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Migration and the Transformation of Modern African Society: Introduction

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I. THE 1977 CONFERENCE

Having established, over the past decade, a significant tradition of annual conferences, the Afrika-Studiecentrum in Leiden decided to devote their 1977 conference to the theme of 'Migration and Rural Development in Tropical Africa'¹⁾. This decision was related to the fact that since 1974 a multi-disciplinary research team of the Afrika-Studiecentrum has been engaged in research into migration²⁾ and rural development in the Lower Casamance, southern Senegal. Having returned from the field early 1976, the conference would provide an excellent opportunity to confront the team's research findings, in an advanced stage of analysis, with a wide range of empirical studies from other parts of Africa, as well as with theoretical studies dealing with migration and development in general. More was aimed at, however, than simply creating an opportunity for discussing the centre's research. The Casamance research had ambitions beyond the mere regional and descriptive level: it intended to provide a series of empirical applications, and empirical tests, of neo-marxist approaches to African migration and development that have recently emerged as alternatives to the more established approaches to these subjects pursued by anthropologists, sociologists, geographers, demographers and economists since the 1950s (Meilink et al. 1978). The conference aimed at bringing together representatives from all current approaches to migration in Africa, including the neo-marxist approach, in an attempt at mutual evaluation, formulating basic theoretical positions, making explicit their underlying assumptions, trying to find tentative solutions for the unsolved problems the various approaches continue to pose.

For several reasons such an exercise, however necessary and timely, is bound to yield only very partial and inconclusive results.

A considerable number of different academic disciplines are involved in the study of migration and rural development in Africa. On the one hand this may make this combined subject eminently suitable for that integrated approach currently known as 'African Studies'; and in fact, migration in Africa features

¹⁾ We wish to express our gratitude to the following people whose contribution has helped to make this conference a success: K. de Jonge, who initiated the conference, was a member of the organizing committee, and in an initial stage assisted in the preparation of the present volume; A. Kuyt, on the same committee, who took care of all administrative and logistic aspects of the conference; the secretarial staff of the Afrika-Studiecentrum, who typed some and duplicated all the papers, under the usual pressure of time; the staff of the Eysingahuis, Leiden, who offered us hospitality during the conference; G. Grootenhuis, the Afrika-Studiecentrum's managing director, for advice concerning the organization of the conference and the publication of the present volume; and all participants, including the many whose papers could not appear here, for helping us to make this conference a stimulating intellectual exchange.

²⁾ Throughout this volume, by migration is meant modern migration in the sense in which this term is used by Amin (1974).

on a great many African-Studies curricula. But on the other hand, the subject has become charged with all the very real problems inherent in multi-disciplinary approaches. Sound anthropology may yet seem obscure and irrelevant from the point of view of sound economics. Between the various disciplines there is very little consensus as to what constitutes adequate analysis, viable concepts, or even problems worthy of scientific study. Demographers and geographers may be wholly justified, from the point of view of their own discipline, if they provide a descriptive, quantitative account of volumes and directions of migration flows, broken down according to sex, age, places of arrival and departure, etc. Similarly, some economists may be content with analysing migration in terms of a flow of labour between different economic sectors, essentially interpreting this as a sign of the changing conditions in the sectoral distribution of employment opportunities as the economy grows. Sociologists and anthropologists, while increasingly acknowledging the importance of these geographic, demographic and economic aspects, would yet be inclined to consider them mainly as basic constraints, that define the field within which the typical subject matter of sociology and anthropology takes shape: changing patterns of rural relationships; the emergence of urban society with new patterns of identification and assistance, inequality and mobility; people's attempts (through manipulation of regional and ethnic ties, through the adoption of new familial and marital patterns, through new ways of organizing their production) to come to terms with the problems of living either in a rural society that is increasingly incorporated in a world-wide economy - or in a urban society which they have entered through migration.

All these various disciplines, moreover, seem to have in common that for them migration tends to be somewhat peripheral to their main body of theory. It is not so much the problem of how labour gets to capital, but how their inter-relationship develops subsequently, that dominates economics. Not the flow of people between various urban and rural social systems or formations, but the nature of the latter and the changes occurring therein, form the subject matter of the social sciences. Admittedly, one has attempted to construct theories of migration, treating it more or less as an isolated social phenomenon that can be meaningfully studied in itself (cf. Stouffer 1940; Gugler 1969, 1976; Todaro 1971). These theories, however, usually have a ring of superficiality, and in fact amount to little more than isolated hypotheses. It is now increasingly being agreed upon that migration should not be studied exclusively in itself - explanation in this field only becomes possible by reference to more fundamental categories of social (geographic, demographic, economic) analysis.

More important even than the difference between disciplines, seem the emergent cleavages within the various disciplines. In recent years, the opposition particularly between established, received approaches (whatever their differences, and these may be as wide as between, in the social sciences, those between methodological-individualism and structural-functionalism), and neo-marxist variants, is particularly important. In their contribution *Marxist and Non-Marxist Approaches to Migration in Tropical Africa*, (see below, pp. 21-35) Gerold-Scheepers & Van Binsbergen review the current literature, and evaluate the relative merits of the various approaches. Discussions of migration and development involving both marxist and non-marxists tend to develop beyond the specific issues at hand, and to turn into a grim battle for academic survival. We shall come back to this point in the third section of this introduction.

The problem is further complicated by the fact that, while non-marxist approaches tend to be fairly tolerant of each other, the emergent marxist approach clearly has its teething problems in that its protagonists seem to disagree on the most fundamental issues. However, a disappointing, though perhaps predictable effect of the heterogeneity of the conference's participants was the reluctance, within the 'radical' camp (represented at the conference by some French marxists whose main spokesman was Amselle; and moreover by researchers like Van Velsen, Webster and Murray who without consistently applying a marxist conceptual apparatus yet derive their major inspiration from marxist political economy) to engage in real fundamental discussion among themselves. These participants, who offered often widely divergent versions of marxist-inspired migration analysis, chose to maintain the illusion of closed ranks vis-à-vis classic economists and state-orientated development specialists at the conference - rather than to engage in a really penetrating discussion of such key issues as: the nature of the modes of production (e.g. Foster-Carter 1978); the process of the latter's articulation (cf. Rey 1973); the nature of exploitation; the extent to which capitalism relies, for the reproduction of its labour, on the domestic community (Meillassoux 1975:145f) or, alternatively (Amselle 1977 and in the conference discussions) the extent to which, in contemporary Africa, it is capitalism which, mainly through migrants' transfers in kind and remittances, has become a major factor in the reproduction of the peripheral village societies. It is important that these aspects of the conference are mentioned here, not because they expose the only too familiar group dynamics of academic encounter, but because they contain suggestions as to the kind of theoretical progress that might be achieved in a different setting.

Of the struggles along these various dimensions, the present volume gives some impression. It brings together only 9 papers out of a total of 30 papers and 2 oral presentations. The theoretical and bibliographical contribution by Gerold-Scheepers & Van Binsbergen, included in this volume, was not presented at the conference. A companion volume, *Migrations au Sénégal et en Gambie*, will be edited by Klaas de Jonge.^{*)} It will contain studies concentrating on Senegal and the Gambia, and will discuss the Afrika-Studiecentrum's Casamance research as well as its theoretical implications, in some detail.

The present volume lacks the geographical consistence of its French-language companion. Its geographical coverage includes West- and Southern Africa, but does not extend to East or Central Africa. This incomplete coverage partly springs from the fact that some papers presented at the conference were already due for publication elsewhere^{*)}, and partly from the constraints imposed by the format of our *African Perspectives* series. More important, however, the major criterium in our selection was not geographical representation, but theoretical relevance. The papers fall into two categories. The first four papers are mainly of a theoretical nature: they sum up the work on African migration done so far,

- ^{*)} See the announcement elsewhere in the present volume. Most papers that were presented at the conference but, for various reasons (editorial, personal, limitations of time and space, or publication elsewhere) could not be included in the present volume or in De Jonge (1978), remain available, separately and in the original form, in the Afrika-Studiecentrum Conference Paper Series. They can be ordered from the Publications Office, Afrika-Studiecentrum, Stationsplein 10, Postbus 9507, 2300 RA Leiden, at a nominal charge.
- ^{*)} Cf. Van Binsbergen 1977; Boutillier et al., forthcoming.

compare and evaluate the achievements of the various rival approaches, and make suggestions as to how we can proceed from this basis. The remaining six papers deal with specific case studies, three from West Africa and three from Southern Africa, in which the theoretical problems that currently dominate the study of African migration are brought to bear upon a body of empirical data. Most papers were substantially rewritten for publication, in the light of specific and general discussions at the conference. We are most grateful to the authors for their ready responses to our editorial suggestions. As editors we flatter ourselves that the exercises in structural analysis presented here, may lead towards a synthesis of approaches to African migration. Both the theoretical papers, and the case studies, represent worth-while attempts to come to terms with what appear to be main problems of migration and rural development in modern tropical Africa. Each paper does so in a way that displays one clearly recognizable approach, yet allows for links with other, rival approaches.

But let us now try to indicate what these main problems are.

II. SOME KEY PROBLEMS OF MIGRATION IN TROPICAL AFRICA

Current literature, and our 1977 conference corroborates this once more, indicates that in the field of migration (and its relation to rural development) the following points constitute some major problems:

- the definition of migration
- description of migration streams
- forces behind migration: structure versus individual motivation
- the nature of the sectors between which migration takes place
- the historical processes by which the different sectors have emerged
- the political and economic processes by which the differences between sectors are perpetuated
- the social processes by which the different sectors are connected
- migration and rural development

We shall briefly discuss these points in the order in which they appear here.

1. *The definition of migration*

To identify the field of study, particularly where so many different academic disciplines are involved, a formal definition is necessary. In the context of modern migrations, however, it should not be so broad as to encompass all forms of geographical displacement of human individuals. To call the movement of spouses between neighbouring villages, at the occasion of marriage, or the shift from one house to another within a suburb, 'migration', would be stretching the meaning of the term too far. These forms of displacement may be permanent. However, limitations of time should also be imposed by our definition, so as to prevent e.g. a townsman's one-week visit to rural relatives from being called migration. It seems meaningful, therefore, to define migration as the geographical displacement of people, for a considerable time and over a considerable distance. For most purposes in the study of modern migrations in Africa, it would be useful to add to this definition that the displacement should be between sectors of a social field that are structurally different from one another. Thus movements forward and backward between the rural areas and the towns, or inter-rurally

between a subsistence economy and a plantation economy, provided they involve residence of considerable duration (minimally a few months, for instance) in each, would be migration; but village-exogamy would not.

2. *Description of migration streams*

This point is self-evident and does not require much comment. Geography and demography have developed, over the years, a body of standard procedures for this description, which could be profitably employed. It is noteworthy (cf. Parkin 1975:4f) that, in contemporary post-independent Africa, migration streams seem to deviate from the familiar ones that dominated the literature up to the late 1960s. International migration is giving way to migration within national territorial boundaries. Circulatory migration between peripheral rural communities and centres of employment (towns, mines, plantations) is giving way to more permanent urbanization. And already a new phase is coming up: that of potential migrants, faced with the overcrowding of the urban labour markets, ceasing to regard migration a viable proposition and instead opting (albeit reluctantly) for a career in rural cash-crop production. Outside southern Africa, where colonial economic conditions partly live on in an acerbated, racist form, labour migration seems to be losing ground to other forms of migration: as access to urban labour markets becomes more difficult, people are brought to invest in education in order to enhance their chances of employment, and given the spatial distribution of educational institutions this often entails migration; similarly, as the urban labour market becomes more difficult to enter, labour turn-over declines, urban residence tends to be more permanent, and non-workers (women, children, elderly relatives) migrate from rural areas to join relatives at work in town. These apparent developments, on which detailed empirical studies are urgently required, imply that the blurred class distinctions between the urban poor and the peasants (with migrants continually shifting in and out either class position) are gradually becoming more sharply defined. Peasants and proletarians, as classes, are drifting apart.

3. *Forces behind migration: structure versus individual motivation*

This problem has haunted the literature on African migration ever since Mitchell (1959) introduced his classic distinction between rate and incidence of migration. Unless the structural setting, at both the micro and the macro level, within which certain individuals migrate is completely understood, any attempt to explain migration by reference to individual motivations alone is bound to fail: one may perhaps understand why (given a structural arrangement that offers the individuals involved certain options, certain accesses to scarce goods and services, certain forms of oppression and freedom) a particular individual decides to migrate, but what really is to be explained, of course, is the nature of this structural arrangement itself, the historical conditions under which it came into being and the political and economic conditions under which it is perpetuated. It is precisely for this reason that one cannot study migration in isolation: the total social structure has to be taken into account, and in particular significant transformations which this structure is undergoing.

4. *The nature of the sectors between which migration takes place*

Residential mobility in Africa ceases to be the anthropologist's private hunting grounds, and enters the realm of migration studies, as soon as this mobility involves

a transition between structurally very different segments of the same social field. But how to define these segments in relation to one another? And how to interpret their interrelation? The social sciences offer the researcher in this field a great many dichotomies from which he can choose: rural versus urban; subsistence economy versus money economy; tribal society versus a society dominated by bureaucratic, formal organizations; village economy versus modern industry; low income areas versus high income areas; pre-capitalist modes of production versus the capitalist mode of production; tradition versus modernity, etc. Each of these dichotomies, in fact, implies a theory of the nature of modern African society, of its internal segmentation, and of the implications this segmentation has for the migrant and those interacting with him. Very few sociologists and anthropologists would attempt to analyse African migration without recourse to a segmented, often dualist, model of modern African society. A notable exception is Amselle, who denies the more or less autonomous functioning of domestic communities in contemporary Africa, and instead sees them as entirely dependent (through migrants' remittances) upon capitalism; instead of the familiar dichotomous models, he therefore sees modern African society, in both its rural and its urban aspects, as displaying mere varieties of capitalism. If one calls to mind societies where pre-capitalist forms have more or less disappeared much longer ago than in Africa (e.g. Western Europe), and where one would not hesitate to treat rural-urban migration along the lines suggested by Amselle, this view has interesting implications; but certainly much more empirical research is required on this point. The dualism pervading most social-science approaches to migration in Africa, may take too much for granted distinctions and boundaries (conceptual, structural, political) which the ongoing transformation of Africa may render increasingly irrelevant.

On the other hand, from the point of view of modern economics this concern with two- or even one-sector models among sociologists and anthropologists would appear hopelessly obsolete. Thus Meilink, in his review of *Some Economic Approaches to Migration* (see below, pp. 51-66), makes it clear that by now economics has reached a stage where dualist (let alone unitary) models of third-world economies have given way to multi-sectoral approaches: the times of Boeke are far behind us, and little needs to be added to the criticism his theories were subjected to in the 1950s (cf. Boeke 1953; Szentes 1973:75f). This may be an important reason why modern non-marxist economists working on migration in Africa fail to be impressed with social-science analyses of the same subject, including the essentially dualist marxist approaches such as advanced by Meillassoux and Rey. A further question which needs to be explored at this juncture is: to what extent do economic and social-structural sectors coincide? Is it possible to employ (for the analysis of phenomena like ethnic identity, urban-rural social control as exercised within the extended family, and urban migrants' continued adherence to a symbolic order whose main frame of reference is village society) a model of social-structural plurality, whilst at the same time admitting that the boundaries between segments in that *social-structural* model cut across, rather than coincide, with the sectoral boundaries stipulated in a multi-sectoral *economic* model? From a marxist point of view, the question might be rephrased thus: does the relative autonomy of super-structural levels in the non-capitalist modes of production which have now become dominated by capitalism, allow for people's continued operation within the framework of these non-capitalist super-structures (kinship obligations, 'traditional' politics, ritual), largely irrespective of their in-

volvement, at the infra-structural level, in capitalist relations of production? This in fact is one of the crucial theoretical problems structural plurality poses in the context of modern African society, and migration studies are likely to contribute towards the answer.

5. *The historical processes by which these different sectors have emerged*

If some form of sectoral approach makes sense in the study of African migration, one cannot understand contemporary migration without understanding the historical emergence of these various sectors. Structural-functionalist approaches, usually rather weak in diachronic analysis, seldom penetrated beyond such descriptive terms as 'the African industrial revolution' or 'the colonial-industrial complex' - terms frequently used, for instance, in migration studies emanating from the Manchester School (e.g. Gluckman 1961; Epstein 1967); when people working in this tradition turned to a historical analysis of migration (e.g. Heisler 1974) it was not to answer the crucial question of how the ultimate structural conditions for migration came about, but how they were administratively maintained (see below, 6). It is here that the greatest merit of recent marxist studies lies: not only do they fill in the dichotomy of capitalism versus pre-capitalist sectors with an explicit and elaborate theory, - they also set out to identify the conditions under which capitalism could become implanted on African soil, encroaching upon pre-capitalist forms and exploiting the latter by draining their labour power and products. In the present volume, the most comprehensive contribution along these lines is that by Gregory & Piché: *African Migration and Peripheral Capitalism* (see below, pp. 37-50): they attempt to provide an analytical framework on the basis of a number of case studies drawn from the literature on African migration. Le Bris, in his study of *Migration and the Decline of a Densely Populated Rural Area: The Case of Vo Koutime in South-East Togo* (see below, pp. 109-125), and Webster in his analysis of *Migrant Labour, Social Formations and the Proletarianisation of the Chopi in Southern Mozambique* (see below, pp. 157-174), offer sophisticated case studies which reflect current marxist thinking concerning the penetration of capitalism in African rural society, treating migration as one of the aspects of this penetration. In view of Gerold-Scheepers & Van Binsbergen's complaint that marxist approaches to African migration so far have produced abstract generalizations rather than specific case-studies (see below, pp. 30f), Le Bris' and Webster's contributions represent a genuine step forward.

6. *The political and economic processes by which the differences between sectors are perpetuated*

The rediscovery of historical dialectics has been one of the main contributions neo-marxism has made to modern social science, offering a way out from the stagnant a-historicism dominating structural-functionalism as the main social-science approach in the 1950s and early 1960s. Yet the present emphasis, in marxist studies of African migration, on the historical process of the penetration of capitalism, may have certain drawbacks. Not only does a historical approach tend to offer little specific suggestions as to present and future policy. More important, national economies of African countries are increasingly determined by international monetary and trade structures (cf. Arrighi, G. & Saul, J. 1973); these determinant structures are changing so rapidly from year to year, from day to day even, that rather than a historical analysis of colonial capitalism in a local

setting, a synchronic analysis of the actions of the International Monetary Fund, the World Bank, etc. seems to offer real insight into the contemporary reality of economic dependence which forms the framework for migration in Africa. Moreover, the historical preoccupation may obscure the very real changes currently taking place within African migration itself. As we pointed out above, post-colonial migration streams are substantially changing direction: towards permanent urbanization, non-labour migration, and the adoption of rural development as an alternative to migration. Therefore a historical analysis of an earlier phase in African migration may not offer the ultimate insight into present-day conditions.

Thus, if modern African migrations occur between structurally different sectors, a crucial question is not only how these sectors came into being but also why, with all this movement of people across the boundaries that separate these sectors, the differences are still maintained. In the past, social scientists might point at the allegedly fundamental difference between village society and the places of employment: was not the internal dynamics of the local culture explanation enough for the universal yet surprising phenomenon of migrants leading a double life: in town and in the village, apparently shedding, upon their return home, their urban ways 'as an old coat'. However, recent studies of ethnicity have revealed that, to a considerable extent, so-called 'traditional culture' can be manipulated so as to express and further interests within a modern political setting: competition for the regional allocations of government funds, elite positions, employment etc. (Colson 1968; Skinner 1968; Cohen 1974). Likewise the Southern-African experience has shown us the extent to which the political manipulation of the concept of traditional culture, in a context of *apartheid*, leads to precisely the kind of absolute sectoral division, in both culture and economy, upon which the exploitation of migrant labour can thrive (cf. Wolpe 1972). The cultural difference between the sectors involved in migration seems merely a surface phenomenon, under which we have to detect the more fundamental economic and political factors that perpetuate the division between the sectors.

Current marxist thinking on African migration sees the maintaining of a domestic sector, where labour is reproduced and the old and sick can retire without any costs for the capitalist sector, as an essential feature of capitalism in Africa; so far, however, detailed studies are scarce which demonstrate the precise mechanism of the process through which capitalist interests lead to the active propagation of peripheral domestic communities. The process is clearest, though, in the Southern African case. In a fascinating oral presentation at the conference, which unfortunately was not available for publication in this volume, Van Velsen (1977) argued that the artificial creation of international boundaries, such as is currently happening with the South-African *bantustans*, is a desperate political device to maintain a sectoral division upon which South-African industry largely depends for its labour. Outside the racist context, one would have to consider less drastic mechanisms by which the sectoral division is maintained: the differential allocation of government funds between urban and rural areas, subsidies on urban-consumed food, administrative procedures hindering inter-regional travelling, unrealistically high wage levels in formal sector employment which in Africa is largely dominated by the state, etc. If migration largely springs from structural differences between sectors, then changes in migration patterns should be interpreted against the background of changes in the processes by which sectoral divisions are maintained.

Yet, attractive though this analysis may be, considerable caution should be taken here. First, we should not relapse into an essentially dualist economic approach. Secondly, even if the above analysis seems to illuminate migration under colonial and racist conditions, it is a remarkable fact that Elkan in his contribution on *Labour Migration from Botswana, Lesotho and Swaziland* (see below, pp. 145-156) stresses that labour for the South-African mines is increasingly drawn from within South Africa. And, most important, with regard to post-colonial independent African states one can scarcely maintain that it is in the interest of industry or the state to maintain a separate, non-capitalist sector from which cheap labour can be drawn. For many years the factor 'labour' has been of relatively limited importance in the industrial centres of Africa: considered against the total costs of production, the expenditure on labour is virtually a residual category. Therefore, industry is only to a limited extent interested in the persistence of a non-capitalist sector which could act as a labour reserve - thus keeping the wages down. On the other hand, industry is certainly interested in the emergence of an affluent consumer group to buy its products - and that inevitably means wages above the subsistence level. Throughout Africa independent governments try, with differing degrees of consistency and success, to make modern goods and services available to the urban poor and to the rural populations - in other words, turning these groups into consumers. The point that labour is being reproduced in the non-capitalist sector may yet remain of importance - but in view of the increasing state expenditure for instance on educational and medical facilities in both urban and rural areas (aspects of the reproduction of labour) it seems as if the situation that the non-capitalist sector alone carries the burden of the reproduction of labour, is increasingly a thing of the past.

7. *The social processes by which the different sectors are connected*

Although structurally distinct at the macro level, the reality of the situation at the level of the individual migrants is that the various sectors are continually linked: socially, by constant movement of people (returning or prospective migrant workers, but also students, visitors, spouses, ritual specialists); and economically, both by the movement of labour and by the movement of food, clothing, remittances, across the sectors. These inter-sector connections pose a number of theoretical problems. Can we maintain that the rural communities' loss of labour is compensated by whatever they receive as the proceeds from their members' participation in the capitalist sector? This would largely depend on the ways this labour was made use of in the rural economy, by whom it is controlled, how strict this control is, how the local demand for labour in specific migrating groups (broken down according to age, sex etc.) varies with the seasons, and how the proceeds from migration are reinvested in the rural economy. Thus in his case study of *Migration, Differentiation and the Developmental Cycle in Lesotho* (see below, pp. 127-143), Murray offers a penetrating analysis of the ways in which the proceeds from migrant labour relate to agricultural income, investment, and family composition. Alternatively, one would need to assess the extent to which the remaining rural population (particularly elderly people, and women) retain control over the income of migrants in distant places of employment. Kinship obligations, marital and ritual ties are operated in order to siphon part of the migrants' incomes back home. But why do migrants, participating in a sector where they are no longer fully dependent upon their rural kin, yet honour the claims of the latter? Is it merely the anticipation of future need, when, jobless and

without an urban foothold, they will have to return in the village? Are they investing in rural ties as an alternative to investing in a store or a plot in some peri-urban area? In other words, is the migrants' continued participation in kin-based and rural-orientated mechanisms of redistribution merely a matter of calculation, or is really an element of identity involved, of persisting attachment to a 'traditional' social order beyond economic necessity? The question is of eminent importance: without understanding the reasons for the universal distribution, and the persistence, of urban-rural networks in modern Africa, the economic aspects of urban-rural transfers in money and kind remain suspended in the air. In their overview of *Urban-Rural Ties in West-Africa: Extent, Interpretation, Prospects, and Implications* (see below, pp. 67-78) Gugler & Flanagan touch on many of these problems.

8. Migration and rural development

With so many fundamental issues at hand which relate to migration proper, it was almost inevitable that both at the conference and in the present volume the link between migration and rural development did not receive the amount of attention that was originally intended. Is migration an aspect of a process of underdevelopment? Does active, planned rural development provide an alternative, and hence a brake, to migration? Can rural development, even though entailing increased dependence and class-formation in the periphery, yet also lead towards a rise of real income there? Is it possible to advance policy recommendations in this field? Of the papers in the present volume, mainly those by Adepoju: *Migration and Rural Development in Nigeria* (see below, pp. 79-92), and by Hinderink & Tempelman: *Rural Change and Types of Migration in the Northern Ivory Coast* (see below pp. 93-107), look at migration explicitly in relation to rural development.

Implied in both the marxist and the non-marxist analyses of migration as presented here, is the assumption that the basic outlines of the problem are clear. African rural society is disrupted to a considerable extent. Marxist studies of the penetration of capitalism, as well as non-marxist interpretations in terms of social change, individualisation, new values, new aspirations, new patterns of social organization, the emergence of a money economy, etc., analyse this process. What is needed is a process of rural reconstruction, through which the relations between these rural communities and the world economic system become redefined: either in the direction of a complete reversal of peripheral dependence leading, instead, to autonomous rural development - or, less radically, by exploring new and more positive ways in which these communities can function within the international economic structures. Whatever the answer that lies at the end of our migration studies, it will ultimately be a matter of political choice and political means - where empirical science may, and should, attempt to provide useful insights, but lacks the power to impose solutions.

And this takes us to the problem of the relation between theory and practice as it poses itself in the context of migration studies.

III. RIVAL APPROACHES TO MIGRATION: BETWEEN THEORY AND PRACTICE

A general problem hindering an integrated, multi-disciplinary approach to mi-

gration relates to the subjective, emotional appreciation of contemporary African conditions, among researchers.

Because migration and rural development have been acknowledged as major problems by African governments and international agencies dealing with development projects, part of the research currently undertaken in this field has been either directly commissioned by these organizational bodies, or implicitly aims at furthering their developmental policies. This type of research tends to take for granted the incorporation of villagers in a world-wide economic system, where they sell their labour or their agricultural products, and often both. The discussion then concentrates on less fundamental aspects of this incorporation: e.g. urban-rural terms of trade: or the peasants' reluctance to adopt modern capitalist structures wholesale, their clinging to 'traditional', pre-capitalist forms (family patterns, subsistence agriculture). From this point of view, incorporation in the world economy, as migrants, farmers and consumers, is considered neutral or even as moderately positive, since it seems to enhance the standard of living of those immediately involved - although some allowance is made for the disruption such incorporation may initially cause in social relations, individual security, and material conditions of life. The alternative point of view, which was equally well represented at the conference, views migration and rural development as interrelated aspects of a total transformation process whose essence is the penetration of pre-capitalist modes of production by a predatory and exploiting capitalism.

So far so good. The theory of capitalist penetration in the third world, though still *in statu nascendi*, has obvious analytical and synthetic power, and is capable of revealing interrelations and implications that hitherto remained hidden. It gives history its proper share - although one would wish for more professional historical dabbling in history have so far attempted to do. Also, the marxist approach seems capable, better than current non-marxist approaches (structural-functionalism, neo-classic economics, methodological individualism), to present a picture of African peasants and proletarians in which main characteristics of their lives: poverty, expropriation, exploitation, are allowed to feature centrally in the academic analysis of their situation - instead of being concealed under formulae, blind structures and individual motivations of ill-informed peasants depicted as atomistic, rational actors. One may wonder to what extent this marxist approach does justice to those aspects of modern African life where even peasants and proletarians are not just miserable, in the material sense, but also the proud owners of a cultural tradition which somehow has still managed to survive in its outlines. But in this respect marxist approaches to contemporary Africans do not deviate substantially from non-marxist ones. Real problems arise, in the academic encounter, when the analytical merits of the marxist approach are no longer assessed, in a detached and dispassionate manner, against those of rival approaches, but when instead the discussion takes on a form of passionate confrontation. More often than not, 'radical' social scientists, in rather a superficial way, proclaim capitalism to be the root of all evil, attempting to expose those of their colleagues who are partial to non-marxist approaches, as misguided representatives of the very capitalist penetration which the 'radicals' have understood to be the true cause of the African predicament. Little wonder, then, that the non-marxists turn away from marxist theories and concepts, and that during a

conference like the present one little progress towards an integrated theory is made.

Intellectually, the way out seems to lie in a re-opening of the debate on the merits and shortcomings of marxist and non-marxist approaches, where the utility of marxist concepts has to be demonstrated by an internal criticism of rival approaches - which should be seriously studied rather than ignored. Here marxists may be in for some surprise. Thus economic contributions at the conference made it clear that, for some time already, economists have proceeded beyond the stage where income distribution was treated as an independent variable explaining other features (including migration). Models currently being worked out (particularly by Gaude (1976) and the Michigan group around Byerlee and Eicher (1972)) treat income distribution as a dependent variable.

In analyzing African migration, we should pay attention not only to the characteristics of national economies but also to the intricacies of world-wide monetary transactions and trade networks - factors which are notoriously tedious to investigate but which yet translate the somewhat mystical cure-all 'capitalism' into specific, concrete variables that can be measured, understood and changed (Wallerstein & Gutkind, 1976). The point is not whether capitalism is bad, or marxism is true, but whether our conceptual and theoretical apparatus enables us to understand, and to change, society. It is not by accident that this formula echoes a basic marxist text dealing with the connection between theory and praxis: 'The philosophers have only *interpreted* the world in different ways; the point is to change it' (Marx, *Theses on Feuerbach*; translated in: Bottomore & Rubel 1974:84). It is somewhat distressing to note that, with all their attention for the predicament of migrants and the rural societies they come from, current marxist approaches to African migration have so far contented themselves with a theoretical and historical analysis of this predicament, without advancing substantial suggestions as to how the situation might be improved.⁵⁾ Their analyses are retrospective. But the retracing of the penetration of capitalism offers no blueprint for the peasants' future.

As concerns these practical aspects of the migratory problem, therefore, it is time that marxist approaches be carried beyond the fatalistic assertion that, through migration and rural development, Africans have become incorporated in a capitalism that exploits them. In addition to case studies as to how this came about, we now need studies that assess the potential, of these emergent classes of proletarians and peasants, to use the contradictions within capitalism so as to check their exploitation. In Africa, capitalism has come to stay, at least for the immediate future. Increasing dependence of peasants and proletarians on capitalist structures, and the emergence of classes that become more and more distinct and antagonistic, are the unmistakable aspects of this process. But even so, might this process not also entail a growth of real income for these immediate producers? And if so, under what conditions, through which strategies? And at what costs of disruption, alienation, struggle and sacrifice?

While students of migration and rural development in recent years have discovered history as a key to the understanding of the present, they should now

⁵⁾ A notable but isolated and not very impressive exception is Amin's (1974) proposal concerning Senegal's development strategy.

move on to politics in order to assess how current capitalist conditions are being maintained, and how these might be altered in the interest of the African peasants and urban poor we all pay lip-service to, but who so far have gained preciously little from the millions of hours of hospitality they have extended to us, researchers.

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Marxist and Non-Marxist Approaches to Migration in Tropical Africa

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1. INTRODUCTION ¹⁾

Recent work on migration in tropical Africa displays a dazzling heterogeneity. Part of the current literature, particularly the more strictly geographical and demographic studies, is of a primarily descriptive nature. It presents quantitative data about migrants, migration streams, areas of departure and destination; underlying theoretical models remain implicit, the data are supposed to speak for themselves and to derive their meaningfulness from common-sense interpretations ²⁾. The conceptually and theoretically more sophisticated studies aim at *explanation* of migratory phenomena and even of the total complex of transformations of which migration forms only one aspect. Here, for some years, the major distinctions have been those between structural and methodological-individualist approaches, and, within the structural approach, between recent marxism on the one hand and structural-functionalism on the other, the latter having dominated the social-scientific study of African migration since the 1950s.

Methodological individualism sees all social life (including migration) as ultimately revolving around the conscious, rational perceptions, motivations, calculations and volitions of actors. The structural tradition, more in the mainstream of social-science thinking, stresses, beyond the individual cognitive and motivational elements, wider social-structural conditions. From the structural point of view, these conditions set the framework for individual action, predetermine individual perception even, and, often altogether escaping the actor's awareness, decisively shape the pattern of social relationships.

The methodological-individualist approach to migration concentrates on individual migrants, who implicitly are viewed as atomistic, a-historical free social agents. Anthropologists and sociologists working in this direction ³⁾ have emphasized the economic factor in migrants' motivations, although, as we shall see below, other factors (social, cultural, psychological, political) have also received some attention. Neo-classical economists studying the direction and volume of migration streams from the same angle, have pointed out that migration occurs from low income to high income areas, and from rural areas to towns - interpreting this as signs of individual migrants aiming at maximalization of their incomes. Recently, new impetus has been given to this approach by Todaro (1971), whose views have subsequently been expanded by Godfrey (1973) and Knight (1972). Byerlee et al. (1976:6f) in principle accept the Todaro approach, but they try to incorporate it in a wider theoretical framework representing all

¹⁾ We are indebted to J.-L. Amselle, J. Gugler, K. de Jonge, H. A. Meilink and F. Snyder for helpful comments on earlier drafts of this paper.

²⁾ Cf. Gould & Prothero 1975; Udo 1975; Dubois 1975; also the greater part of the contributions to the special issue of *Cahiers ORSTOM* (1975) is characterized by this one-sided approach.

³⁾ See Gugler 1969; Gulliver 1955; Mitchell 1959.