Marxist and Non-Marxist Approaches to Migration in Tropical Africa

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1. INTRODUCTION

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. 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-individuallist 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 perception, motivations, calculations and volitions of actors. The structural tradition, more in the mainstream of social-scientific 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 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 maximizing of their incomes. Recently, new impetus has been given to this approach by Todaro (1971), whose views have been expanded by Godfrey (1973) and Knight (1972). Byrlee et al. (1976: 80) in principle accept the Todaro approach, but they try to incorporate it in a wider theoretical framework representing all

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

2) C.G. Godfrey & Prober 1973; Udo 1975; Dubois 1975; also the greater part of the contributions in the special issue of Cahiers ORSTOM (1975) is characterized by this one-sided approach.

the factors (including non-monetary costs and returns related to risk, attitudinal characteristics, social ties and expectations) that influence the decision to migrate. Gugler (1976) criticizes the Todorov model because of the vagueness of its basic components. An ambitious attempt to apply Todorov's views in a specific research setting, that of internal migration in Zambia, is Bates (1976); however, the extreme shortcomings, both theoretically and empirically, of his similar non-structural approaches have been amply exposed by Van Binsbergen (1977).

The alternative to the methodological-individualist approach to migration, is the structural approach, in both its Marxist and non-Marxist versions. These we shall now discuss, in the light of what seems to be the crucial question linking migration and rural development: does migration foster rural development by bringing about an optimal distribution of human resources, or, on the contrary, does migration constitute a drain on the labour and material resources of rural areas, thus exploiting them instead of contributing to their development? The equally fundamental question as to what constitutes rural development (higher rural incomes, a higher quality of rural life? increasing dependence on capitalist mechanisms? or both?) we shall refrain from discussing here. We shall, moreover, concentrate on anthropological and sociological studies (cf. H. Melin's discussion of economic approaches elsewhere in the present volume).

II. THE STRUCTURAL-FUNCTIONALIST APPROACH

The idiom of structural-functionalism revolves on patterns of social relationships creating broad enduring sections within a society (rural versus urban communities; ethnic groups; classes in the sense of status groups; formal organizations; kin groups; age cohorts; sexes etc.); these sections interact with one another, and through both cooperation and conflict produce an integrated and self-perpetuating society. Migration then appears as one of the ways in which these interactions between sections takes place, serving various positive and negative functions for the sections or groups involved. Classic examples of this approach include: Van Velsen (1961), Glickman (1961), Skinner (1962). From the part of economists, we could quote cost-benefit analyses of migration, assessing the economic advantages of migration for both the departure and the destination areas, as examples of a structural approach (cf. Berg 1965; Etkan 1960).

The major recent publication on migration in the structural-functionalist tradition is the book edited by Parkin (1975): Town and Country in Central and East Africa. As a recent compilation of this tradition, two points are striking about this book: the rather positive view of migration as apparent from most contributions (which stress the migrants' positive effects with regard to the development of both areas of departure and destination, by the diffusion of ideas, values, techniques and incomes) 9); and the rather superficial, eclectic theoretical content.

In his introduction, Parkin perceptually cites Amin's (1974) views concerning the influence of overall strategies of development (assigning to a region the role of labour reserve, cash crop production, or either) upon the direction and volume of migration. Parkin, of course, has no reason to identify the causes behind pre-colonial migrations in Africa. However, his analysis of modern migration remains rather bleft. It hardly benefits from such insights into African migration as Amin and other Marxists have gained, but instead leans heavily on Mitchell's (1959) classic distinction between the 'rate of migration' (determined by the collective impact of economic forces) and the 'incidence of migration' (determined by the social and cultural factors influencing the individual decisions of would-be migrants). Gugler has criticized this approach as ignoring not only non-economic (e.g. political) causes operating at the collective level, but also economic causes which bear upon individual decision-making (1967:412). In passing we note that both Parkin, Mitchell and Gugler, while essentially structural-functionalists, in their emphasis on individual motivation incline heavily towards the methodological-individualist position.

A similar dilemma is clear from Garrett's case study (1975) in Parkin's book. Disclassified with migration analyses based on individual motivations alone, Garrett expects to find a way out by shifting from individual to group decision making. The individual's decision is determined by the decision of his kin group (1975:118). Garrett presents this model claiming that the variations within the general migration pattern are not sufficiently accounted for by economic, ecological or political factors. He admits, however, that in Zimbabwe a close connection exists between 'circular migration' and the capitalist economy; but this line of argument is not pursued any further.

In the same volume, Uchendu (1975) advances the thesis that inter-rural migration contributes to rural and even to national development. He emphasizes the significance of 'export capacity' and the 'intensity and duration of inter-rural migration' (1975:166), and considerable confidence in the results of interaction between man and his environment' (ibid). Although this may be right for the areas explicitly discussed by Uchendu (Gitei in Tanzania, Kisi in Kenya, and Teso in Uganda), and perhaps also for some other areas, his approach is limited in that he does not include the causes of emigration from the departure areas in his study. Admittedly, he deals with the emigration from the 'land-hungry areas' and from 'over-populated Sukumaland' to Gorita (1975:169), but the significance he attaches to cause and effect of the emigration is overly superficial. 9) Uchendu advocates a break-through of agriculturally self-sufficient areas. However, when he argues that 'policy decisions which affect the various sectors of the national economy are increasingly mediated by national institutions' (1975:173), this raises the question of whether incorporation of peasant communities in the national economy might lead to share development, particularly when the emigration areas would be assigned the function of supply areas for the national centres. In his comments on Uchendu's contribution, Parkin emphasizes the aggravation of contradictions between the 'landless' immigrants and the 'landlords', in the 'land-surplus' areas as described by Uchendu - this in spite of (or

9) The greater part of the contributions to Proverbs (1972) have been written in the same vein.

9) Cf. Enge (1974), who recognizes the differential aspects of the migration of the Sukuma to the cotton areas, yet advocates a stabilization of the migration process "to the advantage especially of the labour supplying areas..." The role of this policy would then be available for the development of these areas themselves (197:352).
of different sectors. However, structural-functionalism stresses the continuity and integration of the total society, usually underplaying its internal contradictions and its changes over time, attributing great explanatory value to formal-organizational and ideational elements, but assuming that the overall social structure applies more or less equally in all social contexts. Marxist, on the other hand, looks at contemporary African society as a composite of qualitatively different sectors: different 'modes of production', or a capitalist sector versus a domestic, rural sector. The specific internal structuring of each sector, and of production, is given not primarily by formal-organizational and ideational elements, but by the ways in which production and reproduction take place; and this is always considered to imply conflict revolving around the control of production and reproduction, and the alienation or expropriation of products, or surplus. Modern African society is viewed as the process by which pre-existing structures are encroached upon by capitalism, in such a way that surpluses generated in the former are expropriated so as to perpetuate (reproduce) the latter. Capitalism has emerged in the modern world as a specific mode of production characterized by: the separation between producers and their means of production; the commodity nature of production factors (including labour and means of production); and products: they can be bought and sold; and the fact that the economy has come to determine all other aspects of social life, to such an extent that society 'produces' itself solely through the economy. Migration, then, is interpreted as one aspect of the penetration of capitalism: it is one of the possible mechanisms by which rural producers are divorced from their means of production in a pre-capitalist mode of production, and by which they enter, more or less as 'free proletarians', into capitalist production. While the historical expansion of capitalism is thus viewed, by marxists, as the main explanation of migration, they disagree as to the precise ways in which migration reflects and furthers this expansion. Nor do they evaluate the effects of migration on the rural community of departure in the same manner; although they all consider these effects negative and exploitative. The background of these disagreements is their lack of consensus on basic theoretical issues in marxism, and - largely through polemics - the rapid theoretical development in this section of African Studies. All of this makes it extremely difficult to summarize and discuss these approaches within the limits of the present article.

In what has been called the major original book in years to be written by an anthropologist (Panoff 1977:133), Meillassoux develops his theory of migration on the basis of an elaborate model of the domestic community and its economy. For Meillassoux, the capitalist sector always (i.e. not only in Africa) relies on the domestic sector for the reproduction of its labour. Migration is the major way in which capitalist enterprises in Africa can secure their labour, which is being reproduced in the peripheral domestic communities, and at the expense of these communities. With the example of seasonal migration (a form of migration which occurs in many countries throughout Africa), and which is of considerable importance, Meillassoux demonstrates that through migration capitalism benefits in a peculiar way from the domestic economy. Not only is the migrant worker, as any direct producer under capitalism, exploited in that the surplus value he generates through his labour, is expropriated; in addition, his labour is over-exploited, in that capitalism also appropriates (during the slack season in which the peasant is employed by distant capitalist employers) such interest on labour
("create de travail") as that peasant's previous production in the rural subsistence sector has generated, during the productive season. For given this interest on the part of the capitalistic employer, not only is he well aware of the need to provide for the migrant worker only a subsistence wage ('salaires d'appoint'), just enough to let the migrant survive from day to day during the period of his capitalistic employment. The domestic community, and not capitalism, carries the burden of producing his labour force through his non-productive childhood, as well as keeping him alive as soon as he leaves capitalistic employment. The peripheral domestic communities thus subsidize the capitalistic sector at their own expense. The ubiquitous poverty of rural Africa bears witness to this state of affairs. But far from aiming at the destruction of these communities, capitalism in Africa has made their survival (albeit in an entirely subordinated and exploited form) the cornerstone of its own success - as is most clearly demonstrated by apartheid and bantustan in South Africa."

Meillassoux's thesis is not entirely new. More than twenty years ago Deane (1953) analysed the relationship between Central-African rural communities and capitalisation in basically the same way, although with less sophistictation and not as part of an integrated theory of African domestic communities. Meillassoux is capable of accounting, in a systematic way, for such well-known empirical facts as the surprising survival of rural communities and pre-capitalist modes of production: the ubiquity of extensive urban-rural networks; the reluctant urbanisation of Africa in the colonial period; the colonial colour-bar, and the racial situation in Southern Africa. However, one wonders whether the persistence of African rural societies is entirely due to capitalistic interests. Could these interests (even if mediated through administrative structures actively propagating the 'illusion of tribe' (Southall 1969, indirect rule etc.) at all form a sufficient explanation for this persistence? Might not these rural societies' internal dynamics have constituted an equally powerful factor? And, consequently, might the continued operation of urban-rural ties not partly be explained by migrants' positive adherence to these internal dynamics, beyond their economic necessity to retain a rural foothold? When we recall Van Vollenhoven's (1961) classic argument on labour migration as a positive factor in Tonga tribal society, it is clear that Meillassoux is not alone in his views on this point. We are, as an alternative, not suggesting anything like a self-perpetuating, autonomous existence of African "traditional culture". But surely, with Marxists as Rey (1973) stressing the built-in resistance of African pre-capitalist modes of production vis-a-vis capitalism, the question needs to be reconsidered (cf. Van Beusbergen, forthcoming).

Similarly, Meillassoux's approach does not seem to have an answer for the dramatic urbanisation of people of African origin in the metropolis. What changes occurred in the nature of capitalistic enterprise in post-colonial Africa, or in the relations between post-colonial Africa and the metropolis, that allowed for the shift from capitalistic migration to permanent urban dwellers, very much more akin to an urban proletariat divorced from rural production and reproduction? Could it be that with the overthrow of colonialist African states, new relations of production were established, new relations of production? Could it be that with the overthrow of colonialist African states, new relations of production were established, new relations of production? Could it be that with the overthrow of colonialist African states, new relations of production were established, new relations of production?

Finally, one would like to see an extension of Meillassoux's approach, towards the exploration of the urban-rural relationship in Africa, and the involvement of the migrant in the creation of the new relations of production. It is possible, with Meillassoux's conceptual apparatus, to proceed beyond the terrain that cash-crop production constitutes a threat to rural food production?

Amselle (1976b) also interprets migration in the light of the expansion of capitalisation. He stresses that migration will ultimately lead to the separation of the migrants from their rural roots of production. This process will come about gradually. As long as there are socio-economic relations between the migrants and their home areas (Amselle refers to this as the 'migratory network'), capitalisation will continue throughout because they produce the cost of living of the migrants (1976b: 30-34). Whenever these areas function as labour reserves this will go hand in hand with substantial changes in the pre-capitalist relations of production (1976b: 290). According to Amselle, these aspects of rural communities have been neglected by historians. He criticises most current research as overly descriptive, concentrating only upon the characteristics of the areas of departure and destination. He objects to different forms of migration being classified according to binary typologies (e.g. temporary/permanent) which 'are meant to show the causes and respective influences of internal and external determinative factors with regard to migration' (1976b: 11). Such typologies, he claims, evoke distinctions which in reality do not exist, since capitalisation is the underlying factor uniting them all (1976b: 34). Therefore, Amselle prefers not to distinguish between 'old migrations' and 'modern migrations'. Although land scarcity, conflicts between generations, or a particular ethnic group's structural tendency to migrate, may be occasions for migration, as factors these are always subordinate to capitalisation. For the same reasons Amselle criticises the conceptual distinction between rural and urban migrations. In the context of the migration issue concerns not the ultimate product of capitalisation...
geographical destination of migrants, but rather the position of the migrant in the relations of production in the destination area, wherever that may be (1976b:22).

We agree with Ansell that migration research should not start out from a priori distinctions. His analysis, however, is somewhat limited by the emphasis on external factors alone, notably the penetration of capitalism. In addition to this factor, could there really be no internal factor, built into an ethnic group's specific social structure, and capable of explaining, if only partially, why some groups, or their members, tend to migrate more than others? Moreover, does capitalist incorporation always produce the same familiar patterns of migration? Is there no indirect impact of changing relations of production to be considered? The importance of the latter point is clearly demonstrated by Attwuri (1976). He considers the migrations from Ivory Coast and Upper Volta to Ghana during the French colonial regime as 'protest migrations'. He stresses that political protest actions, including migrations, were the symptoms of economic exploitation. By starting from the premise that the capitalist mode of production absolutely determines the motives for migration, Ansell perhaps too readily excludes such possible factors as political repression, religious considerations (Works 1972), escape from social control (Olofson 1976), colonization 10, or climatic disasters (Herring 1976).

Rey (1976, cf. 1973) also holds that migration is solely a consequence of capitalism. His analysis is based on the Marxist theories of imperialism, especially those of Otto Bauer and, to a lesser degree, of Rosa Luxemburg (1967). Both these authors have discussed the mobilization of labour for the benefit of the expansion of the capitalist sector. Bauer recognized the relationship between accumulation of products within the capitalist sector and the recruitment of labour overseas. Luxemburg, on the other hand, stressed the export of labour from the rural areas of capitalist countries to overseas territories. In her view the volume of labour engaged in capitalist modes of production was not merely analytical, but involved a clear temporal sequence.

Rey considers both mechanisms to operate concurrently. The non-capitalist countries function as a continuous source of export of (forced) labour and cash crops to the capitalist countries (1962a:500). Rey does not entirely agree, however, with Amin (1974:88f), who considers the migration process to be determined by overall strategies of development. Rey wonders why, under the same strategy of development, the migration pattern yet varies for the different societies subject to that strategy. He expects an answer from an investigation of the contradictions within the non-capitalist mode of production, and the opportunities for capitalism to benefit from such contradictions. Every mode of production revolves, in its relations of production, around a number of fundamental contradictions between groups controlling each other's labour and expropriating each other's production: men versus women, elders versus youth, masters versus slaves. These contradictions provide an opening for capitalism to penetrate, by striking an alliance between capitalists and exploiting pre-capitalist groups, e.g. the elders and chieftains in a lineage-based community, who dominate the young men by their control over the circulation of women. Through such alliances capitalism links up with a pre-capitalist mode of production. In the context of migration this would mean that exploitation of young men as migrants workers may coincide with that of young men as bride-seekers, paying over their earnings in the capitalist sector to elders in exchange for women. Thus part of the proceeds from the capitalist exploitation of the direct producers accrues to the dominant class in the pre-capitalist mode of production. In other pre-capitalist communities capitalism is less capable of using internal contradictions; and there the participation in capitalism (e.g. through migration) may be less marked or even absent.

Comparing Rey's approach with that of Meillassoux, the striking difference is that Rey attaches much more importance to the internal differentiation and class conflict within the domestic communities. For Rey, capitalism is not the only exploitative factor in Africa. Nor is its dominance over other modes of production taken for granted: it has to be studied as a dialectical process of class alliances. Although Meillassoux ([1975]1986) denies that his domestic communities constitute a distinct mode of production, yet Rey's approach, allowing for specific local forms and variation, can add the necessary corrections to the visionary but somewhat sweeping generalizations by Meillassoux.

The Marxist approaches to migration discussed so far contain a number of potentially testable hypotheses. Thus Meillassoux' analysis of seasonal migration in terms of interest on labour would suggest that societies with a mode of production not involving a slack season (hunting, gathering) would, in terms of migration, respond differently to the penetration of capitalism, at least in its early stages. Rey's views would suggest that societies in which the elders' economic and marital control is particularly strong, would develop different migration patterns from societies with relatively autonomous age groups such as the Nyakyusa (cf. Wilson 1951). Amin's analysis would suggest that migratory networks (in other words, urban-civil ties) would take an entirely different form once migrants have secured relatively stable and permanent positions in the capitalist sector. But while both Rey and Amin have edited a volume of case studies on migration, none of the articles (by such authors as Samuel, Le Bris, Fantou, Baland, and Rey himself) in these books explicitly apply and test their theories.

Samuel (1976) gives some insight into how contradictions develop within the traditional production unit. He notes the exploitation of young emigrants working in France by the traditional authorities at home, who lay a claim to the migrants' income. However, Samuel's data are not representative, as they are based on what happened to a haphazard selection of a few immigrants into France (belonging to the Hai Peul and the Soninké). In order to substantiate Samuel's thesis that the present exploitation is but an extension of pre-existing slavery, one would need to know how many young people are thus held in the inescapable grip of the elders, the amounts of money involved, etc. 11 Le Bris deals with the settlement of pioniers in the colonization area of Togodo (South-east Togol). He gives a picture of the internal contradictions in Togodo originating from the fact that land-titles and labour are in the hands of pioniers, who already held...

10 There is much literature on the causes and effects of migration of Africans to Europe, e.g. Adams (1977); Zehraoui (1978); Kane & Léonard (1975); Durywosa (1975); Samuel (1978); see also the bibliographical survey by M. Agenstan (1976: 116).
key positions in the villages of their homelands. The author himself admits that his case study does not touch on the essential problem of the rural exodus in Southeast Togo (1976:190). While Rey stresses the importance, for the movement pattern, of internal contradictions in the area of departure, Le Briz merely analyses contradictions in the area of destination. Rey’s own short case study (1976b) deals, amongst others, with the disruption of the pre-colonial Gaangam community under the effect of oppression by the Tsyolou. However, his ideas of the relationship between the migratory process and the penetration of capitalism (as formulated in his introduction), hardly come in. Likewise, in Asselle’s edited book, ‘Fidonn’ case study merely assesses to what extent migration of the Lobi in Southwest Upper Volta and Northeast Ivory Coast have resulted in the change of their socio-economic institutions. This is very unlike Asselle’s approach to migration, which considers migration not as an independent input variable but limited as an intrinsic part of a historical process: the penetration of capitalism. Again, Baid’s case study of migrations from Guinea to Senegal does not contain an explicit link with marxist migration theory.

Overlooking the marxist studies of African migration as discussed in this section, we are impressed by their attempt to interpret migration systematically by reference to the fundamental overall transformation of African society, which this approach attributes to the penetration of capitalism. Better than current non-marxist approaches does this approach give full weight to what, at the subjective or common-sense level, appear to be the crucial aspects of modern migrations in Africa: labour, exploitation, increasing dependence of powerless individuals upon world capitalism, and increasing drainage of rural economies. However, with all its obvious potential, two great weaknesses are clear: the failure, so far, to translate eloquent and illuminating abstractions into ordinary, prosaic case studies; and the relative theoretical immaturity of the approach, which accounts for the fact that significant related problems have remained out of scope, so far: rural development as an alternative to migration in the context of capitalist penetration; the survival of non-capitalist modes of production so far as such survival is not due to capitalist intervention, urbanization, and migration from Africa; and the fact that, even if the penetration of capitalism is to be the ultimate key to the contemporary transformation of Africa, yet this process creates social, political, religious etc., conditions which in themselves will have relatively autonomous effects on migration - effects requiring a more intensive analysis than the pious repetition of the words ‘capitalism’ and ‘exploitation’.

A further limitation of the marxist approach is that they mainly apply to one type of migration: circulatory labour migration. Yet much migration in contemporary Africa does not serve the immediate purpose of gaining work in the capitalist labour market: migration of women, children and elderly people to join relatives who elsewhere are involved in capitalist production; and migration of young people in the pursuit of education. No doubt it is possible to interpret also those forms of migration as aspects of the penetration of capitalism. Thus education might be seen in an anticipatory concession to the demands of the capitalist labour market. Also education through part of the costs of the reproduction of skilled or semi-skilled labour for the capitalist sector is once again borne by the domestic sector, which moreover has to do without such productive labour as the youngsters would have been engaged in, had they not gone to school. But a satisfactory macro analysis of non-labour migration has not yet been made.

This takes us to a further point. Marxist analyses tend to stress the extent to which domestic communities are exploited by capitalism, through migration. In non-labour migration this aspect is less self-evident. Thus the structural-functionalist Christopoulou (1976, cf. 1977) sees a connection between discontent with employment in the rural sector and the desire to share in the benefits of town life, particularly urban schooling. Does not sometimes the abstract, formal marxist argument (which considers the expropriation of surplus-value and interest on labour as exploitation) take on moral overtones, without proper assessment of the realities of the situation in terms of actual, concrete gains and losses? Abstract marxist analysis would deem all industrial employees in North-Atlantic society to be exploited, though not over-exploited. No doubt they are, in a formal sense; yet most African peasants and migrants would not hesitate to exchange places with them; even though these workers should be recognized as being alienated and manipulated. If we can account for these differences between African and North-Atlantic workers’ conditions, both on the level of theory, and on the level of political practice, class struggle, trade-unionism etc., marxist analyses of the penetration of capitalism may not remain so utterly negative and fatalistic. Beyond the formal context of expropriation and exploitation, are there no possible benefits from the participation in capitalist production, - benefits which under certain conditions and perhaps only for certain individuals, may yet partly outweigh the detrimental effects of migration? Van der Klau (1977) even goes to the extent of reversing the marxist argument and interpreting seasonal migration in the Lower Casamance (Senegal) as exploitation of the capitalist sector by the peasants. Similarly, Gugi (1976:1950) calls the move to town a ‘gold rush’, where migrants join the ‘urban economy game’. These alternatives to the marxist approach do not sound particularly convincing. But also in view of Rey’s emphasis on the contradictions within pre-capitalist modes of production (contradictions which the penetration of capitalism may reinforce, but which it might also dissolve - to the possible benefit of the underlying groups of women, youth and slaves), we should not be too sure that under all conditions modern migrations constitute a negative phenomenon.

IV. CONCLUSION

If we agree that the perceptions and motivations of individual migrants are many and surface phenomena, which far from exploiting migration are themselves to be explained by reference to more fundamental conditions, it is a disappointing conclusion that none of the marxist and non-marxist structural approaches to migration which we have surveyed here, offer as yet a fully satisfactory explanation. The muddled, eclectic theorizing in recent non-marxist approaches, suggests that future real advances in African migration studies are not likely to come from that direction. One wonders whether structural-functionalism in African Studies will ever recover from the blow it received, sometime in the 1956-60’s, when the truth was brought home that the horizon of African society is not confined to the micro social process of the village. Evidently capable, as this approach has been, of tackling research problems in a local setting, it has
yet failed to produce the comprehensive macro view which is presently required, if we are to come to terms with the migratory phenomenon against the background of the overall transformation of African society. Recent Marxist approaches seem to be much more promising, despite considerable theoretical and empirical shortcomings — some of which we have pointed out.

At present, Marxist and non-Marxist structural analysis approaches to migration are still far apart. Both Marxist and structural-functionalist reject the classic push-pull model, but for different reasons: the former because they consider the penetration of capitalism as the fundamental factor underlying the specific push and pull factors, the latter because push-pull models stress the economic dimension at the expense of social, cultural, political and ideological factors. Moreover, Marxists reject the urban-rural dichotomy as superficial: for capitalism, as the crucial explaining variable, can also take rural forms. For structural-functional approaches to migration, on the other hand, the urban-rural dichotomy has always been an important analytical tool.

The two variants of structural analysis are still separated by a different conceptual language, by differences in respectability in academic life, and (although to a lesser extent) in commonly taken for granted by different political views concerning the predicament of African peasants and the urban poor. However, as Marxists may be expected to turn to concrete empirical research in order to substantiate and enrich their theories, and as structural-functionals will discover the riches of Marxist theory in terms of synchronic scope and particularly historical depth, it can be hoped that these two approaches, whose fundamental similarities we have stressed above, will grow towards one another, producing, among other possible achievements, a viable social theory of African migration.

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