

A SYSTEMS ANALYTICAL FRAMEWORK FOR RURAL TO RURAL MIGRATION STUDIES IN DEVELOPING COUNTRIES

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ABSTRACT: In recent times migration has emerged as an important demographic, planning and development issue in developing countries of the world. However, it is viewed more frequently as synonymous with rural-urban migration, possibly because of its negative effects on food production, and the overwhelming atmosphere of urban crises.

This study is an attempt to examine a substantial and important migration type in developing countries, in this case, rural-rural migration. Its focus is the development of an explanatory model to account for the determining factors for, and impact of, rural migration. Recognising the diversity of causal factors in rural migration in traditional societies of the world, the model proposes that the rural-rural migration phenomenon is better understood within the systems analytical framework.

INTRODUCTION

In developing countries, migration as a research topic has, in recent years, been receiving considerable attention. This is so presumably because of the negative effect which, in the view of many people, migration has on the urban centres as well as on the rural areas, and the general level of economic development in various countries. Thus, in government and other circles of many developing countries, the mere mention of the word migration evokes disgust, revulsion or frustration. This reaction results from the association of migration with rapid urbanization, unemployment and the negatively overwhelming atmosphere of urban crisis as a result of the failure of the

neo-classical model of migration adopted in most developing countries since the 1960s. The neoclassical model contends that rural-urban migration is a desirable and positive phenomenon that permits the transfer of the surplus agricultural labour force to the growing modern industrial sector of the urban centres (Lewis, 1954).

Besides, the inability of most developing countries to feed themselves due to declining agricultural production, and the consequent increasing reliance on food importation¹ to meet local demand has been associated with migration. In Nigeria for examples, a former Head of State, General Olusegun Obasanjo, while launching the Operation Feed the Nation

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1. The proportion of food import in Nigeria stood at about N 1.5 billion (\$5.25 billion) in 1981 according to O. Owoyemi, Federal Director of Agriculture. Published in Bullion Vol. 6, No. 4 (a central bank Publication).
 2. The length of time when impulses or stimuli from the system's environment and elements are transmitted to a potential migrant before he makes the desired move.

(O.F.N.) campaign in 1976 commented on the dwindling agricultural production and migration as follows:

"Government has had to import increasing quantities of a variety of food items from abroad. Prices of food-stuffs have galloped. To make matters worse young men and women have been drifting from rural areas in unprecedented number, leaving behind them old men and women who cannot be expected to meet the growing need of the country for food..."

(Obasanjo, 1976:1).

It is therefore, not surprising that migration has become an important social issue, and thus, a favourite research topic in developing countries. In the light of the above, rural-urban migration seems to have been emphasised at the expense of other forms of migration especially rural-rural migration. This trend, as noted by Makinwa is not justified in a situation where other forms of migration especially rural-rural are very substantial (Makinwa, 1978:67). The situation is all the more unfortunate considering that the economies of the developing countries are basically rural in character with rural migrants playing important roles in food and cash crop production.

Various models have been formulated to explain the migration phenomenon; some of which were put forward to explain the migration situation in developing countries of the world. The review of these models shows that they could be classified into three, viz economic models, behavioural models and systems models. The central argument of this paper is that the rural-rural migration phenomenon as found in developing countries is not haphazard but a systematic process which can be better under-

stood when viewed within the systems model. For example, the various interpretations of the migration phenomenon in purely economic terms has the tendency of overstating the role of individuals in migration decision. Ward (1981) using anthropological techniques, not only questions the validity of the assumption that the decision to migrate is individually made but observed that empirical findings from Papua New Guinea show that the patterns and volume of migration are determined by the systems and institutions involved in the migration. Lattes (1984) in his comments on the findings of Ward states that the work clearly suggests that "the motives and choices of individuals are conditioned and compelled by a number of factors beyond their control, where individual decisions play only a minor role in the explanation of these phenomena" (Lattes, 1984:74). Zolberg (1978) in his own case, having made reference to authors such as Ravenstein, Zipf, Stouffer, Lee and others whose interpretations of migration decision were based on the individuals as rational economic beings argues that the contributions made by this line of thinking "are only little more than formal models of individual voluntary movements in answer to an unequal distribution of opportunities" and as such they are not much useful in the analysis of migrations within the rural areas of developing countries.

On the other hand the behaviourist model of migration designed to relate aggregate behaviour in terms of migration differentials to measures of place utility relevant for individuals, with the objective of predicting the composition of in-and-out-migrants and their choice of destination (Wolpert, 1965) stresses the individualistic basis of the decision to choose destination. On this basis, white

and Woods (1980) argued that the behaviourist approach to migration decision has difficulties in providing any satisfactory set of predictive models because while prediction is only possible in the social sciences at the level of aggregates, the behaviourist ideas are only fully applicable at the level of the individual decision-maker.

The third set of migration models is based on the general systems theory and it sees migration from the holistic perspective. It rejects studies which tend to concentrate upon a particular aspect of the migration problem or those which view the migration decision as individual action emanating from rational economic decision or the result of perceived greater utility of a new place alone. Instead, the systems approach views migration decision as encompassing economic, social and environmental factors all of which act in concert to produce successful migration patterns. Thus, the importance of the systems approach lies in its consideration of migration no more as a simple "linear, unidirectional, push-and-pull, cause-effect movements, but as a circular, interdependent, progressively complex, and self-modifying system in which the effect of changes in one part can be traced through the whole of the system" (Mabogunje, 1970). Mabogunje also adds that the conceptualization of the migration problem in this way tends to emphasize "the structural congruencies or isomorphism with other problems". The systems approach is a more rigorous and positive way of conceptualising reality. It is concerned with diachronic analysis and also with the study of dynamism. That is, it provides the most powerful means of pursuing the causal analysis of change which have yet been devised. This is because the systems analytical frame-

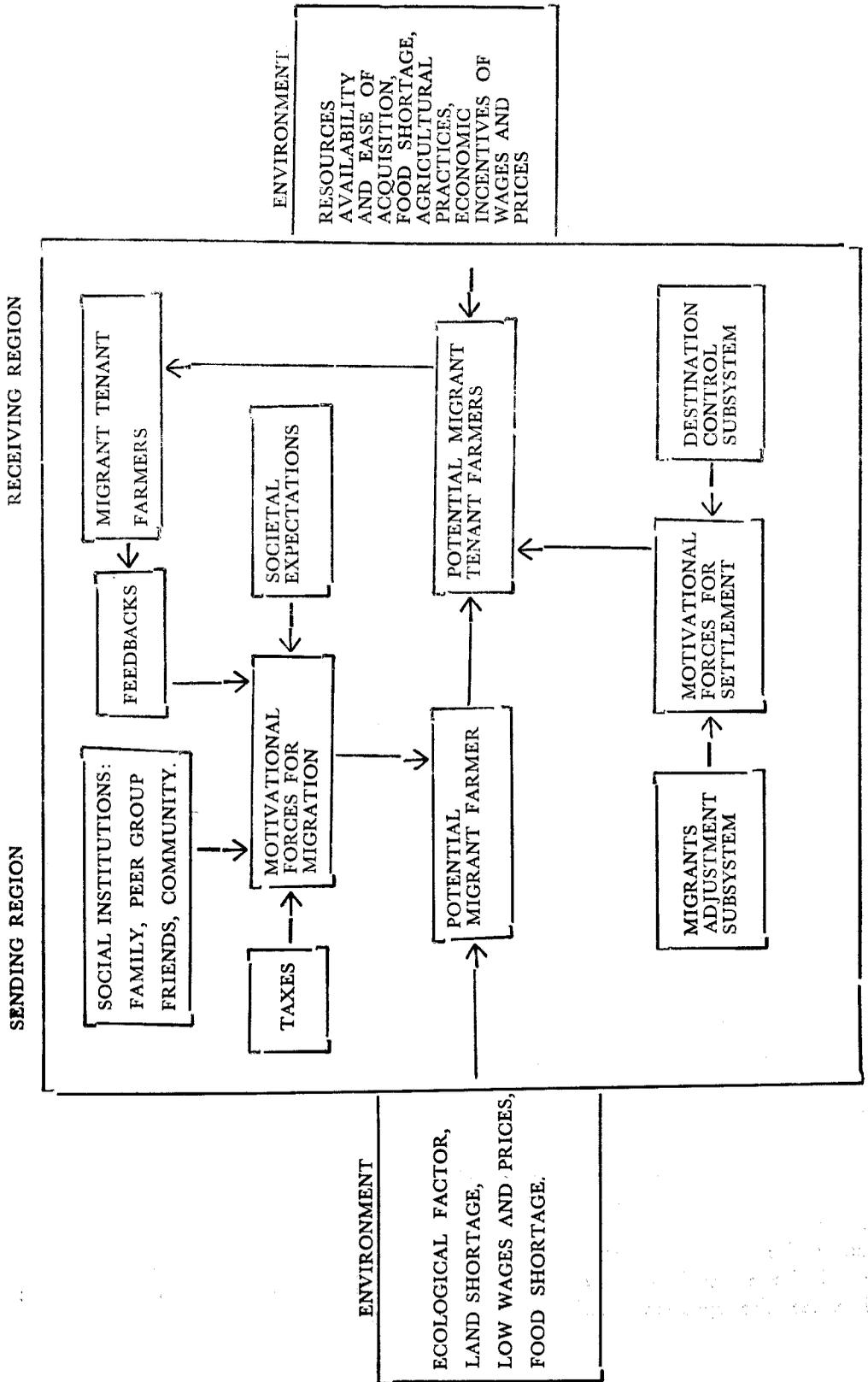
work is unique in providing an integrated framework for the analysis of change which can give form to process studies and, at the same time direct questioning towards a search for causal explanation (Langton, 1972). In fact, the systems approach to migration emphasises the dynamic nature of migration and sees it as a continuous process which changes through adjustment depending on the rate of economic development and the susceptibility of the people involved, to change.

The importance of the systems approach application in migration studies was further stressed by White and Woods in their consideration of migration impact. They are of the opinion that while all migration takes place within some structural framework they also act in some way either to alter or to reinforce that structure (White and Woods, 1980:48). In a rural-rural migration context, the structural framework is the environment, and the study of migration impact on it and on the migrants themselves is not simply descriptive but highly analytical in all its ramifications, even when it is considered in simple cause-and-effect terms. As this cause-and-effect relationship has feedback links, complete analysis of rural-rural migration phenomenon should ideally be undertaken within a systems analytical framework. Attempt is hereby made to present one such framework for rural-rural migration studies.

THE MODEL

The systems model for the analysis of rural-rural migration, presented below, conceives of rural-rural migration process and impact as resulting from the interaction of various factors as shown by the diagram labelled fig. 1. The assumption implicit in the model is that rural-rural migrations are basically for farming purposes.

FIG. 1 : A SYSTEM SCHEMA FOR ANALYSIS OF RURAL-RURAL MIGRATION



The framework has two main parts, namely, the sending and receiving regions, each with its own elements and environment. The major elements or components of the sending region of migrants are social institutions such as the family, age group, friends, community, taxes and rates, feedback and societal expectations. All these elements of the migrants' area of origin are grouped together as the motivational forces for migration. The major elements of the receiving region or the migrants' area of destination are the migrants' adjustment subsystem and the destination control subsystem. These two main elements of the destination area of migrants have been grouped together as the motivational forces for settlement of migrants. The migrants' adjustment subsystem is made up of other migrant farmers whose earlier settlement places them in a vantage position to be of immense help in settling other newly arrived migrant farmers, especially in relation to the acquisition of land for farming purposes. On the other hand, the destination control subsystem is made up of the natives comprising of chiefs and landlords who control land and which appears to be an important factor in the migration process as they constitute the land owning authorities from whom potential migrant farmers could obtain land for agriculture and other purposes.

The operation of the systems elements in general is that of motivating potential migrants to make the move or not, and if it does, to ensure the success (or otherwise) of the move. As motivator within the system, these elements are inputs and as such they produce outputs. The migration system receives input from its elements and makes output of matter in the form of migrants' volume (or number), and of energy in the form of econo-

mic social activities of the migrants. The volume of migration as expressed by the volume of migrants is the measure of the output of the migration. Steady increases in the number of migrants at the destination area suggest the reinforcing nature of a rural to rural migration. This input-output relationship is very important to the understanding of the factors affecting the volume of any rural migration as it can be viewed as a production function system in which there is a relationship between inputs and outputs (through process). An important input into the system is the feedback messages that goes to the place of origin from the destination area. These feedback messages could either be positive or negative, depending on the situation at the destination areas especially as they relate to the achievement by migrants of the purpose of their movement.

The elements of the system (or the elements of the source region and destination region subsystems) as shown in the model scheme (Fig. 1) are inter-related through the migrant farmers' movement to the destination region, and through the feedback messages sent by them from the place of destination to the source region.

Between inputs and outputs is a certain lag time which is referred to as the migration elasticity². To different migrants this lag time varies with the degree of dissatisfaction with the place of origin, Socio - economic characteristics, the strength of Socio-cultural impulses or stimuli, and the quality of feedback messages. Theoretically, therefore, migration takes place among the rural farmers when the resistant attributes of the potential migrant reaches the threshold level and the built-up pressure can no longer be resisted. This is the contention of Miller (1965) in his consideration of

process creation. He contends that processes occur in any system when a strain which has been created by a stress pushes a parameter beyond its range of stability.

As in any other systems, rural to rural migration system has its own environment which is here sub-divided into the environment of the sending and receiving regions. The environment of the sending region is made up of ecological, land shortages, low wages and prices, agricultural practices, climatic and food shortages etc. factors. The environment of the receiving region is made up of farm lands availability and ease of acquisition, food shortages, agricultural practices, high wages and prices etc. factors. While the environment of the sending region encourages the migration of potential migrant farmers away from the sending region, the environment of the receiving region encourages potential migrant tenant farmers to settle down in the receiving region once they reach there.

In this framework, the contention is that while the environment of any rural-rural migration system comprising the physical environmental and economic factors might have provided the necessary impetus for the migration to take place, it does not provide a sufficient reason for the move. The sufficient reason for the move is provided by the elements of the migration system which comprises socio-cultural factors.

The importance of socio-cultural factors in the migration phenomenon is seen in the fact that in some situations even when the physical environmental and economic conditions of an area make

migration the reasonable alternative it still did not necessarily take place. For example, in East Africa, though the Massai are poor they do not migrate whereas the more prosperous peasant farmers of the rich region of Kilimanjaro do migrate in substantial numbers (Sabot, 1972). In the same vein, the Bassari of Eastern Senegal, who though are among the poorest people of the region, do not migrate while the Serere, whose income, both monetary and real is much higher, do migrate (Amin, 1974:91). This is because more often than not, the action of an individual is precipitated not just by the individual concerned but by the society in which he finds himself. Thus indicating that the analysis of migration behaviour with reference to only the economic motive is not only fraught with errors, especially when applied to traditional African societies, but tends to produce a partial explanation of rural migration in developing countries.

This model of rural migration system conceived here is an open one, since it is open to the transfer of matter in the form of migrant farmers and to the transfer of energy in the form of economic and social activities resulting from the migration. Also, this system can be said to be in dynamic disequilibrium with the environment if the migration process is reinforcing through the process of cumulative causation. This is the ultimate result if positive feedbacks which have the tendency of promotive disequilibrium in an open system operate. Within a rural migration system the feedbacks are in the form of economic well-being, remittances and messages emanating from successful migrants.

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