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**THE ROLE OF RURAL-URBAN MIGRATION IN REINFORCING  
INEQUALITY: A THEORETICAL MODEL AND A CASE STUDY OF  
NKOSINI, SOUTH AFRICA**

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I, Derik Gelderblom, student number 9509673, hereby declare that the dissertation entitled:

*The role of rural-urban migration in reinforcing inequality: a theoretical model and a case study of Nkosini, South Africa,*

is the result of my own investigation and research and that it has not been submitted in part or in full for any other degree or to any other university.

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## **NOTE ON REFERENCES**

In my case study I make use of interviews. These are indicated in the text, and in footnotes where appropriate, as 'Interview with X.X.', where X.X. indicate the initials of the person interviewed.

## CHAPTER ONE

### INTRODUCTION

#### 1.1 MIGRATION AND INEQUALITY

When interviewed in their urban destinations, most rural-urban migrants indicate that their standard of living has improved as a result of their move to town (Population Information Program 1983:M-257)<sup>1</sup>. It is, at the same time, well-known that some categories of rural residents are more likely to become involved in rural-urban migration than others (see for example Simmons et al. 1977:27). Migration is selective in terms of age, gender, and income, among other things, from their communities of origin. Migrants tend to be young, often male, adults. The poorest people in rural communities, furthermore, are often not represented in migrant streams. Taken separately, these two empirical generalisations are unremarkable, and have assumed the status of common sense in the migration literature. When read in combination, however, a proposition about the possible effects of migration on inequality emerges, which, to my knowledge, has not been considered in any detail in the migration literature before, and which I intend pursuing in this thesis. This proposition is as follows: If migration is selective, and if rural-urban migration is a means for improving the welfare of individuals, it means that some people are excluded from the immediate welfare-enhancing effects of rural-urban migration. Through a positive feedback process, the initial social inequality that is responsible for the inability of some to migrate will cause further inequality, this time between migrants and non-migrants.

It is not only rural-urban migration that has this potential. Other kinds of migration, such as urban-urban migration can have the same results. Consider for example a declining industrial area such as Newcastle in KwaZulu-Natal, where many people were retrenched over the last decade or so (Todes 1998). If, for one reason or another, some people find it impossible to move away to look for another job when they are retrenched, those people are at a disadvantage compared to others

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<sup>1</sup> I do not consider forced migrations in the form of refugee movements and slavery in this thesis. These are obviously cases where migrants are unlikely to benefit, at least over the short term, from their movement.

who can do so.

The recognition that migration can have these results does not rest easily with the basic neo-classical model of migration. This model sees migration as a means of removing imbalances in income and employment opportunities between regions, as well as migrants and non-migrants, and ultimately as a mechanism to restore equilibrium. For neo-classical economists, therefore, migration reduces income inequalities, rather than increasing them, as long as there is no undue interference by the state in the operation of the market economy. The assumption that migration (as part of the operation of the free market) will necessarily remove the inequalities between regions has been criticized a long time ago. One of the first, and up to now best-known, critics of this assumption has been the Swedish economist Gunnar Myrdal (1957:27). Not much attention has been given to the related criticism that migration can increase inequality between migrants and non-migrants, however (with the exception of the work of Michael Lipton [1980] and his co-workers [Connell et al. 1977], and Oded Stark 1986, 1988).

This thesis intends investigating the possibility that migration might do just that. It consequently examines the theoretical and empirical grounds for the assertion that migration can increase the inequalities between migrants and non-migrants. This is my main objective. In addition I shall study two secondary issues, all related to the critique of neo-classical theory. The first of these relates to how migration can reinforce inequality between different classes of migrants (instead of migrants and non-migrants). This can occur when the migration of some rural residents is better prepared, and occurs with the help of better-resourced networks than in the case of others. As a result the chances that the migration will lead to a successful outcome, and that the migrant will benefit, are higher than for the worse-off migrant. Examples of this are the different experiences of push and pull migrants, as well as male and female migrants. I also intend to show that selective immobility can contribute to inequality between rural and urban areas. If the poorest are under some circumstances likely to be immobilised in the rural areas, and the better-off succeed in moving out, as I contend, it follows that regional inequality between urban and rural areas will be worsened.

After declining from the end of World War II until the late 1970's, social inequality has been

increasing, both in the West and in less developed countries, as well as between rich and poor countries (Bhalla and Lapeyre 1999:18-20). Closer to home, South Africa has been, and still is, characterised by one of the highest rates of inequality in the world. According to Klasen (1997:60), only Brazil had a higher rate of inequality in 1993. A significant amount of this inequality can be attributed to inequality between rural and urban areas. It is safe to say that the high rate of social inequality produced by the developmental path currently pursued by most countries of the world is one of the most important issues that need to be addressed within the field of development theory. It is within this context that this thesis wants to make a contribution.

The increasing global inequality has been connected to an ensemble of factors, such as the rise of flexible production (Harrison 1994, see especially chapter 9) and globalization (see Hoogvelt 1997 and Sassen 1994 for two contrasting conceptions of globalization). My focus will not be on globalization or any other macro process, however, but on the role of migration in inequality. In this respect it is important to stress that migration can only, through a positive feedback mechanism, amplify already existing inequality, and cannot create it *de novo*. Migration is therefore not the initiator of inequality. The primary causes of inequality have to do with the growth path followed by a particular society, and macro-processes such as globalization. Studying the contribution of migration to inequality is nonetheless important, I believe, particularly because it has been neglected.

## **1.2 OUTLINE OF THE THESIS**

Most of this thesis (chapters 2 to 5) is concerned with an exploration and evaluation of the literature on migration in, particularly, poor countries. My emphasis will be on constructing a model of the inequality-producing effect of migration that 1) isolates the main factors that produce inequality and 2) specifies a further set of variables that will affect the intensity to which these factors manifest themselves and that will thus affect the extent of inequality that will be produced in a particular case. What I am trying to identify therefore are the main causal links as well as what one can call, for want of a better word, regulators, that affect the extent to which the main causal links manifest themselves.

The model is fleshed out in more detail in chapter 8. Here I will just give a few pointers so that the reader can get an idea of what the thesis is about. The main factor responsible for the selectivity of migration is its costs. Poor people cannot afford to invest in migration and are thus excluded from participation in it. This is an important causal link in the model. The costs of migration vary from place to place and over time, however, which will affect the intensity of the selectivity of migration, and thus the extent to which it can produce inequality. The variables influencing the costs of migration, such as unemployment and the distance of the migratory move are examples of regulators, as they affect the extent to which the causal link will be operative in a particular case.

The costs of migration can also be reduced by the subsidy provided by migrant networks. The impact of migrant networks on the costs of migration, which is in turn influenced by regulators such as network resources and network dynamics, is another important causal link behind the selectivity of migration. The benefits provided by migration to the migrant, which is the last causal link, are affected by regulators such as the type of migration, gender and the sequencing of migration.

My distinction between main causal links on the one hand and regulators affecting the intensity to which these appear on the other, was inspired partly by the realist conception of causality (Bhaskar 1979:110, 127-128, Outhwaite 1987:22). Arguing against a Humean conception of causality that identifies scientific laws in terms of the conjunction of observable phenomena, Bhaskar claims that causal mechanisms may not, in open systems, produce observable effects, even though they are real. This is because there are numerous other causal effects that may cancel out the effect of the first one. This is based on Bhaskar's distinction between the realms of the real (causal mechanisms reside here), the actual (events in the world), and the empirical (experience of the world), with no guarantee that what transpires on the higher level of the real will filter through to the lower levels. In terms of this conception I am trying to isolate a causal mechanism to explain social inequality, which may not produce observable effects under all circumstances because it is cancelled out by countervailing tendencies.

I discuss these issues in the following order. Chapter two is devoted to a review of theories of

migration. I specifically focus on the extent to which these theories illuminate, if at all, the question of the effects of migration on the inequalities between migrants and non-migrants. I come to the conclusion that the phenomenon of the selectivity of migration is an important determinant of the amount of inequality to be expected. This issue, as well as how it develops over time, is the focus of the third chapter. In that chapter I discuss, *inter alia*, the different kinds of selectivity, such as income and gender selectivity. I give special attention to the theory of Douglas Massey and his co-workers with regard to the development of selectivity. Two factors are particularly important in conditioning the unfolding of selectivity over time, *viz.* the costs of migration and the role of networks in subsidising these costs. This is why chapter four is devoted to a discussion of the role of networks in migration. I look at, among other things, the structure and functioning of networks, as well as network dynamics. One of the conclusions that I arrive at is that, *contra* Massey et al., networks can only reduce the selectivity of migration to a limited extent. The participation of the poorest in migration, in particular, will continue to be limited because of the tendency of networks to exclude them.

My model of the inequality-inducing effect of migration has two dimensions. The one revolves around the issue of the selectivity of migration and how it develops over time. This aspect is discussed in chapters three and four. In chapter five I examine the second dimension of this theory, which relates to the assumption that participation in migration is advantageous for the migrant. This is a generalization that emerges from the literature on Third World migration, but as such, it hides a tremendous amount of empirical variation. In that chapter I try to isolate a number of factors that may make migration more or less advantageous for the migrant, and in this way make the theory more attentive to regional and cultural variation.

Chapters six and seven are devoted to a case study of migration from a rural South African community, called Nkosini. The case study is largely employed for the purposes of illustration of the model, and is not the main focus of my thesis. The people who live in that community were labour tenants on farms in the Southeastern Transvaal before they moved there, and became involved in circular migration to distant urban destinations before the move to Nkosini. In order to simplify my analysis of their migration, I distinguish between their residential moves from farm to farm during the labour tenancy period, as well as their move to Nkosini, on the one hand, and

the development of migrant labour to distant destinations on the other. The first part is discussed in chapter six, in the context of a review of their settlement history over the last few centuries. Chapter seven is devoted to an examination of the rise of migrant labour to urban destinations. My focus in that chapter is largely on changes in the selectivity of migration and in this respect it is an attempt to establish what lessons can be learned for that model from a confrontation with empirical reality.

I also use the ideas developed in the thesis to interpret the course of migration, and its implications, within that community. In the process, I try to show that concepts such as the costs of migration and network dynamics can enrich our understanding of the onset of migration as well as its implications for the people concerned, and that it should receive much more prominence in our conceptualisation of migration. Overall, my intention is to improve our understanding of both the model and the case study in the context of a confrontation between the two.

The last chapter, chapter eight, concludes the discussion by situating it within the broader context of social development. In particular I try to point out why a discussion of migration and its inequality enhancing effect matters in the present context.

## **CHAPTER TWO**

### **DOES MIGRATION EQUILIBRATE LABOUR MARKETS OR NOT?: A SURVEY OF THE LITERATURE ON MIGRATION**

#### **2.1 INTRODUCTION**

One of the aims of this thesis is to criticise the assumption of the neo-classical model of migration that migration acts as an equilibrating force in labour markets. My contention is that migration often tends to worsen, rather than improve, inequalities between regions, classes of migrants, and migrants and non-migrants. In this chapter I provide a survey of theories of migration, starting with the basic neo-classical theory of migration and then continuing with a discussion of further developments within this tradition. In addition I discuss some of the criticisms that have been levelled at this tradition from a Marxist and dependency framework. I consider, finally, the debate around the impact of remittances on inequality in the sending region, which serves as a point of departure for the model that I am trying to develop.

#### **2.2 MIGRATION AS AN EQUALITY ENHANCING PROCESS**

##### **2.2.1 THE BASIC NEO-CLASSICAL MODEL OF MIGRATION**

In its simplest form, the model of migration that can be derived from neo-classical economic theory sees migration as flowing from the wage differences between two areas (see for example Becker et al. 1994:89). These two areas are typically (but not necessarily) an urban and a rural area. In terms of this model, wages are determined by the demand for and the supply of labour in both the rural and urban areas. Initially there is an oversupply of labour in the rural, agricultural sector and an undersupply of labour in the urban, industrial sector. This is because the agricultural sector is stagnant, due to a shortage of capital and the use of traditional production techniques. The urban industrial sector, by contrast, is supposed to be the most dynamic part of the economy with a high demand for labour. As a result of this imbalance between the two sectors the average

wages paid will be lower in the rural sector than in the urban sector. The difference in average wages provides, however, an incentive for labourers to migrate from the rural to the urban sectors.

Due to this movement the imbalance between the rural and urban areas will be corrected. When people migrate, the supply of labour in the former decreases and the supply of labour in the latter increases. This continues until the under- and oversupply of labour between the two sectors have been corrected. Because the imbalance in the labour supply between the regions has been corrected, the wages being offered in each sector also equalise: rural wages increase and urban wages decrease until the difference in the average wage level has been smoothed out (Becker et al. 1994:114). This is in turn the signal for the process of rural-urban migration to stop. Migration is therefore vital to removing income inequalities between urban and rural areas according to this model (Lipton 1980:1; Becker et al. 1994:89).

It is clear that in this model migration fulfils an important equilibrating function. If there is an imbalance between the rural and urban sectors, with more unemployment and lower wages in the rural areas than in the urban areas, migration will solve the problem. The same is supposed to happen where imbalances exist between urban areas as a result of industrial restructuring (Gabriel et al. 1993). In South Africa, as in the rest of the world, the forces of globalization have forced many industries to restructure in order to lower costs and remain competitive. This has often led to large scale retrenchments in these industries. An example of this is the South African steel industry where production in the older plants of the major steel producer (ISCOR) was scaled down after a new plant with an export focus was opened in Saldanha. This had a considerable impact on the economies of places such as Vereeniging and Newcastle. According to neo-classical theory, the unemployment created in the declining regions can be absorbed elsewhere if there are also expanding regions.

Migration plays the role in neo-classical theory of removing the surplus workers in the former regions and relocating them to the latter (Gabriel et al. 1993). Eventually migration is also supposed to equalise wage rates between the two regions due to its effect of removing surplus workers and rebalancing the demand for and supply of labour between regions. The neo-classical

model assumes that labour, like the other factors of production such as capital, is completely mobile. The only reasons why labour may not be mobile, according to neo-classical theorists, is state intervention in the operation of the free market, or reluctance on the part of rural dwellers to leave their areas of origin, due to their emotional attachment to the place and its people. Neo-classical theorists do not have any conception that the mobility of labour may be restricted as a result of factors that are inherent to the migration process, and that the equilibrating function of migration may therefore be very limited.

What we have presented above is the simplest form of the neo-classical model of migration. It is possible to design more complex models using a neo-classical framework. Becker et al. (1994:182-186), for example, have formulated a neo-classical model with three sectors (an urban modern/formal, urban traditional/informal and a rural sector) rather than just the two mentioned above. Since their model is in many respects similar to that of the Harris-Todaro model that we are going to discuss presently, we shall not give it any further attention here.

### 2.2.2 THE LEWIS-FEI-RANIS MODEL OF THE DUAL ECONOMY

In the neo-classical model outlined above, there is, initially, an oversupply of labour in the rural sector. This oversupply is not unlimited, however, with the result that migration can soon dispose of it. Consequently, if labourers migrate from the rural sector, wages will rise there as labour becomes increasingly scarce. According to Arthur Lewis (1958:400-401), the founder of the famous dual economy model of economic development, this is not a realistic assumption in the case of many of the underdeveloped countries of the world. In these countries, labour supplies are in fact unlimited, and labourers can be extracted for a long time from the rural sector before labour becomes scarce. He furthermore says that because neo-classical economic theory does not deal with this scenario, he prefers to place his own writings in the classical economics tradition of Ricardo, Malthus and Marx.

His theory was later extended by John Fei and Gustav Ranis (1964), with the result that dual economy theory became known as the Lewis-Fei-Ranis model. In terms of this model, labour supply is unlimited if an underdeveloped country has a large population relative to the amounts

of capital and natural resources available (Lewis 1958:402). The most probable outcome of these circumstances is a dual economy where the urban and rural sectors each function according to a different set of rules. Most of the population live in the rural areas where there is a large amount of disguised unemployment. The existence of so much disguised unemployment has the effect that labourers can easily be extracted from the agricultural sector without any loss of production. Another element of Lewis's diagnosis of this economy relates to the fact that, because almost everybody in this country lives from hand to mouth, the savings rate is low. As a result, capital is very scarce. The bit of capital that there is, is concentrated in the urban areas and invested in modern industries. As a result, there are two sectors in the economies of most underdeveloped countries: a large and stagnant subsistence rural sector and a small modern, urban industrial sector (Fei and Ranis 1964:3).

In this situation wage rates are not determined by demand and supply. In the agricultural sector it is rather determined by customary arrangements and is set at subsistence level. In the modern sector wages are just slightly higher - according to Lewis (1958:410) there is typically a difference of about 30% in the wage rates of the two sectors. This premium is what is necessary to entice rural workers to leave their homes and relocate to the city. The reluctance of workers to leave the rural areas is due to "strong traditional attachments to soil and family" (Fei and Ranis 1964:40).

Because the wage in the modern sector depends on the wage in the agricultural sector, Lewis (1958:410) says that capitalists have an interest in making sure that the agricultural sector does not develop. This is because such development will cause the wages in the agricultural sector and thus ultimately the modern sector to rise. In a remarkable section, Lewis (1958:409-410) anticipates much of underdevelopment theory by remarking that this can be of great political importance in a poor country. Capitalists often use their political influence to make sure that the subsistence sector does not receive any development aid from the government, or they support policies to actively underdevelop the subsistence sector. As a result "the record of every imperial power in Africa in modern times is one of impoverishing the subsistence economy, either by taking away the people's land, or by demanding forced labour in the capitalist sector, or by imposing taxes to drive people to work for capitalist employers." Given this dimension to Lewis's work, it is indeed ironic that dualist analyses have later been subjected to so much criticism from a radical

perspective (eg. Arrighi 1970) for failing to see the exploitative relationship between the capitalist and the subsistence sectors.

Having said this, let us return to the main thrust of the Lewis-Fei-Ranis model. I have said above that it is possible to attract labour to the capitalist sector from the subsistence sector by paying wages just a bit higher than subsistence levels. (According to this model, labourers in the capitalist sector will not be paid at the level of the marginal productivity of labour, which is the wage level that neo-classical theory predicts, but at a lower level.) The very low wages that are consequently paid in the capitalist sector makes it possible for the capitalists to generate very high levels of profits. If these profits are reinvested, the capitalist sector will grow. As more capital is accumulated in this way, more labourers can be reallocated from the subsistence sector, leading to higher profits, even more capital accumulation, and so on.

In this way a virtuous circle of economic growth is created. Because the labourers who migrate from the subsistence agricultural sector are superfluous anyway, their loss to this sector does not lead to a reduction in agricultural production. At the same time, their reallocation leads to an increase in industrial production. It therefore seems that rural-urban migration in the dual economy model produces the ultimate free lunch! This virtuous circle will operate until all the redundant labourers have been reallocated out of the subsistence sector. In that case the neo-classical model will start to apply. With a reduction in the supply of labour to the subsistence sector, wages in that sector will rise, and with it, wages in the urban industrial sector.

In terms of this model, rural-urban migration does not have any significant impact on the levels of inequality between migrants and non-migrants. As we have seen, migrants have to be paid slightly more to induce them to leave, but it is not clear that this increase in income is not cancelled by higher consumption costs in town, among other things. Migration does have an impact on the distribution of income between capitalists and workers, however, in the sense that capitalists will be enriched (because of the low wage levels) relative to workers. Since capitalists have a higher propensity to save than workers, and since this income distribution will lead to increased economic growth, there is a positive side to this growing inequality as well, according to Lewis (1958:417-419).

The Lewis-Fei-Ranis model was extremely influential, and much of the later work on migration and development has been written either by way of extension or critique of this model. One of the problems in the reception of this model is that, although it was specifically stated by the authors only to be applicable to certain countries, such as India, Egypt and Jamaica, and its relevance to parts of Africa and Latin America questioned from the outset (Lewis 1958:401; Fei and Ranis 1964:2-3), it was in fact treated as a generally applicable model of development for the Third World.

### 2.2.3 THE TODARO MODEL OF SURPLUS URBAN LABOUR

The Todaro model departs from a criticism of the Lewis-Fei-Ranis approach to migration. Todaro (1976:23) argues firstly that Lewis-Fei-Ranis mistakenly assumes that there is a directly proportional relationship between the amount of extra capital accumulated as a result of previous labour transfers and the new job opportunities created in the modern industrial sector. What, he (1976:23) rhetorically asks, would happen “if surplus capitalist profits are reinvested in more sophisticated labour saving capital equipment rather than just duplicating the existing capital?” In such a case capital accumulation will not lead to increased employment opportunities in the urban industrial sector, and subsequent rural-urban migration will create surplus labour in this sector.

Another questionable assumption, according to Todaro (1976:25), is that wages in the urban industrial sector will remain constant until all surplus labour in the rural, subsistence sector have been absorbed. According to Todaro (1976:25), “(O)ne of the most striking features of urban labour markets and wage determination in almost all developing countries has been the tendency for these wages to rise substantially over time, both in absolute terms and relative to average rural incomes, even in the presence of rising levels of open unemployment.”

This criticism of the Lewis-Fei-Ranis model is also applicable to the neo-classical model outlined above (Todaro 1976:29). We recall that neo-classical economic theory predicts that if there is an oversupply of labour to the modern urban sector, wage levels will fall until the wage differential that has stimulated rural-urban migration disappears. According to Todaro, this is not a very

realistic assumption in the case of less developed countries. As a result of a number of labour market imperfections caused, inter alia, by the power of trade unions and the effect of minimum wage legislation, wages are very inelastic in a downward direction. Wages will consequently not move in the desired direction in response to an oversupply of labour. One cannot therefore rely on changing wage levels to equilibrate the imbalance in incomes and employment levels between urban and rural areas.

To formulate a more realistic model one has to take in to account that migration does not take place only in response to differences in wage levels between urban and rural areas (Todaro 1976:28). A rational migrant, trying to maximise economic welfare in a context of urban unemployment, does not only take wage levels into account, but also considers the probability of finding employment in town. In Todaro's model, the probability of securing employment is expressed in terms of the unemployment level in town. If the average wage in town is three times as high as in the rural area where a prospective migrant lives, but the unemployment level is 50% of the level in the rural area, the expected earnings of the migrant in town is  $300 \times 50 / 100 = 150\%$  of the present earnings in the rural area. In this case the migrant will decide to move. It is under circumstances like these that migration will continue even under conditions of large-scale urban unemployment. If, however, the wage level is only 40% higher in town, and the unemployment level 50% (compared to full employment in the sending area), the expected earnings in town is  $140 \times 50 / 100 = 70\%$  of present rural earnings. Under these circumstances it is irrational for the prospective migrant to relocate.

Todaro further assumes that migrants see migration as an investment that will only pay off over the long run. In this he follows the human capital approach to migration pioneered by Larry Sjaastad (1962). Prospective migrants consequently weigh up the long term returns to rural-urban migration on the one hand and the long term returns to remaining put in the present rural residence on the other. In order to effect a comparison between the two, the long run returns are furthermore discounted at a suitable rate by the prospective migrants to arrive at the present values of the two future income streams. The prospective migrant consequently considers the probability of finding employment over the whole time horizon that is relevant for that migrant (this will obviously depend on age, with the result that young people have longer time horizons

than old people). The probability of finding employment over this period is then balanced against the wage differences between urban and rural areas and this sum is then discounted to arrive at a present value.

According to Todaro (1976:31) rural-urban migration still fulfil the function of equilibrating imbalances in income between urban and rural areas, just like in the neo-classical model. In his model the process does not occur through the effect that migration has on lowering urban wages, however, but rather through the effect of migration in increasing the level of urban unemployment. Because differences in average wages between city and countryside persist after migration, unemployment levels in town increase. Under these circumstances rural-urban migration continues until the expected earnings in urban and rural areas are equal. They will be equal when the probability of securing employment in town has decreased enough, relative to the countryside, to balance out the wage differences between the two areas. If this state is reached, the labour market has returned to equilibrium and migration comes to an end in response to that.

### **2.3 MIGRATION AS A FACTOR IN THE CREATION OF SPATIAL INEQUALITIES**

All the theories we have discussed up to now shared the assumption that migration does, over the long run at least, play a role in enhancing both equilibrium and income equality in a society. In the neo-classical model migration does this immediately and in the dual economy model migration does this only after a delay, necessitated by the, at first, unlimited supplies of labour in the rural sector. In Todaro's model, by contrast, migration equilibrates labour markets through its effect on the levels of urban unemployment rather than income levels.

The belief that the free movement of factors of production, such as labour and capital, or of goods, as in international trade, eventually produces an equilibrium situation that is in some sense optimum, runs very deep in the conventional economics literature. It is this belief that I intend criticizing in my thesis by pointing to the constraints on labour mobility that prevents migration from fulfilling its equilibrating function. It is also this belief that the Swedish economist Gunnar Myrdal has set out to criticize in his work. In this section I give an overview of Myrdal's work

with regard to the role of migration in reinforcing inequality between regions. The belief in the inevitability of stable equilibrium in capitalist economies is also foreign to the Marxist tradition. I consequently provide a very brief and selective discussion of some of the Marxist views on the subject.

Most of the criticisms of the neo-classical model in terms of the failure of the free market to equilibrate regional disparities have been levelled in a Third World context and this is the focus I adopt in this thesis as well. In order to demonstrate that the same concerns can be raised in a First World context I shall now briefly refer to two studies done in the US and the UK respectively. Using data derived from the Internal Revenue Service on all interregional migration (between the nine census divisions of New England, mid-Atlantic states, etc.) in 1986-7 in the US, Gabriel et al. (1993) come to the conclusion that, although there is some evidence that migration lessened wage disparities between regions, this did not apply to unemployment rates. In other words, most interregional migration is by employed people looking for higher salaries (people who have quit their jobs or who were transferred). Few unemployed people moved away to search for work elsewhere. Migration therefore responded to wage differences, but not unemployment levels. Gabriel et al. (1993) did not attempt to find out why this is the case, except for noting that increasing house prices in expanding regions seems to be, for the unemployed, a constraint on interregional migration. The perspective adopted in this thesis, with its focus on the role of the costs of migration in discouraging the migration of the poorest, will offer an explanation for the trend observed by Gabriel et al.

Hughes and McCormick (1985) came to a similar conclusion with regard to the inability of migration to equilibrate labour markets for some categories of people. They based their study on information derived from the General Household Survey of 1973-4 in the UK and distinguished between a respondent's intention to migrate from his/her area of origin and the respondent's past migration behaviour (whether the respondent had migrated in the past or not). They noted that those with low educational qualifications and employment in manual occupations were particularly unsuccessful in carrying out their migration intentions. Because their research design made this impossible, they (Hughes and McCormick, 1985) did not study the effect of the past

unemployment of respondents on their actual migration behaviour in the present and recent past<sup>2</sup>, but they did find that unemployed manual workers were much less likely to **consider** migrating than unemployed non-manual workers. In combination these two findings suggest that, in the case of manual workers, the labour market was geographically segmented (Hughes and McCormick 1985). The conclusion that one can draw from the work of Hughes and McCormick (1985) and Gabriel et al. (1993), is that one cannot count on the mobility of labour to remove imbalances in the labour market, especially in the case of those at the bottom of the social hierarchy. The latter groups may be immobilised in their regions of origin, for one reason or another.

### 2.3.1 MYRDAL'S CRITIQUE OF THE EQUILIBRATING EFFECTS OF MIGRATION

As was previously mentioned, Myrdal is critical of the idea that there is an inherent tendency for an economy to return to a state of equilibrium if equilibrium has been disturbed. To accept this, one must accept the idea that any change will always elicit a reaction that goes in an opposing direction to the original change, thus cancelling out the first change and eventually returning the economy to its original state (Myrdal 1957:13). Although this type of reaction is possible, it is, according to Myrdal, in fact more likely that a change will lead to further changes that reinforce, rather than cancel out, the original change. This scenario later became known to systems theorists as a positive feedback cycle where a change leads to other changes that reinforce the original change. The concept of equilibrium in neo-classical theory depends on the opposite kind of scenario: a negative feedback cycle.

An example of positive feedback is the relationship between the residential segregation of African-Americans and crime in the United States<sup>3</sup>. It can be argued (see Massey 1990) that residential segregation in US cities worsens poverty in largely African-American neighbourhoods and that this leads to an increase in crime. Increased crime, however, worsens residential segregation as whites flee the neighbourhood. The interaction between these factors sets up a vicious circle whereby poverty, crime and segregation continually reinforce each other. If this vicious circle is

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<sup>2</sup> In other words they did not know whether the migrants were unemployed at the time of their migration or not.

<sup>3</sup> This is an updated version of Myrdal's (1957: 13-16) own example.

unchecked, the position of African-Americans will continue to worsen relative to that of others. If any of these factors start changing for the better, however, it will also have an ameliorative effect on the other factors, and in this way a virtuous circle may be started that will eventually alleviate the problem. Both the vicious and the virtuous circles are self-reinforcing, which means that it will drag the system ever further away from, rather than towards, equilibrium. Both of these circles furthermore demonstrates for him the principle of cumulative causation (see our discussion of Massey et al. 1994a in chapter 2 for an application of this principle). My own argument with regard to the role that migration can play in reinforcing existing inequality is another example of a vicious, self-reinforcing circle.

Myrdal (1957:27-31) then applies these two processes to the question of economic development. If development starts to occur somewhere in an otherwise undeveloped economy, virtuous and vicious circles of development and underdevelopment will start spreading into the area surrounding that growth point. Using the analogy of the effects of waves on a beach, he subsequently distinguishes between 'backwash' and 'spread' effects.

Due to the backwash effect, resources are extracted from the surrounding areas and concentrated in the growth point, thus enriching the latter further and impoverishing the surrounding areas. One of the resources that will be siphoned off from the poorer areas is labour. But because migration is a selective process, it is the younger, more productive members of the poorer regions that migrate to the growth points. This deprives the poorer areas of labour, and leads to a less favourable balance of income earners relative to dependants. In the growth points this movement will however have the opposite effect. The same argument applies to the savings of the poorer areas, which are siphoned off to be invested in the growth points, thus producing a new cycle of growth there and starving the periphery of capital for growth.

Whereas the backwash creates underdevelopment in the periphery, spread effects have the opposite impact. As a result of the increased demand for agricultural products in the growth point, the surrounding countryside may be stimulated to produce more agricultural products, for example. The same applies to other raw materials for industrial production, such as iron ore. In this way development in the core can stimulate development in the periphery.

Whether a particular peripheral region will develop or stagnate depends according to Myrdal on the relative strengths of the spread and backwash effects in that region. He (1957:33) then makes the point that in rich countries spread effects tend to outweigh backwash effects, while in the poor countries of the world, the backwash predominates.

Since the growth points are in the majority of cases urban areas, and the periphery rural, we therefore see that rural-urban migration may, according to Myrdal, have the effect of increasing income inequalities between rural and urban areas.

### 2.3.2 MIGRANT LABOUR AS A PROCESS OF EXPLOITATION

In my discussion of the dual economy model I said that Lewis, Fei and Ranis doubted the applicability of the model to large parts of Africa. This is because they were unsure at the time (early 1960's) that the assumption of surplus labour could be applied to sub-Saharan Africa. Despite these reservations, the model was indeed applied in the Southern African context, which led to criticisms of the dualist model by Arrighi (1970) and Bundy (1979).

Arrighi (1970) reconstructed the history of the development of the colonial Rhodesian labour market and came to the conclusion that initially, Rhodesia was actually characterised by a labour shortage rather than a labour surplus. Around the turn of the century, the first capitalist enterprises in Rhodesia paid such low wages that very few African labourers were prepared to work for those wages. Even the introduction of taxes by the colonial government, which were intended to force blacks into the cash economy, did not have the effect of increasing the labour supply. Black peasants preferred to produce food for the expanding urban markets rather than become wage labourers, and as a result the peasant economy flourished. It was only after the colonial state had taken a number of steps to underdevelop the peasant economy relative to white settler agriculture that more black labourers were forthcoming. As a result of measures such as land confiscations, denial of access to markets, rural blacks were increasingly forced to participate in migrant labour in order to survive. Arrighi (1970) then comes to the conclusion that Rhodesia started with a labour shortage, but that due to the extra-economic state actions, a labour surplus situation eventually developed.

A similar argument was advanced to account for the development of the labour market in South Africa, this time by the historian Colin Bundy (1979). Like Arrighi, he focussed on the role of government intervention in forcing peasants on the labour market, thus helping to end an initial labour shortage. We shall not go into the debate which ensued as a result of his work in any detail. Suffice it to say that the Bundy-thesis was criticized in the course of later historical research by Delius (1983) and Harries (1983), among others, for overemphasising the role played by coercion in starting the labour flows into the capitalist sector of the economy (also see the criticisms of the Bundy-thesis by Jack Lewis [1984]). It also seems to me that Arrighi's and Bundy's contributions should be seen more as extensions than criticisms of Arthur Lewis's work. I base this on the awareness of Lewis that, due to the reliance of the capitalist sector on a cheap subsistence sector labour force, political pressures may be used to underdevelop the subsistence sector.

The kind of economy described by Arrighi and Bundy is one in which there are three sectors, and not the two posited by Lewis. Besides the industrial capitalist and subsistence sectors, there is a third sector, which is the one based on capitalist agriculture. The existence of the third sector solves a problem that Lewis (1958:432-434) alludes to in his article. If the population of the country starts to grow, more food is needed. Unless capital is invested in the subsistence sector to make it more productive, shortages will develop which make food more expensive. This presents the economy with a dilemma: either it invests money in subsistence agriculture, in which case wages in the subsistence sector and therefore in the capitalist economy start to increase, or it does nothing, in which case food becomes more expensive. This also puts upward pressure on wages in the capitalist sector. This problem can however be solved if the agricultural sector is split into two: a commercial agricultural sector responsible for food production and a subsistence agricultural sector providing cheap labour. Lewis (1958:432) puts it like this:

If the capitalists are investing in plantation agriculture side by side with their investment in industry, we can think of the capitalist sector as self-contained. The expansion of this sector does not then generate any demand for anything produced in the subsistence sector, and there are therefore no terms of trade to upset the picture we have drawn.

In this quote, Lewis draws the classical picture of the labour reserve economy, which is precisely the one sketched by Arrighi and Bundy. South Africa, like colonial Rhodesia, proclaimed a number of African reserves (later called homelands) which were characterised by subsistence (and sub-subsistence) agriculture. Their main function was to export cheap labour to the capitalist

sector. At the same time a system of commercial agriculture was developed which specialised in food production. This sector could produce enough food to feed an expanding industrial capitalist sector without disrupting the supply of cheap African labour.

What remains to be discussed is why the labour supply to the capitalist industrial sector was so cheap. An explanation was suggested by Harold Wolpe (1976), among others. He took his cue from the importance of migrant labour in the earlier South African economy. According to him, migrant labour was very cheap because, at least in the Segregation period (before 1948), the reserves provided part of the subsistence costs of workers and their families. Migrant workers could consequently be paid less than fully proletarianized workers, who needed to be paid enough to support both themselves and their families. Due to the subsidy that the subsistence sector provided towards the wages of the migrant workers in the capitalist sector, the latter can be said to have exploited the former. Because of the advantages that this setup had for capitalists, the state took numerous steps to conserve the agricultural economy of the reserves.

In terms of Wolpe's model, migrant labour was the vehicle through which the capitalist economy could exploit the reserves. Rural-urban migration, in the form of migrant labour, therefore played a role in increasing inequality between rural and urban sectors.

Wolpe's writings stimulated a large amount of debate. He was criticised for, amongst other things, his conception of the cheapness of migrant labour (Burawoy 1976). It was *inter alia* pointed out that his theorisation of the cheapness of migrant labour (he argued that workers were paid below the value of their labour power) was not consistent with a strict Marxist understanding of the value of labour power (Morris 1977). Given that our main interest is in understanding the role that migration can play **at present** in reinforcing social inequality, it will not be profitable to investigate this debate further. Since Wolpe wrote his article, the subsistence basis of migrant labour has to a large extent disappeared. At the same time the price of labour in South Africa has increased to such an extent that it cannot be regarded as 'cheap' at all, irrespective of the measurement of cheapness that is applied. The dismantling of influx control in 1986 also removed the legal sanctions underpinning the migrant labour system - an important part of Wolpe's argument. The same applies to the disappearance of the homeland system in 1994. Wolpe himself

had doubts as to whether the capitalist sector could count on a wage subsidy from the subsistence sector in the post-Segregation (after 1948) Apartheid period, so it is highly unlikely that he would regard his argument as having anything but historical interest at present.

It is for the same reasons that one can doubt the present-day applicability of the dual economy and labour reserve arguments. These arguments also rely to a large extent on the existence of a stream of cheap workers moving from the subsistence to the capitalist sector. From our viewpoint all the theories discussed up to now have another drawback, however: all of them focus primarily on the impact of rural-urban migration on inequality between the urban and rural sectors as a whole. None of them give any particular attention to the impact that migration can have on inequalities between migrants and non-migrants.

## **2.4 MIGRATION AND THE PRODUCTION OF INEQUALITY BETWEEN MIGRANTS AND NON-MIGRANTS**

This issue of the impact of migration on inequality between migrants and non-migrants has received some attention in the economics literature, however. It has occurred largely in the context of a discussion on the impact that remittances have on income distribution in the sending areas. This is a special case of the more general issue of inequality between migrants and non-migrants. Before I proceed to discuss this literature it is therefore important that I clarify the different kinds of inequality in which migration is implicated.

One possibility is that rural-urban migration may worsen intra-urban inequality (Mohtadi 1986). This can occur when the rural areas send a bifurcated migrant stream to the urban areas, consisting of a group of landless people who move to the urban informal sector on the one hand and a group of landed people who find work in the urban formal sector on the other. As a result the rural pattern of stratification is recreated in the urban areas, with the former group working in a low wage environment and the latter group in a sector with higher wages. Mohtadi (1986 and 1990) has found some evidence that this is occurring in the case of rural-urban migration in Iran. It is evident that this pattern can only occur under the following circumstances: a) permanent

migration is the norm for both groups (if there are many circular migrants who send remittances to their home villages it will detract from this trend); and b) levels of rural-urban migration are high enough (and the urban population small enough) so that migration can have a significant impact on the size of the urban population and thus on patterns of urban inequality.

Migration is implicated in another kind of inequality, and this is discussed in the next section. The authors discussed here are interested in the impact that migration has (through remittances) on income distribution in the migrant sending areas, rather than the receiving area. It is evident that this interest does not extend to the total income of migrants (only that part that is remitted is relevant here) or to the income of migrants who have left permanently and who do not remit any more. Neither does it capture the effect that the differentiation of the migrant stream into different classes of migrants has on income distribution.

All of these effects will feature in my thesis, not as separate aspects, but in combination. I shall, like Mohtadi, give attention to how migration can contribute to inequality between different classes of migrant (as well as migrants and non-migrants), but I shall, unlike him, not discuss this in terms of migration leading to urban inequality. This is because the set of circumstances (outlined above) which are necessary for his kind of inequality to occur are becoming increasingly rare as the level of urbanization in the Third World increases. My focus in terms of inequality is mostly on the contribution of migration to inequality in the community of origin between households with and households without migrant members, in other words those receiving remittances from circular migrants and those who don't. The argument advanced here also applies in principle to differentiation as a result of permanent out-migration. In this case migration contributes to inequality between migrant and non-migrant in a less spatially explicit unit than the community of origin. It is perhaps best to see it as part of broader trends in inequality between rural and urban areas. The spatial entity within which inequality is created between different classes of migrant, on the other hand, is the country as a whole.

#### 2.4.1 LIPTON'S PESSIMISTIC VIEWS REGARDING THE EFFECTS OF MIGRATION ON THE DISTRIBUTION OF INCOME

In terms of the human capital approach (Sjaastad 1962), migration is an investment in future earnings. In an investment decision, both the costs and the returns have to be taken into account. In much of the literature on migration the focus is only on the returns, whether that be expected income or the reduction in risk. The other side of the equation, the costs of migration, are consequently often neglected as a factor in explaining migratory behaviour (Connel et al. 1976:29). In contrast, Lipton's (1980:9) argument departs from the costs of migration.

He regards the following costs as relevant to the decision to migrate: transport costs, the cost of lodging in town while looking for work, costs associated with acquiring information about work and housing opportunities ("likely to be higher for the illiterate, contactless or inexperienced" [Lipton, 1980:9]), and the psychic costs of adjusting to an unfamiliar cultural environment. Illegal cross border immigrants face the additional cost of paying the people smuggling them over the border and bribing officials to legalize their papers. The costs of migration help to explain why the poor are less likely to migrate - they are simply unable to afford it.

According to Lipton (1980:9) the costs involved in migration have to be paid upfront, while the benefits only flow later on. This is why migration can be seen as a capital investment: it entails initial expense in order to unlock later benefits. The initial balance of costs relative to benefits adds to the problems the poor have in undertaking migration, because to them the imperatives of basic survival over the short run looms much larger. To risk this in return for the uncertain benefits that may only be realised over the long term may not seem rational to them.

Even if the poor can migrate, they are disadvantaged by the fact that they are the last to do so. Lipton (1980:9) sees the increasing propensity to migrate over time as the diffusion of an innovation. The poor are the last to adopt this innovation since they are the most risk averse. By the time that they have done so, the best opportunities have already been taken up. This is especially the case since they also have the least access to information about new job opportunities and new migration destinations.

The costs of migration increase with distance. Because long distance migration is the most expensive, the poorest are least likely to be able to afford it. If they therefore do reach the metropole, where one would expect the best opportunities would be located, it will be through a series of steps (Lipton 1980:10).

Lipton's argument about the role of migration in reinforcing inequality can be summarised as follows: Due to the costs of migration, the poorest are least likely to migrate. If they do migrate, they are the last to do so (thus missing out on the best/early opportunities), or they only migrate over short distances (thus missing out on the best opportunities that may be the furthest away).

If the poorest are least likely to migrate, one cannot expect them to benefit much from remittances from a family member in town, according to Lipton (1980:11). According to Lipton (1980:12), remittances are used to pay off the debt incurred in financing migration, or for consumption, or for the education of family members of the migrant. They are consequently not likely to be used by the more fortunate households who do have migrants in town for investment in either agriculture or some other employment producing activity, from which the poorest can gain. The poorest are therefore unlikely to experience even an indirect benefit from migration.

#### 2.4.2 ECONOMETRIC STUDIES ON THE IMPACT OF REMITTANCES ON INCOME DISTRIBUTION: THE WORK OF ODED STARK AND HIS ASSOCIATES

Since the groundbreaking work of Oded Stark and his associates (1986, 1988), others have followed their lead to assess empirically the impact of remittances on the income distribution of the villages of origin of circular migrants. After surveying Stark et al's work on this issue, I refer briefly to some of the more recent studies done in this field.

Stark et al. (1986:723-724) argue that the impact of remittances on income inequality depends, *inter alia*<sup>4</sup>, on how migration has become diffused through the rural community. Like any new

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<sup>4</sup> According to Stark et al. (1986) the impact of remittances on inequality is also influenced, in the case of internal migration, by the distribution of educational opportunities within the village. Educational level does not have much of an impact on inequality deriving from Mexico-US remittances because, as we shall see in chapter 3, there are few returns to schooling

idea, rural-urban migration starts among a few innovators in the community and then spread through the community as more and more households adopt the innovation. At first, the impact of migration will of necessity be to create greater inequality, according to Stark et al. (1986:723), because only the early adopters of this innovation have access to its benefits and they come disproportionately from the better-off households. Later, however, if migration becomes generally diffused through the community, everybody is able to share in its fruits and it will in fact make a contribution towards equality in the community. Whether or not this happens depends on whether assistance in the migration process as well as information about employment opportunities are passed on to prospective migrants who are not household members of previous migrants. If this assistance is not 'household-specific', as Stark et al. (1986:724) put it, the migration innovation will spread beyond the borders of the first, privileged, households, and thus the effect of remittances will tend to be more equalising.

From Stark's discussion it is clear that the phenomenon of the selectivity of migration and how it develops over time is of crucial importance in deciding what effect migration will have on inequality. If selectivity decreases over time, migration will worsen pre-existing inequality only in the initial stages of the development of migration. There is therefore a clear link between arguments about the impact of remittances on inequality on the one hand and the issue of changes in selectivity over time on the other. Due to its importance, we shall devote a large part of this thesis to investigate the issue of selectivity. Nobody has yet, to my knowledge, made an attempt to integrate the literature on selectivity with the literature on remittances and inequality. I see the contribution of this thesis to reside partly in my effort to do just that.

Stark et al. (1986:727) test the effect of remittance income on inequality in two rural Mexican communities. The two villages were surveyed by them in 1983. In both of these villages there is Mexico-US migration as well as internal migration, but the mix of the two is different between the villages. In Village 2 there is more Mexico-US migration than internal migration and in Village 1 more internal migration than international migration. Residents of Village 2 are in general more involved in labour migration than residents of Village 1. The effect of remittance income is studied by compiling four Gini indices of the distribution of income for each village: one for total income

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for migrants involved in cross-border migration.

from all sources, one for remittance income from domestic sources only, one for remittance income from Mexico-US migration, and one for non-remittance income only.

They find that in each village the distribution of total income (income from remittances combined with non-remittance income) is more equal than the distribution of non-remittance income, and consequently come to the conclusion that remittance income has a nett equalising effect in these two communities. The equalising effect of remittance income is greater in Village 2 than Village 1, which lends support to their contention that the equalising role of remittances only comes to the fore as a community's exposure to migration matures. This is also confirmed if they break remittance income into its Mexico-US and internal components. In Village 1, with its extensive involvement in internal migration and limited exposure to Mexico-US migration, income from the former is relatively equally distributed while income from the latter is much more unequally distributed. Remittances from Mexico-US migration also accrue proportionately much more to those who are better-off. The situation is reversed in Village 2: much more unequal distribution of income from internal migration and less inequality with regard to Mexico-US migration.

According to Stark et al. (1988) one's judgement regarding inequality depends on the weights attached to different income levels in the compilation of the Gini-index. In their earlier article (1986) they used the Gini-index in its normal incarnation where equal weight is attached to all of the income categories (poorest 20% of the population, next 20%, etc.). Subsequently they (1988) re-examined the Mexican data discussed above and came to the conclusion that remittance income does not have an equalising effect when more weight is attached to the lowest income bracket in the calculation of the Gini-indices. In other words migration reduces the income of the poorest relative to that of others and leads to greater inequality between the poorest and the rest, even while it leads to a more equal distribution among all the other income groups who are better-off.

This is evident in both villages. In Village 1, where remittances from internal migration were previously (see above) seen to be equally distributed, it now becomes clear that the poorest are excluded from them after all. In other words, if a village is extensively involved in internal migration, remittance income from this source spreads to all groups in the village except the poorest. The same conclusion is evident in the case of Village 2, where there is more involvement

in cross-border migration and remittances from this source was previously seen to be more equally distributed. It is now evident that this does not extend to those at the bottom of the income ladder. Stark et al. (1988:320) then come to the conclusion that the poorest households do not have the resources to invest in Mexican-US migration, while they are at the same time denied access to the highest paying jobs in the Mexican labour market. This remains the case, even if migration becomes more generally diffused within the community. The rule that greater community involvement in migration spells greater equality of access to remittances therefore applies to everybody except the poorest. Stark et al's findings are highly significant, given my own interests. In later chapters I argue that the poorest do not have access to networks, and consequently cannot share in the advantages that networks hold to reduce the costs of migration and to therefore facilitate migration. One can therefore expect migration to operate as a differentiating force as far as the poorest are concerned, even though it may, over time, lead to a more equal income distribution for the rest.

With their focus on remittances, Stark et al. can only study the effect of circular migration, or at least only those migrants who retain links with their households of origin and thus continue remitting. They consequently do not consider what effects migration has on the distribution of income between those who leave (permanently and on a temporary basis) and those who remain behind<sup>5</sup>. Although there are numerous methodological problems inherent in doing such a study, it seems that it will have to be done if a complete account of the effects of migration on the distribution of income is to be arrived at.

One of the authors involved in the two articles discussed above, J. Edward Taylor (1992), returned in 1989 to the two Mexican villages with the intention of seeing if the remittances received in 1982<sup>6</sup> had any indirect effects on income distribution in 1988. He was specifically interested in finding out what effect the acquisition of farm animals bought with the 1982

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<sup>5</sup> According to them (Stark et al. 1988:313) there had been no permanent out-migration from the two villages they studied - so, in that case, their method did not introduce any biases in this regard.

<sup>6</sup> When the previous field research was done (in 1983), the authors inquired about remittances received the year before (1982).

remittances had on later incomes. As with the other studies, I shall not go into the detail of the complex econometric techniques used in his study. He found that remittances increased farm incomes in general over this period because they allowed increased investment in agricultural resources. He then tested what effect increasing 1982 remittances by 1% would have had on total income distribution in 1988, and comes to the conclusion that it would have reduced income inequality marginally through the effect that it would have had on 1988 animal herds. The reason for this seems to be, *inter alia*, that those who received most remittance income in 1982 are not the same people as those who receive the most total income in 1988 (there is a low correlation between the distribution of 1982 remittance income and the distribution of 1988 total income) and that the former group had their position raised relative to the latter group through their investments in farm animals. Another reason was that 1982 remittance income was relatively equally distributed, so that its subsequent effect through farm animals was also more equal. Taylor's study could not, in conclusion, perceive any cumulative effect of remittances on income inequality. It should be noted that this is only true for income distribution as a whole - he did not check the impact that remittances would have had on the income distribution of the poorest versus the rest, as was done in the 1988 article.

#### 2.4.3 ECONOMETRIC STUDIES ON THE IMPACT OF REMITTANCES ON INCOME DISTRIBUTION: LATER CONTRIBUTIONS

The three previous studies have one thing in common: they attempt to establish whether remittances derived from migration have a positive or negative effect on the total income distribution of the community of origin. In order to answer this question they compare two scenarios - one where there is no remittances and one where there are remittances plus a non-remittance income. The former scenario is then regarded as the no-migration scenario. The question asked by Stark and his associates is a watered down version of another question: whether circular outmigration from a village improves or worsens income inequality. The latter should ideally be established through a longitudinal study which compares the situation in the community before migration has begun with the present state of affairs (or compares the present state of affairs with a later situation where migration has ceased) and which somehow isolates the effect of migration from other causes of inequality as well as from any pre-existing trend in inequality.

One respect in which the work of Stark et al. falls short of such a study is that it attempts to use a synchronic study to answer a diachronic question. This leads to numerous problems. For one, they assume that the workers who now send remittances did not contribute anything to the household budget before they migrated. In other words, when constructing the no-migration scenario their study assumes that one can merely subtract remittance income from total income. Many of the present migrants must however have contributed something to the household budget before migrating and this income must somehow be incorporated in the estimation of the no-migration scenario (Barham and Boucher 1998, Rodriquez 1998).

A number of attempts have been made to overcome this problem within the constraints of a synchronic study. All of these involve the estimation of the potential home earnings of migrants if they would return at once, using information about their current demographic and socio-economic characteristics. It is evident that this increases the realism of the no-migration scenario to some extent. Adams (1989) used this method to estimate the impact of international migration on the income distribution of three Egyptian villages south of Cairo. He (Adams 1989:57) came to the conclusion that households from the poorer income groups benefited less from international remittances than richer households and that remittances had the effect of worsening the income distribution instead of improving it. The reason for this was that international migrants “were drawn quite disproportionately from the two highest income quintile groups” (Adams 1989:63). However he also found that this was a recent phenomenon and that the 'once-abroad' group evinced much less selectivity than the 'still-abroad' group. This is an example of the reverse of the supposedly typical scenario for the development of selectivity: from less selectivity to more. This finding does not necessarily falsify the typical scenario since he concludes by finding a number of historically specific reasons for explaining this, such as possible discrimination against educated Egyptians in Arab oil states in the wake of the Egyptian-Israeli peace accords.

Two more recent studies (Barham and Boucher, 1998; Rodriquez 1998) tried to improve on the work of Adams with regard to the estimation of the no-migration scenario. Both found that remittances increase inequality relative to the no-migration scenario. Of the two studies I shall discuss only that of Barham and Boucher (1998). One of the innovations in their study is that they (1998:309) tried, in their estimation of the no-migration scenario, to account for the changes

expected in the labour force decisions of other household members in the light of the putative return of the migrants. One can expect, for example, that some non-migrants who previously did not work may now decide to work locally. Barham and Boucher (1998:311, 315) tried to improve on Adams's modelling of the no-migration scenario in another respect: he constructed his scenario without considering the selectivity of migration and thus did not take into account that migrants and non-migrants may differ systematically in terms of their income earnings capabilities when the former return. This weakened his modelling of the no-migration scenario.

Barham and Boucher (1998) apply their model to the results of a survey completed in 1991 in the town of Bluefields, Nicaragua. This survey inquired about remittances derived from both internal and international migration. In order to test the effect of alternative methods for estimating the no-migration income distribution, they used both the method employed by Stark and his associates (where the no-migration scenario merely subtracts remittance income from total income) and their own alternative (described above). When they used the first method, remittances were found to improve the distribution of income, and when they used the second, remittances were found to worsen inequality. These results are confirmed by Rodriquez (1998), who also found that the first method indicates a reduction and the second method an increase in income inequality. This demonstrates, according to Barham and Boucher (1998:327) that the choice of method have an important bearing on the results obtained. The increase in income inequality obtained by them using the second method does not, however, seem to be the result of migration selectivity. According to them (1998:327) the major explanation for this result is as follows:

In the no-migration counterfactual, the effect of returning the migrants to Bluefields is to increase the earnings contributions of a group whose earnings are considerable more equally distributed in the population... Thus, most of the reduction in inequality associated with the no migration counterfactual arises from the increased share of total income accounted for by a cohort whose income contributions are more equally distributed across households.

Barham and Boucher's measurement of inequality is, like in all the studies discussed here except for Stark et al. (1988), the Gini-index with equal weights attached to all the income groups. It can therefore only indicate whether the overall income distribution has changed or not, and does not provide any information about what is happening to those in the poorest group. This is a major drawback, given that, as we shall argue below, it is at the bottom of the income distribution where

impediments to mobility will continue to exist.

What is also worrying about the whole exercise of imputing incomes and calculating Gini-indices is its sensitivity to the choice of method. Besides the problems mentioned above there is the added one of having to decide whether a household is allowed mobility into another income group between the calculation of its non-remittance income and the calculation of its total income. Adams (1989:61) does not allow mobility, while Rodriquez (1998:336) does. A household that relies on remittances for most of its income is classified at the bottom of the income distribution for both the total income and non-remittance income Gini-indices if mobility is not allowed and this obviously affects the outcome of the comparison of the no migration and migration scenarios (Rodriquez 1998).

The attempt by Adams, Rodriquez and Barham and Boucher to estimate the putative home earnings of migrants leads, lastly, to a result that may be more realistic than that of Stark et al., but is not without drawbacks of its own. The latter study does make the mistake of assuming that migrants will be unemployed on returning, but the assumption of the first three that all the returnees will find employment when so doing is surely also somewhat unrealistic. In order to rectify this problem, they will have to find a way of estimating the effect on the local labour market of an increased supply of labour, which will introduce additional complexity into calculations that are already very complex.

## **2.5 CONCLUSION**

In my brief overview of theories of migration I have identified two approaches to the impact of migration on inequality. In the first migration is seen as a process which smooths over differences in income and/or employment between regions. The second sees migration as part of a process of increasing differentiation between a core, developing region and a peripheral, underdeveloping region. None of these focus on the impact of migration on inequality between migrants and non-migrants, which is what I am interested in. I have lastly discussed a number of econometric studies on the effect of remittances on the distribution of income, which do give attention to this issue.

My conclusion is that, while these studies are certainly worthwhile, the methodological barriers to arriving at a satisfactory estimation of the effect of migration on inequality are certainly formidable. Estimating an effect that develops over time on the basis of synchronic data is inherently problematic and reduces the realism of all such studies. I argue, instead, that the question should be pursued by investigating the factors governing the diffusion of migration within a community of origin. Linking this issue to the literature on the selectivity of migration will consequently allow us to gain more clarity about what is to be expected with regard to the effect of migration on income inequality. It is this literature that I discuss in the next chapter.

## CHAPTER THREE

### THE SELECTIVITY OF MIGRATION

#### 3.1 INTRODUCTION

We have known since 1885, when E.G. Ravenstein presented his papers on the laws of migration to the Royal Statistical Society, that migration is a selective process. Ravenstein believed that women are more likely to be short-distance migrants than men, who are inclined to migrate over longer distances (Lee 1966:48). We notice two aspects here of the issue of selectivity that still feature in present-day discussions: the gender dimension of selectivity and the tendency for selectivity patterns to change depending whether we are dealing with shorter or longer distances. Both of these aspects feature in this chapter - they come especially to the fore in the section devoted to an overview of selectivity patterns in Third World migration. Other issues that are discussed in this chapter are the explanations for selectivity, changes in the selectivity of migration over time and the measurement of selectivity.

Most of the research on the selectivity of migration is primarily interested in rural-urban migration. According to Brown and Lawson (1985) rural-rural and urban-rural migration are generally neglected by researchers, even though these two types of migration are very common in the Third World. The belief that rural-urban migration is the norm and the other kinds of migration negligible is generally held, but incorrect. This leads Rhoda (quoted in Brown & Lawson 1985: 416) to say that:

Rural-urban migration should not be confused with rural out-migration or with urban in-migration; many, and in some cases most, urban in-migrants come from other urban areas while a large percentage of rural out-migrants move to other rural areas.

The danger of assuming that these other kinds of migration have the same characteristics as rural-urban migration and can be subsumed under it, is that they may operate in different ways. This is indicated by, inter alia, the effect of distance on rural-rural migration. Distance is an obstacle to both rural-rural and rural-urban migration with the result that the migrant stream between two

places becomes less the further they are apart (Population Information Program 1983:M255). The further two places are apart from each other, the more difficult the information flow (about jobs, for example) between them and the higher the costs of moving. In the case of rural-rural migration, however, the effect of distance is significantly stronger. According to Brown and Lawson (1985:425) the reason for this is that “knowledge of rural economic conditions is more severely attenuated by distance; thus increasing both monetary and psychic movement costs (per unit distance).” Because of the difference between the two types of migration, I shall distinguish from time to time between trends in the selectivity of rural-urban migration as opposed to trends in the selectivity of rural-rural migration.

### **3.2 A SURVEY OF THE SELECTIVITY OF MIGRATION IN THIRD WORLD COUNTRIES**

According to Lee (1966:56), selectivity refers to the fact that “migrants are not a random sample of the population at origin”. The stream of migrants are selected from the population of origin in terms of gender, age, income and education, with the result that the composition of the migrant stream is different from that of the population of origin. The migrant stream typically contains more young adults than the population of origin, for example.

I now discuss each of the selection factors of gender, age, income and education individually.

#### **3.2.1 GENDER**

Men and women tend to have different propensities to migrate. Whether men or women will dominate in the migrant streams depends on which continent is being studied however. Boserup (1970) has distinguished between four regional patterns of male and female migration in the Third World: Arab, Latin America, Southeast Asian and African. According to her, women in Latin America are more likely to migrate than men, while in Africa, the Middle East and Asia the situation is the opposite with more men than women migrating. Because of gender differences between regions in the incidence of rural-urban migration specifically, the urban sex-ratio varies

between these regions as well. The following comparison of male-female ratios in urban areas gives an indication of the regional variations to which Boserup refers (these figures are based on census data recorded between 1965 and 1975). In Oceania there were 128 men for every 100 women present in urban areas, in Africa and Asia 109 men for every 100 women and in Latin America 92 men for every 100 women (Gilbert and Gugler 1982:59). Despite the general tendency for men to dominate in migrant streams in Asia, there are, according to Khoo et al. (1984), significant variations within Asia, and even within the same countries in Asia (as in India where women have a higher propensity to migrate in the South than in the more Islamic North). In the Spanish-speaking and predominantly Catholic Philippines, women are more likely to migrate than men, as is the case in Latin America (Khoo et al. 1984:1255).

According to Chant and Radcliffe (1992:5, also see Khoo et al. 1984), these regional differences in urban sex-ratios have not changed much since the time when the censuses providing the basis for Gilbert and Gugler's figures were taken. There is an overall trend for the predominance of men to become less pronounced over time in the Third World, but this takes place very slowly (Simmons et al. 1977: 28, Chant and Radcliffe 1992:5). Faster movement towards evening out in the sex-ratios has however taken place in the rapidly industrialising countries of East and South East Asia (Chant and Radcliffe 1992:5).

Boserup's general observation with regard to regional differences is confirmed by studies of individual countries in these regions. In the case of Brazil, Castro et al. (1978:39, 62) report a greater preponderance of women in migrant streams in 1970 (except for what would probably be the most dynamic and attractive destination, São Paulo province). Male predominance in migrant streams has been observed in East Africa (Rempel 1981:16,45) as well as elsewhere in Africa (Simmons et al. 1977:27). The only countries in Africa where men do not dominate migration streams seems to be Cameroon (Simmons et al. 1977:28) and Ethiopia (Gugler 1989:350). Male dominance of the urban population has, however, recently declined somewhat in sub-Saharan Africa (Gugler 1989).

Zachariah and Condé (1981:9) have observed that in West Africa men dominate the long-distance migrant streams and women the short-distances (just as Ravenstein has predicted more than a

century ago). The tendency for women to migrate over shorter distances (and to smaller places) is also confirmed by Connell et al.'s (1976:43) survey of village studies in Asia, and by the work of Danesh (1987:18) in Iran, who found that the proportion of migrants who are females decline as the distance of the community of origin from Tehran (the major migration destination) increases. After surveying the literature on gender selective migration, Chant (1992b:198-199) comes to the conclusion that in the Third World generally men migrate over greater distances and to a more varied range of destinations than women, even in countries where the latter have a higher propensity to migrate than men. This indicates that gender differences are not only observed with regard to the issue of whether an individual migrates or not. They also influence the distance of the migratory move and the type of migration destination.

The gender selectivity of migration can be reduced over time if family reunification takes place (Zoomers 1986). If there is a tendency for men to predominate in migration streams initially, for example, one can expect that at some stage they will fetch the wives and children that have stayed behind in the rural areas to join them. If women initially dominate the migrant stream they can in turn be expected to fetch their husbands and children. This is of course only true if we are dealing with permanent migration. In the case of circular migration, the gender selectivity of migration can continue indefinitely, or at least as long as the conditions giving rise to it are maintained. Family reunification will also not affect gender selectivity if a high divorce rate between urban men and rural women creates many female-headed households in the rural areas (as in the South African case).

### 3.2.2 AGE

Migrants are more likely to be between 15 and 30 years of age than any other age category (Connell et al. 1976:39, Simmons et al. 1977:27, Population Information Program 1983:M-256). This trend is observed all over the world. The age-selectivity of migration is generally associated with changes over the life-cycle of the individual in the sense that young adults are at the age where they have to find a job, and migration is then part of this process (Ritchey 1976:379).

The predominance of young adults in rural-urban migration streams has numerous positive

economic implications for urban areas (Williamson 1988:298), and presumably, negative effects for the rural areas. Young adults are more likely to be employed, and with their immigration the number of possible income earners relative to dependents (old people and children) increase. This increases the per capita income, as well as the savings rate, of the city, according to Williamson (1988:298, 299).

### 3.2.3 INCOME

Because I am interested in the impact of migration on social inequality, and because income differentials are an important indicator of social inequality, the income selectivity of migration is of special interest to me. If the migrant stream excludes the poorest people it means that they will not benefit from the opportunities that migration offers for improving their welfare. The issue is clouded, however, by the numerous methodological problems that crop up in determining the effect of income on migration. In the case of gender, education and age, the act of migration does not have any impact on the value of these variables. Migration cannot influence the gender of a migrant, or his/her age. Except in the case of tertiary education, where migration is often a prerequisite for its acquisition, migration does not have any effect on educational status either. Even in the case of tertiary education, the effect of migration on educational status only appears over time, and would not be apparent if surveyed shortly after the act of migration. When it comes to income, however, migration has, in most cases, an immediate effect in the sense that it tends to increase income.

In most cases selectivity is measured through a cross-sectional comparison of migrants and non-migrants (Ritchey 1976:383). The comparison is therefore made after migration has occurred and not before. If it is found by such a survey (as is generally the case) that migrants have a higher income than non-migrants, there is no way of knowing whether the higher income was present before the act of migration and genuinely indicates the income selectivity of migration or whether it is a consequence of migration, only appearing after the act of migration. This is because of the impact, alluded to above, of migration on income (Ritchey 1976:383).

One possible solution is to use another, more stable indicator of household income in cross-

sectional studies. The value of the house in which the household is living is such an indicator. The measurement will be done differently depending on whether we are dealing with permanent migration, in which case we compare the value of the destination area house of the migrant with the value of the area-of-origin house of the non-migrant, or circular migration, in which case the migrant has not left his/her area-of-origin house behind and one can compare these houses of the migrant and the non-migrant. While this strategy may work for middle class people, it can be problematic if we are dealing with the rural-urban migration of poor people in a Third World context. In that context the urban (destination) and rural (origin) housing markets are often very different, which makes the prices of houses in the two areas difficult to compare. Such a measurement is also particularly problematic when there is no meaningful market for housing, as in the former homeland areas of South Africa.

Possibly the best solution to the problem of knowing whether income differentials have manifested themselves before or after migration, is to study the income-selectivity of migration in a longitudinal fashion (Davanzo 1981:121, Connell et al. 1976). In this case, a particular sending area is surveyed at one stage. At a later stage, an attempt is made to find out which households have since relocated (in the case of permanent migration), or have dispatched migrant members to another location (in the case of circular migration). Income-selectivity can then be tested by comparing the pre-migration income of migrant households with that of non-migrant households in the community of origin.

When testing the income selectivity of migration the distinction between absolute and relative measures of poverty becomes very important. The decision to use either a relative or an absolute measurement of poverty depends partly on the theoretical framework from which one is departing. For Oded Stark (1991) non-migrants start to experience feelings of relative deprivation when confronted with the consumer goods brought home by successful migrants and this motivates them to become migrants as well. In his case relative measures of poverty would be totally appropriate. On the other hand, if one sees the inability to afford transport costs, or boarding costs while looking for work, as the reason for the non-migration of some, relative measures of poverty are inappropriate. If somebody cannot migrate due to poverty it is the result of absolute and not relative deprivation.

If one's interest is in absolute rather than relative poverty, as mine is here, it becomes difficult to interpret the results of empirical studies that are sometimes couched in terms of relative deprivation. As Connell et al. (1976:20-21) point out, the poorest villagers in prosperous villages might well be better-off, in terms of absolute measures of poverty, than the richest villagers in poverty-stricken areas. Another complication is that what sounds like a relative measure of poverty is in fact often intended as an absolute measure. If one says, as I am going to say here, that it is seldom the poorest who migrate, it is not only a statement about people who are at the bottom of the pile. It refers more accurately to those who are closest to destitution: those who are landless and unemployed and survive on handouts and piece jobs. This is the sense in which I am going to use the term here, and it is also the sense in which Lipton and his associates, who are my main sources for the discussion of the next paragraph, are using the term.

Despite the problematic nature of measures of income-selectivity, it does nevertheless seem that, even though it is generally poor people who migrate in Third World countries, the poorest among them seldom migrate (Lipton 1980:7, Connell et al. 1976:21). Those among the poorest who do migrate are more likely to be rural-rural migrants than rural-urban migrants (Connell et al. 1976:12, Population Information Program 1983:M-254), or to migrate over shorter distances (DaVanzo 1981:111, Population Information Program 1983:M-255). As a result the poorest are more likely to engage in step migration (Lipton 1980). They are more likely to approach the major metropolitan areas (the major migration destinations) in a country step by step, often first migrating to a small town close to their place of origin, then leaving for a secondary metropole after a period of consolidation and, if they are successful in this, mobilising their resources for a final move to the major metropolitan areas.

Of the numerous studies that confirm the findings of Lipton as well as Connell and his associates, I shall mention only one. Commenting on the two villages in the Dominican Republic she has studied, Georges (1990:118-119) remarks that the patterns of outmigration do not reflect the beliefs of both neo-classical as well as Marxist economists. It is not the case that migrants are drawn "from a 'surplus' rural population, which dispossessed of its land, is made 'free' to move to the cities to work for wages". Instead, she (1990:119) continues, "migrants are more likely to come from households with a more privileged access to resources strategic in the rural context".

Not all studies agree with Lipton and Connell et al.'s assessment, however. Speaking of internal migration from the village of Acuitzio to Mexico City, Wiest (1984:131) claims that there are two groups of people who migrate: the well to do and the "landless, unemployed poor who are destitute and who have no options in Acuitzio". The conflicting results can probably be partly explained as a reflection of the methodological problems, referred to previously, inherent in studying the income selectivity of migration. Another factor, however, is the changing patterns of selectivity that are observed as the migration stream matures. These are discussed in a later section of this chapter and I shall not pursue this topic here.

### 3.2.4 EDUCATION

It is generally observed that educational levels are positively correlated with rural-urban migration (Simmons et al. 1977:28, Ritchey 1976:382). This relationship is stronger for longer distance (internal) migration than for shorter distance moves (Ritchey 1976:385, Levy and Wadycki 1974:200). Rural-rural migrants are also more likely to have a low level of education (Connell et al. 1976:68, Population Information Program 1983:M-253, Brown and Lawson 1985:418). One of the reasons for the association between education and migration is that information available to rural households about urban employment opportunities is likely to increase as educational levels increase (Rempel 1981:77, Ritchey 1976:385). The information-enhancing effect of education is likely to be especially strong with regard to migration destinations that are further away. The reason for this is that information about distant destinations is less likely to be carried by word of mouth, and more likely to be disseminated through formal communication channels where literacy is a prerequisite. This helps to explain why the effect of education is stronger for moves over a longer distance (Ritchey 1976:374).

The strong positive link between education and long-distance migration does not hold in the case of, especially undocumented, cross-border migrants, according to Massey and Espinosa (1997:948, also see Stark et al. 1986:732). The reason for this is that, because of the differing cultural context in the sending and receiving countries, the skills acquired by the migrant through education is not likely to be as useful outside the country of origin as within that country. A migrant with a secondary school education acquired in Mexico is much more likely, according to

Massey and Espinosa (1997), to prefer a job as a clerk somewhere in Mexico than a job in the unskilled labour market, which are the only positions open to Mexican migrants in the United States. Migrants are therefore positively selected for education in the case of internal migration, but according to them (Massey and Espinosa 1997) negatively selected with regard to international migration. Massey and Espinosa's argument seems to be true for secondary education, but I would be surprised if it holds in the case of tertiary education as well. People with tertiary education are probably more likely to migrate in the case of both internal and international migration. Tertiary education is less bound by the cultural context of the country of origin than secondary education. It also provides skills that are high in demand in the knowledge intensive industries of the First World. This is reflected in the concerns about the brain drain from Third World countries that causes these countries to lose many of their skilled professionals.

### **3.3 EXPLANATIONS FOR THE SELECTIVITY OF MIGRATION**

Since I am primarily interested in the consequences of selective migration (in terms of increasing inequality) rather than its causes, I shall not discuss the explanations advanced for the selectivity of migration in too much detail. It is nevertheless important to give some attention to these explanations because they provide us with a better understanding of the context in which migration takes place. It is also necessary to investigate the explanations for selectivity because they give an indication whether, and if so, by how much, selectivity changes over time. We can classify the explanations for selectivity into four broad categories:

- 1) there are firstly those explanations that use the costs and benefits of migration as explanatory variables (we call these the human capital approaches);
- 2) another explanation focuses on the impact of changes in the organisation of production on a world scale which create a demand for female workers (the world systems approach);
- 3) the third set of explanations sees selective migration as the result of household decisions which try to optimise the economic welfare of the household (the household strategies approach);
- 4) the last set of explanations are based on aspects of social structure which retard or encourage the migration of particular groups in society (the social structural approach).

### 3.3.1. HUMAN CAPITAL APPROACHES TO MIGRATION

The first person to adopt a human capital approach to migration was Larry Sjaastad (1962). His work resulted from dissatisfaction with the previous econometric approaches to migration. These approaches explained migration as a response to income differentials between regions. Since everybody in the poorer region is exposed to these income differentials, the question arises why only a limited number of people migrate in response to these stimuli, rather than everybody in that region. Econometric approaches also found it difficult to explain why migration varies according to factors such as the age of the migrant (Sjaastad 1962:90, Speare 1971:117). Sjaastad (1962:87) argues that if migration is viewed as a form of investment in human capital, with costs attached to it as well as returns that will materialise in future, new light can be cast on many of these questions. In Sjaastad's terms, the money spent on financing the move is the investment made by the migrant. If, in the new environment the migrant can earn more money, s/he has realised a return on this investment. Sjaastad does not pursue this question, but the reason why he calls it **human**, rather than any other type of capital, is probably that he thinks that the move increases the returns on the skills acquired by the migrant. The migrant is therefore more productive, with a consequent increase in human capital.

According to DaVanzo (1981:103) "(r)ecognition that the benefits of migration occur over a period of time is...the distinguishing characteristic of the human capital model." The benefits of migration is not immediately realised as a once-off pay out, but occurs over the entire future income stream of the migrant as an increase in the wage commanded by the migrant. As in the case of all other investment decisions, the investor has to discount the value of the enhanced future income stream (earned as a result of the move) to arrive at the present value of that income. The younger the migrant, the longer the term of the enhanced income stream and consequently the higher the present value of the investment. The value of the investment increases with the term of the investment in the same way as the value of an endowment policy increases over time. This explains, according to Sjaastad (1962:88) why young adults are more likely to migrate. Since the costs that young and old are expected to bear are the same, and since the benefits are higher for the young, it is more likely that the benefits of migration will outweigh the costs of migration in the case of the latter group. They are therefore also more likely to decide that migration is a

profitable investment. In this way, the human capital approach offers an explanation for the observed trends with regard to the age-selectivity of migration.

We have discussed the costs of migration in chapter one. Sjaastad (1962) distinguishes between the money and non-money costs of migration. According to him, the non-money costs are the psychic costs associated with a new cultural environment, as well as the costs associated with separation from family and friends. Sjaastad (1962:84) claims that the money costs are likely to be so low that it is improbable that it will significantly limit the amount of migration expected. He believes that the non-money costs are much higher than is generally accepted. The results of migration models typically indicate that an extraordinarily large increase in the income differences between regions is necessary to elicit more migration from the poorer to the richer region (Sjaastad 1962, Ritchey 1976:373). Findings such as this can only be true, according to Sjaastad, if the costs of migration are very high. In other words, if migration only takes place if the advantages of migration outweigh the costs, the high increase in the advantage of migration (reflected in the income differential) needed before more migration takes place suggests that the costs must be high as well. Given that he thinks that the money costs are low, it means that the non-money costs must be very high if we are to explain why migration is so inelastic in response to income differences between regions.

Sjaastad's statement that the costs of migration are higher than generally assumed is very interesting since it explains why less migration takes place than expected. His statement that the money costs of migration are low is problematic, however. He does not consider the money costs as a proportion of the income of different classes of migrants, but thinks in terms of average incomes. Consequently the possibility that, in the case of the lowest income groups, the money costs relative to the income of the group might be too high to make migration an economic option does not arise for him. The fact that migration tends to select people in terms of their income, suggests that monetary costs can indeed act as a disincentive in some cases and that Sjaastad is wrong to focus exclusively on non-money costs.

When people make investment decisions, they also have to consider how they are going to finance their investment. The same applies to investment in migration. At this stage of the investment

decision, the operation of credit markets, and the creditworthiness of the individual investor becomes very important. Sjaastad assumes that prospective migrants will not experience any constraints in this respect, or that the costs will be so low that financing does not become an issue. According to DaVanzo (1981:96) this is an issue that needs to be considered, however, especially since banks are unlikely to finance a risky endeavour such as migration. DaVanzo (1981:96) argues that people who already have some wealth, or who can obtain credit and board from relatives are in an advantageous position in this regard. Since it is well-known that the poorest encounter severe problems in gaining access to credit through formal channels, this helps to explain the income-selectivity of migration. As we shall see in the next chapter however, poor people can use their social connections to gain credit in an informal fashion.

It is generally the case that the money costs increase as the distance of the migratory move increases (DaVanzo 1981:110-111). Distance is therefore less likely to be a deterrent for those with higher incomes, and this adds to our understanding of why the income-selectivity of migration tends to increase as the distance of the migratory move increases (DaVanzo 1981:110-111). The obverse of this is that income-selectivity will be nil for areas of origin that are very close to a destination area.

Another element of the typical investment decision that has to be considered in the context of migration decision making is that of risk. The prospective migrant has to take into account the probability that s/he will find employment in the migration destination, and has to bear the opportunity cost (the earnings foregone by leaving the present place of residence) of that decision (DaVanzo 1981:95, Taylor 1986:148-149). There are other factors that might act to make migration more risky, such as the levels of crime and political violence at the destination, and these also enter into the decision making about migration.

The attitude of the prospective migrant to these risks depend on how risk averse he or she is (DaVanzo 1981:95). One can assume that the poorest are likely to be the most risk averse (Lipton 1980:9-10), since they are the closest to the survival minimum and are the most powerless to defend themselves against risks generally. They are also the least likely to have access to reliable information about these risks, given that the acquisition of information entails certain costs

(Goodman 1981:143). Information reduces risks (DaVanzo 1981:96), and the unequal access to information to reduce these risks will act as an additional bias against migration among the poorest.

The tendency for migration to be selective with reference to education can partially be explained by the risk-reducing impact of information, and the higher levels of information prevalent among the better educated (Rempel 1981:77). Another reason why education increases the probability of migration is that, at least for internal migration, the better educated are likely to realise higher returns by migrating to urban destinations than staying behind in the rural areas<sup>1</sup>. For most of the better-educated, rural-urban migration is a precondition for realising a return on their investment in education (Rempel 1981:77, Connell et al. 1976:59-63). Because agricultural jobs are generally unskilled, rural-rural migrants are likely to have a lower level of education (Connell et al. 1976:65).

Education and migration are similar from a human capital perspective in the sense that both can be understood as ways of investing in human capital. Because one needs resources if one is to invest in formal education (school fees, books, the opportunity costs of not working while studying, etc.) it can be assumed that households with a higher income are more likely to invest in education. The positive link between income and educational levels, as well as the link between education and migration provides additional ground for the observation that the poorest are unlikely to engage in migration (Rempel 1981:92, cf. also Connell et al. 1976:28).

### 3.3.2 WORLD SYSTEMS EXPLANATIONS FOR THE SELECTIVITY OF MIGRATION

The world systems approach focuses on changes occurring in the international organisation of production. According to world systems theorists (Kentor 1985) production is increasingly organised on a world scale. This is due to technological changes (primarily developments in information technology and telecommunications), as well as the rise of transnational corporations. Because of these two developments, the labour process in manufacturing is broken up and

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<sup>1</sup> As we saw above, international migration may negatively select for education, at least up to secondary school level.

reassembled geographically so that some parts of it (generally the higher value-parts, such as the design of the product) are retained in metropolitan countries and other parts (generally the low value, final assembly of the product) devolved to Third World countries. The final assembly is hived off to Third World countries in order to make use of the cheap and often rightless labour force that can be obtained there. As a result of this, we have seen the rise of so-called export processing zones in many parts of the Third World. These are cities where products are assembled by transnational corporations for international markets. An example is the factories of the Nike sport shoe company in places such as Vietnam.

It is because of these developments that a demand for female workers arise in many parts of the Third World (Sassen-Koob 1984). Female workers are in demand because there is a perception that they are less likely to join unions and are more suited to the repetitive assembly line work needed at this stage of the labour process. The increased demand for female workers results in increased female migration to these export processing zones (Sassen-Koob 1984). Female selective migration in these cases can thus be explained with reference to the demand-pull forces operating from the industrialising areas. In Mexico, for example, women migrate to the northern border regions of the country where many American companies have built factories to take advantage of cheap Mexican labour (Young and Fort 1994). These factories (called *maquiladora* factories) specialize in the final assembly of products for the American market and employ a largely female labour force.

### 3.3.3 THE HOUSEHOLD STRATEGIES APPROACH TO MIGRATION

In terms of the household strategies approach, the demand for female labour in destination areas does not by itself provide an adequate explanation for female selective migration. According to this model, this demand only becomes effective as a migration inducing factor if it dovetails with the labour allocation strategies of households, in other words if it is advantageous to the household to send out female members. The reference to household labour allocation suggests an important dimension of the household strategies perspective. This is that migration should not be seen, in terms of this approach, as a decision taken by an individual migrant for the purposes of improving the welfare of only that individual, but as a household decision directed at improving

the welfare of the household as a whole.

The poor household is thus seen as a unit engaged in pooling its available labour power so as to allocate it more efficiently between the different jobs available. This can involve industrial employment, work in farming as well as domestic work (the household strategies approach takes into account that domestic tasks also have to be performed, a reality often ignored by other approaches to migration decision making [Chant and Radcliffe, 1992:22]). According to the household strategies approach many poor households, unlike middle class families, cannot depend on a single (or even dual, as in the case of a married couple where both partners work) source of income. They have to combine income from a number of (monetary and non-monetary) sources in order to survive. This often includes income from agriculture, whether commercial, subsistence or even sub-subsistence (as in the case of most former homelands in South Africa). A decision with regard to the migration of any household member therefore has to make sense in terms of the household's labour allocation strategy. In such a strategy the different jobs that need to be performed, and that are available to household members, have to be weighed up against each other.

From this it is clear that households with many able-bodied adults relative to dependants have an advantage when it comes to survival. The more labour power at the household's disposal, the more it can diversify its income sources and still have labour power left to perform domestic tasks. The fewer dependants in the household, the lower the household's consumption requirements and the easier it is to balance the household's income with its consumption. It is the need to strike a balance between these aspects that is responsible for the tendency of poor households in Southern Africa to foster out children temporarily during times of need (Spiegel 1987).

The household strategies approach predict that a rural household will dispatch the member with the highest urban income possibilities and the lowest potential contribution to agriculture to the urban areas and retain the others to work its fields in the rural areas and do the domestic work. If that worker is female, as in most of Latin America, female selective rural-urban migration will occur. If that member is male, it will be just the opposite. This is the case in the Southern African context (and elsewhere in Africa), where the labour market generally favours men (Low 1984:10).

In addition, women are for cultural reasons associated with agriculture in Africa and consequently they are more likely to stay behind to work the fields. In this way the household strategies approach can provide an explanation for the gender selectivity of migration.

It is clear that this perspective is better suited at explaining circular rather than permanent migration. The strategy of sending out some household members as migrants and retaining others on the family agricultural allotment is only possible if those who leave retain their membership of the rural household and engage in temporary, circular migration.

There are numerous reasons why a rural household may follow this strategy of sending out some circular migrants and retaining others on the farm. It may do so to reduce the risks of migration, for example (DaVanzo 1981:96). I have previously discussed the risks of migration under the heading of human capital approaches to migration, but a consideration of the effects of these risks is just as applicable here. According to Stark (1991:39-40), theorists such as Todaro who focus exclusively on differences in expected income between rural and urban areas as a motivation for migration, overlook the role that can potentially be played by migration in a household's risk reduction strategy (see Stark 1991:40-41). Agriculture is a risky business for rural, farming households. This is especially the case when the household is experimenting with new, high yield varieties of a crop. These give higher yields when all goes well, but they generally need more inputs. They are also often less drought resistant. In this context it may make sense to dispatch a household member to town to provide an income that the household can fall back on when things go wrong on the farm.

The interaction between the migrant and the rest of the household should be seen as an implicit contract where the other household members subsidise the migrant initially while s/he is still looking for work (Stark 1991:221). When the migrant adapts to the circumstances in town, and find some kind of work, s/he has to repay the initial investment of the household in their migration. This is when urban-rural remittances start to assume a greater importance for the members staying behind in the rural area. They can now rely on the household's urban-derived income to smooth over temporary income deficits due to drought, etc. Migration can therefore be seen as a mechanism to pool risks and spread them over a wider range of income opportunities.

Circular migration as a risk-reducing strategy is particularly common in the former homelands of South Africa and revolves around an attempt to retain access to rural land (both for agricultural and residential purposes) to serve as insurance against the event that something goes wrong for the migrant in the urban area (Spiegel 1980). Insurance is thus provided as a result of the household's pooling of its available labourers and dispatching them to different occupations and places. Most members of the household stay behind in the rural area, but the household members with the highest urban income potential are dispatched as circular migrants.

Another reason why a household may dispatch circular migrants is to take advantage of the earnings possibilities to be found in urban areas while at the same time consuming the money earned there in the rural areas (Hugo 1985:78). This is done by sending only the wage worker to town and retaining everybody else in the rural area. The rationale for consuming in the countryside is that consumption costs are often lower there with the result that the money earned in town stretches further (Hugo 1985; Nelson 1992). Consumption costs are lower because water can often be drawn for free from communal water sources while firewood can be collected for free, for example. The association of women with these consumption tasks (the reason for this is not examined by the household strategies approach) provides another reason why they, rather than men, stay behind in the rural areas.

The home base from which circular migration is launched does not only have to be a rural area. Todes (1998) describes how the town of Newcastle in KwaZulu-Natal serves as a home base for many migrant labourers. Newcastle is attractive for this function because it has better services than rural areas, it is considered safer for a family than the metropolitan areas (less political violence) and the conditions for local income generation are more favourable (Todes 1998:46-47). Households also retain Newcastle as their home base, even after the breadwinners may have lost their jobs there, because they have already invested much in their houses in that area<sup>2</sup>. Because of their association with reproductive activities, women are more likely to stay behind in Newcastle, with men leaving as circular migrants. Chant (1992a) describes a very similar situation

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<sup>2</sup> This decision has to be seen in the context of a shortage of housing in the metropolitan areas and the easy access to housing land in the former homeland areas surrounding the town of Newcastle.

in the case of female migrants to towns in the province of Guanacasteco, Costa Rica. They move to these towns because land for housing is more readily available (land invasions are more likely to be tolerated here than in the larger cities - Chant 1992a: 61) and other consumption costs are also lower. In addition these towns are closer the areas of origin of the female migrants and this allows them to retain more links with their networks of family and friends. While the women (and their children) mostly stay behind in the Guanacasteco towns after migration, men leave these towns as circular migrants to work in seasonal agriculture and in the bigger cities, such as the capital city San José. It is, as in the case of Newcastle, women's association with reproductive activities that is responsible for the fact that they are the one who stay behind to maintain the home base of the household (Chant 1992a:61).

The household strategies approach can also provide an explanation for the age selectivity of migration. The predominance of young adults in migration streams is consistent with the developmental cycle of rural households in the Southern African context (cf. Murray 1981). Murray argues that social differentiation between rural households has a cyclical element that is not picked up by cross-sectional studies, and that temporary rural-urban migration is part of this cyclical differentiation. In the ideal typical scenario, young men are initially landless, and are under an obligation to earn an income to support their parents<sup>3</sup>. In order to do this, they become involved in a limited period of circular rural-urban migration. Remitting income to their parents and supporting the rural economy in this way is, in terms of the prevailing tenure system, also a precondition for acquiring land at a later stage. When they get married and have children, they may be allocated a residential plot. The men generally want their wives to live on that plot in the rural area to look after the children, while they live elsewhere near their work. When they are older, and when they have accumulated rural assets such as a house to live in, cattle, agricultural land, and implements such as a tractor that can be rented out to others, the migrant may retire to the rural area. At this stage in the developmental cycle the (now previous) migrant hopefully can depend on the remittances of his children in turn. According to the developmental cycle argument, households at this stage of their development are at the peak of their earning capacity, because

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<sup>3</sup> In sub-Saharan Africa women can generally only acquire land in terms of the tenure system if they are widows (Bryson 1981). They are also less likely to be migrants, as discussed previously.

they now have a rural income, as well as an income from their children's remittances. The implications of this argument for the age selectivity of migration is therefore that while men are young, they are more likely to be migrants, and when they are older, they are more likely to stay at home.

The developmental cycle argument only makes sense as long as there is enough agricultural land available so that the migrant can eventually acquire some in the way described above. With the increasing pressure on land in the former homeland areas of rural South Africa and changes in the land tenure system, the possibility of eventually acquiring agricultural land is becoming less and less, which reduces the applicability of the developmental cycle argument (Spiegel 1982). Men nowadays have fewer possibilities to retire early, given their lack of rural resources, and are increasingly forced to be migrant workers over the entire period in which they are economically active.

### 3.3.4 SOCIAL STRUCTURAL EXPLANATIONS FOR THE SELECTIVITY OF MIGRATION

These explanations focus on the social structural forces that can either immobilise some categories of people in the rural areas or alternatively force them to migrate. Because these forces operate selectively, they can also provide an explanation for the selectivity of migration. According to Standing (1981) for example, in a semi-feudalist rural setup (as is found in parts of modern India) the poorest part of the rural population can be immobilised there through indebtedness. The relations between landlords and their tenants in these parts of India is typically structured in such a way that tenants do not earn enough money to survive on a permanent basis. They consequently need to borrow money from the landlord all the time and in this way end up in a kind of bondage to the landlord (not unlike serfdom in medieval Europe) that does not allow them to move away. The influx control system in the rural areas of South Africa in the past was a similar semi-feudalist setup in the sense that it also attempted to immobilise agricultural workers.

According to Standing (1981) the situation changes, however, once agriculture becomes fully commercialised. Landlords then want to get rid of their tenants, who are often forced off the land in one way or another. The previously immobilised workers are now forced to join the migrant

streams to the urban areas. This scenario is described with telling effect by John Steinbeck in his work of fiction *Grapes of Wrath*. He shows in that book how sharecroppers are forced off the land in the 1930's in the American Midwest and how they leave for California to find work picking fruit on the Californian farms. A similar story is told by Sol Plaatje in his book *Native life in South Africa* when he describes the effect of the 1913 Land Act on black labour tenants in South Africa. The relevance of Standing's argument for selectivity is thus that the poorest can either be totally under represented in migration streams when they are immobilised or they can join these streams in large numbers when they are pushed off the land. Which of the two predominates at any particular time depends, as we saw above, on trends in the development of the relations of production in agriculture.

Social structural explanations have also been advanced for the gender selectivity of migration. They emerge in the context of a criticism of the household strategies approach. This approach assumes that the household's decision to deploy a member of a particular sex in town is a purely economically rational decision, depending on the possibilities for off-farm employment of that member and his/her potential contribution to agriculture. According to feminists this approach does not adequately confront the gender division of labour which is a reflection of both power differentials within the household and cultural traditions and which helps to decide how the household is going to allocate its labour (Radcliffe 1991). According to Radcliffe (1991) young single women in the Andean region of Latin America are more likely to migrate than young men because the gender division of labour does not give them an important role in agricultural activities. In sub-Saharan Africa, by contrast, the gender division of labour gives women the lion's share of agricultural duties and this helps to explain why African women are less likely to be represented in migrant streams.

The independent movement of women is not only constrained by the gender division of labour. It can also be limited by a number of other factors associated with gender, such as the stigmatisation of independent female migrants to town as prostitutes in parts of West Africa (Chant and Radcliffe 1992:14, Brydon 1992:99) or cultural traditions such as seclusion which, in parts of South Asia with a strong Islamic influence, make independent movement impossible for women (Chant and Radcliffe 1992:7). According to Ilcan (1994:567), in the village of Sakli

in northwestern Turkey, “it would be culturally impossible for a woman to travel by herself to seasonal wage work.” On the same page she observes that “(I)n Sakli, it is considered inappropriate for women to work outside the village, as it is believed that a woman's duty is to look after her family and the fields.”

It has also frequently been observed that the mobility of women is more controlled than that of men, both by the state and by their families. In parts of Asia, daughters are often told by their parents when and where they might move, while their unaccompanied migration is discouraged (Chant and Radcliffe 1992:15). They are also expected to retain more ties to their households of origin (Chant and Radcliffe 1992:17) and do so out of their own accord because they attach more importance to kinship relations (Chant and Radcliffe 1992:17). In line with this, parents often demand a larger share of the remittances of daughters than of sons (Chant and Radcliffe 1992:15).

In the past there were even stronger controls over the movement of women. Bozzoli (1983, 1991:89), describing the women of Phokeng near Rustenburg, relates how the migration of women was constrained during the 1920's: they could, for example, not purchase train tickets without the permission of the chief. Brown (1983:384) recounts a story of similar restrictions on women in Botswana that lasted until at least the 1940's (also see Sharp and Spiegel 1990:534, Brydon 1992:99). According to Pedraza (1991:311), male emigration from the villages of Kostroma province in late 19th century Russia had the contrary effect of immobilising women. “As peasants, the family was an economic unit of production, not just of consumption, and marriage to a village girl tied the young man who left more firmly to the family-economy as the wife continued to work in agriculture, in his place, and to live with her in-laws. Families thus placed greater constraints on women's migration than they did on men's; hence, few women migrated.”

### **3.4 CHANGES IN SELECTIVITY OVER TIME**

#### **3.4.1 TRENDS IN THE COSTS OF MIGRATION**

It is not clear whether selectivity is a temporary phenomenon, characteristic of the initial stages of the migration process, or whether it is a more permanent feature of the migration process. If it is the former, the migrant stream will eventually exhibit the same characteristics as the population of origin. The inequality inducing effect of selective migration is then restricted to the initial phases of the growth of a migrant stream between a community of origin and a particular destination area. Besides the impact of maturing networks, discussed in section 3.4.2, the major factor explaining these changes is trends in the costs of migration. The costs of migration will especially affect income selectivity, because, as we saw above, the poorest are least able to afford the costs of migration. If this constraint on their migration is reduced, one can expect more of them to leave their areas of origin.

One of the major social processes occurring at present is 'time-space convergence' (Janelle 1968). Due to faster, and increased, telecommunication links, and improved transport facilities, the distance between places becomes less of an obstacle, and, for all practical purposes, shrinks. Marx called this process the annihilation of space by time. An example of this is the changes occurring among the Frafra of Ghana (Population Information Program 1983:M-255, also see the description of Pedi and Ndzundza-Ndbele migration in 19<sup>th</sup> century South Africa - chapter 7 below):

The Frafra of northeastern Ghana who migrated in the 1930's had to walk for two or three weeks to cover the 330 miles to the city of Kumasi. In the 1970's they could travel the 500 miles to Accra in a single day by bus or truck for the relatively small sum of two pounds (UK).

In South Africa, the rise of the kombi-taxi industry led to a similar rise in the mobility of the population due to increased access to transport. These changes reduce the cost of transport, and increase the amount of information people have about migration destinations. In this way the deterrent effects of distance on migration is reduced. The implementation of universal education with its impact on literacy levels and thus the amount of information at the disposal of people will similarly reduce the costs of migration for most people.

There are limits to the extent to which these changes will reduce the costs of migration. One of the reasons for this is that the fruits of the process of time/space convergence are unequally distributed, as pointed out by Doreen Massey (1991). Those with money, and/or information, are

far more able to take advantage of the new technology, and for them distance is less of an obstacle than for those who are poor. This is confirmed by David Harvey (1989:265-266), who says that “low income populations, usually lacking the means to overcome and hence command space, find themselves for the most part trapped in space”.

Another reason why the costs of migration may not decline that much is that they may not have been so high to begin with. This will be the case if there is a significant amount of recruiting done by employers. In South Africa, for example, there was a labour shortage for most of the period of capitalist development until around the 1960's . Much of the work on offer was low paying and unpleasant, or dangerous (especially in the mining and farming sectors), and employers constantly complained about not having enough workers (Greenberg 1980:152). In an attempt to induce more migration employers recruited workers by using touts, general dealers, and later on, labour bureaus in the former homeland areas of South Africa. This system lowered the costs of migration because workers received cash advances and free or subsidised transport and lodging. This situation changed after the early 1970's when the economy moved into a permanent labour surplus mode. Recruitment stopped and job seekers had to make their own way to town to look for work

The final reason is that although some of the costs associated with migration may be lowered, others may rise. Transport and information costs may be reduced, but in most cases the subsistence costs entered into while looking for work increase. This is due to the increased unemployment rates that characterise the development process in most Third World societies. It takes, on average, now much longer to find a job than before, with a resultant increase in subsistence costs while looking for a job.

#### 3.4.2 MASSEY ET AL.'S STUDY OF CROSS-BORDER MIGRATION FROM MEXICO

Besides changes in the costs of migration, selectivity is influenced by migrant networks. If more people get, over time, access to networks that link migrants and non-migrants, selectivity is likely to decline. This is because networks subsidise the costs of migration. In a study done on transnational migration from Mexico to the US, Douglas Massey and his associates (1994a) argue for an interpretation along these lines. Their study is very important and is going to be the major

focus of my attempt to combine the literature on remittances and inequality on the one hand with a focus on the unfolding of selectivity as the migration process develops on the other. In the process of combining these two, I hope to shed some more light on both. In particular it opens up a new approach to the literature on the impact of remittances on inequality. It also enriches the work of Massey et al., since it shows that the discussion around changes in selectivity has implications for policy beyond those already recognized.

According to Massey et al. the first cross border migrants from Mexico to the U.S. in a typical village are selected in terms of income, age and gender, as previously indicated. This is because of the costs as well as the risks associated with cross-border migration. Soon however, there are enough people with migration experience in that community to act as bridge headers for the rest of their families. Chain migration then ensues. These networks reduce the costs and risks of migration, thus reducing the amount of selection in migration streams. Since their (1994a:1495) argument is quite important in this context, it is worth quoting in full.

International migration is a costly and risky exercise, and those who undertake it are usually selected on demographic, social, economic, and psychological grounds. Social capital, however, plays a powerful role in mitigating these costs and risks, and its accumulation over time tends to reduce the selectivity of migration. Variation in the amount and quality of social capital can, therefore, produce very different migration streams over time and across communities, making migration patterns appear to be discrepant when, in fact, they reflect the same underlying process.

They argue as a result of this that variation in selectivity that appears in cross-sectional studies of villages will disappear once the length of time those villages have been engaging in cross-border migration is taken into account. A similar argument is advanced by Zoomers (1986:64-65) and Skeldon (1990:66, 185). Villages that have been engaged in cross-border migration for a longer time will exhibit less selectivity than those that have recently been linked into the process. Synchronic variation should therefore disappear if we can fit villages diachronically into different stages of a developmental process.

In order to allow comparison between communities that are at similar stages in this developmental process but in different parts of calendar time, Massey et al. (1994a) developed what they call the migration prevalence ratio. They (1994a:1495) describe it as follows:

For any community in any year, the prevalence ratio is defined as the number of people

with international migratory experience divided by the total number of people alive. It can be calculated retrospectively for any year in the recent past given just two pieces of information: the date of each respondent's birth and the date of his or her first foreign trip.

By applying this instrument, they argue, it is possible to see if communities with a longer history of cross-border migration produce less selectivity and thus test their hypothesis.

Massey et al (1994a) applied this instrument in a survey of 19 Mexican villages in Western Mexico, a part of Mexico that sends large numbers of migrants to the U.S. They (1994a:1513) calculated migration prevalence ratios for each community for every year since 1940, and then assigned each 'community year' to one of five prevalence categories. Each category represents a stage in the evolution of migration, from low exposure to international migration to the stage of mass migration. A migration prevalence level of less than 10% of the population defined the first category, less than 20% the second, and so on, until the category of mass migration where more than 40% is involved in migration, is reached. All 19 villages fell into the first category, 18 of them reached the second, 15 the third, eight the fourth, and only two of these evolved into the stage of mass migration.

The five categories of the migration prevalence ratio serve as the independent variables in their study (Massey et al. 1994a:1513). They attempt to find out if common patterns can be observed in the migration streams of these villages by comparing the characteristics of these streams between different prevalence levels. The indicator used to measure the amount of selectivity present in migration streams is the diversity index (Massey et al. 1994a:1518). The diversity index for each dependent variable is compiled by looking at the distribution of the migrants between the different categories of that variable. Educational level, for example, is divided by them (Massey et al. 1994a:1525) into 3 categories: none, 1-5 years, and more than 6 years. If all the migrants are concentrated in the lowest educational category, for example, diversity is zero. Conversely, if the migrants are distributed evenly between the three categories, diversity is at its maximum (100%).

Given my interest in socioeconomic selectivity I shall focus on their discussion of this aspect. They (Massey et al. 1994a:1525) investigate the educational levels, property ownership and Mexican occupation of migrants in the year before their first U.S. trip. According to them (Massey et al.

1994a:1526) the diversity of the migrant stream with respect to educational levels increases over time as villages move from low to high prevalence. Diversity varies from 36% in the first stage, 53% in the second, 55% in the third, 51% in the fourth, and 63% in the last stage. Since the prevalence rate of the last stage is calculated using only two (largely agricultural) villages, by their own admission (Massey et al. 1994a:1526) there has to be some doubt about the generalisability of the trends observed in this stage. This leaves us with a fairly stable pattern (that is 53%, 55% and 51%) after an initial increase in diversity from 36%.

Massey et al. (1994a) did not calculate a diversity index for land and business ownership. The reason for this is probably the fact that, in all the prevalence categories, only a small proportion of migrants were owners, with the result that the diversity index would give a low reading in all the phases. Land ownership starts from 6% and 8% of migrants respectively in the first two phases, move to 5% in the third and fourth phases and ends in 0,5% in the last phase. Massey et al. (1994a:1526) assert that these changes are an indication of a declining selectivity, but it is unclear why they think this. The very low proportion of land ownership in all the prevalence categories certainly cannot be an indication that it is at first the middle poor who migrate and that it changes later on. According to Massey et al. (1994a:1526) they could not discern a clear trend for business ownership, due to fluctuating ownership patterns between the prevalence phases.

Massey et al. (1994a:1526-1527) also compared the proportion of migrants who were engaged in agricultural occupations over the prevalence categories. Here they found a curvilinear pattern, with the proportion of agricultural occupations starting off at a high level, then declining and rising again in the last two prevalence categories. In addition Massey et al. (1994a:1527) calculated diversity indexes for occupational groups (such as skilled manual, unskilled manual and services). The trend observed is once again a curvilinear one, starting with low diversity, increasing after that and tailing off again in the last two prevalence stages.

If we, for the moment, accept Massey et al.'s (1994a) indicator of selectivity (the diversity index) as valid, one can conclude that they found a limited amount of confirmation of their thesis of declining socio-economic selectivity, as well as some contrasting evidence that selectivity may rise again after declining initially. Major doubts exist, however, about the validity of the diversity index

as an indicator of selectivity. A migrant stream is selective in so far as it deviates with regard to a particular variable (say income) from the distribution observed in the village of origin (see my definition of selectivity at the beginning of this chapter). In order to make meaningful observations about selectivity one therefore needs information about the distribution of this variable both in the migrant stream and in the village of origin. Massey et al.'s (1994a) research design makes it, however, unlikely that they would have been able to find the information about village characteristics that are necessary for a proper study of selectivity. They work with migrants in community years stretching all the way back to 1940, and therefore need information about village characteristics for every year since 1940. Since it is unlikely that such a data set exists, and since it is impossible to reconstruct it retrospectively, they are forced to rely on an indicator such as the diversity index.

The diversity index measures the uniformity or diversity of the migrant stream as such, without any reference to the characteristics of the village of origin. There is, however, no guarantee that a highly diverse migrant stream is a correct indicator of low selectivity. It was pointed out above that the diversity index is an indication of how evenly migrants are distributed over the categories of a particular variable. Consider the following example. Let us say that educational level is divided into four categories (e.g. no schooling, primary, secondary and tertiary), and that migrants from village A are distributed as follows between these categories.

**Table 3.1**  
**Educational levels of migrants in village A**

No schooling	Primary	Secondary	Tertiary
60%	20%	10%	10%

Because the majority of migrants are clustered into the first category, it is clear that this migrant stream will yield a very low diversity index, indicating, according to (Massey et al. 1994a), that selectivity is high. If, however, the total population of village A exhibits the same distribution, that is 60% has no schooling, 20% only a primary schooling, 10% secondary and 10% tertiary, the selectivity of migration will be zero far as education is concerned. In other words, migrants are a random sample of the population of origin in this regard.

Now let us assume that the distribution of educational level stays the same over time in village A, but that the composition of the migrant stream changes. The latter now looks like the following:

**Table 3.2**  
**Educational level of migrants at a later date**

No schooling	Primary	Secondary	Tertiary
30%	20%	30%	20%

The diversity of the migrant stream has evidently become much less, and according to Massey et al. (1994a), it is now an indication of less selectivity. Given that the distribution of the whole village has stayed the same, it is, however, very obvious that the migrant stream has in fact become much more selective. There is now a much greater tendency than before for migrants to be more educated than the population of origin.

This leads us to the conclusion that the diversity index is a very poor indicator of migrant selectivity and that Massey et al.'s (1994a) conclusions with regard to selectivity cannot be regarded as carrying much weight. The only place where the diversity index will yield anything close to meaningful results is with a variable such as sex, which should, under most circumstances, be relatively evenly distributed among the population of origin. It is unfortunate (and ironic) that Massey et al.'s (1994a) very original attempt to account for diachronic variation (by standardising communities according to their stage of migration prevalence) should at the same time make it impossible for them to take a proper measurement of changes in selectivity.

#### 3.4.3. AN ALTERNATIVE APPROACH TO THE DEVELOPMENT OF SELECTIVITY: THE WORK OF RICHARD JONES

For an alternative view of the development of selectivity I now turn to the work of Richard Jones (1998). Jones's article is in fact about the effect of remittances on inequality, but I discuss his work here rather than at the end of chapter 2 or two reasons: he places much emphasis on changes in the selectivity of migration, and he uses a different approach from the authors discussed at the end of chapter one - he does not estimate non-migration income using econometric techniques and

he does not use Gini-indices to measure inequality.

For Jones (1998:11-12), the selectivity of migration is an important factor in determining how remittances will be distributed in a community. Like Lipton (1980) and Stark et al. (1986), Jones (1998:14) explains changes in selectivity (specifically income selectivity) by regarding migration as the diffusion of an innovation. In terms of this framework, migration goes through three phases as it spreads through a community, according to Jones: the innovator, the early adopter and the late adopter stages. In the innovator stage, the selectivity of migration is high, and only members of relatively well-off households migrate. In this stage, migration will worsen the pre-existing income distribution. Income inequality decrease in the early adaptor stage as communication between the innovators and the other residents introduce more people to migration, especially those who are less well-off. In this stage the selectivity of migration decreases. This trend is reversed again in the late adaptor stage. In this stage, the community becomes divided between a migrant class and an “expanding non-migrant class composed of poor families who have never sent migrants or who are inactive” (Jones 1998:14). The income distribution in the community becomes more skewed as selectivity increases. What Jones is therefore proposing is a U-shaped curve for the development of selectivity. Selectivity is first high, then it decreases and ultimately it increases again.

Jones unfortunately does not explain why selectivity should follow this trend. The changes occurring from the innovator to the early adaptor phases have been described numerous times by other authors and relates to the expansion of networks that lower the costs of migration. Why this process should be reversed in the last phase is not at all well explained by Jones, however. One gathers that it has to do with the observation that households who have previously sent people are not doing so anymore, but it is not clear why this should happen. Presumably this is because some households are better able to establish migrant networks than others. The absence of an appropriate explanation for this is a major shortcoming of Jones's theory. Through the addition of this third phase Jones's theory becomes very different from that of Massey et al. in its implications for inequality, but he does not identify any factors that are responsible for this reversal in the pre-existing trend. In chapter 6 I shall make an argument why I think that selectivity may rise again after declining initially. I base this on changes in the costs of migration

as well as the capacity of networks to subsidise the costs of migration.

### 3.5 CONCLUSION

From this discussion it emerges that the functioning of networks is crucial to our understanding of what will happen to the selectivity of migration over time. There does not appear to be any conclusive empirical studies with regard to how migrant streams change, as we saw from our discussion of Massey et al.'s work, and this question is thus still wide open. According to Dinerman (1978:498) the poorest do not have the resources to 'build and maintain wide social networks linking them to other households' and will as a result not be represented in migration streams. We therefore need to answer the question of whether resources are necessary to maintain access to networks or not. If the answer is 'yes', Massey et al.'s argument will at most apply to the age and gender selectivity of migration, and not to income selectivity. The next chapter is devoted to a discussion of networks in an attempt to illuminate this question.

## CHAPTER FOUR

### SOCIAL NETWORKS IN THE MIGRATION PROCESS

#### 4.1 INTRODUCTION

Interest in the role of networks in the migration process dates from the 1970's. The issue came to the fore for two, related, reasons. The first was the collapse of modernization theory as a description of social development in the Third World. Modernization theorists such as Talcott Parsons claimed that the extended family will be replaced by the isolated nuclear family during the modernization process (Choldin 1973, Gelderblom and Kok 1994:16-18). Over time it became clear, however, that extended families, as well as wider kinship structures, continue to be important features of developing societies. Poor people, in particular, try to keep extended family structures intact, as well as maintaining intense contacts with wider kinship structures. Family structures therefore become neither nuclear nor isolated from wider kinship structures during modernization, critics maintained. This is because kinship networks offer mutual support in times of crisis, as well as easing the migration process of individuals. Because of the continuing relevance of kinship networks, studies of rural-urban migration can consequently not ignore the role played by them.

The second reason why an interest in networks developed concerns the critique of the so-called myth of marginality (Perlman 1976). Studies of the urban structure of Latin American countries used to assume, much along the lines of modernization theory, that recent rural-urban migrants are socially and politically isolated from the wider urban community (this became known as the marginality-thesis) and suffered from the social disorganisation caused by recent migration. In contrast to this, analysts now stressed that rural-urban migration does not necessarily sever the links between migrants and their communities of origin and therefore does not have to lead to social disorganisation<sup>1</sup> (Kearney 1986). It became evident that the social links between the areas

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<sup>1</sup> In this chapter I shall show that, in some cases, these links are indeed broken, with negative implications for the migration prospects of those who have stayed behind.

of origin and the urban areas play an important role in facilitating the process of rural-urban migration. Within the urban areas there are also diverse kinship and communal networks that formed the basis for organized community life (Gurak and Caces 1992:154), once again focussing attention on the role of networks.

Studies of networks in migration focussed largely on their role in reducing the costs of migration. A prominent example of this is the work of Massey and his associates, to which I referred at the end of the previous chapter. In this chapter I intend going beyond this focus by investigating what Boyd (1989) calls the dynamics of networks. She (1989:655) believes that we should in particular establish why networks may fail to appear or why they may weaken and disappear. Another issue that Boyd feels should receive attention is conceptual issues surrounding networks. In this respect I consider, amongst others, the insights to be derived from the sociological tradition of network analysis, which has developed largely independently of the migration literature's study of networks. I use Davern's (1997) distinction between the structural, normative and resource aspects of networks to discuss the structure and functioning of migration networks.

## **4.2 CONCEPTUAL ISSUES SURROUNDING NETWORKS**

### **4.2.1 DEFINING NETWORKS**

In the most formal sense, a network can be defined as a set of interconnected nodes (Castells 1996:470). In the case of social networks, the nodes represent actors, whether these be individuals or organisations, and the connections are social bonds between actors (Davern 1997:288). A tradition of network analysis has developed in sociology that uses this definition of networks. This conception of social networks is more formalistic than the definition typically used by the migration literature, but it has the advantage of focussing attention on the structure of networks. I shall return to this issue when I discuss network structure.

The migration literature has not made much use of the sociological tradition of network analysis up to now (Boyd 1989:654, Gurak and Caces 1992:160). The contribution of urban

anthropologists and specifically the work of Larissa Lomnitz (1977) on the social ties of shantytown dwellers in Mexico city has been more influential in forming the migration literature's conception of networks<sup>2</sup>. According to her (1977:3-4) shantytowns are inhabited by people who do not have access to jobs in the formal sector of the economy. They have low levels of skill, are consequently badly paid, enjoy little job security, and often work in the informal sector. This raises the question of how they manage to survive. The answer is that they use the only resource that they have in abundance, which is their kinship and friendship ties. They help their kin or friends when these are in need or when they have something extra to share and expect to be helped in turn. Lomnitz calls this reciprocal exchange. Reciprocal exchange smooths over the irregular earnings of people who are frequently unemployed and provides security in the form of loans during times of crisis. Those who participate in these exchanges form a network. Lomnitz (1977:132) consequently defines a network as 'the flow of reciprocal exchange of goods, services, and economically valuable information'. In terms of the formal definition offered above, the nodes are individual poor people and the connections are kinship and friendship ties. The purpose of the network determines the form that the network will take and this is captured by the term 'organising focus' (see Gurak and Caces 1992:162). The organising focus of the network in this case is reciprocal exchange for survival.

In Lomnitz's case the organising focus of the network does not involve facilitation of migration. It is however not a great conceptual leap to broaden the conception of networks to include this as one of the organising functions of the network. This is done in Kearney's (1986) conception of the articulatory migrant network, which she (1986:354) defines as a 'vascular system through which flows persons, information, goods, services and economic value'. Kearney's metaphor of the vascular system suggests that people and other things circulate within the network along well-defined paths, linking at least two and sometimes a number of places<sup>3</sup>. When migrants leave home they continue to circulate between origin and destination areas, carrying information, money and

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<sup>2</sup> This paragraph is based primarily on Gelderblom and Kok (1994:38).

<sup>3</sup> Kearney's use of the term 'articulatory' to describe migrant networks is derived from the modes of production literature and is intended to focus attention on the way in which networks connect different modes of production in urban and rural areas. This aspect does not feature very strongly in my own conception of networks and I shall therefore dispense with the use of the term 'articulatory'.

goods between the two. Besides calling attention to circulation, the metaphor of the vascular system also suggests images of well-worn paths traced through space along which the migrant can proceed more easily.

It is evident that in a migrant network the actual spatial distribution of the individuals (nodes) in the network comes to the fore. This is different from the tradition of network analysis in sociology, where the distribution of individuals in social space is considered but their arrangement in geographical space is ignored. When considering the structure of the migrant network we therefore have to look at how people are distributed in space between origin and destination areas. It is clear that migrant networks can vary in terms of their spatial complexity. In the simplest case the network will link one origin and one destination area. More complex networks can stretch over numerous origin and destination areas, and can facilitate any combination of rural-urban, urban-rural, urban-urban as well as rural-rural migration. It can also grow to include international destination areas. Networks are especially important in the case of international migration. The cost of international migration is high and this brings the cost-reducing properties of the network to the fore (Gurak and Caces 1992:153).

Because of the physical distance covered by migrant networks more effort has to be put into maintaining them (Gurak and Caces 1992:152) and the probability of being separated from such a network consequently increases. If s/he does not like the responsibility of supporting the family left behind in a distant rural area a migrant family member can easily disappear in the big city, compared to a situation where the whole family lives together in the same place. In the case of migrant networks the rule of 'out of sight, out of mind' applies. It is consequently important that news in the form of letters and phone calls, as well as gifts and visitors keep on circulating in the migrant network so that the social bonds sustaining it does not wither away. Boyd (1989:650) mentions four ways in which migrant networks are maintained over space: 1) through return migration of previous migrants; 2) visits of migrants; 3) activities such as sports associations or village fetes linking the area of origin and the destination area; and 4) 'marriages which sustain kinship obligations across time and space...' (Boyd 1989:650). Gurak and Caces (1992:152) hypothesise that migrant networks may function differently than the community-based social support networks studied by Lomnitz because of the effort involved in sustaining migrant

networks.

Another definition of migrant networks is offered by Massey et al. (1994b:728). According to them migrant networks are 'sets of interpersonal ties that connect migrants, former migrants, and nonmigrants in origin and destination areas through ties of kinship, friendship, and shared community origin.' Reciprocal exchange is, as in the case of Lomnitz's networks, the basis of the migrant network. This implies that an individual will be helped to migrate, let's say from a rural area to town, by connections living in town on the understanding that s/he will be able to help them some time in future (as we shall see, this aspect of network functioning is important in determining how networks will develop over time and who will be included in the network and who excluded). Reciprocal exchange involves trust that the beneficiary at one stage will reciprocate at a later stage, as well as normative prescriptions that one should help others. It is here that the interpersonal ties referred to by Massey et al. (1994) comes to the fore. Because they involve ties of long standing, they provide the basis for trust. This trust increases the likelihood that an individual will be helped by someone else in the network. The advantages accruing to an individual by virtue of network membership (such as the help received during migration) is called 'social capital' (Massey and Espinosa 1997:951). It is therefore clear that networks generate social capital which can facilitate migration.

By mentioning former migrants in their definition, Massey et al. draw attention to the fact that the facilitator of migration is often a previous migrant him/herself. This is why migration that takes place with the help of networks has often been called chain migration (see for example Banerjee 1983). In chain migration the process is set in motion by a pioneering migrant. Once the pioneer has established him/herself in the new location, they are now in a position to help others who belong to the network to migrate as well. As a result a chain is formed between origin and destination communities by which the initial migration leads to a stream of new migrants.

Drawing all the elements discussed previously together, we can define a migrant network as the social ties between a set of geographically dispersed individuals that facilitate the circulation of people, information and goods.

#### 4.2.2 DEFINING THE HOUSEHOLD

Given our definition of the migrant network, the question arises how the migrant network can be differentiated from the household, since the household is also a group of (sometimes spatially dispersed) individuals linked together by social ties. The question is therefore one of boundary maintenance and specifically in terms of what factors households maintain boundaries with networks<sup>4</sup>. While we need to conceptually distinguish between household and network, the extent to which households are in practice distinct from networks is always a matter of empirical observation. I point out below that households are not always clearly distinguishable entities.

Bossen (1981) offers one way to distinguish between the two. Her (1981:291) solution to the problem of boundary maintenance is to associate the household with investment and the network with consumption and expense sharing. She is critical of the view of the household that regards it as being mostly concerned with short term survival of household members. According to her a household can be identified by the existence of a mutual long-term commitment to acquire durable assets. Households try to improve the long-term economic security of their members by acquiring assets such as land, housing and cattle. These are the savings of the household and can be sold to acquire cash when necessary. Whereas the household is concerned with long-term commitments and savings, the network is involved in short-term reciprocal exchange to facilitate consumption, according to her. Households therefore go together with ownership relations. It is in the nature of establishing ownership relations that it must be made very clear who has a claim on these household assets, and who has not. The boundary defined for this purpose is the boundary in terms of which boundary maintenance with the network is going to occur. The problem of boundary maintenance can thus be resolved, Bossen believes.

It is certainly true that the household is more likely to be a unit of investment than the network. It is common knowledge that households acquire durable assets, such as housing. Because the network is more likely to be ephemeral than the household, it is not such a good vehicle for long term investment. Households by contrast are more likely to be stable, simply because they are often based on closer family connections than the network. It is not however true that households

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<sup>4</sup> This discussion is partly based on Gelderblom and Kok (1994:44-47).

are **always** units of investment, and sometimes the network can also be a unit of investment. Investment is therefore **one** of the distinguishing characteristics of households but it cannot be the only one. Moreover, the absence of investment cannot disqualify a domestic unit from being a household. It is neither a necessary nor a sufficient characteristic of the household but certainly a common one.

The first justification for this position is that households can sometimes be very unstable. In the South African context it has been pointed out (cf. Spiegel 1987, Spiegel et al. 1996) that extreme poverty and violent urban conflict can prevent household consolidation, with the result that households keep breaking up and reforming. Household catastrophes such as the death or unemployment of a breadwinner, for example, may necessitate the transferral of household members to other households. Household fission and fusion is not restricted to South Africa - elsewhere in Africa (and increasingly in South Africa itself) the death of caregivers in the household, caused by the Aids epidemic, often leads to the fragmentation and then reconstitution of households. When subjected to so much instability, households cannot be vehicles for long term projects such as capital accumulation.

In addition the household can be distinguished from the network by investment only as long as it has capital goods to share. Under circumstances of extreme poverty there may be nothing to inherit. Gender and age divisions within the household must also be factored into the equation in the sense that a wife or a child may have a very tenuous claim on household assets. In the rural areas of South Africa the most likely asset a household will invest in, besides a house, is cattle. There are, however, cultural restrictions that prohibit a woman from being directly associated with cattle. By investing in cattle, a male migrant worker can acquire assets that his wife has no independent claim to (cf. Sharp and Spiegel 1990). This indicates that not everybody in the household participate on equal terms in the investment fund and that some might be excluded altogether. In that case, they are also excluded per definition from being household members, which in the case of a wife is clearly nonsensical.

It is also possible to become part of two investment funds, one belonging to the 'household' and one to the 'network'. Think for example of the case where a male migrant worker invests in cattle

that is grazed on his uncle's farm. These cattle are clearly identified as belonging to him, and as being distinct from his uncle's cattle, and thus a household is established around these assets. But what happens if he and his uncle decide to buy a light truck together and begin a small-scale transport business? There are now two investment funds, with the last one clearly belonging to the network and not to any individual household.

All of the above lead to the conclusion that households are more likely to be identified by investment funds than the network, but this does not mean that they are the only entities to be so identified. Given that the long-term commitments necessary for investment is not always present in the household, we should perhaps return to the idea of associating the household with short-term reciprocal exchange.

According to Lomnitz, (1977:132-134) the intensity of exchange within the network depends on the following four factors:

- a) formal social distance, i.e. how closely people are related to each other (more exchange between brothers than between distant relatives and friends);
- b) physical distance (more exchange between people living together or between neighbours than between people separated over greater distances),
- c) economic distance: if the difference in the income levels of people is too great, the poorest will not be able to reciprocate - given the necessity of reciprocity for the functioning of networks, they will thus be excluded from such exchange;
- d) psychosocial distance: in this case the intensity of exchange will depend on how closely people feel to one another.

Except for the issue of economic distance which will be discussed below, the other three kinds of distance are relevant for our conception of the household. Networks consist of family, friendship and neighbourhood ties and, as discussed previously, the reciprocal exchange between network members depends on these ties. If the intensity of exchange between household members is higher, one can expect that the closeness of these ties must also be greater. Because households generally consist of closer family ties (at least the nuclear or extended family) the formal and probably psychosocial distance between household members are also less. This justifies the view of the household as a site of more intense exchange within the network.

One problem with this view, however, is that intense exchange obligations can exist between people who are not necessarily part of the same household. Townsend (1997) refers to the obligations surrounding the position of mother's brother in Tswana society. Because of the obligation to help their sister's children, men may have less money to share with their own household, according to Townsend. We also have to take into consideration divisions within the household with regard to the amount of exchange taking place. Kotze (1993:80-81) describes for example, the situation in Dixie, an impoverished settlement close to the Kruger National Park. Here households often contain members of the extended family. A distinction is often made, however, between the more extensive obligations between the nuclear (mother and child) unit within the household on the one hand and obligations to other household members on the other. For example, if a mother leaves her child in the care of her grandparents, she is supposed to make contributions to the upkeep of that child. The money she gives for that purpose is then earmarked for that child only and other children in the household may go hungry as a result. The situation is therefore that even though the household is generally a zone of more intense exchange we also have to recognise the existence of smaller units within the household that may be characterised by even more intense exchange. This makes it clear that we need more than the criterion of more intense exchange in order to distinguish the household.

This brings us to the third factor determining the amount of exchange taking place in the network, viz. that of physical distance. According to Lomnitz the amount of reciprocal exchange increases the closer people live to each other. If you have to borrow money or the proverbial cup of sugar to help you out, it is much easier to run next door to your sister's place than to a relative that lives three blocks away. Households for Lomnitz (1977:100) are units where people share a common residence in the sense that they either live on the same plot or on adjoining plots and this is another element of her definition of the household. She calls this residential proximity. Besides being a factor in determining the amount of exchange going to take place, residential proximity is for Lomnitz important in its own right as part of the definition of the household.

Although the notion of co-residence (or residential proximity) very often forms part of the

definition of the household in the literature, this is not a convention that I shall follow, however. In my previous discussion (in chapter 3) of the household strategies approach I indicated how poor households can improve their overall welfare by allocating their members between different places. If this can be such an important part of the sustenance strategy of households, it does not make sense to define them in terms of co-residence<sup>5</sup>. Boundary maintenance therefore does not have to take place around the idea that all household members live together. It is in fact quite possible for the household to maintain itself as a unit while being physically dispersed like that. According to Parson (1984:15) 'such a household has an integrity of its own which bridges or rather incorporates its physical dispersion to a number of geographical locations, rural and urban, within the wider society.' (Also see Caces et al. 1985:7). Nevertheless, the notion of 'co-residence' is used so commonly as part of the definition of the household that it is worth a closer look. We should perhaps try to establish what function the notion of 'co-residence' fulfills in the typical definition of the household and then see if we can retain part of the meaning suggested by 'co-residence' without implying that all household members are presently residing there.

I shall start with Lomnitz's definition of the household. She (Lomnitz 1977:133) defines a household as a kinship group who live closely together and who share certain domestic functions such as child raising and cooking. By sharing these tasks, the household can utilize its labour more efficiently and thus improve its economic welfare. As will become evident shortly, this is a very important point for our conception of the household. The household can achieve economies of scale, so to speak, by pooling its labour in this way<sup>6</sup>. It is more time- and cost efficient to prepare food for a number of people than for one person, for example. The aspect of residential proximity and the functions of shared domestic tasks such as childcare and cooking are related. It is easier to do these tasks together if people also live together. Co-residence therefore facilitates the pooling of household labour for domestic tasks. Living together also makes for more efficient use of scarce residential space, for obvious reasons. For poor people the problems caused by overcrowding, such as lack of privacy, is easily outweighed by the costs of building another house

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<sup>5</sup> This is an extended discussion of ideas first raised in Gelderblom and Kok (1994:39-41).

<sup>6</sup> I ignore, for the moment, the gender division of labour that often goes with matters such as common food preparation. The existence of the gender division of labour does not, by itself, falsify the point that it is more efficient to pool labour.

to accommodate the overflow.

This discussion suggests that a household can gain material advantages from organising their residential behaviour in a co-resident way - it helps the reproduction of the household. In the previous chapter I have provided numerous examples of how households can increase their economic welfare through the spatial diffusion of some of its members. Organising their residential behaviour in a different way from co-residence can therefore also provide material advantages. A household can for example 'live in the countryside and earn in the city' so that they benefit both from the cheaper consumption costs in the rural areas and the job opportunities of the town. It can also send its wage earners to different places as a form of insurance against the possibility that an economic downturn in one place (such as a manufacturing plant shutting down) does not deprive them of their only wage earning possibilities.

One can use Brown and Sander's conception of place utility to conceptualise this. It refers to the level of satisfaction experienced with a given residential location. They (Brown and Sanders 1981:150) regard migration as the substitution of one residential location for another 'in order to increase the place utility experienced at the residential site'. They are describing here the conventional scenario of permanent migration where migration involves the substitution of one residential place for another, but the concept of place utility can just as easily be used to describe a situation where the place utility of different places are combined and the household does not lose the utility of one place if a new one is added to its portfolio of residential locations. In this case we are dealing not with the permanent migration of the household but with circulation of household members between different places.

Spatial diffusion is therefore a different way of pooling the labour of household members, compared to the strategy of co-residence, but, I argue, the underlying principle is the same. In both cases a particular residential organisation helps to improve the welfare of household members. The idea of residential behaviour seems to be a fundamental part of our conception of the household and should be included in our definition of it. Because of the advantages provided by co-residence in the domestic labour and consumption aspects of the household, one seldom finds diffusion without at least some part of the household engaging in co-residence. The diffusion

part is more useful for the income-generating function. In terms of the production and consumption distinction, diffusion often refers to the production (or income-generating) part of the household whereas co-residence makes more sense from the consumption (or reproduction) perspective.

To return to the question I asked a few paragraphs ago: what function does co-residence fulfill in the typical definition of the household? It is clear that co-residence is, in terms of Lomnitz's conception of the household, a kind of coordinated residential behaviour. For people to live together, there must be a mutual understanding of who sleeps where, for example, which suggests some degree of coordination. The existence of a degree of coordination does not necessarily mean that there is complete consensus among household members about the way in which they are organising their residential behaviour - it is possible to have a conflict over goals simultaneously with the coordination of behaviour. Residential coordination merely suggests that people are orienting their actions towards each other in this respect. Being one of a number of kinds of residential organisation typifying households, suggests, I want to argue, that co-residence is just a special case of a more general phenomenon. This is an important point. The concept 'household' is closely related to the existence of some kind of residential behaviour, but this does not have to be in the form of co-residence, or Lomnitz's version of it, residential proximity. Far from being the defining form of residential behaviour, it is just one of a number of forms of it.

In my discussion up to now I have stressed the functional aspects of residential coordination, in other words the ways in which it helps to improve the household's material reproduction. But this does not mean that people only engage in coordinated residential behaviour because it improves their welfare - there are cultural reasons (for example the ideology of the nuclear family that prescribes living together) or simply reasons of habit why they do so. Neither does it mean that residential behaviour is always animated by the pursuit of material gain. Even if it has such a purpose it may not be successful in attaining it. Residential behaviour may have unintended consequences that results in household members being disadvantaged by it, rather than gaining from it. We also cannot assume that everybody gains to the same extent from a particular form of residential organisation - for a woman left behind in a rural area whose husband is a migrant worker, the costs can outweigh the benefits. The actual form taken by a household's residential

behaviour can consequently also be the outcome of conflict and negotiation of interests between household members.

I have chosen to use the terms 'coordinated residential behaviour' rather than 'residential strategy'. The concept 'household strategies' has been subjected to some criticism recently (see for example Wolf 1990). Not all of the criticisms are valid, I think (e.g. I doubt that the existence of a household strategy necessarily implies consensus over the nature of that strategy), but one problem I do have with the idea of a household strategy is that it presents household residential behaviour too strongly as the outcome of stable and long-term plans. In some cases households' residential behaviour are indeed coordinated with such plans in mind, but this is by no means inevitable. The amount of conscious decision-making varies from household to household and from time to time in the life of the same household. It can happen, for example, that a household develops a particular settlement pattern unthinkingly, and only comes to realise its advantages after the fact. In general, residential behaviour seems to consist of a combination of unthinking adherence to habit, some short-term responses to changing circumstances, and a degree of planning.

The question can arise what advantage it can have to use an abstract concept such as 'organised residential behaviour' in one's characterisation of the household. My answer is that the spatial aspect of the household is very important. The argument I would advance in this respect is indebted to the more generalised concern to incorporate time and space in the understanding of social development, as evinced in the work of the human geographer Torsten Hägerstrand (1969, also see Pred 1977). Hägerstrand makes the movements of individuals through time and space the central focus of his time-geography. For this purpose he constructs time-space paths (which look much like the world-lines constructed by particle physicists for elementary particles) which trace the movements of individuals over different time scales. On a daily basis, individuals move for example between a number of 'stations' where they meet others to participate in common activities. The movement from 'home' to 'work' is an example of this. Seen from this perspective, it becomes apparent that people weave complex paths through time and space, as they congregate and disperse over a number of stations. Over the longer run, social transformations, such as the destruction of labour tenancy, can be depicted in terms of the impact it has had on the time-space

paths of individuals.

Using Hägerstrand's perspective, I argue that a household comes into being around one (co-residence) or a number of living spaces where the daily (and more long-term) time-space paths of a group of individuals intersect. Individuals circulate in and out of these spaces on a daily, weekly or longer term basis to go off to work, school or to go shopping, among other things. Congregation around the 'home-base' (if it is a spatially diffused household) is typically important from the perspective of the reproduction of the household (domestic tasks, consumption and leisure time), while the outpost living spaces are important as a base from which to access employment. In order to maintain the integrity of the household, much circulation between the different living spaces of the household is required. Household members who occupy the outposts must return to the home base from time to time, while the outposts are used as a base for others to visit the doctor, look for work, go shopping, etc.

To summarise this discussion: I have identified a number of characteristics in terms of which the household can be defined. Households are units of investment that also function as intense nodes of exchange for day-to-day survival. In addition they are characterised by coordinated residential behaviour. Households are distinguished from migrant networks in the sense that they a) are more likely to be units of investment than networks, b) are more intense nodes of exchange, and c) have coordinated residential behaviour as their focus. They are distinguished from networks in terms of the latter criterion because the level of coordination of residential behaviour is higher in the former case. Migrant networks, by contrast, consist of individuals who make use of a spatial distribution of socially connected people that have arisen more by accident than design. I shall discuss this aspect of networks in more detail in the section on networks dynamics below.

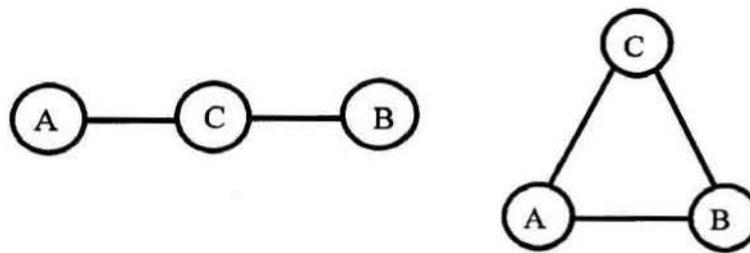
The household concept has been criticized by, among others, Spiegel et al. (1996) and Kotze (1993:82) as unworkable due to the amount of residential instability often perceived among poor people in South Africa. In their critique they refer inter alia to the tendency for people to be transferred between households. They argue that household boundaries can be very porous and that individuals, especially children, are often exchanged between households (Kotze 1993, Spiegel 1987). A boy might be sent to herd cattle for a friend or relative of the family, or a girl

to help clean and cook, for example. This is done to relieve the sender household of the strain of providing for that member, and/or to increase the labour power available to the receiving household. This practice seems to be especially common under circumstances of extreme poverty. Residential instability can be so severe that an individual may sleep and eat at numerous households, because no particular household accepts the responsibility for that individual on a permanent basis (Kotze 1993:82). Kotze relates the case of Sammy, for example. Sammy was a young boy who lived at first with his grandmother because his divorced mother, a migrant worker, was away from her own homestead for most of the time. Due to his grandmother's drinking problem he was not well looked after, however, and he left her household. With this move, Sammy isolated himself from the last household that accepted some kind of stable responsibility for him, and he now oscillated from household to household. Sometimes, when his mother returns home from work he sleeps at his mother's house. At other times he has to sleep at his friends' homes.

Even though this is an extreme case, it demonstrates that the mutual understanding in the community of who lives where can, for some individuals, be eroded. In the case of inter household transfers of people, the residential designation of a particular individual can change very quickly. This does not mean that the households concept is useless. Demonstrating that a particular entity has porous boundaries is not the same as saying that there are no boundaries at all. Spiegel and his co-workers do demonstrate, however, that households under circumstances of extreme poverty can be prevented from consolidation. In middle class households, the residential behaviour of the household involves longer term commitments. A household will, for example, invest in a house that is big enough to accommodate everyone and for that purpose it will commit itself to a bond with repayments scheduled over, say, 20 years. Even in poorer households, longer term commitments are not unusual. A migrant worker that remits money to the rural areas in order to first gain a residential site and then build a house there for his/her retirement is obviously involved in a longer term project. When household composition fluctuates, with households breaking up and reforming as in the examples provided by Spiegel, the residential behaviour of the household is of a short term nature with mere survival as its major aim.

### 4.3 NETWORK STRUCTURE

I begin my study of network structure by considering the sociological analysis of network structure. According to Davern (1997) the structure of a network is concerned with two issues, viz. the geometric arrangement of the actors and the strength of the ties between them. Network analysts assume that the geometric arrangement (in other words the distribution of actors in social space) of actors in a social network conditions the outcome of the interaction between them. This is demonstrated by the following example (derived from Davern 1997). If three actors are arranged in a triangular structure so that all the actors are directly linked to each other, the



**Figure 4.1 Direct versus indirect ties**

outcome will be different than it would be in the case of a line structure where the two actors on the extremities are connected to each other via the actor in the centre (see figure 4.1). Because, in the latter case, the central actor mediates the relationship of the other two, it can be assumed that that actor has more power in the relationship than the other two, for example.

The strength of the network tie is measured by the intensity of the interaction between actors as well as the intensity of their emotional involvement (Davern 1997). Strong ties are obviously important to the health of a network, but they also have the disadvantage that, due to the amount of effort needed to keep them intact, they limit the number of connections that can be maintained to other networks (Gurak and Caces 1992:161). In this respect, Granovetter drew attention to the importance of weak ties in networks. He (as summarised in Gurak and Caces, 1992:161-162) believes that '(w)eak ties serve as bridges, uniting diverse networks without requiring major investments by networks members and thus increasing the pool of resources potentially available to network members.' It is especially in terms of access to information that weak ties are important (Boyd 1989: 655). I discuss this issue in greater detail later in this chapter.

Davern's conception of network structure cannot be used without adaptation to describe the structure of migrant networks. The problem with his conception is that he represents the aspatial social connections between individuals in a network in a quasi-spatial way (through his conception of 'geometric arrangement'). For example, in the triangular structure, the actors are not physically located relative to each other in a triangle, but only in terms of the nature of their social bonds. The moment one adds real spatial content to one's conception of networks (as in the distribution of individuals between area of origin and destination area) it becomes confusing to use the quasi-spatial notion of 'geometric arrangement' to describe connections between individuals. I therefore substitute the question whether the links are direct or indirect for the notion of 'geometric arrangement'.

This brings me to the conclusion that four aspects are relevant for determining the structure of migrant networks. These are the spatial distribution of individuals, the nature of the linkages between them (i.e. whether these are direct or indirect), the number of ties connecting nodes (density of ties) and the strength of the ties between them (intensity of ties). It seems intuitively attractive to suppose that the structure and functioning of networks are closely interrelated. Given our focus on understanding the migration facilitating function of networks, it makes sense to consider the effects of different migrant network structures on their functioning.

a) The simplest migrant network consists of two people, one in the area of origin and one in the destination area. They are linked directly and the bond between them is strong. One can represent this configuration as follows:

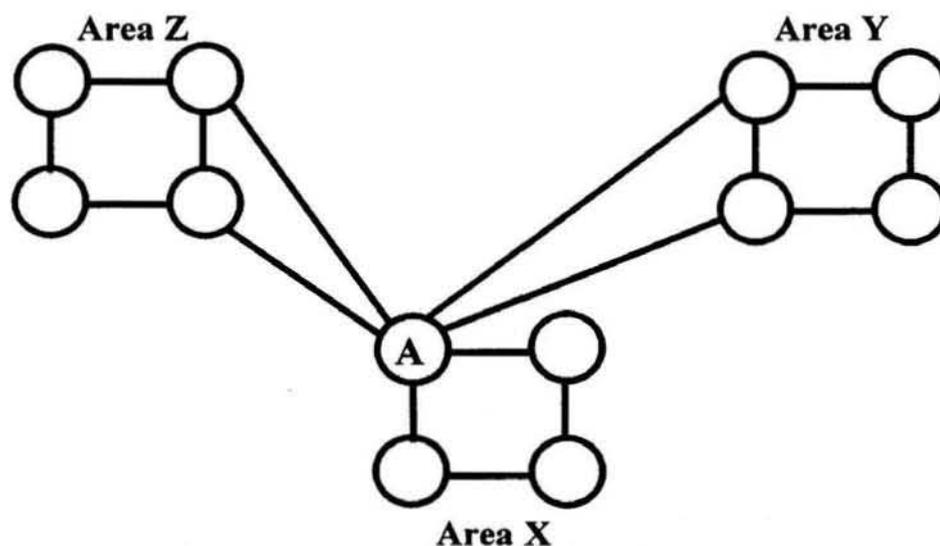


**Figure 4.2 Simple migrant network**

In this figure (figure 4.2), each node represents an individual, for example a husband and wife, who are united by a strong tie, indicated by the thick line between them. Neither of them has access to other networks. The presence of a strong tie between the two suggests that this network

is also a household.

b) The effect of network connections in particular places on the likelihood of migration is captured by the term 'auspices of migration'. This term was first used by Tilly and Brown (1967). Auspices refer to the 'social structures which establish relationships between the migrant and the receiving community before he moves' (Tilly and Brown 1967:142). Tilly and Brown's notion of 'auspices' is very similar to Massey's conception of social capital (see above p.56) and its facilitating role in migration. What is added however is the idea that social capital is invested in particular places and that a migrant is more likely to go to a place where s/he has auspices. Moreover, 'if auspices are also available in other locations, then the probability of choosing the first location may be reduced' (Caces et al. 1985:10). They also hypothesize that, in general, 'intentions to move from point X to point Z are, *ceteris paribus*, positively related to the presence and strength of auspices in point Z and negatively related to such links at any other point Y'. Caces et al. (1985) derives from this the idea of 'competing auspices', in other words the notion that the potential migrant may have a choice between alternative destination areas and that the choice is influenced by the amount of auspices available at these possible destinations. This scenario is pictured in the following figure (figure 4.3). In this figure the potential migrant (node A) is connected to people at possible destination areas Z and Y, as well as in the area of origin X.



**Figure 4.3 Competing auspices of migration**

c) Migrant networks have to be distinguished from support networks in the origin or destination areas (Kritz and Zlotnick 1992:6). They are different because they link two areas, the area of origin and the destination area, whereas the latter two are located in either an origin or a destination area. I give examples of each of these three in the figure below (figure 4.4).

d) The **intensity** of the ties between network members vary. Some are united by strong ties, as in this case, and others by weaker ties. The thickness of the lines connecting nodes vary in the figures, indicating that the bonds between the nodes are of varying intensity. Weak ties typically function to link networks, as pointed out above. In the case of weak ties, the commitment of network resources is limited to the exchange of information, and therefore does not imply a duty to help each other in more material ways, such as sharing food. In our next figure (figure 4.5) there is an added weak tie linking the network to another network.

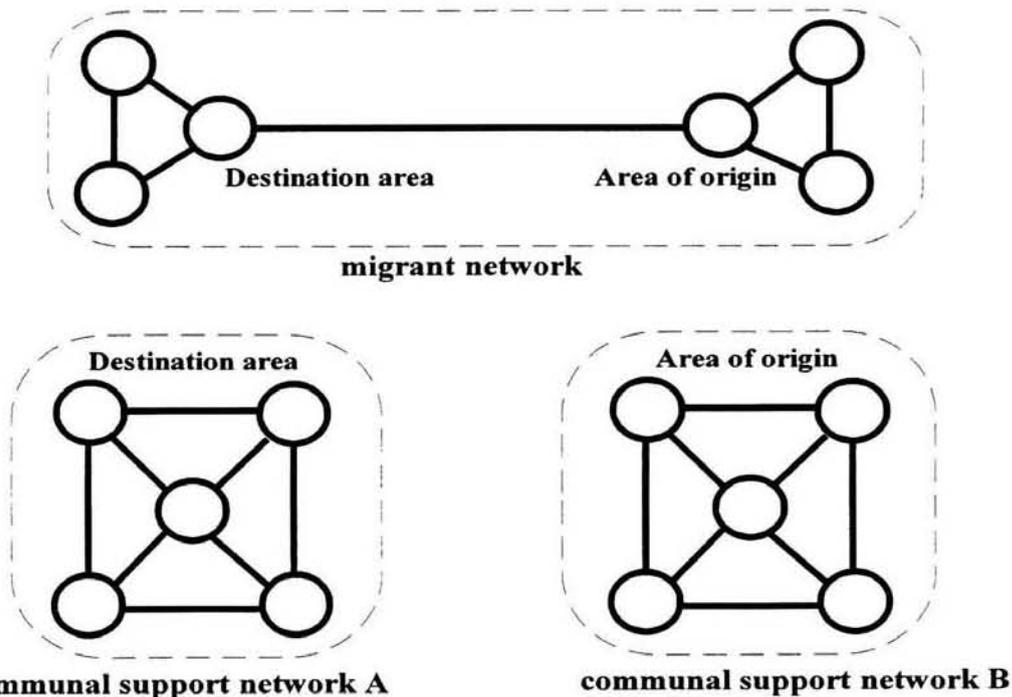
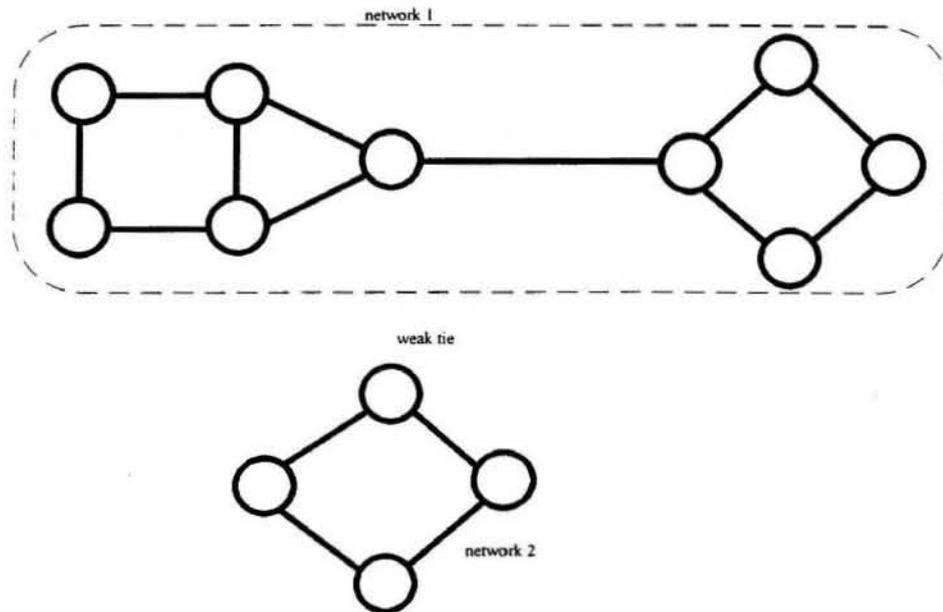


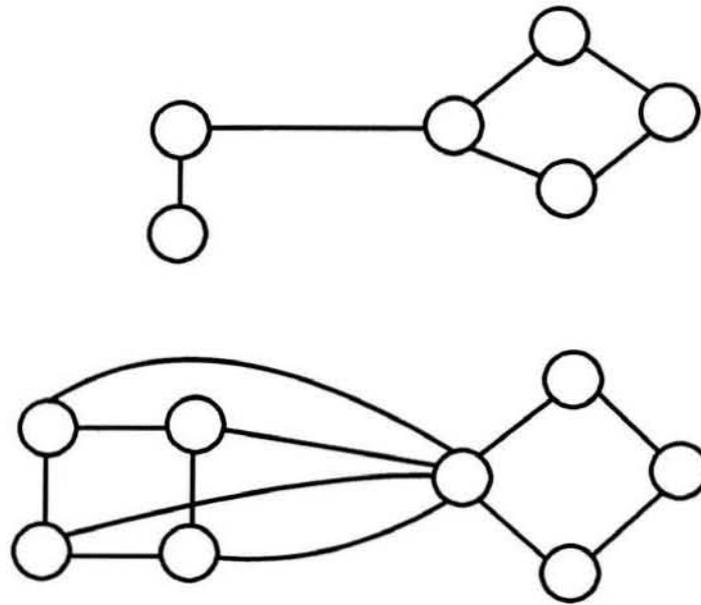
Figure 4.4 Migrant network versus communal support network



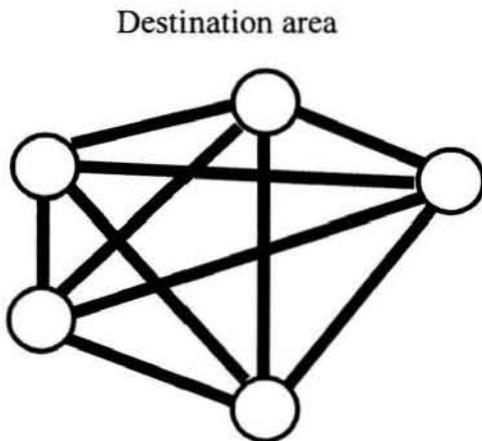
**Figure 4.5 Weak tie linking two networks**

e) Whereas the **intensity** of the ties refers to the strength of the ties between nodes, I use the term **density** to refer to the number of direct ties connecting a node to a series of other nodes in a particular place. I illustrate the notion of density in the following figure (figure 4.6). It features two migrant networks: in the first one a node is connected via only one connection to a network in a destination area and in the second one the node has multiple direct links to the network in the destination area.

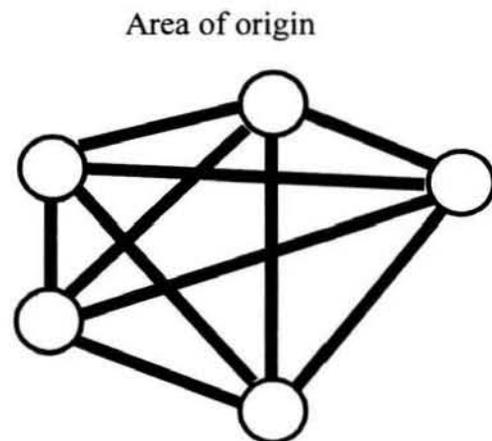
f) It is possible to imagine numerous permutations of more and less dense networks, but here we restrict ourselves to a few cases that are theoretically interesting. The first case is the so-called 'encapsulation' scenario (Mayer 1970). Migrants become encapsulated upon arrival when they forge a dense set of connections with others in the network but no connections to any other network (see figure 4.7). The dense set of connections within the network makes for stronger ties between members because they often interact with people who belong to the same group as they. As a result of the high frequency of interaction within the network they have less time, or inclination, to interact with people outside the group. The network becomes turned in upon itself and isolated from other networks.



**Figure 4.6** Variation in density of connection to destination area



**Figure 4.7** Encapsulation scenario



**Figure 4.8** Dense area of origin network

This scenario is thought to have an impact on the ease of assimilation of the migrant in the destination area. The dense set of ties firstly makes the emotional adjustment of the migrant in the destination area easier in the sense that s/he is less likely to miss friends and relatives in the area of origin. It furthermore helps the migrant to find a job and accommodation. Besides this helpful side to the dense network there is also a more negative side in the sense that it can reduce the

incentive for the migrant to become an active participant in the social life of the destination area outside of the network (Gurak and Caces 1992:155, Choldin 1973:171, Pohjola 1991). The migrant may take longer to learn the language spoken at the destination area and may be less likely to make friends outside the network. This is especially likely if the network members are themselves previous migrants from the same area. In that case the network forms a capsule that enfolds the migrant within a social context very similar to that found at home - from there the word 'encapsulation' (Mayer 1970).

g) In another case, the potential migrant has a dense set of connections to people in the area of origin but not many in any probable destination area (see figure 4.8). These connections are supposed to influence the likelihood of migration (Gurak and Caces 1992), but the effect of a dense local network on the likelihood of migration can be quite contradictory. On the one hand, a dense local network can reduce the incentive to migrate because the potential migrant can call on the help of many others in times of need. The network therefore increases the economic security of the potential migrant at the area of origin (e.g. a rural area), especially relative to the largely unknown situation in the probable destination area (perhaps a nearby town). In addition the presence of many close friends and relatives serves as a factor binding him/her to that place through emotional ties (Ritchey 1976:389-391). A potential migrant may therefore choose to stay behind in that area, even though wages are higher elsewhere and s/he might be able to increase their income by moving away. The force binding that individual to the area of origin can, however, be outweighed by the fact that access to such an extensive network improves the ability of the potential migrant to finance the migratory move. There are more people to borrow money from and more people to offer advice and information about the situation in possible destination areas. The costs of migration therefore becomes less of an obstacle to it taking place. This leads us to conclude that the effect of a dense local network is to reduce the incentive to migrate while increasing the ability to do so.

#### **4.4 NETWORK FUNCTIONING**

We start our discussion of network functioning by distinguishing between the structure and

function of networks. The structural functionalist approach in sociology distinguishes between the two by associating structure with the static and function with the dynamic aspects of social life, but this will not do in our case (Giddens 1979). Network structures can be quite fluid, although they vary in terms of their openness to change (Davern 1997:289). As social ties are formed and dissolved, network structure changes. It is therefore a mistake to view network structure as being static. From the above discussion it is clear that network structure is concerned with the form of networks, in other words what they look like. Network functioning, by contrast, deals with what networks do. We are specifically interested in the consequences they have for the individuals who participate in them. As we shall see, structure and function are closely related and it is not always easy to separate the two in practice. Because of the degree of overlap between the two I sometimes repeat in this section issues that have been touched upon in the previous section.

#### 4.4.1 THE FUNCTIONS FULFILLED BY NETWORKS

Migrant networks fulfill the following functions in the migration process - they can:

- a) stimulate the migratory move;
- b) facilitate the migratory move;
- c) discourage the migratory move; and
- d) channel the migratory move.

a) Networks can stimulate migration in the sense that the information they convey about successful migrants can motivate others to follow suit. According to Stark (1991) the example provided by successful previous migrants will increase the feelings of relative deprivation experienced by those who have not yet migrated. If the previous migrants form part of the reference group of the potential migrants (they may for example be old school classmates) those who stayed behind will identify with them and think that they can also be successful. They will now feel deprived relative to their successful friends and this will increase their desire to move away. The information about the success of the previous migrants can either be communicated directly when they visit their old homes and flaunt their newly acquired consumer goods or indirectly through gossip by others. It is especially in the latter case where the network, as a conduit of information, has an influence. The information carried by the network can stimulate

migration independent of the mechanism of relative deprivation. Simply by informing potential migrants about new opportunities for employment arising in a destination area it can encourage additional migration.

b) The facilitating effect of networks has been referred to numerous times in this thesis. Network connections assist potential migrants at all stages of their move. They make migration easier because they firstly provide information about accommodation and possible job opportunities in destination areas. Information dissemination is the result of the social interaction that takes place between network members. The stronger the bonds between network members, the more information they share (Choldin 1973:164). They keep in contact through visits, phone calls and letters while information is disseminated through gossip or as a result of more directed inquiries. The information disseminating function can be so effective that potential migrants can find jobs before they leave the village through the agency of network members, as Banerjee (1983:195) reported in his survey of migrants in Delhi in India.

Network connections assist migrants during the move by providing cash in the form of loans or outright gifts when the migrant needs to pay for transport. They can also be the basis for the pooling of the savings of potential migrants to finance the trip. Once one of them has left with the help of the network, s/he is then under an obligation to help those who have stayed behind to move as well (Choldin 1973:164). In the case of illegal cross-border migration these connections provide money to bribe officials and pay the agents that smuggle the migrant across the border (Georges 1990). Another way in which networks facilitate migration is through the material help they offer to the new migrant in arranging jobs and providing accommodation once the migrant has arrived in the destination area. Network members render emotional support to the migrant. They also can help the adjustment of the migrant by fetching him/her at the railway station, for example, and generally 'show them the ropes' in the new environment (Fuller et al. 1990:535).

Networks facilitate migration in a different but related sense in so far as they reduce the risks inherent in migration (Stark 1991). By pooling the risks of migration they can offer insurance against these risks much like a short term insurance policy gives insurance by pooling risks (I have described this process in chapter 3 in the context of a discussion of the household strategies

approach. Stark primarily has households in mind in discussing risk pooling, but his argument can also be applied to networks). Thus the risks of a migratory step being a failure is offset by the probability that some of the migratory moves in the pool of risks will be a success. In practical terms this means that network members will attempt to diversify their sources of income (by combining urban and rural income, for example) so that the risk of one failing is offset by the hoped for success of the others.

All of the above are ways in which networks reduce the costs of migration. I use the term 'network subsidy' to describe the contribution of networks in reducing costs. Because networks fulfill this cost reducing function, it follows that their role in migration becomes more important if the costs of migration are high and migrants have fewer resources. If the costs of migration are low, we can expect networks to play a lesser role. As I pointed out in chapter 3 some of the costs of migration (such as transport and information costs) may decrease over time while others may increase (subsistence costs while the migrant is looking for a job). Consequently the contribution of networks may become more or less important over time depending on the trends in the costs of migration. If the costs are low, one can expect to see more individual migration. Conversely, if the costs are high, chain migration, which is associated with networks, will be more prominent.

The cost reducing property of networks also have the effect of increasing the amount of migration that takes place among poor people. Because it makes migration less financially demanding and lowers the threshold income needed for migration, it allows poor migrants who otherwise would not have been able to move to do so. Due to this effect on the poorer part of the migrant population, it reduces the income selectivity of migration. As I pointed out in chapter 3, the income selectivity of migration increases as the costs of migration escalate. Conversely, one can expect income selectivity to decrease if the costs are lowered by networks. This, however, only happens up to a point: networks themselves are selective in terms of who they include and who they exclude. If, as I am going to argue below, they tend to exclude those who are destitute the income selectivity reducing effect of networks will not extend to the latter group (on the other hand, if the costs of migration have been reduced so much that they are no longer an obstacle to the migration of anybody, it does not matter that the poorest are excluded from networks, because they can move without the intervention of networks).

c) The information disseminated by networks is not always about new opportunities - it can also communicate that jobs are becoming harder to get in the destination area, or that circumstances are deteriorating generally in that area. Information about violent conflict in informal settlements in urban areas (as occurred in South Africa in the late 1980's and early 1990's) will be disseminated quickly back to the area of origin. Such information will discourage further migration.

d) According to Caces et al (1985:10) networks affect both the likelihood of migration and the destination area chosen by the migrant. Besides a facilitating function one can consequently also distinguish a channelling function of the network (Tilly and Brown 1967, Gurak and Caces 1992, Banerjee 1983, Fuller et al. 1990:535, Population Information Program 1983:M256). The network fulfils a channelling function because it directs migration away from some possible destination areas and towards others. Migrants are more likely to go to destination areas where they have 'auspices', as I pointed out earlier. The existence of auspices at a particular destination area creates a channel in which migrants flow between the area of origin and that destination area. This is why migrants from a particular area of origin tend to cluster in specific neighbourhoods of a town or in specific towns.

The channelling function of networks is not only limited to guiding migrants to specific geographical areas, but also involves a channelling into particular occupations or particular companies in the destination. This occurs because previous migrants are better placed to find jobs for new migrants in the occupations or companies where they are themselves employed. Employers often prefer to employ somebody who are recommended by an existing employee, on the assumption that that person is similar to the existing employee (Montgomery 1991:1409, Kannappan 1985). It is also a low cost way of recruiting a new employee (Montgomery 1991:1409). In addition previous migrants are more likely to know about job opportunities that exist in the company in which they are employed or in their own occupation (Banerjee 1983:195).

The channelling function of networks can be limiting to the migrant at the same time as it is helping him/her. By inserting the migrant into a particular place and into a particular job, the network restrains the migrant's options as much as it is advancing them. This is why Phojola

(1991:439) claims that networks entail support as well as social stratification. According to him (1991:439) 'social relations, in helping the migrants to get a job, also socialize them into the types of jobs where migrants typically end up...'. Because of their encapsulating tendency they shield the migrant from exposure to other social environments and other possibilities for employment and generate a homogenous class of migrants. Phojola (1991:440) believes that this dimension of networks has not been emphasised enough in the literature: 'Too often the role of social networks is seen as ideally supportive, while the other side of the coin, their restrictive nature, is overlooked.'

Although I have stressed the fact on p.85 above that one cannot regard network structure as being static, one also has to accept that migrant networks cannot change overnight in terms of the direction in which they channel migration. Networks embody a significant investment in social capital for people, and one cannot expect that potential migrants will find it easy to direct their attentions away to family members/friends in different places at short notice. The constraining impact of investment in social capital on mobility is similar to the impact that investment in 'bricks and mortar' has on the mobility of companies: unlike investment in the stock market, it cannot be easily disposed of and makes companies less 'footloose'. As a result, networks impart a degree of inertia to migrant streams. In other words, once a migrant stream between two areas has come into being, a certain momentum has been built up which will be difficult to change overnight. Our earlier discussion of network structure suggests that the degree of 'stickiness' imparted by networks to migrant streams increases as the network becomes more encapsulated and becomes less as the number of weak ties to other networks increase. The inertia of migrant streams provides an additional explanation for what one can term the 'Todaro effect' (see chapter 2 above): the tendency for rural-urban migration to continue in the face of increasing unemployment in the urban areas. It is also an indication that the supposed tendency of migration to equalise income and employment levels between regions through the regional reallocation of the poor and unemployed people (this is known as the equilibrating effect of migration) is unlikely to be consistently successful. The inertia imparted to migration streams by networks has the effect that migration cannot quickly respond to changes in the economic performance of specific regions, and therefore neoclassical economic theory is called into question in this regard.

#### 4.4.2 NETWORK RESOURCES

The extent to which migration is facilitated by the network in a specific case depends on the resources of the network, as well as the willingness of network members to support that particular migrant. Even though network members have the ability to help somebody, they may not be prepared to do so because s/he is not regarded as being related closely enough to network members or not deserving of help for other reasons (such as being unlikely to be able to reciprocate, or not having kept up relationships with network members). This aspect has to do with the normative dimension of networks and will receive attention in the next section.

The concept of network resources derives from the sociological literature on network structure (Davern, 1997) and up to now, has not received much attention in the migration literature<sup>7</sup>. Resources are those things that actors can use to help them achieve their goals (Davern, 1997:290). In the context of migrant networks it refers firstly to the power, status and money that network members have, as well as the amount of information at their disposal. From this we can deduce that the more resources a network control, the more of a facilitating role they can play in migration. A well-resourced network has more information and more cash at its disposal, and is better able to offer help in the form of accommodation and employment.

Networks also vary in the amount of resources they control in a different sense from the more obvious one discussed above. This relates to the channelling function of networks. Some networks channel migrants into more lucrative areas and occupations than others. This conception of network resources refers to the spatial structure of the network, as well as the regions and occupations to which the migrant is channelled.

One can firstly hypothesise that a network that offers competing destinations is more likely to advance the migrant's career than a network that channels the migrant into only one region. The reason for this is that because it offers alternative destinations and increases the migrant's options,

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<sup>7</sup> For an exception see Gurak and Caces (1992:155), where they refer to previous research done by Caces which concluded that the poverty of Filipino migrants to Hawaii can be ascribed to the limited resources of the networks they belong to.

s/he is less likely to end up in a dead-end career. The difference in outcomes may only be small, in practice, because migrants generally occupy the bottom of the occupation ladder wherever they go, but not necessarily insignificant.

It is not only the number of places to which the migrant is channelled that increases the network's resources, but also the places to which and the occupations into which the migrant is channelled. A network that connects a rural area with a declining urban area (for example the East Rand in the Gauteng-province of South Africa where the economy is dominated by the metal industry and gold mining, both of which have been shedding jobs) is less likely to improve the migrant's position than a network articulated with an expanding urban area (for example Richard's Bay in the KwaZulu-Natal province of South Africa). In general terms, rural-rural networks are also less likely to offer good employment than rural-urban networks, largely because wages tend to be lower in agriculture. Similarly, if network members are employed in declining occupations, even in areas where the rest of the regional economy is expanding, resources will be lower. As I argued above, network members are more likely to find jobs for migrants in their own occupations or firms. The odds are therefore that they will channel migrants into jobs where they are themselves employed, and migrant's jobs will reproduce the characteristics of the jobs of other network members.

The effect of network resources is described by Sharp and Spiegel (1990:539). With reference to the village of Matatiele in the former homeland-area of Transkei where there is a sharp distinction between long-standing residents and recent arrivals from white-owned farms, they say the following:

Men whose network of contacts included others already in secure employment had a significant advantage in entering the labour market over those whose families had long been farm workers without close links with such networks. Long-standing location residents who also has some education managed to acquire relatively plum jobs...(M)ore recent immigrants to the district, particularly those who been brought up on white-owned farms and had no schooling, were forced to accept work on the mines or, worse still, as labourers on Natal sugar-cane estates or Western Cape fruit farms.

Meagher (1997:89-90) provides another example of the differentiating effect that the channelling of migration can have. She describes migration within Northern Nigeria and notes that predominantly Christian migrants from Southeastern Nigeria into Northern Nigerian cities are

much better connected than largely Muslim migrants from rural areas in Northern Nigeria itself. The latter 'are largely channelled into low-income itinerant activities in the urban informal sector'. The former, by contrast, 'have access to well-established and economically fairly buoyant commercial networks, which tend to channel migrants into more permanent and lucrative informal activities'. She (1997:90) concludes by saying that this has led to bloody ethnic clashes in Northern Nigerian cities in the early 1990's, when youths attacked Igbo street traders from the Southeast.

In all of these cases, the limiting effect of the network will be greater the more isolated the network is from other networks. Consequently the encapsulation scenario will have the most negative effect on the migrant. The isolation of the network is lessened through the existence of weak ties. The more weak ties connecting the network to other networks, the more information the network will consequently be able to mobilise. One can therefore hypothesise that the existence of weak ties will lessen the limiting effect of the network on the migrant (Gurak and Caces, 1992:165).

There is consequently a greater chance that a migratory move that is sponsored by a well-resourced network will be a success than one sponsored by a network that is worse off. This introduces the issue of differentiation between migrants. If network A is better off in terms of resources than network B before migration, and if its chances of sponsoring successful migration is higher than that of network B, then its advantaged situation will be reproduced and in fact reinforced after migration due to the increased remittances that feed back into the network as a result of migration. This implies that networks can reinforce differentiation in ways that go beyond the exclusion of the poorest by networks.

#### 4.4.3 NORMATIVE ASPECTS OF NETWORKS

By this time it should be clear that reciprocal exchange is the basis of network functioning. This reciprocal exchange is normatively sanctioned; in other words there are rules, derived from particular cultural contexts, that prescribe the form these exchanges will take. The idea of reciprocal exchange has its origin in the work of anthropologists such as Mauss, Firth and Polanyi

about the structure of primitive societies (Sahlins 1972). Reciprocal exchange is typically distinguished from the cash transactions that forms the basis of modern capitalist economies (see for example Ilcan 1994: 568). Whereas in a cash transaction the reciprocity is upfront, in the sense that one is contractually bound to reciprocate, and immediate ('hand over the cash before you get the goods'), in reciprocal exchange the reciprocity is implicit (and often denied) and delayed (Sahlins 1972:194; Bourdieu 1990:112-121). Reciprocity is delayed because the debt that is created by such helping is not expected to be repaid immediately, but lingers on until the previous benefactor is in need of help. Reciprocal exchange is often expressed in terms of a discourse of family or friendship obligations ('I must help this person because s/he is my sister/brother') and the open expression of the reciprocal basis of the relationship ('I am helping you because I expect to be helped in return sometime in the future') is regarded as being impolite (Lomnitz 1988:44, Bourdieu 1990).

It is not clear why the reciprocal nature of the relationship is so often implicit, but one can argue that it is not acknowledged because to do so would undermine the relationship (Bourdieu 1990:118). Reciprocal exchange is backed up by trust relations. In the Spanish-speaking communities of Latin America studied by Lomnitz (1977, 1988:45) the term *confianza* is used, which refers to the trust between people who have a close relationship. One can argue that by stressing the moral basis of the relationship, rather than their mutual material need, people can maximise the trust underlying their relationship (cf. Portes and Sensenbrenner 1993:1332). Whatever the reason, the *confianza* aspect is so necessary to the relationship that people often invent kinship relations to bolster it. This can be seen for example in the common Latin American practice of godparenthood (Lomnitz 1977).

Because of the culturally prescribed nature of these obligations there are regional differences with regard to the functioning of reciprocal exchange networks. There are differences with regard to the people one has special obligations to, although it is generally family members, friends and neighbours. Among the Tswana of Botswana, as I pointed out above, the position of 'mother's brother' carries special obligations (Townsend 1997), and this obligation is culturally specific. There are also differences about how one should reciprocate. Caces et al. (1985:16) refer to the lowland Filipinos, where the accepted practice is that one must always repay a favour with interest

to make sure that one has repaid the debt (also see Sahlins 1972:160 with reference to Maori gift exchange). The unintended consequence of this is that the previous beneficiary now becomes the benefactor, which creates a new debt that must be repaid some time in future, thus reproducing the cycle of reciprocity.

One aspect of cultural variability that is relevant for the facilitating nature of networks is the transferability of sponsorship. This emerges in a study done by Fuller et al. (1990) of the network links between a community of rural Thais and their urban based contacts. According to them (Fuller et al. 1990: 552) many rural people feel that, on their recommendation, their contacts in town are willing to help strangers. These urban contacts are therefore willing to transfer their sponsorship from those they know to the latter's friends and relatives. If such behaviour is common, the number of people whose migration can be facilitated by the network is higher. This is indicative of a network with a more open structure. In general, the more open the network structure, the quicker migratory behaviour will become diffused through a community, with the result that the migrant stream will become less selective more quickly (in the way proposed by Massey et al.). If, as one suspects, the transferability noticed by Fuller et al. (1990) is restricted to people who have the same characteristics (in terms of age, sex, class, etc.) as the original network members, the selectivity reducing effect of the more open network will obviously be much reduced. That this is not so unlikely is borne out by the fact that one's friends are often very similar to oneself. Since Fuller et al. (1990) did not probe this aspect of the transferability, it is unclear how significant their discovery is for our interest in selectivity.

According to Sahlins (1972:191-193) the time allowed for assistance to be repaid, and the very need to reciprocate at all, vary between different contexts. For him, reciprocal exchange lies on a continuum that varies from generalized reciprocity on the one end to negative reciprocity on the other. 'Balanced reciprocity' is the mid-point between these two and refers to a setup where gifts are reciprocated fairly quickly and equitably. Examples of this are marriage transactions and peace agreements (where the peace is cemented through the reciprocal exchange of gifts). Generalized reciprocity occurs typically between close family members and comes the closest to the ideal of a free gift. 'This is not to say', according to Sahlins (1972:194), 'that handing over things in such form, even to 'loved ones', generates no counter-obligation. But the counter is not stipulated by

time, quantity, or quality: the expectation of reciprocity is indefinite'. At the other extreme is transactions in which deception and violence can play a role - negative reciprocity. Sahlins (1972:199) believes that the closeness of the kinship bond between people will determine which kind of exchange will predominate in a primitive society, with generalized reciprocity occurring between close family.

Sahlins therefore believes that, in primitive societies at least, the poorest may not be forced to reciprocate if they are unable to repay the assistance they have received from close family members. Although this may be the case in a primitive society, it seems unlikely that networks of poor people who have been incorporated into the capitalist society still function in the same way. According to James (1987), at least in the rural areas of South Africa, the nature of such reciprocal exchanges has changed, even though the ideology in terms of which it is legitimated has stayed the same. The changes that have occurred is demonstrated by the tendency for people who cannot at least potentially reciprocate in future to be frozen out of these relationships (Sharp 1994:78, Delius 1996:152, also see Lomnitz 1977:134 for ethnographic evidence to this effect from Mexico).

Lomnitz (1977:134, 1988:47) distinguishes between a patron-client relationship and one based on reciprocal exchange. In the former the economic distance between members of the network is too great for the beneficiary to reciprocate in kind. There is therefore no possibility that the beneficiary can respond by helping the benefactor some time in the future in the same way. Despite this, it is still an exchange relationship. What is exchanged in this case is the political support of the beneficiary for the assistance (in getting a job or a house) of the benefactor. Patron-client relationships are common in urban politics in poor neighbourhoods in the Third World and has given rise to a style of urban politics known as populism (Castells 1983:175, Perlman 1976).

Because patron-client relationships do not expect reciprocity they are in principle one avenue for the poorest of the poor to be supported in their migration. If you are unable to reciprocate, and thus frozen out of networks, a patron might be able to help you. This is, however, not very likely to happen in practice. While these relationships can be very important in the adaptation of the migrant in the urban area once the migration process is over, they are not very prominent in the

actual process of migration (one exception is Thailand where Singhanetra-Renard [1992] discusses the importance of patron-client relationships in facilitating migration). Politicians help groups of people to get houses in exchange for political support, but they are less often in a position to offer help to the individual migrant stuck somewhere in a rural area. I shall consequently not give further attention to patron-client relationships here.

From this we can conclude that, as far as the facilitation of migration is concerned, the poorest among the poor will be excluded from networks because they cannot reciprocate. Networks are resources for poor people, but may not be accessible for the poorest among them. If you have nothing, the only way in which you can reciprocate is to offer your labour to your relative/friend by, for example, working in their garden or painting their house. Although this kind of exchange does happen (see for example Ilcan 1994:568-569), it is not in the first place the type of reciprocity captured by networks. The help the benefactor expects in future is more likely to be along the lines of a cash loan or the procuring of a job - in other words something they can fall back on when they are in need themselves. The possibility of reciprocating through your labour does therefore not fundamentally alter the operation of networks in this regard: this kind of reciprocation is not typically the kind that is expected and consequently you may still be frozen out of networks if you are destitute.

#### **4.5 NETWORK DYNAMICS**

Under this heading we are going to discuss how networks emerge, how they develop and under what circumstances they can disappear. Network dynamics is one of the neglected areas that Boyd (1989:655) feels should be researched more thoroughly in future.

Networks emerge when the first migrant from a community of origin leaves home and establishes him/herself in a particular destination area. Whereas it is clear that broad historical transformations are generally behind the rise of a migration process towards a particular growing city (such as the discovery of gold on the Witwatersrand and the growth of the capitalist economy in South Africa as a result of it), it is equally clear that the rise of a particular network linking one area of origin

and one destination area is to some extent a chance occurrence. Describing how a network linking the village of Yeniköy in Turkey and Göteborg in Sweden developed, Wilpert (1992:182) says the following:

The first migrant left in 1963, trying Belgium, Holland, and Germany, until reaching Göteborg, Sweden, in 1966. After finding a job in one of the city's leading industries, he called for his brother to join him. Fourteen years later, 23 adults and 19 children from the Turkish refugee group were residing in Sweden, all at the initiative of one man and all related to one another.

It is clear that this migrant could just as well have found a job in Holland, in this case creating a network linking Holland and the area of origin. Or he could have died in a bus accident along the way, thus removing the possibility for that network altogether. This reinforces the idea that chance factors play a large role in establishing any particular network.

In one respect the rise of a particular network is not a chance occurrence. The propensity to migrate diffuse spatially from the large cities into the surrounding countryside as information about urban opportunities spread outwards from the city. Zelinsky (1971:237) likens the propensity to migrate to 'a kind of prairie fire burning its path across the map'. According to Georges (1990:113) however, 'if the idea diffused from Santiago (the biggest city in the Dominican Republic - D.G.), it did so in a leapfrog fashion, skipping many communities along the way.' Georges (1990) refers here to international as opposed to internal migration, but her statement does raise the question about the mechanisms that determine the way in which the propensity to migrate diffuses and thus also the way in which particular networks develop. This issue is not well researched, but one can speculate that the spread of mass media, schools and roads will have an effect on the diffusion of the propensity to migrate.

Wilpert's (1992) case study is significant for another reason. This is that the first migrant belonged to the Turkish refugee group in the village rather than the majority Kurdish people or the indigenous Turks in that village. They were part of a group of people displaced in Turkey as a result of political conflict. Later, when the migrant network had developed to include all the people mentioned in Wilpert's quotation, only members of the Turkish refugee group belonged to the network. This was because, in Wilpert's (1992:182) words 'there was no tradition of mutual obligations of assistance across kinship group boundaries'. She then continues by saying: 'Given the social cleavages in the village, the first migrants saw no reason to help those outside their

group who desired to migrate.' Wilpert's case study therefore points to the limitations that social cleavages in the area of origin, in this case ethnicity, can place on the later growth of the network and thus the number of people in that area whose migration can be facilitated by the network.

Recruitment agencies often play a role in stimulating a migration flow between an area of origin and a destination area (Georges 1990:81). Because, among other reasons<sup>8</sup>, the cost of migration is very high, workers have at first to be assisted to migrate. Recruitment agencies do this by providing a job placement service and assisting with the transportation of the migrants. This is especially the case where we are dealing with the migration of unskilled labourers over national borders. The *bracero* program instituted by the American authorities after World War II to attract Mexican workers into low-wage jobs in agriculture and other industries is an example of this. Closer to home the activities (since the end of the previous century) of the Witwatersrand Native Labour Association (WNLA) to recruit workers from the subcontinent of Africa for the South African gold mines comes to mind. Labour recruitment is not restricted to international migration however. In South Africa, labour bureaus were scattered all over the former homeland areas of South Africa until the 1970's, by which time the country started to move from a labour shortage to a labour surplus economy and it was no longer necessary for industries to recruit people in that way.

As the migration flow matures and as the first migrants become established in their new home, networks start to form between the area of origin and the destination area. Previous migrants are now in a position to sponsor the migration of family members, thus lowering the cost of migration. The initial migration flow, started off as a result of organised recruitment, now calls forth additional migration (Boyd 1989:645). What is ironic about this is that the new migration flow often occurs when the authorities no longer wish to encourage migration, either because of a downturn in the local economy or because of anti-immigrant sentiment. By that time a migration flow has become institutionalised between the two areas that continues despite the ending of

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<sup>8</sup> Another important reason why rural people initially do not migrate is that the jobs on offer at the beginning of a process of migration are generally not very attractive - they are typically to low wage and dangerous occupations such as agriculture and mining. More attractive jobs only become available later on with the growth of secondary industry and increased unionization.

recruitment or even active border control measures to limit migration (Boyd 1989:645). This is why Boyd (1989:641), among others (also see Massey and Espinosa 1997) claims that '(O)nce begun, migration flows often becomes self-sustaining, reflecting the establishment of networks of information, assistance and obligations which develop between migrants in the host society and friends and relatives in the sending area.'

Banerjee (1983:195) explains why previous migrants are willing to help potential migrants in their home village to migrate. They firstly want to recreate in their new environment the networks of mutual support in which they participated in their home village, and for this purpose they sponsor the migration of network members. Another motivation is that they plan to return to their home village on retirement or when something goes wrong in their new home (such as unemployment). Because they feel that they cannot afford to alienate people back home, they maintain their connections there by, *inter alia*, assisting the migration of their relatives and friends. According to Banerjee (1983:195) this willingness to help potential migrants is a reflection of the lack of assimilation of previous migrants into the new environment. Besides this, it is also a reflection of the economic insecurity that often characterise conditions in the destination area and which make people feel that they may need their rural base in future. Georges (1990:96) suggests another motive for the support offered by previous migrants to potential migrants. By sponsoring the latter's migration, previous migrants can change them from dependants to people who are in a position to help carry the burden of subsidising those left behind.

There are a number of reasons why previous migrants may become unable or unwilling to support the migration of others. One of these is poverty in the destination area that limits the ability of network members to maintain the network connections. Spiegel et al. (1996:14-15) refer to cases where recent migrants to Cape Town are too poor to visit family members in their Transkei area of origin, or otherwise keep in regular contact. They are also unable to sponsor visits by family members to Cape Town. As a result the network (and even household) that the recent migrants previously formed part of cannot be maintained, with obvious implications for the migration prospects of those who were left behind.

Once a network member becomes successful, the incentive to remain part of the network is

reduced. While networks offer good ways for poor people to accumulate capital through mutual savings clubs (called *stokvels* in South Africa) this is only true as long as everybody is more or less on the same economic level (see above where I refer to Lomnitz's claim that reciprocal exchange only takes place as long as the economic differentiation between network members is not too great). If differentiation starts occurring the better-off might experience the claims of others on the resources they have accumulated as a strain rather than as a source of security. According to Portes and Sensenbrenner (1993:1339) '...cozy intergroup relationships of the sort frequently found in solidary communities can give rise to a gigantic free-riding problem. Less diligent group members can enforce on successful members all types of demands backed by the same normative structure that makes the existence of trust possible.' They (1993:1339) then relate the example of entrepreneurs in a predominantly Catholic community in the Ecuadorean Andes who are often Protestants. The reason for this is that by leaving the Catholic church, they can isolate themselves from many of the obligations they have to others in the community.

Sharp (1994:80) similarly describes how social differentiation in the former homeland of QwaQwa created a group of migrant workers who increasingly felt secure enough with their town base to lose interest in networks in QwaQwa. According to him this has had devastating consequences for social relationships in QwaQwa. QwaQwa was designated as the homeland for the Southern Sotho people in 1969 and soon after that hundreds of thousands of former farmworkers settled there, some having left the farms voluntarily and some being forcibly resettled there<sup>9</sup>. This process caused large scale destitution in the area as the new arrivals had to compete in an already overcrowded job market for migrant jobs elsewhere in the country (QwaQwa at first having no local employment opportunities). One reaction to this was initially the growth of social networks. According to Sharp (1994) '(N)etworks of mutual assistance, such as savings clubs...burial societies, and neighbourhood lending and borrowing had grown up in the 1970's, predicated on the shared trauma and suffering of the experience of relocation.' Since the government did provide schools (if nothing else), and as a result of changes in the labour market that created permanent and better-remunerated jobs for skilled migrant workers, a class of better-off workers emerged during the 1980's. They held down unionised jobs in metropolitan areas like Johannesburg. Even though they still lived in QwaQwa among their former friends and neighbours, these workers

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<sup>9</sup> This discussion is based on Sharp (1994) and Sharp and Spiegel (1985).

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diverted more of their income into the construction of brick houses and the acquisition of domestic appliances, and less was available for sharing with previous network members. The result of this was that the networks created in the 1970's lost much of their vitality in QwaQwa in the 1980's.

One can deduce from this that people only remain part of networks as long as they feel that over the long term they are likely to gain as much as they contribute to the network. This decision is of course seldom taken explicitly and calculatingly, given the normative prescriptions that one must help others because of the close relationship one has with them, and given the denial of the need for reciprocity. Better-off people do seem disengage from networks, however, perhaps because, due to the growing economic gap, they do not feel as close as before to their relatives and friends.

As discussed previously, those who do participate in networks in turn exclude those who are totally destitute. Sharp and Spiegel (1985) provides us with numerous case studies of how those without income opportunities were excluded from the networks that flourished in QwaQwa during the 1970's. There is therefore ample evidence that, besides the ethnic cleavages referred to by Wilpert (see above), class barriers can also restrict the extend to which migrant networks can grow beyond the first migrants.

The effect of social cleavages on networks should alert us to the fact that, despite the idiom of mutual help and communal solidarity that infuse networks, both networks and households are often riddled with conflict. Grandparents may consent to look after their grandchildren while the latter's parents go of to work somewhere, but under much protest, as attested to by Kotze (1993:81) in his study of Dixie in the former Gazankulu homeland. As a result of unrelenting pressure from the grandparents to relieve them of the burden of looking after additional children, the children may do so. Conflict over obligations to significant others can therefore lead to the breakup of these connections. These conflicts do not only occur between the generations, but also, and especially, between husband and wife. Sharp and Spiegel (1990, also see Delius 1996:162) refers to the conflicts that often take place between husband and wife in the rural areas of South Africa about how money remitted is supposed to be spent. Male migrant workers may want to spend most of their money on themselves and remit the minimum for the upkeep of their

households back home, or they may have specific instructions about how the wife in the rural area is supposed to spend the money remitted by them. The husband often wants the money to be spent on the purchase of cattle which improves the long-term security of the household but reduces the amount of money available for immediate consumption.

The conflict can become so severe that the family splits up. This can have devastating consequences for the partner (generally the wife) that stayed behind in the rural areas and depended on the remittances of the migrant worker (generally the husband) for her livelihood. There are many female-headed households in the former homeland areas of South Africa (as well as the rest of Southern Africa affected by high rates of migrant labour) that developed in this way, or as a result of the death of a spouse (Brown 1983). Households often also break up when the migrant worker husband finds a girlfriend in town and divorces the wife in the rural area. Because networks are often structured around family obligations, the breakup of families can result in the family members who have remained behind in the rural area losing their access to the migrant network, with obvious negative consequences for their ability to migrate in search of a job.

The same argument that Spiegel (see above, p.99) makes with regard to the inability of household members to consolidate their households for long term projects, also applies to networks. If the households which are the building blocks of networks cannot maintain themselves over the long run, and continually break up and reform, household members will struggle to keep their network connections intact. The conditions that cause instability in household membership, and that lead to the breakdown of households, such as poverty, violence, and diseases such as AIDS, for obvious reasons also affect the viability of networks. To maintain networks, and especially migrant networks that can stretch over considerable distance, members have to expend considerable amounts of time and money. I referred to this above on p.66. Friends and relatives have to be visited, or contacted in some other way, savings clubs and sports associations that link the migrants with the area of origin maintained, and so forth. All this is impossible under circumstances of extreme poverty.

This is confirmed by Meagher (1997:89) when she discusses the effect of structural adjustment policies on migrant networks in Nigeria. These policies, imposed by international institutions such

as the World Bank, led to a 'severe contraction of real incomes in both rural and urban areas...(which)...left households on both sides less able to maintain ties and contribute to extended family needs'. Rural households cannot any more afford the input prices to produce food surpluses that can be sent to urban relatives, while the steep rise in transport costs has reduced the frequency of visits between urban and rural households. As a result of the latter, the remittance flow from the towns has declined. Increasing poverty has also made both rural and urban households 'less willing to take in relatives and clansmen, a central mechanism for migration in both directions' (Meagher 1997:89).

For networks to function, and to mobilise resources to support the migration of network members, there has to be some stability in household membership as well. Network members need to form stable relationships, and residential instability will not help with this. Moreover, the disorganising effect that violence and AIDS have on households also applies to networks. Under the conditions outlined above, networks will cease to exist, or at least struggle to perform their functions adequately.

#### **4.6 CONCLUSION**

A number of conclusions emerge from this discussion that are relevant to my overall argument about the inequality-inducing effect of migration. It is firstly clear that although networks do not play a significant role in the initiation of a migrant stream between an area of origin and a destination area, it can stimulate and facilitate additional migration once that stream has begun. Networks stimulate migration by creating the motivation among non-migrants to migrate, largely through the demonstration effect. Networks facilitate migration by subsidising the costs of migration. The effect of this is what Massey et al. (1994b) call the cumulative causation of migration. In other words, the more migration has occurred between places, the more additional migration will take place, due to the institutionalisation of migration between those two places that occurred as a result of the development of networks. As networks develop, more people from the community of origin get a chance, therefore, of migrating to that destination area. This deepening of the migrant stream has the effect of reducing the selectivity of migration.

The model that I propose as an alternative model to that of Massey et al. incorporates these central insights of Massey and his co-workers. It goes beyond it however in so far as it stresses that the extent to which selectivity is reduced is likely to be limited, and unequally distributed between the different kinds of selectivity. In the case of circular migration, more than permanent migration where family reunion will play a role, considerable gender selectivity is expected to remain, as was discussed in chapter 3. This is due to household survival strategies and gender dynamics within the household. Gender selectivity is not directly attributable to the costs of migration in the first place, with the result that the network subsidy is unlikely to have much effect on it any way. Income selectivity will continue to exist as far as the poorest of the population of the community of origin is concerned. This occurs as a result of a number of reasons.

The poorest people within the community of origin are less likely to migrate because they are not able to join migrant networks. This is because the emphasis on potential to reciprocate disqualifies them from joining networks. The migrant networks that do exist will thus not grow to include everybody within the community of origin. Other social cleavages within the community of origin such as ethnicity can have the same effect of reducing the growth potential of networks. Social differentiation within the community of origin can further lead to the decline of networks, as those with the strongest urban base experience a decreasing need to remain part of migrant networks. Social factors such as poverty, disease and violence can also lead to the collapse of migrant networks as both the urban and rural residents within the network find it impossible to maintain those networks due to a lack of resources. The (especially income-) selectivity reducing effect of networks is therefore limited in two ways: on the one hand social cleavages such as class and ethnicity limit the growth of networks and on the other those networks may collapse due to a number of reasons.

Even if a network continues to function well, there is no guarantee that it will continue to spur on additional migration. This is firstly because the network may happen to channel migration to an area with declining job opportunities. In this case, the information transmitted via the network may work in the opposite direction. The network now signals that opportunities are becoming fewer in the destination area and that it is not worth the effort to go there. Another reason for this is that the network may have such limited resources that it is not able to offer much help. The network

subsidy has to be seen in the context of the cost of migration. The more expensive migration is, the more help has to be offered by the network to make it happen, depending on the level of the individual migrant's own resources, of course. Network resources are more of an issue therefore if the cost of migration is high and the resources of the individual migrant is low. In chapter 3 it was pointed out that some of the costs of migration may be lowered over time, but that others, such as the costs associated with the job search period, may increase. It is therefore evident that the effect of the network depends in this case on a number of variables, such as the cost of migration, network resources and the individual migrant's resources.

## CHAPTER FIVE

### THE IMPACT OF MIGRATION ON SOCIAL INEQUALITY

#### 5.1 INTRODUCTION

The theory of inequality that I am developing consists of two parts. The first part concerns the selectivity of migration and the way in which it develops over time. I am saying that, over time, the poorest will continue to be underrepresented in migration from a community of origin. I have dealt with this issue in the previous two chapters: chapter 3 dealt with the selectivity of migration and chapter 4 was concerned with the role of networks in changing selectivity over time. The second part of the theory is based on the assumption that migration improves the position of the migrant relative to the non-migrant. This chapter is concerned with this part.

Although generally true, the assumption that migration improves the position of the migrant has to be expressed in a more qualified way. Factors such as the type of migration, the channelling effect of networks, and gender play a role in determining how advantageous migration is for the migrant and most of this chapter is occupied with a discussion of these factors. These issues are discussed in the following order. After a few preliminary remarks (sections 5.2 and 5.3), I look at the factors that can determine how advantageous migration is for the migrant. The first of these is the type of migration (push versus pull migration and rural-urban versus rural-rural migration). This is discussed in section 5.4. The second factor, discussed in section 5.5, has to do with the timing of the move, i.e. whether the migrant is a leader or a follower in the migration process. Gender is the last factor that can determine the outcome of migration and this receives attention in section 5.6.

My intention with this discussion is to introduce more complexity into the theory of the inequality producing impact of migration and to make it more adequate in dealing with the real world. Clearly, under some circumstances migration may produce more inequality than under others (or even none at all), because the degree to which migration is advantageous varies from case to case. A consideration of the factors mentioned above allows us to get a greater grip on what the

relevant circumstances may be.

There is another factor complicating the relationship between migration on the one hand and inequality between migrants and non-migrants on the other. Even if migrants do extract significant advantage from their migration, with the result that migration can potentially worsen inequality, this effect will be softened if the migrant's remittances are redistributed through the community of origin to a significant extent. In this scenario non-migrants may also gain as a result of the migrant's movement, thus reducing the extent to which they are worse off relative to the migrants post-migration. In sections 5.7 and 5.8 I investigate how the migrant's earnings are redistributed through the community of origin, first to family members as a result of kinship obligations, and then throughout the community of origin by way of the cash nexus.

## **5.2 THE OBSERVED CONDITIONS IN THIRD WORLD CITIES AND THE ADVANTAGES THAT MIGRATION IS SUPPOSED TO BRING: IS THERE A CONTRADICTION?**

As is clear from the previous discussion, much of my argument with regard to the inequality producing effect of migration depends on the assumption that migration improves the position of those who participate in it. One obvious objection to this assumption is that there is so much overcrowding and unemployment in Third World cities that moving to them can hardly be said to constitute an improvement. To answer this objection it is necessary to do a brief survey of how the attitudes of academics and policymakers to urbanization have evolved over the years.

It has been remarked that their conception of urbanization has gone through three stages over the last couple of decades (Population Information Program 1983:M-245). In the first stage rural-urban migration was seen in an overwhelmingly positive light. Modernisation theorists of the 1960's and earlier regarded urbanisation as an essential part of the industrialisation process which in turn formed the basis of the process of modernisation. Urbanisation represented the transfer of surplus population from the agricultural sector into more productive urban industrial occupations (see for example my discussion of Lewis's dual economy model in chapter 2). In the second phase,

which started soon after the world recession brought about by the 1973 oil crisis, rural-urban migration was viewed as contributing to the overurbanisation of cities in the Third World. There was now an acute realisation that large parts of the Third World do not industrialise fast enough (if at all) to accommodate the numbers of people streaming into cities from the rural areas. Scholars started to focus on the negative consequences of urbanisation in terms of the ecological pressures, housing shortages, crime and unemployment thought to be caused by uncontrolled population concentration in mega-cities.

Since then, both planners and academics have adopted a more balanced outlook about rural-urban migration. It is now more generally recognized that urbanisation has both positive and negative implications for Third World countries and that policy should be about trying to maximise the former and minimising the latter. Even though my focus in this thesis is on the inequality producing effects of migration, and is thus on one of its more negative aspects, I agree with this sentiment. If under some circumstances rural-urban migration can exacerbate inequality, this does not mean that it cannot also have positive effects which may outweigh the bad, especially if policy measures are in place to minimise the negative aspects.

One of the reasons for the more balanced view of rural-urban migration is that it became clear that even though rural-urban migration may have negative consequences for the cities concerned, individual migrants generally reported improving their position as a result of migration (Dogan & Kasarda 1988:21, Population Information Program 1983:M-245, Miro & Potter 1979). Citing numerous studies to support their conclusions, the Population Information Program (1983:M-257) report:

Most migrants are glad that they have moved...They believe that their living conditions have improved..., that they are making progress..., and that their children are better off...A substantial minority, however, are dissatisfied with city life ... and may return or move on...

Migrants feel that they are better off because they compare their present situation with conditions in their rural areas of origin. If one realises that however bad conditions are in the urban areas, things are even worse in the migrants' areas of origin, one starts to see rural-urban migration in a new light (Dogan and Kasarda 1988:22). This is true even if one acknowledges that, in most cases in the Third World, migrants do not leave the rural areas for formal sector jobs in town. Instead, as Danesh (1987:12) says, jobs are not there to be taken, but have to be created by the

migrants themselves in the informal sector. Despite this Danesh (1987:12-13) believes that in Iran in particular (where he did his research) and in the Third World in general, rural-urban migrants still improve their position overall as a result of their move. This is because conditions in the rural-areas are so bad in comparison.

It is therefore important not to generalise from the observed conditions in mega-cities to the experiences of individual migrants of these conditions. The consequences of migration for the individual migrant him/herself may very well be positive, even if the move may have negative consequences for the urban destination area as a whole, in the sense of contributing to housing shortages and congestion. If the consequences for the migrant are positive, it follows that the bad conditions in urban areas cannot be used as an objection to my argument about the inequality producing effects of migration.

### **5.3 URBAN BIAS, STRUCTURAL ADJUSTMENT AND THE ADVANTAGES OF MIGRATION**

It therefore emerges that it is necessary to make a comparison between conditions in the area of origin and the destination area before one can get an idea of how migration between the two affects the welfare of the individual migrant. Bad conditions in the destination area may be outweighed by even worse conditions in the area of origin. In the last few decades Third World countries have undergone a period of wrenching adjustment as a result of the debt crisis of the 1980's, the structural adjustment policies imposed by the IMF and World Bank and recently the fall-out from the crisis in South East Asia. These changes have affected the welfare of urban areas relative to that of rural areas. It is therefore worthwhile asking whether it is still true that urban areas are better off than rural areas, especially in the light of Douglas Massey's (1996) observation that poverty is increasingly an urban and not a rural phenomenon. In order to answer this question, I discuss in this section the changes that have occurred in the life chances offered by big cities, smaller cities and rural areas respectively in the last few decades as a result of structural adjustment programs. This will provide an indication of how advantageous rural-urban migration is at present to the individual Third World migrant. Because there is so much regional (that is

from one continent, country and province to another) variation in the distribution of life chances between urban and rural areas, any answer arrived at is bound to be very general. To establish the situation in a specific case, an empirical analysis will have to be undertaken. This is however not so problematic, given the level of abstraction at which the argument about the inequality producing impact of migration is couched.

Since the 1980's a series of diagnoses of the underlying problems of Third World economies and their solutions, known as the 'Washington consensus', have predominated in discourses on economic development. These emphasised in the first place high interest rates (to fight inflation and restore the confidence of international investors), the reduction of budget deficits (to fight inflation and reduce the 'crowding out' of private investment by government expenditure), the opening of markets to foreign competition and deregulation and secondarily (and less consistently) lower exchange rates (to supposedly fuel export led growth). Although the Washington consensus has recently been questioned by establishment economists such as Joseph Stiglitz of the World Bank and Jeffrey Sachs of Harvard, for twenty years it represented the policy of institutions such as the IMF and the World Bank (the World Bank has of late started to question this line of thinking and is increasingly at odds with the IMF over policy issues). During this period, reforms along these lines (known as structural adjustment) became a precondition for help from these institutions for Third World countries.

The insistence on market led policies came in reaction to the unsustainable economic policies pursued by (often) corrupt and incompetent Third World governments, but it is a moot point whether the so-called cure was often not as bad as the disease it was supposed to address. For the most part, the impact of these reforms on the poor in the cities of the Third World countries proved to be devastating (Gilbert 1994, Portes 1989). Because of the abolition of subsidies, food and transport prices rose. As a result of tight fiscal and monetary policies, as well as foreign competition, many industries closed down and formal sector employment fell sharply. Urban unemployment increased sharply in most Third World countries (Portes 1989:24, Gilbert 1994:51). The only exception to this trend were the South East Asian countries, who exhibited high rates of economic growth until 1997 when they too were forced by the IMF to implement adjustment programmes following a financial panic. In addition the real value of wages for those

who still had jobs fell drastically (Gilbert 1994:47). Deregulation of the labour market led to increasing subcontracting and generally more insecure employment (Gilbert 1994:54). The informal sector expanded significantly as a result of deregulation and increasing unemployment, but it is clear that it could not accommodate everybody who became unemployed (Portes 1989:25, Gilbert 1994:53). Moreover, per capita income earned in the informal sector fell significantly as the market for informal sector jobs became overtraded and formal sector income available for recycling in the informal sector declined (Portes 1989:33, Gilbert 1994:53).

As a result the distribution of life chances between metropolitan areas on the one hand and smaller urban areas and rural areas on the other seem to have shifted in most parts of the Third World. Brockerhoff and Brennan (1998: 91) provide figures that compare infant mortality rates for selected Third World countries between bigger and smaller cities (those with more and less than 1 million inhabitants) as well as towns (less than 50 000) and rural areas. According to them, (Brockerhoff and Brennan 1998:89) these figures can be used as an indicator of overall living conditions in the different kinds of settlements (their rationale being that infant mortality rates are very sensitive to changes in socio-economic conditions). After comparing these figures, they (Brockerhoff and Brennan 1998) come to the conclusion that some of the disadvantages previously imposed on the smaller settlement types (smaller cities, towns and rural areas) relative to big cities have lessened in most regions of the Third World between the late 1970's and the early 1990's. The only exception is Africa where conditions in smaller cities relative to other areas seem to have worsened. Even though the disadvantages of smaller settlement types compared to big cities have been reduced somewhat, Brockerhoff and Brennan's figures also make it clear that, with a few exceptions, big cities still have more favourable conditions than smaller settlement types in most regions of the Third World. One of the reasons why cities and towns continue to do better in terms of service provision, despite attempts to reverse urban bias, is that it is much more economically viable to deliver services to urban than to rural populations. Because of the relative distance from the existing distribution network in the case of water, electricity and telecommunications, it requires far less capital outlay to install services in an urban or peri-urban informal settlement than in a remote rural area. The capital outlay is especially critical given the small income the utilities will probably derive from the poor consumers they are servicing in both the rural and urban areas (due to low consumption) and militates against providing services to

rural areas.

Part of the improvement in infant mortality rates that Brockerhoff and Brennan (1998) ascribe to improved living conditions generally is probably more a result of reforms to the health care sector specifically, rather than improved overall living conditions. According to Gilbert (1994:48) governments have become more aware of the need to target the remaining health care subsidies (such as feeding schemes for underweight children, clinics, etc.) at the poorest people living in the most deprived regions. This should have led to improvements in health care in previously disadvantaged places, such the smaller settlement types. Nevertheless, there are indications that some economic growth has been diverted to places outside of the major metropolises over this period. The developmental model that was followed in most of the Third World during the 1970's was import substitution industrialisation. Because industries find it advantageous to locate close to their markets, it made sense for them to be in the biggest cities during this period. According to Portes (1989:34) however:

(T)he shift toward an export-orientated model during the late 1970's and 1980's has been accompanied by the growth of industries that are not located in the large cities, such as commercial agriculture, forestry, mining, and product assembly. The proliferation of export-processing zones in several countries have added to the trend because these industrial enclaves are generally located away from national capitals.

Consistent with this trend, it seems that the growth rate of most of the largest cities in the Third World has slowed recently relative to that of smaller cities (Portes 1989:14, Brockerhoff and Brennan 1998:80-81). This indicates that some rural-urban migration has been directed away from the former to the latter. Armed with this information, we can now return to the question with which we started this section: in the light of the structural adjustment policies of the last two decades, is it still true to say that migrants improve their situation when they migrate to urban areas? It seems that the answer to this question is still 'yes', albeit a qualified one. Brockerhoff and Brennan's figures confirm that cities in general are still better off than rural areas, as I pointed out above. Some of the urban bias that previously characterised developmental policies has indeed been addressed, and some improvements in rural areas have taken place in things such as health care due to the better targeting of subsidies. As we saw above, some migration has also been redirected away from the largest cities to smaller cities, but this does not take anything away from the privileged position of the urban sector as a whole.

In chapter 4 I made the point that networks channel migration into particular places and into particular occupations (see above pp. 88). It also became evident from that discussion that if the network channels migration into an area or an industry with rising employment opportunities, migration will be more advantageous than in the case where migration is channelled into a declining area or a declining industry. The channelling effect of networks imparts a degree of inertia to migration streams, which means that it can take time before migration adjusts to changing circumstances. How fast migration adjusts depends critically on the resources of the network, as we saw above. One can therefore expect that the changing distribution of life chances, discussed in the previous paragraph, will not affect all migrants in the same way. Some will be better prepared to cope with it than others, which imparts a further differentiating effect to migration. In this case migration differentiates between different classes of migrant rather than between migrants and non-migrants.

#### **5.4 THE IMPACT OF THE TYPE OF MIGRATION ON THE ADVANTAGES OF MIGRATION**

In this section (5.4), as well as the next section (5.5) devoted to a discussion of the impact of gender on migration, I discuss a number of factors that influence the degree of advantage that migrants can derive from migration. This is done as part of the broader goal of this chapter to qualify the statement that migrants benefit from migration. It seems that this advantage is variable, depending on the factors discussed below.

##### **5.4.1 THE OPPOSITION BETWEEN PUSH AND PULL MIGRATION**

One objection to the idea that migration improves the situation of migrants is that this statement applies more to pull-migration than to push-migration. The migrant responds to pull-forces if s/he decides to move to an urban area because conditions there are very attractive in terms of high wages, good services, etc. Push-migration occurs when the migrant is forced off the land in some way or the other. Pull migration is discretionary with the migrant having a choice in the matter, but push migration occurs out of necessity. The rationale for the argument that only pull migration

improves the migrant's position is that when the migrant is forced to leave his/her community of origin, as in the case of a sharecropper that is kicked off the land as a result of the commercialisation of agriculture (I described this scenario in chapter 3 under the heading of social-structural explanations), migration is an act of distress. The careful planning of and preparation for the act of migration that is implied by the notion of pull-migration do not apply in this case of push-migration and therefore one cannot expect push-migration to be as advantageous to the migrant as pull-migration (Lipton 1980).

The issue is made more complicated because push and pull migration are not only types of migration, but also feature respectively in two different theoretical perspectives on migration. The push-migration theoretical approach is more interested in migration from a macro-theoretical and structuralist viewpoint, while the pull-migration approach views migration from a micro-theoretical and agency angle. In a sense then, push and pull migration are not only realities on the ground, but also theoretical constructs created by the tendency of the push perspective to view people as merely reacting to social and economic forces operating on the macro scale, and the pull perspective's focus on the rational and microscale decision making of the individual actor. The term 'macro' refers to large-scale social processes occurring on the level of society as a whole, while 'micro' indicates a focus on the smallest scale social forces structured by the individual's interaction with other individuals. The difference between macro and micro is therefore the difference between a perspective that sees the 'big picture' and one that zooms in on small scale phenomena. From the pull-migration perspective one is therefore more likely to interpret the migration one encounters as a planned and unforced decision by the individual actor. If one adopts a push perspective, on the other hand, there is a tendency to view the migrant as a victim of large-scale social and economic transformations (such as the commercialisation of agriculture) over which the individual has no control.

The distorted image of migration that an exclusive focus on each of these aspects of migration provides has given rise to calls for a new perspective that avoids the extremism of either (Wood 1982). In response, meso level concepts (concepts that in other words focus on a level of analysis between the large and small scales) such as 'household' (Wood 1982) and 'network' (Boyd 1989) have been offered to overcome this dualism. According to Boyd (1989:642), adopting this

perspective “permits understanding migration as a social product - not as the sole result of individual decisions made by individual actors, not as the sole result of economic or political parameters, but rather as an outcome of all these factors in interaction”. That this is the case becomes apparent once one reviews the discussion in chapter 4. Households respond to constraining macro-structural forces by spreading their members over a number of tasks and places. By engaging in reciprocal exchange, networks can overcome the constraints imposed by the high cost of migration and in so doing allow more network members to migrate than would otherwise be the case. Sometimes, however, social forces are so strong that networks degenerate and become unable to sponsor migration.

It is thus the case that from a more balanced perspective that takes into account forces operating at the macro-, meso- and microlevels, and that allows for the interaction of structure and agency, pure push and pure pull migration are unlikely to be very prominent. People are not just passive victims of social forces as suggested by the push perspective, but can often respond creatively to these conditions. At other times, however, the social forces are so strong that (poor) individuals are very constrained in their reactions to these forces. This leads to the conclusion that it is better to see the amount of control that an individual has over his or her movement as variable, although it is unlikely ever to be complete (as in pull-migration) or totally absent (as in push-migration).

In so far as pull-migration responds to attractive conditions in town and push-migration results from pressure from the rural side, pull-migration is oriented to the urban end and push migration to the rural end of the rural-urban continuum. The exclusive orientation to either the urban or rural side of the equation is another reason why push and pull migration always have to be seen relative to each other and never as absolutes. The pull of the urban areas is only effective, after all, because it is better **relative** to the conditions the potential migrant is facing at the rural home (Danesh 1987:20 makes a similar argument). As a result, urban pull does not make sense without some level of rural push. It is true that if one is evicted from a farm there is in most cases no alternative but to leave, but even in this case a destination is chosen<sup>1</sup> from a number of

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<sup>1</sup> This is true in most cases but not all. It has happened before that migrants were forced to wander aimlessly through the countryside because they had nowhere else to go. See our reference to Sol Plaatjie's work in chapter 3, as well as our reference to Steinbeck's novel.)

alternatives. The rural push therefore also has to be seen in terms of pull factors suggesting a particular destination above others.

The conclusion to be drawn from this is that the amount of control an individual has over his/her migration is variable. This creates a continuum with two extremes ranging from absolutely necessary migration to absolutely discretionary migration, although neither of these two alternatives are likely to occur in practice. Because the terms 'push' and 'pull' migration is so commonly used I shall continue to use them, although it must be understood that they refer to degrees of control over movement rather than the total presence or absence of it. We now need to return to the question whether it is true that the more control an individual has over his/her migration, the more beneficial the move is going to be for the migrant.

Besides the element of planning and preparation referred to above, there are other reasons why the migration of those with less control over their movement (and by implication those with less power) is likely to offer fewer rewards. These are all related to the observation that poverty and powerlessness go hand in hand. As a result, push migration is more likely to apply to the movements of the poorest, and pull migration to those of the better off (Lipton 1980, also see Mohtadi 1986:719). It was mentioned previously that the poor migrate over shorter distances, and tend to go to rural rather than urban locations. Unless a relatively privileged urban area is within striking distance from where they live, the poor, because they cannot afford to migrate over long distances, therefore have to make do with the destination area that is within their reach. Their chances of reaching the better-off areas are therefore lower, with the result that the average return from their migration is also less (Lipton 1980:4). This strengthens the argument that those who exercise little control over their movements are also less likely to gain from them.

From this we can conclude that a migratory move is not likely to cause as much inequality between the migrant and those who have to stay behind when the migrant is pushed into migrating as when the migrant is pulled by better opportunities. This is because in this (push migration) case the migrant does not benefit as much relative to the non-migrant as a result of his/her migration. Pull migrants are much more likely to improve their situation relative to those who stay behind. But if in this case the extent of inequality created between migrants and non-migrants is less, it

still has the potential to worsen inequality between different classes of **migrants**. Here inequality is not worsened through the mechanism of the non-migration of the poorest and the migration of the better-off, but through the better prepared migration of the latter and the more constrained migration of those who are worse-off (cf. Lipton 1980). As a result the migrant who is pushed benefits less than the migrant who is pulled. This is a similar argument to the one I am going to make in the next section for the difference between rural-urban migration and rural-rural migration.

#### 5.4.2 THE DIFFERENT EFFECTS OF RURAL-RURAL AND RURAL-URBAN MIGRATION

In chapter 3 I referred to Brown and Lawson's (1985) claim that rural-rural migration is a neglected phenomenon. According to Chant and Radcliffe (1992:9) rural-rural migration is more prevalent in the regions of a country where there is a seasonal demand for agricultural labour (especially during harvesting). They mention specifically tropical export crops such as cotton, sugar and coffee which have high labour demands at some stages of the growing season. In South Africa rural-rural migration takes place to satisfy the labour demands of the sheep farming industry (sheep shearers), the sugar industry and fruit and vegetable farms of various kinds (Sharp and Spiegel 1990:539). Many South African mines are located in rural areas and consequently the migration that takes place in response to their labour demands can also be classified as rural-rural migration. Rural-rural migration takes place in response to these labour demands, but because the extra labour is only needed at some stages of the growing season, it is more likely to be circular than permanent migration.

From chapter 3 it is evident that rural-rural migration takes place over shorter distances and generally attracts poorer and more unskilled migrants. The question now arises if rural-rural migration advantages migrants relative to non-migrants to the same extent that its counterpart, rural-urban migration, does. Because rural-rural migration is largely of a circular nature, the general conditions in the (rural) destination area are not as important for our answer as the wages to be gained from such migration. In general <sup>2</sup>, it seems that wages are lower in agriculture than

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<sup>2</sup> Because there is so much regional variation in wage rates, our answer can obviously only be of a very general nature.

in formal urban occupations, especially where the urban occupations are unionised. If rural-rural migration is not so advantageous as well-prepared rural-urban migration to formal sector jobs, this does not mean that rural-rural migrants are not better-off compared to those who are immobilised in their home village, however. This form of migration still allows individuals to make use of opportunities spread over a wider geographical area than the home village.

The different rewards offered by rural-rural and rural-urban migration and the under-representation of the poorest in the latter migration stream is another way in which migration can reinforce inequality. As in the case of push versus pull migration, the inequality is here created less between migrant and non-migrant than between different classes of migrant. Better-prepared rural-urban migrants, who are already privileged relative to rural-rural migrants, can reap more rewards from their migration than the latter group. In a self-reinforcing cycle the privileges afforded this group not only get reproduced but are also amplified once they reach their destination.

### **5.5 THE IMPACT OF THE TIMING OF THE MIGRATION DECISION ON THE ADVANTAGES OF MIGRATION: LEADERS AND FOLLOWERS IN THE MIGRATION PROCESS**

I am now going to discuss another factor that influences the extent to which migrants benefit from migration. This has to do with the distinction between leaders and followers in the migration process. According to Lipton (1980:9), migration can be understood with reference to models of the diffusion of innovations. Innovations, such as the decision to use high-yielding seeds in agriculture, are first adopted by the leaders in the community (who are also prepared to carry the higher risks usually associated with innovations) and then spread slowly to others. Innovations not only diffuse down the socio-economic hierarchy, but also geographically. Some villages, usually those closest to the major urban areas, are the first to adopt an innovation. If successful, other villages will then follow the leader village in this innovation. As in the case of other innovations, the migration innovation diffuses slowly down the socio-economic hierarchy as well as the settlement hierarchy (Skeldon 1990).

Generally, those who are the first to adopt the migration innovation gain the most from it, according to Lipton (1980:9). This is because once the first migrants have succeeded in establishing themselves in town, factors come into play that reduce the advantages that later migrants may derive from migration. Lipton (1980:9) claims that this is due to the initial job opportunities that gave rise to the migration stream being oversubscribed, while the creation of new jobs are limited by the downward inelasticity of wages as a result of trade union pressure (Todaro [1976] makes a similar argument - see chapter 2 above). Lipton's argument does not take cognisance of the possibility that the first migrants, instead of just taking up jobs, may eventually be job creators themselves. This will happen if the earlier migrants become entrepreneurs in an ethnic enclave (for example grocers who supply Mexican foodstuffs to the Mexican immigrant community in US cities). In this case they would be able to employ later migrants, with the result that their migration does not disadvantage later migrants in the sense of taking up their jobs. Because they had time to take up the opportunities for entrepreneurship offered by the enclave economy, earlier migrants are however advantaged relative to later migrants in the sense that they are the entrepreneurs and the latter (sometimes) their workers. Lipton's argument must of course also be qualified with reference to the discussion of networks in chapter 4. Later migrants may not be disadvantaged so badly if they have network connections to previous migrants. These connections facilitate the migration of later migrants and are thus able to compensate for the disadvantages that later migrants may face.

The impact on social inequality of the timing of the decision to migrate also occurs through the inflation of land values. Migrants typically invest their earnings in the acquisition of land in their area of origin. The first migrants are often able to acquire land rather cheaply (Wiest 1984:127). This is because the lack of agricultural opportunities which is in the first place responsible for their decision to migrate generally feeds into low land values. As more migrants leave, the demand for land increases relative to the supply, with the result that migration is often associated with the inflation of land values (Russell 1986:687, Georges 1990:186). Those who leave later, therefore, are disadvantaged relative to the first migrants in the sense that they cannot buy land at those cheap rates. It is not clear that the acquisition of land has such an important impact on social inequality in the community of origin, however, because land acquired by migrants is generally not used productively. Mines (1984:152) reports that US bound migrants from a village in the

Mexican state of Zacatecas buy land, not to invest in agriculture, but “for prestige, security, and to raise food for their parents.” In that village migrant landowners tend to become absentee landlords farming the land through sharecroppers or family members, who do not have the motivation or the capital to raise the productivity of the land (Mines 1984:153). That migrant earnings are often not used to improve the productivity of agricultural land is confirmed by Georges (1990:243) in her study of a village in the Dominican Republic, as well as by general surveys of the effect of remittances on agricultural productivity in the Third World (Russell 1986).

Under some circumstances earlier migrants can be placed in an advantageous position relative to later migrants due to the timing of their migration decision. As the previous discussion shows, it is not clear how common this is, however, because there are so many factors that can influence the degree to which they benefit. To the extent that it is the case, the amount of differentiation between **later** migrants and non-migrants will be less, as the former is not advantaged as much by their migration. As was the case for the other factors discussed above (e.g. push versus pull migrants), differentiation between migrants and non-migrants is replaced by differentiation between classes of migrant if some categories of migrants benefit less as a result of migration. Here we are referring to differentiation between leaders and followers in the migration process.

## **5.6 THE IMPACT OF GENDER ON THE ADVANTAGES OF MIGRATION**

Recent research on women and migration has demonstrated that gender helps to determine the outcome of migration (see for example Pedraza 1991:321). In other words, men and women are not alike in their experience of migration, and may not benefit in the same way and to the same extent from migration. Sometimes women gain more from migration than men, as their moves give them greater opportunities for education and employment than men (Pedraza 1991:321), and at other times it may be the opposite. To what extent women gain or lose from migration, and the circumstances under which either outcome appears, is not at all clear, however (Tienda and Booth 1991). Studies done on women and migration in different parts of the world attests to a large amount of regional variation in the advantages of migration for women. As we shall see, the answers arrived at are often inconclusive with regard to this question, and one has to accept that

it is largely an empirical question for which an answer has to be established afresh in each case. The difficulty involved in interpreting the literature on migration outcomes does not only reside in the complexity of empirical reality, however. The biases of scholars with regard to development theory also play a part in determining their perception of migration: those who depart from a modernisation framework are likely to see migration as part of a process of modernisation that erodes the extreme patriarchal restrictions imposed on women in the countryside (migration is therefore seen as overwhelmingly positive), while those adopting a more critical perspective tend to see migration as part of a process that destroys the productive role that women previously performed in the precapitalist economy and casts them into a marginal role in the capitalist one (cf. Gilbert 1994). In this section I shall try to avoid either of these (ideologically loaded) extremes and attempt to account for some of the empirical variation by identifying critical variables that determine the outcomes of migration for women.

The question whether or not women improve their economic welfare as a result of their own migration has to address the following two components of economic welfare: changes in income earning possibilities for the female migrant that occur as a result of migration, and the ways in which income is redistributed within the household. Why we should look at the first issue is obvious: if migration improves the chances of the woman to earn an income, at least the household to which she belongs (if not the migrant herself) will register an increased income. Whether or not the individual migrant improves her own position depends on the amount of control she has over her own income (as well the income of other members of her household). Relations of redistribution within the household therefore affects who within the household is going to benefit as a result of the migration of one of the household members. Is it going to be the migrant him/herself or the migrant's household as a whole or other members within the household? This question forms part of the broader imperative to consider the unit which is regarded as being advantaged as a result of migration. Do we mean the migrant as an individual, or the household of the migrant? The validity of this question is demonstrated by the following examples. A rural household that depends on the earnings of a circular migrant may not do well if the migrant does not remit regularly, even if the wages of the migrant him/herself are high. In this case the migrant does well, but not his/her household of origin. At the opposite extreme is the case of a female migrant that may not have much control over her earnings, and must give up

most of it to her parents' household. In this case the household benefits at the expense of the individual migrant.

We shall now look consecutively at the two components of economic welfare that were isolated above.

### 5.6.1 MIGRATION AND THE INCOME EARNING CAPACITY OF WOMEN

Although it may seem obvious that migration should improve a woman's income earning chances, a study of US statistics by Maxwell (1988) suggests that things are not so clear-cut. In an analysis of results of a longitudinal survey of young women and men, she found that married women did not improve their earnings upon migration, while unmarried women did. This suggested that married women were tied migrants, following their husbands rather than migrating for job related reasons on their own account. As a result they suffered an (at least initial) earnings decline upon migration. Leaving aside for the present the question whether things may have changed in the US since the time the survey was done (in the late sixties and late seventies), it nevertheless suggests the important role gender may play in our understanding of the consequences of migration.

#### *THE ROLE OF MARITAL STATUS IN DETERMINING INCOME EARNING CAPACITY*

Since Maxwell's study was done in the US we need to ask the further question about the applicability of her results in a Third World context. According to a survey of the literature on gender and migration in the Third World by Tienda and Booth (1991), marital status does seem to be an important variable in determining migration outcomes for women. Although they are specifically interested in the impact of migration on the status of women relative to men (and not on the economic welfare of women in general), their findings are general enough to be applicable here with the necessary qualifications. In most (but not all) of the cases investigated by them (Tienda and Booth 1991), it was found that women who migrate to join their husbands do not benefit from migration, in contrast to single women, who are generally better-off. One can interpret this as a special case of our assertion above (section 5.4) that the less control the migrant has over his/her migration the less benefit will be derived from migration. An important variable

here seems to be cultural prescriptions against the employment of married women, and the ability of women to contest them. This is borne out by the observation that where the position of married women improves upon rural-urban migration (among Yoruba migrants to a small Nigerian city), they do not face any proscriptions against employment (Tienda and Booth 1991:62). On the other hand, if a woman leaves her home village where she had some income-generating possibilities to live in a family where she is not supposed to work, her own income-earning capacity will obviously not improve. This may be off-set by the share she receives of her husband's income, so one cannot deduce from the above that her economic welfare will necessarily take a turn for the worse. Because Tienda and Booth (1991) are interested in changes in the position of women relative to men, they do not investigate this possibility, but it is nevertheless an important consideration for our purposes. It will feature again when we discuss the issue of the control the women can exert over the income of other members of her household.

#### *RURAL INCOME EARNING POSSIBILITIES*

Besides marital status, another variable affecting a female migrant's income earning possibilities is the possibilities for income generation in both the rural origin and urban destination. In the rural area, women's income earning capacity depends on the amount of agricultural land available coupled with the place occupied by them in the gender division of labour in agriculture. Starting with the last of these two issues, it is well known that there are important differences between regions with regard to the position women occupy in agriculture (see for example Chant and Radcliffe 1992). In Latin America, women have a limited role in agriculture, whereas in most<sup>3</sup> of sub-Saharan Africa, women perform a much greater role (they do most things, except for land clearing and ploughing - cf. Bryson 1981). Where women have a role in agriculture, farming provides them with part of their (and their household's) subsistence. In the rural areas of South Africa, women are allowed to use part of the grain crop for beer brewing and this provides them with an additional cash income (Sharp and Spiegel 1990:532). According to Sharp and Spiegel (1990:540), because migrant men recognise the importance of investment in agricultural resources, they are more prepared to remit money to their rural wives when they have agricultural

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<sup>3</sup> The exception seems to be areas (especially in West Africa) where cash cropping predominate (Bryson 1981).

land. These remittances provide the women concerned with resources they can invest in informal sector activities such as hawking, beer brewing and clothes making.

This is only possible, however, in cases where there is some agricultural land available. Many rural households all over the Third World are in fact landless. This is certainly the case in South Africa, where there are big differences in terms of the amount of agricultural land available between rural areas. Sharp and Spiegel (1990), for example, contrast the situation in the Matatiele district in Transkei where there is relatively limited landlessness with the former homeland area of QwaQwa where most households are landless. Rural landlessness is also common in other parts of Africa (see for example Nelson 1992:124) and elsewhere. The income earning possibilities for women in agriculture is consequently limited by the extent of landlessness.

To sum up: women can earn some income from agriculture in the rural areas if they have land available and if they have a culturally sanctioned role in agriculture. Where these two conditions are not met, they have to depend on whatever other possibilities are open to them, such as hawking (see below, 5.7, for a discussion of the jobs available in the rural areas). But, as we saw above, an agricultural income is, at least in the South African context, an important facilitating factor for access to those possibilities. Landless women are consequently at a disadvantage in this respect. The gender division of labour also limits the non-agricultural jobs women can perform in the area of origin. Women are unlikely to become taxi drivers in most places in the Third World, for example. Georges's (1991) discussion of the prejudice against women taxi drivers in the Dominican Republic sounds very similar to the attitudes one finds in South Africa in particular and in the rest of the Third World in general.

#### *URBAN INCOME EARNING POSSIBILITIES*

The gender division of labour is also an important factor in determining the urban income earning possibilities of women. Certain occupations are thought to be more suitable for the employment of poor women than others, largely because they are closer to the domestic roles performed by women. The garment industry, for example, makes extensive use of female labour because it depends on needle working skills many women already possess given their domestic roles. The

extent of homeworking in this industry also makes it easier for women to combine employment and domestic labour (Pedraza 1991:315). Other occupations that are held to be particularly suitable to female employment is domestic service<sup>4</sup> (Pedraza 1991:314), as well as those service occupations that are associated with the domestic role, such as cleaning services and waitressing. Women are also a very prominent part of the labour force in export processing zones, where they are typically involved in the final assembly of products (Georges 1990, Sassen-Koob 1984). Besides these formal sector jobs one also needs to consider the informal jobs open to women in the urban areas. In this regard the gender division of labour is once again an important factor, with certain jobs closed to women. In South Africa, women are concentrated in the hawking of foodstuffs and clothes, as well as shebeening, and are, as in other parts of the world, unlikely to be backyard mechanics. The above discussion therefore leads us to conclude that income earning possibilities for women at the urban end depends on the number of jobs available in those sectors of the economy that are open to poor women.

#### *A PRELIMINARY CONCLUSION*

The question now remains whether rural-urban migration improves the income earning possibilities of women or not. As far as marital status is concerned, it seems that migration improves the income generating possibilities of single women. In the case of married women, the possibilities for improvement depends on the cultural prescriptions regarding the employment of married women. This finding must be combined with a consideration of how many jobs are open to women in both sending and receiving areas. The latter depends on the gender division of labour as well as the size of those sectors of the economy in a particular country that offer employment to women. In a country with a big textile and clothing industry, as well as many export-processing zones, rural-urban migration will obviously offer a bigger improvement in income-generating capacity than in a country without strong sectors of this kind. The service jobs associated with the domestic role of women are almost invariably more urban than rural oriented (except for ecotourism destinations). In addition the scope for the informal sector is greater in town than in rural areas, largely because there is far more money in circulation in the former than in the latter. The only advantages offered by the rural areas occur in those cases where there are large numbers

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<sup>4</sup> Except for West Africa, where domestic service is more male dominated.

of agricultural jobs open to women. One can therefore conclude this section with the observation that in most cases urban areas will have better income generating possibilities for women than rural areas, but that there are exceptions to this trend.

#### 5.6.2 MIGRATION AND CONTROL OVER INCOME

If a woman earns more money in town this is no guarantee that her economic welfare will improve. If she does not control the income earned by her, and has to hand over most of it to her husband or to her parents, she will not benefit as much as she otherwise would (Tienda and Booth 1991:54). On the other hand, if a woman's husband earns more money upon migrating to town, and she shares in it, her economic welfare can improve even if her own income generating capacity has not changed. It is therefore important to combine a focus on income earning capacity with a consideration of income redistribution within the household.

#### *MARITAL STATUS AND CONTROL OVER INCOME*

In general, women have less control over their household's income than men (Tienda and Booth 1991:54). As Tienda and Booth (1991:54) point out "equal shares in production *do not* (their emphasis) automatically translate into equal shares in consumption". An improvement in women's income earning capacity therefore does not necessarily mean that they will have more money in their pockets, as I pointed out in the previous paragraph. As in the case of income generating capacity, it seems that marital status is one of the factors determining how much women retain of their own income. Widowed and divorced women do not, by definition, have husbands who can compete with them for control over their own income. They sometimes have to compete with the ex-husband's family for control over his assets, but this is another issue. Single, never-married, women are in a similar position<sup>5</sup> of greater control over their own income, although in their case their parents' expectation that they remit home a higher portion of their income, compared to their brothers, complicates the issue (Chant and Radcliffe 1992:17)

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<sup>5</sup> Things are of course not always so simplistic: there are often in Third World countries many shades of grey between being married or not married. The distinction between being married and being divorced, for example, can be vague when the couple had a customary marriage (Peters 1983).

*RURAL-URBAN DIFFERENCES IN CONTROL OVER INCOME*

There are pronounced differences between urban and rural areas in terms the amount of autonomy women have. The act of migration, by taking them from the one to the other, is therefore itself a factor in determining how much of their own income women will retain. Unfortunately, there does not seem to be a clear pattern to these rural-urban differences and thus there is no simple answer to the question of how migration affects income redistribution within the household (Tienda and Booth 1991). In our analysis of the effects of migration on the control women have over their own income, we consequently need to consider all the outcomes that, logically speaking, are possible: migration may worsen their control, or it may stay the same, or it may improve as a result of migration. With regard to the control women have over other household members' income, the same three possibilities may arise. In the case where the woman's migration coincides with her marriage to an urban based man, she may lose some control over her own income, but gain some control over her new husband's income. As a result, change in the two variables discussed here may not be in the same direction, which complicates the issue even more. In the next three sections I discuss each of these three possibilities. In each case I consider the woman's control over her own income together with her control over her husband's income.

*a) The possible negative effect of migration on autonomy*

It can be argued that migration may worsen the autonomy enjoyed by women in those cases where they performed the role of farm managers in the rural areas, and where they moved to live with their husbands in the urban areas as their dependants. As was previously discussed, women only occupy the farm management role in those areas where the gender division of labour makes it possible (most of sub-Saharan Africa) and where rural landlessness does not curtail farming activities. The argument in favour of the belief that rural women have some autonomy in those cases is that when men are absent as labour migrants for most of the year they are forced to leave many of the decisions regarding household affairs to the women who stay behind. As we saw in the previous section, Sharp and Spiegel (1990) make a similar argument when they refer to the sphere of autonomy opened up for rural women by their husband's remittances. These are intended for investment in agriculture, but women manage to divert a portion for investment into

their own income generating activities.

The extent to which women do indeed have some autonomy in those cases where they are farm managers has been contested, however (see Nelson [1992:128] with regard to women in rural Kenya as well as Brown [1983:386-388] for a summary of the arguments regarding the situation of women in southern Africa). One of the factors determining the autonomy enjoyed by women, at least in sub-Saharan Africa, seems to be the settlement pattern upon marriage (Nelson 1992:126). In most of sub-Saharan Africa the pattern is for women to move to the husband's home village to live with his family upon marriage. This is known as a patrilocal settlement pattern, which places the woman effectively under the control of the husband's family and reduces her chances of autonomy, even in his absence (Ramphela 1989:401, Nelson 1992:129). According to Nelson (1992:125) other factors influencing the degree of control exercised by rural women are the distance from the husband's place of employment (if husbands can visit more often, they are obviously in a better position to exercise control) and the level of the husband's earnings (these determine in the Kenyan context whether the husband is going to invest in cash crops or not: cash crops are under the husband's control with wives reduced to unpaid farm labourers).

The case for the so-called autonomy enjoyed by rural women has to be qualified however by Nelson's (1992:128) observation that in many cases this autonomy means that husbands feel less responsibility for the welfare of their wives (this is obviously not true for all rural women in this category, as Sharp and Spiegel's [1990] study attests). If this translates into reduced remittances, the position of rural women can hardly be said to have improved. One factor militating against the abandonment of women by their migrant husbands is the latter's need for a rural home to return to upon retirement (Sharp and Spiegel 1990). This need does not always translate into continued support for their wives however, with the result that there are large numbers of rural women in southern and eastern Africa who have to survive without regular remittances. Given that agriculture resources are, though variable, generally insufficient to provide rural families with their own subsistence, and that most rural households in southern and eastern Africa are dependent on external income sources for their own survival, the failure of some men to continue remitting to

their wives is an important factor in the feminisation of poverty in these areas (Brown 1983)<sup>6</sup>. This leads both Brown (1983:387) and Nelson (1992:137) to remark that increased autonomy under conditions of impoverishment is hardly an attractive bargain. In other words, when women improve their control over their own income in the rural areas, there is a chance that their control over their husband's income might decrease.

Their net control over resources will under these circumstances not be enhanced by their role as farm managers. In these cases, migration to the urban areas will not necessarily mean that their autonomy is reduced. Their reduced control over their own income may very well be outweighed by their chance to increase their claims on the husband's income, given that their physical presence in town discourages the husband from pursuing extra-marital affairs. The latter are often a threat to the wife's welfare since they represent another claim on his wages (Ramphela 1989). The upshot of this discussion is therefore that under some circumstances migration may reduce the control women have over their own income, but only in a very limited number of cases. Moreover, in some of these cases migration will entail an increased control over their husband's income, thus cancelling out the effects of the former change.

*b) The possible neutral effect of migration on autonomy*

Ramphela's study of women migrants who live in the migrant hostels of Cape Town as dependants of male bedholders provides an interesting example of how migration may leave the net position of some migrants unchanged and improve the conditions of others. In this case migration entails exchanging the patrilocal rural family in Eastern Cape province where they are under the control of their husband's family (as previously described) for a position as a dependant of a male bedholder. With a few exceptions all the bedholders in this male hostel are men (the

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<sup>6</sup> This statement has to take cognizance of Peters's (1983) criticism that not all female headed households are disadvantaged. She bases her criticism on, among other things, the observation that inter household links (such as that established by the role of mother's brother in Botswana) may lessen the isolation of female-headed households in rural Botswana. In the same context of rural Botswana, Brown (1983) has however remarked on the decline of these kinds of interhousehold transfers. This difference of opinion among observers suggests that the exact conditions under which female-headed households in the rural areas of southern Africa become isolated and in danger of impoverishment is a complex issue that cannot be pursued here.

exceptions having inherited the beds from their deceased husbands). Since accommodation for black women in Cape Town was at the time extremely difficult to find, given the heritage of the government's influx control policies, these women did not have any alternative accommodation to the bed<sup>7</sup> their husband controlled in the hostel. Their dependance on their husband's consent for their continued stay in town made them extremely vulnerable. Under these circumstances they sometimes merely exchanged one constrained position for another. In other cases, however, their physical presence in town forced their husbands to accept some responsibility for their welfare and provided the only alternative to starvation in the rural area.

*c) The possible positive effect of migration on autonomy*

In contrast to the above, there are also case studies that found that migration improves the position of women. According to Pessar's (1984) study of women migrants from the Dominican Republic to New York, the move resulted in an increase in the control women have over household budgets. After migration most households pooled their income, with decision-making about the disposal of the income shared between husband and wife. This was in contrast to the premigration situation in the Dominican Republic, where, in most households, the wife either received an allowance from her husband, or the husband totally determined how the income was to be spent. The major reason for this change, according to Pessar (1984), was the increased participation of Dominican women in the labour force after migration. Survey results confirmed that as many as 91,5% of Dominican women had worked for a wage at some time after their migration, whereas only a small minority were employed previous to their migration (Pessar 1984:1195). Women's experience of work outside the domestic sphere increased their self-esteem. At the same time their increased contribution to the household's income pool provided them with more leverage to demand an equitable share in household decision-making. Other factors responsible for this change, according to Pessar 1984:1194) were a) the shared experience of migration between men and women and its role in bringing men and women closer together, thus reducing power disparities; and b) the influence of the more egalitarian American model of

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<sup>7</sup> The hostel was originally intended to house men only in a dormitory fashion. Single rooms do not exist - thus the use of the term 'bed'.

marriage with its greater stress on shared household decision-making.

### *A PRELIMINARY CONCLUSION*

It is therefore clear that there is much regional variation with regard to the effects of migration on the control exercised by women over both their own income and those of their husbands. Migration in some cases seems to have a positive effect, in other cases a negative effect and in still more cases a neutral effect. This observation is in line with the previously discussed findings of Tienda and Booth (1991). If we conceive of the economic welfare of women as consisting of both their income generating possibilities (discussed in section 5.5.1 above) as well as their control over income, and assume that in most cases migration improves the first of these two, then we can conclude that migration will improve female economic welfare in those cases where the control of women over income improves or stays the same (a static share of an increasing income is still an improvement). It will also improve the position of women in those cases where the increase in income generating possibilities outweigh their reduced share of household income.

It seems to me therefore that the balance of probabilities are still in favour of a nett improvement in their welfare. Nevertheless, the fact that we do not know how common the experience of a worsening income distribution within the household is, reduces the confidence with which we can make this assertion. It is therefore also difficult to say that in all cases female migrants are better off than female non-migrants, although it is probably true in the majority of cases. Returning to my assertion that migration can worsen inequality between migrants and non-migrants, it becomes evident that gender is an important variable in determining the extent to which migration can do so.

We saw in my discussion of push versus pull migration and rural-rural versus rural-urban migration that if migration does not discriminate between migrants and non-migrants, it does tend to do so with regard to different classes of migrant. If gender intervenes to lessen the distinction between female migrants and female non-migrants, in the sense that migration does not materially improve the position of women migrants, while male migrants do benefit, it follows that migration will differentiate between female and male migrants. Unfortunately the literature is as unclear with

regard to this issue as it is with regard to the question whether migration improves the position of female migrants at the expense of female non-migrants (Tienda and Booth 1991). It seems that in the majority of cases it tends to do so, but there are many exceptions, as we noted above.

## **5.7 REDISTRIBUTION OF MIGRANT EARNINGS AS A RESULT OF FAMILY OBLIGATIONS**

The statement that migration advantages migrants relative to non-migrants needs to be qualified in yet another way. Research done in rural communities in the Third world has demonstrated that there are often mechanisms by which the migrant's income is redistributed beyond the migrant's own household. This occurs either as a result of network obligations to others or as a result of the products and services the migrant buys from people in the community of origin with his/her wages. It is on the first of these that I focus in this section. Both of these redistribution mechanisms have the capacity to ameliorate the inequality producing effect of migration and consequently need to be addressed.

These obligations have featured prominently in anthropological studies done in the rural areas of Southern Africa. Spiegel (1980) has demonstrated, for example, that in the early stages of the typical developmental cycle of rural households, migrants are often expected to remit money to the rural household of their parents as well as their own. This can lead to conflict between them and their parents, especially if their parents cannot (either because the land has already been promised to somebody else or they don't have any land) offer the inducement that they might 'inherit'<sup>8</sup> their agricultural land later on (Spiegel 1980:117, 141). Conflict can also occur between their wives and their mothers, as they compete for a share of the migrant's earnings. Obligations to others are not restricted to immediate family members. In the context of a critique of the belief

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<sup>8</sup> 'Inherit' is written in brackets here because land can, in terms of the tenure system in Lesotho studied by Spiegel, not be inherited. Strictly speaking land reverts back to the chief on the parent's death. There is provision, however, for land to be transferred to sons while the parent is still alive and when the parent does not need it (Spiegel 1980:116). This is different from the situation in Transkei, where the introduction of betterment has meant that land can formally be inherited (Sharp and Spiegel 1990:539).

that female-headed households in rural Botswana are necessarily deprived, Peters (1983) has referred to the exchange relations that can exist between such households and other male kin, such as brothers, and that protect them from total isolation. This point is also taken up by Townsend (1997), who stresses the obligations that male migrants in Botswana have in their role as 'mother's brother'.

Although it may appear that these obligations have the potential to moderate the inequality that can arise between households with and without migrant members, they are not as significant as may appear at first glance. Recall that my discussion of changes in selectivity in chapters 3 and 4 have found that network connections have the potential to reduce the selectivity of migration over time, with the important proviso that some people may be isolated from networks and that they will therefore not join the class of migrants over time. My argument about the inequality producing impact of migration is in the first place focussed on those people. It is also this group of non-migrants that will fail to gain as a result of the redistribution of the migrant's earnings to others, simply because they are isolated from those networks within which this redistribution takes place. Their isolated position is in fact the reason why they find it difficult to migrate in the first place.

### **5.8 THE DIFFUSION OF THE MIGRANT'S EARNINGS THROUGH THE AREA OF ORIGIN AS A RESULT OF THE CASH NEXUS**

Once the migrant has parcelled out his/her earnings as indicated above, some of it is recycled into the community of origin beyond the immediate beneficiaries. The migrant's remittances are used, for example, to buy goods and services in the community of origin. This diffusion of the migrant's earnings allows non-migrants to gain access to the earnings of the migrant and is a further way in which the inequality-producing effects of migration can be ameliorated. I am going to review some of the ways in which income is diffused through the communities of origin in this section. It should be borne in mind that circular migrants are more likely to remit money to their communities of origin than permanent migrants. Most of the members of their households still live there and they intend returning to that community - therefore they have an interest in remitting

money back to that community (Russell 1986:685). This discussion consequently applies more to circular than to permanent migrants.

In the Southern African context the payment of bridewealth is an important mechanism through which migrant income is diffused through rural communities (Spiegel 1981:9). Bridewealth used to be paid in cattle but it has in recent years become increasingly based on cash payments (Brydon 1981). It also used to be a transaction between the families of the man and woman, with young men dependent on their fathers to provide the cattle. Since migrant labour has become commonplace in the rural areas of Southern Africa, young men have however developed a degree of independence in this respect and often finance the bridewealth payments from their wages (Harries 1983). Bridewealth is typically paid in installments and the marriage contract is not regarded as being completely valid until all the outstanding money have been handed over (Peters 1983). It is clear from this that city-bound migrants who take rural wives are bound to hand over part of their wages to the latter's family as long as some of the bridewealth is outstanding.

Many commentators remark on the tendency of migrants to spend a large part of their earnings on the consumption of liquor in the company of their friends upon their return (cf. Durand et al. 1996:428, also see Spiegel 1980:123, Wiest 1984:126). This is a further mechanism for the recycling of their income into the rural community (Durand et al. 1996:428). Non-migrants benefit because they are involved in the brewing of beer (in Southern Africa - see Spiegel 1980:123) or because they own (both legal and illegal) drinking places. Money is also recycled when male migrants make use of the services of prostitutes or when they give gifts to facilitate their illicit love-affairs (Spiegel 1980:152). Women who stay behind can sometimes also find employment as child minders or domestic workers by taking over the household duties of absent female migrants (Georges 1990:133).

It is well known that migrants spend most of their earnings on increasing their consumption and very little on investment in their villages of origin (Russel 1986:688, Georges 1990:150, Mines 1984:154, Kearney 1986:346). Consequently only a few permanent jobs are created in their home villages as a result of their investment activity (Georges 1990:148). Among the little that is invested, investment in land features very strongly (Russel 1986). Depending on the land tenure

system, they will either buy land, as in the rural Dominican Republic (Georges 1990:186), or ply the chief and his/her councillors with gifts or bribes to get land allocated to them in terms of the 'communal' land tenure system of the rural areas of Southern Africa (Spiegel 1981:9). Both of these are mechanisms for the redistribution of their income through the rural community. Besides the acquisition of land, the construction and upgrading of housing is an important priority for migrants (Georges 1990:129, Wiest 1984:126). This leads to the employment of local craftsmen in the form of bricklayers, thatchers and carpenters (Spiegel 1980:122-123, Georges 1990:129), the use of local unskilled labour to clear the land and collect building material, as well as the consumption of locally manufactured bricks (Wiest 1984:126).

Migrants typically also invest money in cattle (Georges 1990:182, Spiegel 1980:122, Durand 1996:433). If their own households do not have rurally-based labourers to look after the cattle, they need to hire people to do so (Spiegel 1980:124). They may also leave their cattle in the care of others who then benefit from the milk and skins of the cattle (Spiegel 1980:122). Migrants who invest in cultivation also need to employ people to assist with ploughing, weeding and harvesting in order to compensate for their own absence in the fields (Spiegel 1987:119). Due to the importance of agricultural activities in recycling migrant income, non-migrants in villages with limited agricultural potential are potentially worse off than those in agriculturally better-off villages (Sharp 1987:142, Sharp and Spiegel 1985:146).

Other priorities as far as investment is concerned are the acquisition of beer halls, grocery stores or taxis (Sharp 1994:77, Georges 1990). These are logical investments for migrants, given the economic conditions in their villages of origin. Other investment possibilities are absent: the absence of investment opportunities and thus sluggish local economic conditions is in the first place the reason why migrants leave their home village (Georges 1990:244). In addition, as subsistence agriculture declines with the onset of migration, households become more dependent on grocery stores to provide them with food (Georges 1990:142). The investment in taxis is, lastly, easy to explain: large-scale (especially circular) migration leads to a situation where people regularly travel between the place of employment and the home village and this creates a big market for fast and flexible transport options such as small buses and kombi-taxis.

Georges (1990) describes a setup in a rural Dominican Republic community that sounds very similar to the circumstances that one finds in the rural areas of South Africa (see eg. Sharp 1994, Spiegel 1980) or as a matter of fact in any village with heavy outmigration anywhere in the Third World. She (1990:148) qualifies the statement that few permanent jobs are created as a result of migrant's investments by saying that migrant income provides numerous temporary and very small-scale income-generating opportunities for non-migrants. None of these are nearly adequate on their own to allow a person to survive. This leads to a situation of occupational multiplicity, where every individual performs any number of these 'windfall' jobs. Even this does not, generally, provide an adequate income for the individual's survival. Occupational multiplicity is, in fact, a state of chronic underemployment (Georges 1990:144) where individuals have to pool their income in the household to smooth over its irregular nature. Despite this, it makes an important contribution to household survival (Georges 1990:148). I have already mentioned a number of the temporary jobs created by migrant income, such as building work, child minding and help during ploughing and harvesting. Other examples are fattening poultry for sale (Georges 1990:146, Spiegel 1980:147), or selling a neighbour's fruit in an informal market (Spiegel 1980:149).

The jobs created through migrant investment are often parcelled out to family members, friends and neighbours, i.e. people who already form part of the migrant's network (Georges 1990:152, Spiegel 1980). This is because migrants prefer to employ people to whom they already stand in a trust relationship. Because of this, non-migrants who do not have network connections to migrant households gain only to a limited extent from the diffusion of migrant earnings. This demonstrates, once again, the problems faced by those who are excluded from the better-resourced networks. Not only are their chances of becoming migrants limited, as we saw in chapter 4, but they also struggle to gain access to the recycled migrant income. This category of people also struggle to become self-employed. Access to a pre-existing cash income is often essential for success in this regard. In the case of agriculture, for example, one needs cash to invest in seed, ploughs and draught power before one can reap a harvest. As a result, those households that have a wage-earning member are in a better position as far as farming is concerned (Spiegel 1980:126). The same applies to occupations such as beer brewing (Sharp 1987:139, Spiegel 1980:146, 149, Spiegel 1987:117).

This raises the question of how those who are isolated from better-off networks and who do not have access to a migrant income manage to survive. One of their strategies is to sell off previously acquired land (Georges 1990:147-148) and livestock (Spiegel 1980:147). Another is to reduce consumption needs by hiving off household members to better-off households (I have discussed this strategy in chapter 3). Young men in this position fail to marry and remain dependent members of their households of origin (Spiegel 1980:124). Women, in turn, resort to prostitution. Where there is some level of social security provision (as in South Africa), pensions are an important resource for destitute families - to such an extent that people actively recruit old people into their households in order to get access to their pensions (Spiegel 1987). A more common, outcome, however, is underconsumption (Georges 1990:159-160). People are forced to eat less and remain in a chronic state of malnourishment, which makes them more susceptible to disease and ultimately, to dying prematurely.

## 5.9 CONCLUSION

In chapters 2 to 4 I have advanced an argument that departs from the assumption that migrants benefit from migration and that concludes that migration has the potential to foster inequality between those who leave and those who stay behind. In this chapter I have investigated this assumption in more detail, in an attempt to make the theory more adequate in confronting the complexity of the real world. I have specifically analysed the factors that determine the level of advancement that flows from migration, such as the type of migration, the timing of the migration decision, and gender. These factors all affect the degree to which the theory of the inequality producing effect of migration is applicable under particular circumstances. If, under some circumstances migrants benefit less from their migration, their welfare obviously does not increase as much relative to non-migrants as under other circumstances. With each of the factors I have investigated, I came to the conclusion that, while this may reduce the extent to which migration differentiates between migrants and non-migrants, it opens up a new arena of differentiation: between different categories of migrant. In this way migration may distinguish between push and pull migrants, between rural-urban versus rural-rural migrants, between earlier and later migrants and between male and female migrants.

To conclude I tried to establish to what extent the redistribution of the migrant's earnings to other households in the area of origin may ameliorate the differentiation that may take place between migrants and non-migrants and between different categories of migrant. The end-result of this investigation was that the redistribution of the migrant's earnings as a result of network obligations will not have much impact on this differentiation, but that the migrant's demand for the services and products of others in the area of origin may ameliorate it to a limited extent.

## CHAPTER SIX

### THE PREHISTORY OF A RURAL SOUTH AFRICAN SETTLEMENT: NKOSINI IN THE NORTHERN PROVINCE

#### 6.1 INTRODUCTION

My argument about the impact of migration on inequality has, up to now, been formulated at a high level of generality, as well as abstraction. I have attempted to unravel a few strands of a complicated web of causality. In order to do so, I have ignored much of the regional and cultural specificity that provide the context within which these causal mechanisms play out. Although it is essential for the purposes of theory construction to abstract from empirical reality, a theory only has value to the extent that it can shed some light on that reality. This is what I begin to do in the following two chapters. In these chapters I present a case study of migration in a particular South African rural community. This case study should be read as an illustration of how some of the variables I have discussed in the theoretical part may play out in the real world.

The rural village in question is located in the Northern Province, near its boundary with Mpumalanga province and is called Nkosini (the place of the king) because it is where the local chief, Poni Mahlangu, lives. The inhabitants of this village are all members of the Ndzundza Ndbele group, and in this chapter I discuss the history of the Ndzundza Ndbele, as it relates to the process by which the Nkosini villagers have come to settle here. I call this chapter a prehistory because it deals with the settlement history of this group of Ndzundza-Ndbele before they came to settle in Nkosini. They have only been living here for the past sixty years, which is why I feel it is necessary to trace their past settlement from their pre-colonial strongholds on the eastern side of the Steelpoort river, through their period as labour tenants on white farms up to their movement to Nkosini on the western side of the Steelpoort river. I specifically do not address their labour migration to distant (urban) locations in this chapter, with the result that the issues of selectivity and inequality I have discussed in the previous four chapters do not feature explicitly here. The prehistory of Nkosini does however form an essential background to the next chapter (chapter 7), which does deal with these issues.

## 6.2 A NOTE ON SOURCES

There is a considerable secondary literature on the history of the Ndzundza Ndbele, and it is on this that I draw in my discussion of the period before the village of Nkosini came into existence. I have found the Masters thesis of Van Jaarsveld (1985) especially useful for the period before the Ndzundza-Ndbele conquest. In addition I have made extensive use of the work of Delius (1983 and 1989) for my discussion of the period of indenture and labour tenancy following their defeat, as well as Morrel (1983) and James (1987 and 1988) for subsequent periods.

I also make use of information derived from periods of fieldwork in this village, especially to flesh out my discussion of the migration histories of Nkosini residents. The fieldwork was done in the period between August 1996 and January 1997 when I went to Nkosini on four separate occasions. In total I spent about three weeks there, living, with an interpreter, in the household of a member of the interpreter's extended family. During this time I did a survey of 40 households out of a total of 185<sup>1</sup> households in the village. The purpose of the survey was primarily to establish whether there were any households who were excluded from access to migration, and strict representativity was not my main aim<sup>2</sup>. Sampling was done by walking through the village from one end to the other and selecting households randomly, making sure that I selected two households in every group of ten<sup>3</sup>. I also conducted a number of in-depth interviews. These were

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<sup>1</sup> Houses in Nkosini have numbers painted on them that range from 001 to 198. This does not indicate the total size of my population, however. Nr. 187 is the local shop and was excluded because it would otherwise have placed the owner's household at risk of being sampled twice (the shopkeeper was interviewed any way, but her and her husband's information was not included in the analysis of the information about farm of origin and time of arrival in Nkosini). There are no houses numbered 76 to 79 and 192 to 197. In addition this series contains the houses of the two royals, who were not included in my sample. This leaves  $198 - (1+4+6+2) = 185$ .

<sup>2</sup> According to Neuman (1997:221-222), in small populations of less than a thousand, it is desirable to increase the sampling ratio to about a third if representativity is to be ensured. In this case the ratio was lower (about 22%) with the result that some degree of representativity was probably lost.

<sup>3</sup> I deviated from this in two cases. Three houses in the 90's range became part of my sample. This is the area around the house where I started my interviews. There were only two houses in the 190's, so I did only one interview here.

with a schoolteacher, shopkeeper, local authority official, the official responsible for a brick making project, as well as the family members of my interpreter. I also conducted interviews with selected groups of people. This included three middle aged, unemployed men in a shebeen (one of whom became a part of my sample), two women helping out in the local school feeding project, and six young people of both sexes. The information obtained in these interviews only entered into my sample if it threw more light on a person already included in it. Later, in end October and beginning November 1999, I followed up my visits to Nkosini with four in-depth interviews with migrants from Nkosini who lived in hostels in Mamelodi, Pretoria, and in April 2000 with telephone interviews with Mr and Mrs. Roux of Blinkwater, who both grew up in this area.

### **6.3 A BRIEF SURVEY OF THE HISTORY OF THE NDZUNDZA NDBELE UNTIL THEIR SUBJUGATION BY THE TRANSVAAL REPUBLIC <sup>4</sup>**

The language of the Ndzundza-Ndbele forms part of the broader Nguni language group. Other Nguni-speakers are the Zulu of KwaZulu-Natal, the Swazi and the Zimbabwean-Ndbele. The Ndzundza-Ndbele are therefore related to these groups. The Ndzundza-Ndbele form part of the Transvaal-Ndbele (and specifically the Southern Ndbele part of the Transvaal Ndbele). Doubt exists about aspects of the origin of the Transvaal-Ndbele, but, according to Van Jaarsveld (1985:14), the following can be said with certainty. They are probably an offshoot of Natal-Nguni groups, but, unlike the Zimbabwean-Ndbele who only split off from the Zulu in the early 19th century, they left KwaZulu-Natal and have been living in the Transvaal for at least two centuries and probably longer. No significance, except that of similar broad Nguni origin, can therefore be attached to them sharing a name with the Zimbabwean-Ndbele. Some ethnographies date back their presence in the Transvaal to around the year 1500 (Van Jaarsveld 1985:9), others to a later period.

Since the Transvaal-Ndbele came to live in the Transvaal, there have been numerous splits in that

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<sup>4</sup> This section is based largely on the master's thesis of Van Jaarsveld (1985), and to a lesser extent on the work of Delius (1989).

group. The Ndzundza came into being when their chief, Ndzundza, and his followers were evicted from the Pretoria area where they had previously lived with another group, the Manala Ndbele (together, these two groups are referred to as the Southern Ndbele)<sup>5</sup>. After splitting from the Manala they settled in the Steelpoort-river valley. Pressures such as cultural assimilation into the majority Sotho-speaking population of the Transvaal and the displacements caused by the *difaqane*<sup>6</sup> led to the Ndzundza-Ndbele being the only Transvaal-Ndbele group left with a relatively pure Nguni-heritage by the time they made contact with the Voortrekkers in the 1840s; although even among them Sotho-influences could be discerned, as Delius (1989:230) points out. They also suffered heavily as a result of the *difaqane*, but they managed to regroup eventually. During the years of the *difaqane*, at around 1839, they moved to the mountain ranges to the east of the Steelpoort valley under their chief, Mabhogo, as these mountain ranges offered more protection against being raided by other chiefdoms. In these mountains (in an area of about 84 km<sup>2</sup>) they built a number of fortified strongholds. The whole area was called KoNomtjharhelo, and the name of their main stronghold, and capital, was Erholweni (Van Vuuren 1992:8). One reason why the Ndzundza-Ndbele survived the *difaqane* better than the other Transvaal Ndbele groups was in fact the protection offered by their fortified mountain strongholds (Van Jaarsveld 1985:22, Delius 1989:229). They lived here in the Steenkampsberge (the highest point in the Transvaal, at 2331m, is in these mountains) near present day Roosenekal until they were defeated by the forces of the Transvaal Republic in 1883 (Van Jaarsveld 1985:22).

The site of their capital was on the eastern side of the Steelpoort-river valley, not far from the present site of Nkosini, which is on the western side of the Steelpoort-river. How the Ndzundza-Ndbele moved from the eastern to the western side of the Steelpoort river is the subject of the rest of this chapter. Although there are indications that the Ndzundza-Ndbele initially welcomed the arrival of the Voortrekkers, based partly on the hope that they might restrain the other Nguni

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<sup>5</sup> The Manala Ndbele has since been assimilated to some extent by other groups.

<sup>6</sup> Delius (1983:19) defines the *difaqane* as “the struggles and migrations unleashed by the conflicts which accompanied the emergence of Zulu dominance in Natal”. As a result of this process, numerous Nguni-groups were driven out of KwaZulu-Natal into the Transvaal, among which was the Ndbele under Mzilikaze who eventually settled in Zimbabwe. These groups, as well as the Zulu, in turn raided the people already living in the Transvaal, with the result that many of the pre-existing Transvaal chiefdoms did not survive intact.

groups from raiding the Southeastern Transvaal, their attitude soured when they began to clash with the Voortrekkers over land and the demands made on them by the Voortrekkers to supply labourers for farming (Delius 1983:30-31). One of the reasons for the escalating conflict was the population increase on both sides. By 1879 the Ndzundza-Ndbele numbered about 10 000 people and found that their land needs had increased considerably (Van Jaarsveld 1985:160). This added further urgency to a border dispute that had been raging between them and the Transvaal Republic<sup>7</sup> for some time.

During the course of 1880, the Ndzundza-Ndbele under their chief Nyabela claimed a large area of land between the Steenkampsberge in the East and Maleoskop<sup>8</sup> in the West (Van Jaarsveld 1985:158). This area included at least twenty white farms that were occupied at the time, as well as a number of other white farms that were unoccupied by their owners due to the security situation that was caused by the war against the Pedi under Sekhukhune. What is interesting from the perspective of the later settlement patterns of the Ndbele (as we shall see below, a considerable number of the present day inhabitants of Nkosini were born on these farms) is that the farms Kafferskraal, Lagersdrift and Grootkop were among the farms claimed by the Ndzundza-Ndbele (Van Jaarsveld 1985:163-164). During 1880 the Ndzundza-Ndbele moved on to some of these farms and this led to the owner of five of them, Cornelis Du Plooy, complaining to the magistrate of Lydenburg that five of his farms (viz. Zwartkoppies, Uitkyk, Lagersdrift, Kafferskraal and Grootkop) were used by the Ndzundza-Ndbele. With the exception of Grootkop (which was first registered in 1870) the other farms were first registered in the names of their white owners in 1857. Du Plooy bought these farms between 1872 and 1879 from their owners, who had never lived on them (Van Jaarsveld 1985:164).

After a long period of escalating tension between the Ndzundza-Ndbele and the Transvaal Republic, war broke out between them on 7 November 1882. The war ended on 10 July 1883

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<sup>7</sup> The Transvaal Republic was the state created by the Voortrekkers.

<sup>8</sup> Maleoskop is a mountain on the present day farm of Rooikraal, which is not far from Nkosini (see map on p. 155). The Kopa lived there first under their chief Maleo, until they were scattered after their defeat by the Swazi in 1864. Subsequently the area was inhabited by the Pedi, some of whom went to live there after their defeat by the British forces in 1879 (Van Jaarsveld 1985:147, 165, 171).

when Nyabela surrendered with 8000 of his subjects (Van Jaarsveld 1985:235). It is noteworthy that the Transvaal burghers (and their largely Pedi-allies) achieved this victory not through outright military defeat of the Ndzundza-Ndbele (the costs of that would have been too high as it would have involved storming the heavily fortified capital of Erholweni), but through a long period of siege which led to widespread famine and succeeded in breaking Ndzundza-Ndbele resistance (Van Jaarsveld 1985).

After their defeat, the Ndzundza-Ndbele lost all their land and became indentured labourers on white farms in the vicinity for a period of five years. The Volksraad resolved that they must be dispersed and that they would never again be allowed to live near Erholweni (Coetzee 1980:248). According to Delius (1989:232), an area of about 15 000 morgen in the Ndzundza-Ndbele heartland was parcelled out to the landless among those burghers who had participated in the campaign. They received the land on condition that they settled the land and improved it. This area came to be known as the Mapochsgronden, after Mabhogo, a previous chief of the Ndzundza-Ndbele. Burghers who had participated in the campaign or who were without labour received preferential treatment as far as the allocation of labourers was concerned (Delius 1989:232).

#### **6.4 THE DISPERSAL OF THE NDZUNDZA-NDBELE THROUGH INDENTURE, AS WELL AS THEIR ATTEMPTS AT CONSOLIDATION ON KAFFERSKRAAL**

The scattering of the Ndzundza-Ndbele after their defeat initiated a new cycle of dispersal followed by attempts at consolidation, which seems to be a constant theme in their history. It was barely 50 years after they had moved to Erholweni in an attempt to reverse their scattering by the Difeqane. This time, however, conditions were to prove less auspicious for their efforts to regroup. The Transvaal government was of the sentiment that black settlement was never again going to be allowed in the Mapochsgronden, and they were able to enforce their will due to the weakened state of African chiefdoms in the Transvaal (most of whom had lost their independence by then). This, together with the general lack of land for black settlement, also made it difficult for the Ndzundza-Ndbele to be absorbed into other chiefdoms (Delius 1989:

232, 237).

According to Delius (1989:234), the burghers who served in the campaign against the Ndzundza-Ndbele were from the districts of Middelburg, Pretoria, Lydenburg, Standerton, Wakkerstroom and Potchefstroom. Most of the labourers went to the first four of these districts, which, with the exception of Standerton, which is more to the south, form a contiguous area in the Southeastern Transvaal. Many of the Ndzundza-Ndbele tried to escape their indentured state, but this proved to be difficult, as there were few places to seek shelter (Delius 1989:236). Besides seeking to escape, another response was to move from farm to farm. This movement resulted from attempts to reunite families or to improve conditions of service and it accelerated after their period of indenture ended (Delius 1989:243). When their indenture ended, they became labour tenants on white farms. They could now move from farm to farm, looking for better conditions, provided that the white farmer was prepared to give them a *trekpas*.

Most of the royal family were sentenced to jail terms in Pretoria. This, as well as the dispersal of the Ndzundza-Ndbele, proved to be a major threat to their future as a distinct group. When one of the royals, Madzidzi, escaped, a long overdue initiation could be organised for young men (Van Vuuren 1995:13, Delius 1989:201). Initiation plays an essential role in Ndbele society in instilling a consciousness of themselves as a distinct group, and consequently this initiation (held in 1886) was vital in ensuring the continued existence of the Ndzundza-Ndbele (Delius 1989: 241, Van Vuuren 1995). After escaping, Madzidzi, who was a younger brother of Nyabela, went to live with family members on the white farm of Kafferskraal (Delius 1989:240, James 1987: 31). According to Delius (1989:241) and James (1987:47), the first initiation also took place on Kafferskraal. Kafferskraal was one of the farms claimed by Nyabela a few years previously (see p.143 above), and Madzidzi's choice of it as a refuge indicates a degree of continuity in Ndzundza-Ndbele settlement patterns. After their period of indenture ended, a number of Ndzundza-Ndbele went to live on Kafferskraal with Madzidzi (James 1987:31).

Madzidzi assumed the role of chief by default, although he was not the rightful heir. In terms of the rules of succession, the rightful heir to the throne was Fene, who was still too young to rule at the time and in whose place Nyabela was acting as regent. According to James (1987:44-47)

and Delius (1983:84-85), chiefly successions always contained elements of negotiation and were not always simply determined by the rules for succession. Madzidzi's de facto position, as well as these elements of indeterminacy built into the process, seems to have led to a situation where he was recognised as chief by the Ndzundza-Ndbele who lived in the Middelburg district. Fene eventually held sway in the Pretoria area, and this division continues until today, with Fene's lineage ruling in the former Kwandbele homeland and Madzidzi's lineage ruling in Nkosini in the form of the current chief, Poni Mahlangu (see James 1987:44-50, for a more detailed discussion of this leadership struggle). In the rest of this narration, I shall concentrate only on the history of the latter group, because it was largely them that ended up living in Nkosini.

The Anglo-Boer war (1899-1902) provided an opportunity for the Ndzundza-Ndbele to regroup. As the authority of the Transvaal Republic collapsed, and with the departure of male burghers to the front and the herding of Boer women and children into concentration camps, many Ndzundza-Ndbele left the farms and congregated around Madzidzi at Kafferskraal and to a lesser extent around Nyabela and Fene in the Pretoria district (Delius 1989:244). According to Krikler (1993:14) as many as 300 'kraals' streamed back to settle on farms around Kafferskraal in the Middelburg district. The British forces supplied these Ndzundza-Ndbele with guns and enlisted their support against the Boers, but soon after the war ended the cattle and the guns they acquired through the war were seized (Delius 1989:245-246). Despite being promised a location of their own in return for helping the British, none was forthcoming (Morrel 1983:138). Instead, pressure was applied on them to return to the farms on which they had worked before the war (Delius 1989:246). This was because the restoration of white agriculture in the Transvaal was a much more important consideration for the occupying British forces than any promises they might have made to the Ndzundza-Ndbele. Their importance as agricultural labourers made them much too useful to be allowed to stay on locations of their own. Most of the Ndzundza-Ndbele returned, although some were allowed to remain on Kafferskraal. Madzidzi in particular was allowed, after he had 'begged hard' (quoted in Krikler 1993:196), to remain there. This episode initiated a new cycle of dispersal and attempts at consolidation.

## **6.5 THE NDZUNDZA-NDBELE QUEST FOR LAND OF THEIR OWN, CULMINATING IN THE MOVE TO THE TRUST FARMS AROUND NKOSINI**

After the dispersal of the Ndzundza-Ndbele they once again lived as labour tenants on white farms in the Southeastern Transvaal. There are indications that their post-war dispersal was not as drastic as the previous one. As labour tenants, the Ndzundza-Ndbele had more freedom of movement than as indentured labourers, and it seems that they had succeeded in moving closer to their previous heartland in the Middelburg district. Delius (1989:255-256) refers to the census of 1904/5, which enumerated approximately 11 000 Ndzundza-Ndbele on farms in the Middelburg district, and approximately 9 000 living on farms in the Pretoria district. The census figures reveal that, at this stage, these two districts were the only ones where significant numbers of Ndzundza-Ndbele were living (Delius 1989:256). These districts were at that time much bigger than they are at present, however. At the beginning of the century, the Middelburg district also contained what is today the Witbank district, as well as parts of the present day Groblersdal district. The Pretoria district in turn contained the present day Bronkhorstspuit district and part of the Groblersdal district (see map in the beginning of Krikler's [1993] book). The number of 20 000 Ndzundza-Ndbele living in these two districts probably represented most of the Ndzundza-Ndbele population. The perception that most of the Ndzundza-Ndbele were living in these two districts is strengthened by the fact that approximately 10 000 people were indentured after the war in 1883 - if we allow for natural increase, a total population of around 20 000 Ndzundza after 20 years does not sound unreasonable. It would take a population growth rate of about 3,5 per cent per annum to double the population after 20 years, which is certainly high by any standards.

This perception is confirmed by estimates of the Ndzundza-Ndbele population provided by the Department of Native Affairs of the Transvaal government in its 1909-1910 annual report, although with a few modifications (Transvaal 1911, appendix 3). That report lists the Ndzundza-Ndbele population of Middelburg district as 7692 out of a total black population of 15694. In addition there were estimated to be 5219 Ndzundza-Ndbele (out of a total of 28361) living in the Pokwani sub district of Middelburg. Pokwane was in the north of the Middelburg district, and consisted of reserve areas and locations that were the left overs from the former Sekhukhuneland,

as well as white farms carved out of the former Sekhukhuneland. It seems likely that most of the Ndzundza-Ndbele enumerated here were in fact living on white farms, given that the Ndzundza-Ndbele had no land of their own. This gives us a total of 12911 Ndzundza-Ndbele living in the greater Middelburg district, which is not so different from the 11000 enumerated five years previously. The only other district where they were strongly represented according to these estimates, was Bethal, where they numbered 3745 out of a total black population of 5459. In Ermelo the Ndzundza-Ndbele formed 1515 out of a total black population of 18500. In other districts the report combines the number of Ndzundza-Ndbele with other groups, e.g. in Belfast there are 2408 Ndzundza-Ndbele plus Basotho, and in Carolina the Ndzundza-Ndbele are thrown together with a disparate group (numbering 3782) consisting of Zulu, Bushman (sic) and Shangaan.

I have related previously how the Ndzundza-Ndbele lost their land. The fact that they did not have any land of their own, unlike their Pedi-neighbours, placed them in an unfavourable bargaining position with regard to the rendering of agricultural labour (James 1987:36, Morrel 1983:137). The Pedi had access to a number of locations, which were pieces of crown land that were granted around the end of the 19th century to Africans (Morrel 1983:122). In addition large numbers of them lived as rent paying 'squatters' on land company farms. This offered, as long as rents were relatively low (rents increased as land became more scarce over time - Morrel 1983: 130-133), an alternative to wage labour. The Ndzundza-Ndbele were less fortunate. After their period of indenture ended, they worked as labour tenants on white farms, mostly in the Middelburg district. Their labour contracts involved the rendering of labour on the farms in exchange for a place to stay as well as some land on which to graze their cattle and plant crops for subsistence and sometimes for sale<sup>9</sup>. In the beginning, they mostly did not receive any cash wages (if they did, these were very low), which made their labour very attractive to the white farmers who were, with a few exceptions, perpetually cash strapped and undercapitalised (Morrel 1983:138, 168).

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<sup>9</sup> The amount of land offered to labour tenants for their own use varied much between farmers and over time. On some farms conditions were favourable and tenants produced a surplus for sale, on others they did not have enough for their own subsistence (Morrel 1983:179).

The exception to this situation was the farm of Kafferskraal, where a group of around nine families of Ndzundza-Ndbele were living as rent paying tenants on white owned land (James 1987:37 fn. 12, James 1988:23), and a few other farms in the Pretoria and Middelburg districts where they lived in a similar set up (Delius 1989:247). Another farm that probably contained rent paying Ndzundza-Ndbele was the farm Wonderhoek in the Middelburg district. Morrel (1983: 166) relates that the farmer W. Wheeler was found to have 23 squatter families on his farm, Wonderhoek, in 1909. They each paid him 10 bags of maize per annum in order to remain on the farm. Morrel does not say anything about the ethnic affiliation of these squatters, but according to Van Vuuren (1995:13), the farm of Wonderhoek in the Middelburg district was one of four places used for Ndzundza-Ndbele initiation ceremonies during the 1920's: the other three being Kafferskraal, the farm Welgelegen in the Pretoria district where Fene lived, and another white owned farm in the Middelburg district, Witpoort. This suggests that Wonderhoek was indeed inhabited by Ndzundza-Ndbele.

The Ndzundza-Ndbele responded to their predicament by making numerous requests to be allocated the location they were promised by the British in return for the help they provided in the Boer War (Morrel 1983:138, Coetzee 1980:251). Due to pressure by white farmers who wanted to retain their landless labour force, nothing came of these requests until the 1940s. Even the unofficial Ndzundza-Ndbele location on Kafferskraal was highly unpopular among white farmers (Morrel 1983:138). Their only alternative, that of buying land, was very difficult, given that they did not earn wages as labour tenants (Morrel 1983:137). They did have the option of earning wages by engaging in migrant labour during their off-season, but as we shall see in the next chapter, this was initially a very limited option. After numerous unsuccessful attempts by Fene to buy land, Fene's son eventually managed to buy the farm Weltevreden near Pretoria in the 1920's (James 1987:47, Coetzee 1980:251-252). This farm in later years became the nucleus of the KwaNdbele homeland.

In terms of the 1913 Land Act, it became illegal for blacks to rent or own land in most white areas of the country. As a result, 'squattening' (rent-paying tenants, as in Kafferskraal), labour tenancy, sharecropping or otherwise living on white farms without working for the white farmer became illegal (Morrel 1983:124). In return, land would be made available for exclusive black

occupation in reserves in order to accommodate those displaced from white farms as a result of the enforcement of the Act. Eviction from farms were in fact linked to provision of alternative land for the displaced, which delayed the implementation of the Act for a long time. A number of commissions of inquiry were established to investigate the need for reserves in the various districts. The first of these was the Beaumont Commission, which was established in 1913. The Beaumont Commission recommended that an area in the Middelburg district far to the north of Kafferskraal be set aside for the Pedi. This included Sekwati's location and Mogale's location in the heartland of Sekhukhuneland, but did not offer any land for Ndzundza-Ndbele occupation (Morrel 1983: 124-126).

The issue was revisited by the Stubbs Commission in 1917-1918. He increased the land area potentially set aside for black occupation considerably. He recommended in particular that a large area between the Blood River in the south and the land scheduled by the Beaumont Commission in the north be set aside for the Ndzundza-Ndbele (Morrel 1983:137). Farmer influence ensured that this did not happen, however. Because he feared the dislocation that could result from declaring such a large area a 'native' reserve, as well as the consequences flowing from large scale evictions from white farms, he recommended that a moratorium be placed on evictions. He also recommended that the area in the south of the reserve be declared an open area, which meant that whites who already owned land there could sell their land to other whites. Over the long term however, the land was supposed to be bought for black occupation (Morrel 1983:128). According to Morrel (1983:130-131) this had the perverse effect that farms within the open area that were previously unoccupied by whites and only used by them for winter grazing and as labour farms, now experienced a heavy inflow of white settlers. This applied in particular to farms near Kafferskraal that were in the vicinity of the Blood and Olifants Rivers and that offered irrigation potential. The result of this was that rents increased on farms such as Kafferskraal, as the land became more valuable (Morrel 1983:131). More demands were also made on the labour force in this area.

The situation stayed unchanged until after the 1936 Land Act. As a result of this Act, more attention was given to enforcing the provisions against squatting and sharecropping. Some time after that Kafferskraal ceased to be farmed on a rent tenancy basis. By the 1960's it was a labour

tenancy farm like the others in the vicinity<sup>10</sup>. The 1936 Act also led to the establishment of the South African Native Land Trust, which was given money to buy land for exclusive black occupation. During 1943-4<sup>11</sup>, the Trust bought a number of farms to the north of Kafferskraal, such as Paardenplaats, Goedenhoop and Vaalkopfontein. At around the same time, a number of Ndzundza-Ndbele families who had been living on Kafferskraal under their chief Jonas Mahlangu (a successor of Madzidzi), left to settle on these farms (James 1987: 41). In 1957 these farms became the Mahlangu tribal authority which, in 1962, was formally incorporated into the Nebo-district as well as the Lebowa homeland (Coetzee 1980:270). This was an anomalous situation, however, since, in terms of Apartheid ideology, Lebowa was the homeland for the Pedi people. This group of Ndzundza-Ndbele did not fit here, given the idea that each ethnic group should have their own homeland. It was not until much later that the KwaNdbele homeland was created northeast of Pretoria around the farm of Weltevreden. After 1994, the tribal authority lost many of the local government functions it previously fulfilled. Today Nkosini falls under the Hlogotlou/Lepelle transitional local council, which took over most of these functions.

## **6.6 THE ORIGIN AND TIMING OF THE MOVE TO NKOSINI**

### **6.6.1 BACKGROUND INFORMATION ABOUT NKOSINI**

Nkosini is a closer settlement with a population of approximately 1200. As previously mentioned, it is the seat of the Mahlangu tribal authority. It is situated on a plateau in hilly terrain at an elevation of around 1600 m. Towards the south the land falls away towards the valley of the Blood River, and towards the north it gradually slopes down to the Olifants River. To the northeast is the Sekhukhune mountain range. One of the highest peaks of these mountains, Hlogotlou, at 1915 m, is not far from Nkosini. East of the Sekhukhune mountains the land falls away towards the Steelpoort River valley. The plateau on which Nkosini is situated is connected in the southeast to the rest of the Transvaal Highveld via Tauteshoogte and the Bothasberge.

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<sup>10</sup> Interview with J.R.

<sup>11</sup> Interview with J.R.

Due to its elevation rainfall is, like in the rest of the Eastern Transvaal highveld, good (around 700mm annually). The hilly terrain makes farming difficult, however. Some households have fields allocated to them, but since these are some distance from Nkosini, getting to and from their fields is difficult (Interview with MM). In addition, many households who do not have an external cash income from migrant labour wages find it impossible to afford the input costs associated with agriculture, with the result that many fields are not worked (Interview with EM). There used to be considerable cattle holdings in the community, but these have been depleted through stock theft (Interview with MM).

To the south of Nkosini is the boundary between the Northern Province and Mpumalanga, Nkosini being in the Northern Province (see map 6.1 on p. 155). There is considerable unhappiness in the area about the fact that it falls in the Northern Province. This has led to much popular agitation for the area to be incorporated into Mpumalanga. In the later half of 1997 this dispute flared up and led to incidents of violence. The reasons for the unhappiness about the provincial demarcation are not entirely clear, but one suspects that ethnic identification plays a role. The former homeland of KwaNdebele falls in Mpumalanga. In addition farms immediately to the south of Nkosini where large numbers of Ndzundza-Ndebele still live, such as Kafferskraal, Zaaiplaats and Buffelsvallei, are also part of Mpumalanga, as is the former capital of the Ndzundza-Ndebele around Roosenekal. According to a local government official, the case for incorporation into Mpumalanga is made in terms of the existence of the graves of their ancestors in Mpumalanga (interview with A.M.) which strengthens the suspicion that ethnicity is a factor here.

Nkosini is surrounded by a number of closer settlements with varying degrees of formality and levels of service. Monsterlus, which is about 10 km's away, is the closest to being a town. It has tarred roads, street lights, and shopping centres. Groblersdal is the nearest 'white' town and is about 40 km's from Nkosini. Middelburg, about 110 km's from Nkosini is the largest town in the vicinity. Pretoria is 240 km's from Nkosini, which means that it is too far away for daily, or even weekly, commuting to be possible. The area in which Nkosini is situated is nicknamed Dlawulale, which means 'eat and sleep'. It is derived from the perception that this place is so far from anything that by the time you get there, you are so tired that you can only eat and then go

to sleep<sup>12</sup>.

#### 6.6.2 THE ORIGIN OF THE PEOPLE OF NKOSINI

James (1987:21, 41-42), in reporting on the results of her research in a village that she calls Morotse (which is not far from Nkosini), claims that the Ndbele in-migrants into this area can be divided into two groups: a) those who lived on Kafferskraal or on farms surrounding it and b) those who lived further afield in the Southeastern Transvaal. The first group lived close to what became the reserve area and were thus in a better position to make the move to that area when land became available there. They moved there at an earlier stage (from the 1930's to the end of the 1950's - James 1987:21) and under more favourable terms. The terms were more favourable because labour tenancy agreements did not place as many restrictions on things such as cattle holding and farming on one's own account as was the case at a later stage. In addition, the earlier migrants generally left out of choice, while the later migrants were evicted from the farms. The later group, according to her (James 1987:21), arrived from the 1960's onwards. She (James 1987:42) claims that they are the majority group among the Ndbele residents of Morotse.

In my survey, I asked about the migration histories of the oldest member(s) of each household. This information was not always available, as respondents sometimes did not know where their spouses/parents were born. I obtained information about the place of birth of the spouse (in addition to the respondent's place of birth) in only five cases. This information is included here. In five cases the respondent was a child who did not know anything about their parent's place of birth. Another problem was that, in a few cases, the respondent could not remember when they came to live in Nkosini. I used the Ndzundza-Ndbele system of initiation regiments as a memory aid for older respondents with regard to the date when they arrived in Nkosini. Initiation is done every four years and each regiment of initiates is given a name. These names are repeated over a cycle stretching 60 years and allows the researcher to date an occurrence to a specific four year period (Van Vuuren 1995:7). I identified 37 individuals who were born elsewhere. Of these, I have no information about when they arrived in Nkosini in the case of seven individuals. In the case of another nine, I could work out on the basis of other information they gave me (e.g. 'I lived

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<sup>12</sup> Chris Van Vuuren, personal communication.

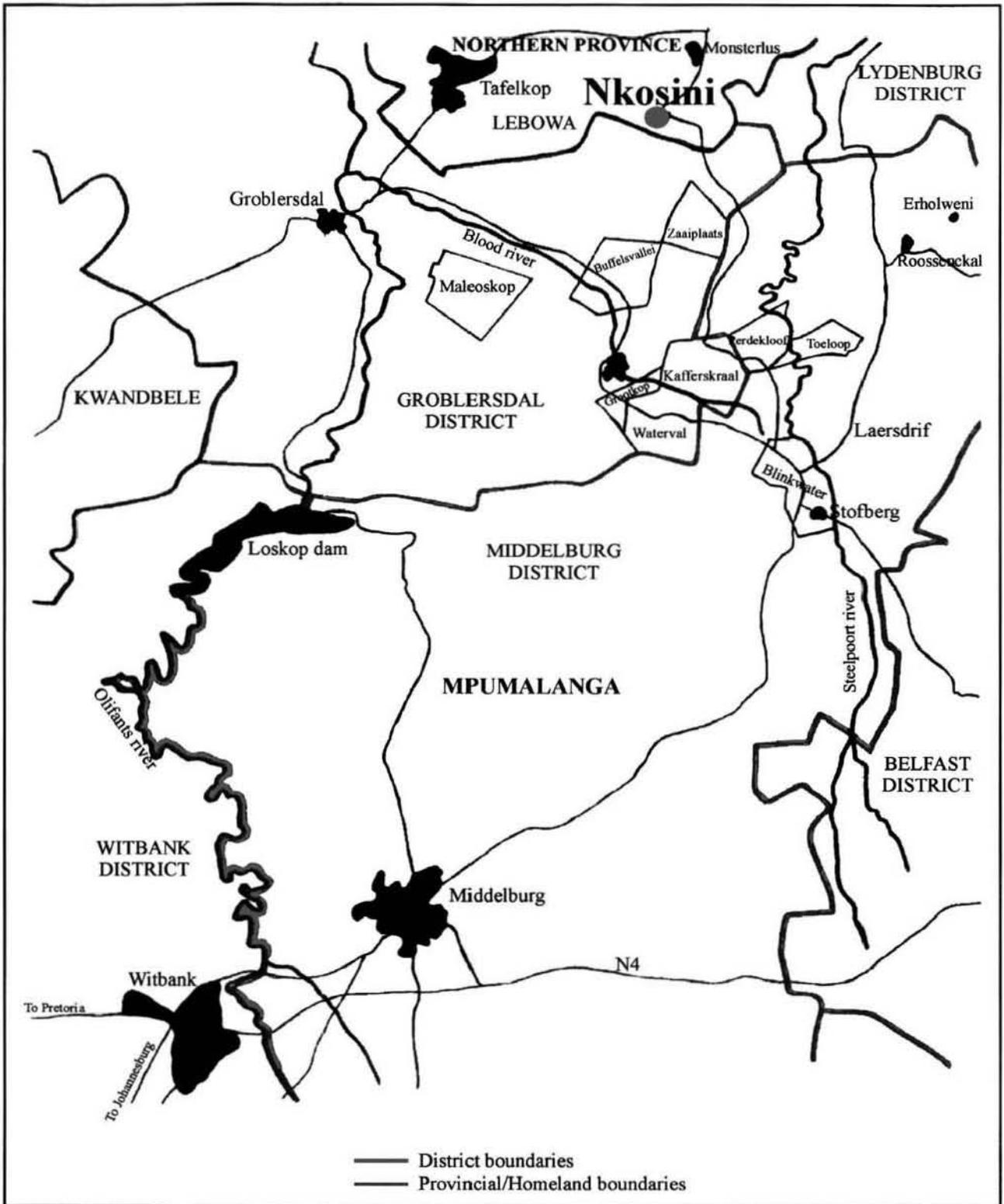
on Buffelsvlei until after the birth of my last child and the death of my husband and then came to live here') approximately when they arrived in Nkosini.

Of the 37 who were born elsewhere, three people were born on white farms in the Belfast-district (the Belfast district is just to the east of the Middelburg district) and eleven were born on white farms in the Groblersdal-district (immediately to the northwest of the Middelburg district). Twenty-one of the rest were born in the present day Middelburg district. This leaves two people: one was born on a white farm near the Loskop-dam (since this can mean either the Groblersdal or Middelburg districts, I could not classify it), and one who was born in Tafelkop. Tafelkop was a white farm to the northeast of Nkosini in the Nebo-magistrates district that was acquired by the Trust for black occupation. It is today a big closer settlement on the road to Groblersdal, not far from Nkosini. Distinguishing between districts of origin does not, however, adequately capture how close to Nkosini the farms of origin of its residents are situated. There is, in fact, little evidence of movement from further afield in the Southeastern Transvaal into Nkosini.

With a few exceptions, everybody was born on farms very close to Kafferskraal and Nkosini. Especially prominent here are eight contiguous farms just to the south and southeast of Nkosini (see map 6.1 for place names). These farms are Kafferskraal, Zaaiplaats, Buffelsvallei, Waterval and Grootkop in the Groblersdal district and Paardekloof, Toeloop and Blinkwater (also called Stofberg) in the Middelburg district. Although the last three are in another district, they are situated just to the northeast and east of Kafferskraal. I call these farms the Kafferskraal farms, due to the historical importance of Kafferskraal as the seat of the chief. It is clear that these farms fulfilled an important role in housing the Ndzundza-Ndbele living in the north of the Middelburg district. The tenancy arrangements differed from farm to farm, and over time, with labour tenancy being more common. Kafferskraal was initially occupied by tenants who paid rent, as we saw previously. Later, however, the situation became the more common one of labour tenancy<sup>13</sup>. Zaaiplaats, on the other hand, was bought by the Trust after 1936 for black occupation, but was never incorporated into the reserve area (James 1987:57). It therefore remained part of the Groblersdal district. Buffelsvlei, and most of the other farms, was occupied by labour

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<sup>13</sup> Interview with S.S.



**Map 6.1** The location of Nkosini

tenants<sup>14</sup>. James (1987:39-40) describes how a Pedi labour tenant by the name of Jacobs Madihlaba lived during the 1930s with his family on Buffelsvallei and how he left the farm after a dispute with the white land owner in 1938.

The breakdown of the farms near Kafferskraal is as follows: besides the two people born on Kafferskraal, one person was born on Grootkop (next to Kafferskraal), three on Buffelsvallei, one on Zaaiplaats, four on Perdekloof, one on Toeloop and eight on Blinkwater (the original Blinkwater farm includes the small settlement of Stofberg - respondents tended to use the two names interchangeably)<sup>15</sup>. One person was born in Ellisdrift, which is just to the north of Stofberg. Ellisdrift is another name<sup>16</sup> used by Nkosini-residents for the old white labour colony of Laersdrif, and at present consists of small-holdings. In addition three people were born on white-owned small-holdings near Roosenekal. Roosenekal is, as was previously mentioned, near the site of the Ndzundza-Ndbele capital of Erholweni in the Steenkampsberge and is also called Mapochsgronde, in honour of Mabogo, a previous ruler of the Ndzundza-Ndbele. Roosenekal is just to the north of Stofberg.

The situation thus differs from the one James is describing for the village of Morotse, in that only three people were born in a district (Belfast) that is not immediately adjacent to the Nebo district in which Nkosini is situated. James argues that most of the Ndzundza-Ndbele in her study area came from further afield in the Southeastern Transvaal. One possible explanation for this difference could be that the Nkosini in-migrants form part of the group, distinguished by James, that arrived earlier (before 1960). According to James this group arrived mostly from areas close by and in this respect they are similar to the Nkosini in-migrants. Since the chief came to live in Nkosini in the early 1940s, it is not unreasonable to suppose that those who came to live in

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<sup>14</sup> Interview with J.R.

<sup>15</sup> The land on which Stofberg is situated was sold the South African Railways for the erection of a station by one of the owners of Blinkwater, Dirk Stofberg (Interview with J.R.)

<sup>16</sup> This was confirmed to me by the respondent herself. It is not clear why the people of Nkosini would want to substitute one Afrikaans name for a farm for another. It does however indicate their intimate knowledge of the area and the influence of the Afrikaans language on the Ndzundza-Ndbele as a result of their long standing association with Afrikaners as farm labourers and labour tenants (Van Vuuren 1992).

Nkosini arrived more or less at the same time as he did. There is, however, little evidence to support this hypothesis.

Most of the migrants arrived during the 1960s and 1970s. Labour tenancy was formally abolished by government notice in the Middelburg district in 1967, and this seems to have resulted in increased movement off the farms (Surplus People Project 1983:120). Of the 30 individuals I have information about, 11 arrived during the 1970s and another eight during the 1960s. Only seven arrived before 1960: one in the 1930s, two in the 1940s and another four in the 1950s. There are only four recent arrivals: three during the 1980s and one during the 1990s. Of these, two are atypical. The first came here during the 1980s, but was born in Tafelkop (in 1943). Tafelkop was bought by the Trust in that year, so the migrant wasn't born on a white farm. It is most likely that his parents moved into Tafelkop from a white farm not long before 1943, however, given that this purchase was followed by considerable in-migration. Another late arrival moved to the farm Vaalkopfontein during the 1930s as a child with his parents (he was born on the farm Schoongezicht in the Belfast-area). Part of Vaalkopfontein eventually became the settlement of Nkosini. He then moved around a great deal and only came to live with his sister's child in Nkosini during the last few years. In his case it is difficult to describe him as a bona fide first time in-migrant into Nkosini.

The picture that emerges from these data is of a community that had a low rate of in-migration from its inception in the late 1930s until the 1950s, followed by a major growth spurt as many settlers arrived during the 1960s and 1970s, and ending with almost no immigration during the last two decades. Nkosini therefore ceased being a magnet for people evicted from white farms since the beginning of the 1980s. Those leaving the farms in recent years have either gone to surrounding settlements or preferably to KwaNdbele, which is much better situated with regard to access to jobs in Pretoria, Bronkhorstspuit and Johannesburg (Interview with teacher, W. S.). **Because** Nkosini is too far away from these places to be a home for daily commuters, job seekers cannot look for work using Nkosini as a base. By the time one has heard from people visiting from Gauteng about a job going there, it is already too late, because it would have been taken ~~long ago~~. The situation is different in KwaNdbele, because one can be updated on a daily basis about what is happening on the job market by commuter friends and relatives (Interview with

E.M.).

Almost all of the in-migration into Nkosini was thus from surrounding farms and not from more distant farms in the Southeastern Transvaal, contrary to what one would expect from James's work (as we saw above, she claims that the majority arrived from further afield in the South Eastern Transvaal). In addition the short-distance migration took place at a different stage than James reports for the short-distance Morotse migrants. James believes that those who came from close by were the early migrants, which is not the case in Nkosini. We are thus presented with two, opposing, pictures of Ndzundza-Ndbele migration, which raises the question whether either of them can be generalised to Ndzundza-Ndbele migration as a whole. James (1987:21) certainly thinks that her version has more general applicability. Another way in which to ask this question is whether these two pictures are competing versions of a general description of in-migration into the Mahlangu tribal area or whether they reflect local conditions that differ between the two villages. If the former is the case, we have to decide which version is correct. If the latter is the case, the two versions are obviously not contradictory.

This is an important question, because if my version of events can be generalized to the whole area, in other words if most Ndzundza-Ndbele migrants have arrived from farms close by, it means that they have had more control over their settlement patterns than generally recognised, and that the impact of their dispersal by the indenture system and labour tenancy was counteracted to a significant degree. They were consequently not such a captive labour force as is suggested by some historical evidence (see e.g. Morrel 1983:164). It also means that the conditions were relatively favourable for the reestablishment of networks of mutual help, given that (in the absence of sophisticated communication and transport technology) networks need some degree of physical contiguity to function properly.

Since my survey is restricted to only one village, it is clearly too limited to answer the question whether my version of Ndzundza-Ndbele in-migration can be generalized to the whole area. If more information was available regarding the distribution of the Ndzundza-Ndbele population between Transvaal districts over the first half of this century, it could give us an idea of how many people were available in which places for in-migration into the Mahlangu tribal area. This

could illuminate one aspect of the two differing interpretations, viz. whether the majority of Ndzundza-Ndbele in-migrants into the Mahlangu tribal area came from close by or from more distant parts of the Southeastern Transvaal. We have already dealt with two sources of evidence in this regard. The first is the census figures for 1904/5 (quoted by Delius and mentioned above on p. 147), and the second is the estimates provided by the Department of Native Affairs for 1909/1910. These suggest that at the beginning of the century, most Ndzundza-Ndbele were living in the Middelburg and Pretoria districts, with a significant minority living in Bethal district. There are also some mid-century data available. These are the census figures of 1946, combined with Van Warmelo's (1952:11) extrapolations of these.

They broadly confirm that most Ndzundza-Ndbele from the Southeastern Transvaal were living in Middelburg and Bethal around the 1950's, that is the time when migration to Nkosini started to take place. Van Warmelo (1954:11) attempted to calculate the total number of Southern-Ndbele (among others) in the country in 1946, and their dispersal between magisterial districts<sup>17</sup>. Since he only provides us with the proportions which the Ndzundza-Ndbele made up of the total black population in various districts, it is necessary to combine his figures with the 1946 census statistics for magisterial districts (South Africa 1951). These data is presented in the following table (table 6.1).

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<sup>17</sup> Van Warmelo does not disaggregate the Southern Ndbele figures. As we saw on p. 141 above, the Southern Ndbele consists of the Manala and the Ndzundza-Ndbele. Since the former lives largely in the Pretoria district, one can safely assume that almost all the Ndbele's enumerated in the Southeastern Transvaal were Ndzundza-Ndbele.

Table 6.1

**Distribution of Ndzundza-Ndbele population of the Southeastern Transvaal in 1946 by magisterial district**

<b>Magisterial district</b>	<b>Number of Ndzundza-Ndbele</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
Middelburg	25 967	50%
Groblersdal	4017	8%
Belfast	5133	10%
Lydenburg	2413	5%
Bethal	10110	19%
Carolina	2512	5%
Ermelo	2261	4%
<b>Total</b>	<b>52413</b>	<b>100%<sup>18</sup></b>

Sources: Van Warmelo 1951:11, South Africa 1951

Van Warmelo mentioned also that a significant number of Ndzundza-Ndbele lived in Bronkhorstspuit district, as well as Pretoria, Witbank and the East Rand, but I did not include this in my calculations, for the following reasons. The first is that Pretoria and the East Rand are urban areas and as such unlikely to have contributed many labour tenants families to the Nkosini population. In addition, Van Warmelo did not give estimates of the number of Ndzundza-Ndbele living in these areas. He did give a figure of 22195 Southern Ndbele for Bronkhorstspuit. Bronkhorstspuit was previously part of the Pretoria district and probably contained a higher proportion of Manala Ndbele, which renders the number of 22195 problematic as an estimate of the number of Ndzundza-Ndbele. It is further the case that due to distance factors, most of the Ndzundza-Ndbele in this group would have migrated to the Kwandbele nucleus around Weltevrede rather than to the Mahlangu tribal area.

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<sup>18</sup> Adds up to 101% because of rounding off.

These figures firstly makes it clear that half of the Ndzundza-Ndbele of the Southeastern Transvaal lived in the current Middelburg district in 1946. To this figure we must add Groblersdal, which had 8% of the Ndzundza-Ndbele population and which is the district in which farms such as Kafferskraal is located (it was previously part of the Middelburg district). As is clear from the map, parts of the Belfast and Lydenburg districts are also close to Nkosini, which accounts for a further 15%. The only distant district with a large number of Ndzundza-Ndbele is Bethal, which contributed 19% to the total. The other more distant districts (Ermelo and Carolina) had only 9% of the population.

Comparing these figures with the estimates for 1909/1910, one is struck by the stability of distribution of the Ndzundza-Ndbele. It is clear that the large majority of the Ndzundza-Ndbele population of the Southeastern Transvaal must have lived in the area in and around the original Middelburg and Bethal districts during the labour tenant period. Because Van Warmelo's calculation for the Middelburg district does not distinguish between Ndzundza-Ndbele living on the farms near Kafferskraal and those living in the rest of the district, it is not possible to decisively falsify James's assertion about the origins of Ndzundza-Ndbele in-migrants (she distinguished between those living on the nearby farms and those living in more distant locations in the Southeastern Transvaal, which would presumably include the more distant parts of the Middelburg district). The distribution of Ndzundza-Ndbele does however raise question marks about her assertion - they were certainly less dispersed than she suggests.

There are also, however, indications that my own findings reflect conditions peculiar to the histories of the Nkosini residents interviewed by me. One interesting aspect of the migration histories recounted here is the high proportion of Nkosini residents who were born on the Kafferskraal farms or in the Stofberg vicinity. Of the 35 born elsewhere, 13 are from the Kafferskraal farms. This represents only eight farms, out of a total of about 160 farms in the present day Middelburg district (I established this figure by doing a rough count of farms from the 1:250 000 map). To this figure of 160 farms we must add those farms that are in the present day Witbank and Groblersdal districts and that previously formed part of the Middelburg district, as well as farms in the Bethal district. Within the boundaries of this area, lies the farms most likely to contribute migrants to the Mahlangu tribal area. That most of the Nkosini migrants were

born on only eight (contiguous) farms, rather than being more widely distributed across the whole area, therefore suggests a clear tendency for Nkosini residents to cluster with regard to their farms of origin.

One possible explanation for this tendency relates to the fact that Nkosini is presently the seat of the chief - a function it has taken over from Kafferskraal. One can argue that people who previously lived with the chief, or close to the chief, would be more likely to do so again if the chief's place of residence changes. This argument explains why those who had moved at around the same time as the chief would join him in Nkosini, but it does not, however, explain why those who arrived after the early 1940's would choose to settle there. As we know, the chief left Kafferskraal in the early 1940's, while the majority of Nkosini in-migrants arrived after the 1950's. They, or their parents, chose not to leave with the chief when he did so, so why would they join him later? It is therefore not clear why so many Nkosini residents arrived from the same group of farms.

One can presume that network connections between people who have lived near each other for some time had something to do with this tendency to choose Nkosini above other destinations. Living in the heartland of Ndzundza-Ndbele settlement, Nkosini residents and their ancestors were able to escape the isolation that Ndzundza-Ndbele who were situated on farms in the deep Southeastern Transvaal would have experienced. Their concentrated settlement pattern was conducive to the construction of dense local networks. Many residents are related to each other, which is another factor that would have led to a denser and more intimate set of network connections. Sixty per cent of my respondents all had the same surname (Mahlangu - the same as that of the chief). In total, there were only 11 surnames among 40 respondents. A number of the respondents are closely related to the chief. This connection to the chief, as well as the prevalence of kin relationships, suggests that network connections were important as a factor in determining the choice of Nkosini as a migration destination. The impression that family connections are very important is reinforced by the pattern, very apparent in Nkosini, whereby male children build houses around their parents' house. The conclusion one can draw from this is that the local support networks of future Nkosini residents were characterised by relatively high density as well as intensity (see chapter 4 for a discussion of these aspects of the structure of

networks).

Respondents did not always move directly from the place they were born to settle in Nkosini. There was a significant amount of movement between farms over the lifetime of some migrants. In a few cases migrants came from further afield to live in Zaaiplaats, Kafferskraal or Blinkwater for some time before they moved to Nkosini. These three farms therefore served the function of directing migrants to Nkosini.

## 6.7 CONCLUSION

What emerges very clearly from this discussion is a picture of a people that have been very mobile as far back as we can see. In the precolonial period their mobility seemingly had much to do with leadership disputes and the breakup of tribal units. Later, events such as the *difaqane* initiated a number of cycles of dispersal and attempts at consolidation for the Ndzundza-Ndbele. Their dispersal by the *difaqane* ended in their consolidation in the mountain strongholds of KoNomtjarhelo. This was followed by their defeat by the forces of the Transvaal Republic, after which they lost their land and were scattered as indentured labourers among farmers in what was originally the Middelburg and Pretoria districts. During the Anglo-Boer war, many of the Ndzundza-Ndbele used the opportunity to congregate around Madzidzi in Kafferskraal, as well as Fene in the Pretoria district. With the cessation of hostilities, they were dispersed again, however. An opportunity to regroup did not present itself until land was bought by the Trust in 1941 and a number of families settled, with the chief Jonas Mahlangu, on these farms. Nkosini is one of the settlements that emerged as a result of this migration.

Most of the residents of Nkosini who were born elsewhere, were born on the surrounding white farms. Some of them on farms to the south of Nkosini such as Kafferskraal, Zaaiplaats and Buffelsvallei, and others on farms a little further away, particularly those on and surrounding the old white labour colony of De Lagersdrift. This applies even to those who have moved more recently to Nkosini, that is in the 1960's and 1970's. This raises doubts about the general applicability of James's assertion that more recent Ndzundza-Ndbele migrants to the Mahlangu

tribal area are from further afield in the South Eastern Transvaal, rather than from the surrounding area. The extent to which the origins of Nkosini in-migrants are clustered around a few farms in the vicinity, as well as the phenomenon that most of the people of Nkosini seems to be related to each other, are two clues that suggest that network connections between residents of Nkosini are particularly strong.

It is evident that the settlement history of Nkosini residents are closely bound up with their history of colonial subjugation and the policies of Segregation and Apartheid that came after that. Buying land for black settlement, and evicting blacks from 'white' areas when their labour was no longer necessary, was part of the broader policy of Segregation, and later Apartheid, of the government of the day<sup>19</sup>. These policies were based on the belief that broader geopolitical separation between black and white people was necessary to ensure the future of white political domination. Due to broader political developments, the Ndzundza-Ndbele were prevented from consolidating their own position geographically for any period of time. They were often forced by circumstances beyond their control to uproot themselves and begin a new struggle for consolidation. This also applied to the movement of some of them to Nkosini.

These are the circumstances that led to the situation whereby Nkosini residents became involved in migrant labour even before the community was born. In fact, the migration to Nkosini, and labour migration after that, was superimposed on long standing connections with migration destination areas. This phenomenon has considerable implications for our understanding of changes in selectivity, as we shall see in the next chapter.

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<sup>19</sup> The exception to this is of course the fact that the Mahlangu tribal area was eventually incorporated into the predominantly Sepedi-speaking homeland of Lebowa, which contradicted an important pillar of Apartheid ideology: the supposed imperative to settle each black 'ethnic group' within their own homeland.

## CHAPTER SEVEN

### THE DEVELOPMENT OF LABOUR MIGRATION FROM NKOSINI AND MIGRANT SELECTIVITY

#### 7.1 INTRODUCTION

The conventional model of the development of mobility, as propounded by Massey and others, holds that the selectivity of migration becomes less pronounced over time. This is the result of the growth of networks that reduce the costs of migration. Massey et al. formulated their model to specifically explain changes in international migration over time, but others (for example Skeldon) describe the development of internal migration in a similar fashion. I concluded my discussion of migrant networks in chapter 4 by saying that, although this model is in broad terms correct, it needs to be amended in certain important respects: a) the poorest people in the migration sending community are likely to be excluded from the assistance provided by networks because they cannot reciprocate, and one should therefore not expect the income selectivity of migration to be reduced for that group; and b) households dynamics and gender will, at least in the African case, combine to ensure that (married) women continue to be under represented in the migration stream as long as circular migration persists. In addition trends in the costs of migration will have an independent impact on the operation of this model. If the costs of migration decrease over time, less income selectivity will remain. If the costs increase, however, the cost reducing impact of networks may be outweighed by the increased costs.

In this chapter I give attention to aspects of this model in the context of a discussion of labour migration from the village of Nkosini. My objective with this exercise is twofold. I firstly want to use the model and the causal links it proposes to deepen our understanding of the consequences and causes of labour migration in one area of the rural periphery of South Africa. I believe the model can do this because it emphasises variables (such as the costs of migration and selectivity) which have up to now not received much attention in the literature on migration in this country. Besides using the model to understand migration in South Africa I, secondly, want to reverse the focus and see what lessons empirical reality has to offer regarding the adequacy of the model.

Because this is a case study which does not allow for generalization, and because there are still numerous unresolved methodological problems in studying migrant selectivity (alluded to in chapter 3 above), this study can test the theory only to a limited extent. It can however begin the process of identifying shortcomings in the model. At the very least it can suggest ways in which the model should be extended to accommodate the complexity of empirical reality.

From the above it is clear that my discussion in this chapter is largely going to be directed at the first part of the theory I am developing, in other words that part that deals with changes in selectivity over time. The second part, which is concerned with the assumption that migration improves the position of the migrant, will not receive attention here.

## **7.2 HOW THE NDZUNDZA-NDBELE BECAME INVOLVED IN MIGRANT LABOUR**

Delius (1983:62-79) describes the process by which the Ndzundza-Ndbele and neighbouring societies became involved in migrant labour in his book on the history of the Pedi, and in this section I summarize relevant parts of his discussion. His focus is primarily on the Pedi, but much of what he is saying with regard to migrant labour also applies to the Ndzundza-Ndbele. According to Delius (1983:63) the Ndzundza-Ndbele were participating in migrant labour to the Eastern Cape by the early 1860's. They were only one of a number of societies who were so involved - among the others were the Pedi, who were living on the western side of the Steelpoort river valley and the Manala Ndbele who lived near Pretoria. According to Delius (1983:63) the Pedi were the most committed to this system. He (1983:68) reports that they became involved in this movement as far back as the 1850's.

The initiative for this movement seems to have come from the chiefs (Delius 1983:74). They also exercised tight control over the migrants by sending members of the royal family to accompany the migrants and by demanding on their return a portion of the wages earned by them (Delius 1983:75). Permanent settlement of the migrants at their destination was discouraged from all sides: by the chiefs, by the colonial authorities in the Eastern Cape and probably by the migrants themselves, with result that nobody stayed at their destination for longer than two years (Delius

1983:64). There was therefore no question of the formation of migrant networks that would encourage voluntary migration later on. The most important motive behind this movement was the acquisition of firearms (Delius 1983:68). Firearms were used for hunting, which was an important source of food and income (through the ivory trade), as well as for defensive purposes. Another motive was to restock cattle herds, which were depleted as a result of the *difaqane* and disease.

It is an interesting question how these societies in the north became aware of the opportunities for wage labour in the Eastern Cape, which was, after all, more than a thousand kilometres away. Delius (1983: 71) believes that pre-existing trade networks between these societies and the southern Sothos under their king Mshweshwe acted as conduits of this kind of information. It is clear that the migrants faced many hardships on their way to work. Travelling to the Eastern Cape and back was done on foot and often at night. They travelled at night especially on their return trip. The reason for this is that they wanted to avoid being harassed or captured - either by Transvaal burghers who declared that it was illegal for blacks to possess firearms, or by other tribes who wanted to relieve them of the products of their labours. It took fifteen days of travel for the Pedi before they reached the kingdom of Mshweshwe and by the time they got there, the food they carried with them was often finished (Delius 1983: 64). Suffering from hunger and exhaustion, the migrants had to work here for some time before they were given an exit pass to proceed to the Eastern Cape. Port Elizabeth, where some of them ended up, was at least another five hundred kilometres away. The costs of migration were therefore extraordinarily high. These costs largely took the form of time and effort and did not involve money to any significant extent (occurring before these societies were fully integrated into the money economy). Chiefly assistance, as well as travelling in groups, seems to have played a role in overcoming these costs.

After the discovery of diamonds in 1871 at Kimberley, the movement of labourers was redirected to the diamond fields. This was a closer destination where migrants could earn higher wages (Delius 1983: 66). The returns published in an appendix to Siebörger's (1975:183-193) thesis indicate that the Pedi seemingly responded to the new opportunities before the Ndzundza-Ndbele, and for a long time they remained an important part of the mines' labour force. Nevertheless, by 1877 the Ndzundza-Ndbele featured strongly, contributing 2760 of the 18834 'new hands'

recruited for the Kimberley and Beaconsfield mines in that year from the whole of Southern Africa. As with the other tribes, Ndzundza-Ndbele movement to the mines occurred despite the deprivations that the trip to and from the mines entailed. Siebörger (1975) describes how migrants had to contend with drought, cold weather and hostile farmers and officials in the Republics while they were walking to and from the mines. The costs of migration were therefore once again very high, although, given the smaller distance to the diamond fields as compared to the Eastern Cape, probably lower than in the latter case. The Ndzundza-Ndbele's strong showing in the ranks of the workers on the diamond fields continued until involvement in migrant labour came to an abrupt halt when the Ndzundza-Ndbele went to war against the forces of the Transvaal Republic in 1883. As we saw in the previous chapter, the result of that engagement was that the Ndzundza-Ndbele lost their land and their cattle and that they were indentured among white farmers in the South Eastern Transvaal for a period of five years. During that period they were not allowed to leave the farmers' land, with the result that migrant labour was impossible.

### **7.3 NDZUNDZA-NDBELE INVOLVEMENT IN MIGRANT LABOUR DURING THE LABOUR TENANCY PERIOD**

At the end of their five year period of indenture the Ndzundza-Ndbele were uniformly poor, since they had lost all their land and cattle. Numerous commentators remarked on their poverty (see Delius 1989:247 and Morrel 1983:37). Since almost everybody was poor, there was very little social differentiation among them (Delius 1989:247). With few exceptions<sup>1</sup>, the Ndzundza-Ndbele continued to work on the white farms as labour tenants, as explained in the previous chapter on p. 148. This means that they had access to grazing land which made it possible to start accumulating cattle again, which they slowly did by trading the products of their craft work (Delius 1989:243).

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<sup>1</sup>The exceptions were those who later became rent tenants on farms such as Kafferskraal, as well as a few richer families who were sharecroppers (Delius 1989:247). Sharecroppers owned the seed, draught animals and implements necessary for farming. This allowed them to remain independent producers on the white farms (see Keegan 1986:78-79 regarding the differentiation between sharecroppers and labour tenants).

After their indenture ended, they were formally free to leave the farm on which they lived if the farmer was willing to give them a *trekpas*. The *trekpas* was one of two kinds of passes given by farmers. It was issued by an official upon the request of a farmer and allowed a black tenant to drive his stock through the countryside (Keegan 1986:151). Farmers sometimes refused to give their tenants such passes if they could point to (real or imagined) failures on the part of tenants to fulfill their sides of the tenant contract, but, as Keegan (1986:152) points out, in the climate of labour scarcity on the farms that existed until at least the 1930's (see Morrell 1983:179 and Schirmer 1995:513 for evidence regarding labour shortages in the Middelburg- and Lydenburg-districts respectively), these refusals were not always effective in restricting the mobility of tenants. Tenants could often find another farmer who wanted their services and who was prepared either to employ them without a *trekpas* or to challenge in court the first farmer's refusal to issue a *trekpas* (Keegan 1986:152). Significant movement consequently did take place between farms, especially from farms that belonged to the poorest farmers and where conditions were at their worst, to the farms of better off farmers who could give the Ndzundza-Ndbele better terms of employment (Delius 1989:243). As we saw in chapter 6, there was probably also a slow process by which Ndzundza-Ndbele gradually moved closer to their former heartland, especially to the farms surrounding Kafferskraal where their chief lived.

### 7.3.1 OFF- FARM EMPLOYMENT

In contrast to the *trekpas*, which allowed the tenant and his household to leave the farmer's employ permanently, farmers also issued passes to sanction temporary absences from the farm (Keegan 1986:152). During these absences tenants could work for wages for another employer. These passes opened up the possibility for tenants and (mainly) their sons to engage in a limited amount of off-farm employment, using their farms of origin as a base. This was possible because, in the labour tenancy system, tenants were only contracted to render labour to the farmer for a specified period. During the rest of the year, tenants could work on their own fields or work elsewhere to earn cash wages. Farmers were generally not against the practice of leave for off-farm employment for two reasons: a) it absolved them from the necessity to pay cash wages, since the tenant's need for cash (to pay taxes, among other things) could be satisfied to a limited extent in this way; and b) it occurred in the off-season, when, given a system of mono cropping, labour

demands were low (Morrell 1983:186, Keegan 1986:122-123).

Farmers' commitment to granting such leave of absence was not uniform, however. The length, and the mere existence, of this leave varied from farm to farm and over time. It is clear that until the Anglo-Boer war at the end of the nineteenth century, the Ndzundza-Ndbele had limited possibilities for this kind of employment. They were in a very powerless and poverty-stricken state, and farmers probably used this to refuse their requests for such passes (Delius 1989:242-243, Morrell 1983:164. Also see Van Vuuren 1992:13). Although their general conditions of employment probably improved somewhat in the new century with the Anglo-Boer war coming to an end<sup>2</sup>, by 1914 it was still reported that many tenants worked on the farms the whole year through, and that their children were in many cases not allowed to leave for temporary employment elsewhere (Delius 1989:246). As we shall see below, conditions became more auspicious for off-farm employment as the century wore on, so that by the 1940s it seems to have been quite common.

Even when passes were forthcoming, they were, at the start of the new century, often not issued for a period long enough to allow the tenants to travel far in search of work. It seems that many farmers were concerned that their tenants might not return if they became too established further afield. Tenants were contracted to work for a period of three to six months for the farmer, but this did not necessarily mean that the tenant could stay away for nine or six months of the year respectively. Besides the imperative of cultivating their own piece of land (Schirmer 1995:511<sup>3</sup>), tenants were often faced with a situation where their leave was spread in small amounts throughout the year, with the result that many tenants could never leave the farm for any significant period of time (Schirmer 1995:511, Keegan 1986:123-124). They therefore tended to work on neighbouring farms rather than further afield (Morrell 1986:186, Keegan 1986:124).

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<sup>2</sup> As we saw in chapter 6, many Ndzundza-Ndbele absconded from the farms during the war, and it took a considerable effort on the part of the colonial administration to get them to go back.

<sup>3</sup> Given that the product that farmer and tenant were producing were in all likelihood the same, e.g. maize, and that the times of high and low labour demand were the same for tenant and farmer, it is unlikely that the need to cultivate their own patch of land interfered too much with the tenant's off-farm employment

Until the 1940's most tenants in the area around Kafferskraal were employed locally in their off-time, earning wages by working for another farmer, on road and rail construction projects, for the co-op, in the roller mills, or even by working for the same farmer<sup>4</sup>. The duration of their absence is probably not the only reason why they did not travel further in search of employment - their skills were, after all, agriculturally based.

In addition the labour time that tenants were contracted to provide was sometimes very vaguely defined. Morrell (1983:180) argues that these vaguely defined contracts were more prominent among those tenants who worked for poor farmers and in areas where labour shortages were less of a problem. Poor farmers could not afford to employ many tenants and therefore needed more work done more frequently by each of their tenants; consequently they were less amenable to letting them work elsewhere for significant periods of time (James 1987:35). According to Morrell (1983:180-181), labour tenants had less bargaining power in the north of the Middelburg-district (where most of the residents of Nkosini came from - see chapter 6 above) because labour was more readily available due to its closeness to the locations and reserve areas of Sekhukhuneland. Writing about the situation around De Lagersdrift in 1930, Morrell (1983:180-181) mentions that tenants were often expected to work whenever there was work to be done, with no off-time being laid down. Tenants called these contracts the 'somaar' contract. De Lagersdrift is in the north of the Middelburg-district, and was, as we saw in the previous chapter, until recently a labour colony for poor whites. If Morrell is correct, the 'somaar' contract would probably also have applied in the small-holdings around Roosenekal, also known as Mapochsgronde, where many poor whites lived (Morrell 1983:89). It is not clear, however, that Morrell's argument that poor farmers were more likely to offer the 'somaar' contract is not contradicted by his (1983:176) other argument that poor farmers had less bargaining power in their dealings with tenants. Poor farmers were often forced to employ rich tenants with large herds of cattle (large herds were unpopular with farmers, but poor farmers were not in a position to be choosy about their tenants). If poor farmers couldn't choose their tenants it is doubtful that they could force them to work without wages and without leaving for periods of wage-earning employment.

Not all the white farmers in the north of the district were poor, however. Farms in the vicinity of

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<sup>4</sup> Interview with J.R.

the Blood River, such as Kafferskraal, were much bigger than in De Lagersdrift, and farmers had more capital at their disposal (Morrell 1983). As I pointed out in the previous chapter, most of the residents of Nkosini originated on these farms. On these farms, tenants were much more likely to be given permission to stay away once their period of compulsory labour to the farmer was over<sup>5</sup>.

Besides the problems experienced by some tenants in leaving for periods of migrant labour in more distant towns, such as Pretoria and Johannesburg, there were other factors limiting the Ndzundza-Ndbele's participation in off-farm employment in the early years of the century. One of these was the control exercised by the farmer over the movements of the dependents of the household head. The contract which the labour tenant entered with a white farmer often specified that the tenant's whole household was required to render labour to the farmer. The tenant committed not only himself, but also his whole household to this contract (Morrell 1983:181-182, Keegan 1986:132, Schirmer 1996:123). If an unmarried son, or less frequently, a daughter of a labour tenant family left the farm in search of work elsewhere without the farmer's permission, the farmer could evict the whole family, because he regarded the contract between him and the head of the labour tenant household to have been broken (Morrell 1983:171, Schirmer 1996:129). These controls gained official status when they were contained in the Native Service Contract Act, which was passed in 1932 (Duncan 1995:136-137). The intention of these restrictions was *inter alia* to make it more difficult for young men, who had the most potential for off-farm employment, to leave without the farmer's permission. It was also to force them to return after their pass expired. This Act also increased control over the movement of women, especially married women. Passes were never granted for women to leave on their own, which made it very difficult for them to leave (Schirmer 1996:147).

Children who absconded did not only act against the will of the white farmer. They often also left against the will of their fathers (especially initially when their parents were still committed to the labour tenancy system). This was not only because the family risked eviction, but also because the whole household's participation was necessary to cultivate the tenant's own fields. In fact, the exploitation of the whole household's unpaid labour is the basis on which the viability of this type

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<sup>5</sup> Interviews with J.R. and S.S.

of farming depended (Keegan 1986:84,134). This of course set the stage for generational, as well as gender (the tenant generally being male) conflict in labour tenancy households (Keegan 1986:134). Household heads also objected to their wives leaving for temporary migrant labour, thus limiting the movement of a further group in tenant families (Schirmer 1995:522). The shared need for the labour of the dependents of labour tenant households ensured that white farmers and black household heads often had the same interests when it came to ensuring that children and wives did not abscond (Schirmer 1996:114, Keegan 1986:134).

It is clear that the Ndzundza-Ndbele's movement from the farms for periods of migrant labour was restricted. These restrictions applied to all tenants, whether Ndzundza-Ndbele or not, but it seems that the Ndzundza-Ndbele had more problems in this regard. This was because they were highly valued by farmers as farm workers (James 1987:37). This was probably in part due to their farming skills. James does not attach much significance to this as a reason and believes that the real reason why they were so popular among white farmers is that they did not have any alternatives to farming and were therefore very exploitable. Whatever the reasons for their popularity, the fact is that the Ndzundza-Ndbele encountered especially strong resistance to their leaving the countryside.

The effect of these restrictions should not be overestimated, however. This statement applies especially to the contractual obligations of the tenant's family members. The existence of a contract between a tenant and a farmer about the employment of the former's family, was not in itself a guarantee that it would be honoured. In a context of labour scarcity farmers were not always prepared to evict the tenant family. This is because they would have had to forego the services of the family members who were still prepared to work on the farm in the process (Keegan 1986:133-134). The bargaining power of the tenant, as reflected in the demand for his services, was therefore a factor in the amount of control the farmer could exercise over his dependents. Farmers often complained to magistrates that the wives or children of their tenants refused to work for them. Within months of the passage of the 1932 Act, farmers' organisations were complaining it was not effective in ensuring that the dependents of their labour tenants return after their spell of migrant labour was officially over (Duncan 1995:139). These restrictions were also very difficult to police from the urban end (Duncan 1995:139). According to Duncan, '(a)

lucrative trade in forged farmers' 'leave notes' developed, about which the pass office could do little'. These contractual obligations were therefore not completely successful in forcing dependents a) to work for the farmer, b) to refrain from leaving without permission, and c) to return when their spell was supposed to be over. It must also be pointed out that the restriction placed by this system on the movement of dependents only applied to trips not sanctioned by the farmer. The conclusion one arrives at is that these restrictions made migrant labour by dependents more controlled and more difficult, but not impossible.

From this discussion, as well as the foregoing few pages, it is clear that the labour tenant household, at least initially, was not the ideal base for periods of migrant labour on the part of sons and daughters. Leaving the farm without permission could upset the rural base for such movement, because the household risked being evicted. If children left without their parent's permission they risked alienating them. Given that they still needed their support, especially in the case of young men who needed their father's help in accumulating cattle to use as bridewealth payment, this was not a wise decision.

The importance of a conducive rural base for migrant labour becomes apparent once one compares the position of the Ndzundza-Ndbele with their neighbours, the Pedi. Unlike the former, the Pedi had access to alternatives besides the labour tenancy system (see chapter 6, p. 148 above). Some of them lived in locations and reserve areas, which consisted of those parts of their former home, Sekhukhuneland, that remained under Pedi control, or on land they rented from white owners. Both of these kinds of settlement pattern differed from labour tenancy in the respect that in the case of the former two, households could maintain more control over how the household's labour was going to be used. They did not have to contend with the white farmer's demands for the labour time of household members and could dispatch them for a period of migrant labour in a distant (mostly urban) destination without getting permission first. Migrant labour is, by definition, a system that necessitates a base around which family members can circulate and to which they can return periodically. This discussion makes it clear that, at least initially, labour tenancy provided a less conducive base for migrant labour than other settlement systems.

As we shall see towards the end of this section, this changed over time during the nineteenth century. By the 1940's and 1950's it was not uncommon for youths in the Kafferskraal vicinity to leave the farm for many years while their parents were working for the farmer and then return unmolested to work on the farm themselves for some time. At that stage it seems that it was important that at least one member of the family stayed behind to render labour (James 1985:182). These restrictions were therefore more common at the beginning, rather than the middle, of the century.

### 7.3.2 PERMANENT MOVEMENT FROM THE FARMS

Besides migrant labour, another way in which the Ndzundza-Ndbele could benefit from urban employment opportunities was by leaving the farms for good and becoming permanent urban dwellers. As the country industrialized in the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, many jobs were created in town. Many blacks did move to town, as is attested by the increase in the proportion of the black population that lived there (Duncan 1995:100): between 1921 and 1951 the urban black population rose from 657 620 to 2 328 342, or from 14% of the total black population to 27,2%. This rise occurred despite official government policy that black migration to the towns should be discouraged, as well as restrictions in terms of the pass laws that limited the rights of blacks to settle permanently in the urban areas. According to Duncan (1995), the Department of Native Affairs, whose job it was to implement these restrictive measures, did not always do so, among other reasons because the officials did not agree with these measures and did not think that they were practical.

Permanent migration to town in most cases probably started as circular migration, which then developed into a more permanent arrangement. Reasons why this could occur are dissatisfaction with farm labour or the choice of an urban woman as a bride. Circular and permanent migration should therefore be seen as two points on a continuum rather than as discrete entities (see Gelderblom & Kok 1994). Because of the link between the two types of migration, the impediments faced by Ndzundza-Ndbele labour tenants in their circular migration (as set out in 7.3.1 above) would also apply to permanent migration. There is another reasons why they would, initially, be under-represented in this drift to town.

In a discussion of labour tenancy in the Lydenburg district, which is adjacent to the Middelburg district, where most of the Ndzundza-Ndbele labour tenants we are studying lived, Schirmer (1996:113-116) emphasises the extent to which the labour tenants themselves were, at least until the 1940's, committed to a rural lifestyle. The title of his paper is "What would we be without our land and cattle?". As the title suggests, most labour tenants could not easily conceive of a meaningful life without access to land and to cattle. Cattle fulfilled important social functions, not the least of which was their role in breadwealth payments. It was for this reason very important for households to maintain access to land on which to graze cattle. Schirmer (1996:118) adds to this the relative security that flowed from access to land. In contrast to the urban areas, where one could easily be fired (there was a very high labour turnover in the unskilled occupations that labour tenants would aspire to - Schirmer 1996:118), access to land at least allowed one to survive. Given that for most Ndzundza-Ndbele labour tenancy was the only way in which they could initially get access to land and cattle, this explains their initial attachment to the system.

Since they didn't own the land, and often were caught up in disagreements with the farmer that forced them to leave, this security was not absolute. It was certainly less than the security of tenure offered to those living on trust land or in locations - although even here black spot and betterment removals threatened security of tenure, especially in the Apartheid period. As Schirmer (1996:114, 120) points out, it wasn't only the land, however, but also the social relationships surrounding the cultivation and holding of land that contributed to this feeling of security. Conditions on the farms were generally harsh, and farmers often used violence to discipline their workers (Delius 1989:243, Van Vuuren 1992:13). This was tempered by the relatively intimate relationship that existed between farmer and tenant (Schirmer 1996:118). Farms were big and isolated, with the result that farmer and tenant got to know each other very well, especially since they grew up together. The labour tenant setup also allowed the tenant some degree of autonomy (Schirmer 1996:114). He and his family were only contracted to work for the farmer for part of the year. During the rest of the year the tenant could farm on his own account, and this was highly prized by tenants.

### 7.3.3 THE COSTS OF MIGRATION AS AN OBSTACLE TO BOTH THE PERMANENT AND CIRCULAR MIGRATION OF NDZUNDZA-NDBELE TO TOWN

One of the central themes of this thesis is the constraints faced by those pioneering migration in financing the costs involved in doing so. Earlier in this chapter I referred to the high costs of migration faced by the 19<sup>th</sup> century Ndzundza-Ndbele migrant labourers to the Eastern Cape and the Kimberley diamond fields. At that stage the costs revolved largely around the time and effort expended in travelling to employment and back, as well as the dangers and hardships faced on the way. The money costs as such were very low to non-existent. During the 20<sup>th</sup> century, this situation changed, and the money costs of migration became more prominent.

This happened despite the major migration destinations (the Witwatersrand and Pretoria) now being closer and more accessible to migrants from the Southeastern Transvaal than the diamond fields and the Eastern Cape were before. As the pass laws became stricter and better policed, the travel documents that migrants had to carry became more extensive. The list now included an inoculation certificate, proof of payment of taxes and leave of absence from their farm. Migrants had to pay to get these certificates from magistrates and other authorities. On their way to work and back, they were often stopped by real or bogus officials who demanded to see their certificates, and had to pay real or bogus 'fines' for con-compliance (see Van Onselen 1982:174).

With the advent of the railway line between Lourenço Marques and Pretoria in 1895, it became possible to travel from Middelburg to Pretoria by train. This reduced the travelling time to employment opportunities, especially for those who lived close to Middelburg, but it also introduced a money cost (the train ticket) into the calculus of costs. When the branch line to Stofberg was constructed in 1927 (Morrel 1983:94), it made it easier for the people who lived on the farms in and around Kafferskraal to travel to Pretoria and other destinations. In addition migrants had to consider the living costs in the destination area while they were looking for work. This was unlikely to be very high at that stage however, since the chronic labour shortage of the time made it easy to find employment.

Some costs were fixed (such as those involved in getting your travelling documents in order), others (such as transport costs) depended on the distance travelled to work. As we saw in chapter 6, in the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century the Ndzundza-Ndbele were living in a reasonable concentrated fashion in the Middelburg and Bethal districts. Relatively few of them were living in the outlying districts such as Carolina and Ermelo. The core area of Ndzundza-Ndbele settlement was relatively close to urban destinations such as Pretoria and the Witwatersrand, compared to say, the Transkei, with the result that the distance costs of migration was also lower. In addition, there were employment opportunities in the immediate vicinity with even lower distance costs, such as those opening up at the beginning of the century on the Witbank and Middelburg coal fields. As I pointed out in chapter 3, these costs have to be evaluated in terms of the income levels of the prospective migrants, however. Ndzundza-Ndbele labour tenants received very little by way of cash wages, and they were initially viewed by their contemporaries as being very poor (see p. 168 above), with the result that even modest money costs would have been major disincentives to migration for them. This situation changed over time, as we shall see in section 7.4.3, where I also discuss the implications it had for migration.

These costs could have been met in principle through the actions of labour recruiters. According to Morrell (1983:212) the Premier diamond mine near Bronkhorstspuit was active in recruiting black labourers from the Middelburg district in the beginning of the twentieth century. Most of these workers seem to have been Pedi who lived in the reserve area, however (none of my respondents recalled ever working for Premier mines). The coal mines of Witbank and Middelburg were also active in recruiting labourers at the same time (Morrell 1983:211). Since these towns were close by, it was also easier to go to them from a costs perspective. Labour recruiters provided cash advances to potential migrants as an inducement and arranged transport for them (Morrell 1983:212, Crush et al. 1991). Employers such as the mines and municipalities also often provided free (or very cheap) board and lodging to their workers in hostels. This lowered the costs of migration, or in the case of cash advances at least made them more affordable (Crush 1985:154).

Because labour recruiters were since 1911 forbidden to recruit in white farming areas in order to safeguard the farmers' labour supply from competition from the mines (Schirmer 1995:520, Crush

et al. 1991:138), this avenue was to some extent closed to labour tenants from the white farming areas of the Middelburg district. This restriction was flouted during times of exceptional labour shortages on the mines and elsewhere, such as the 1940's (Schirmer 1995:520). Duncan (1995:132, end note 246) refers to letters written in 1939 by the Department of Agriculture to the Departments of Mines and the Interior, as well as the South African Railways and Harbour, requesting them not to 'permit recruiting where it would interfere with farmers' labour requirements'. The fact that this letter was deemed necessary, indicates that other employers were indeed poaching the farmers' labourers. This was especially common in the period before the mines centralised their recruiting operations in 1912 (Crush et al. 1991). At that stage, recruiting was largely unregulated and often in the hands of private recruiters, who often 'stole' farm labourers (Morrel 1983:212).

One can assume that some Ndzundza-Ndbele did get involved in migrant labour in this way, although the number seems to be limited. The report of the Native Affairs Department for 1911 (Union of South Africa 1913) is a useful source in this regard. It gives a breakdown of black labourers from the different districts of the Union, their destinations, and whether they travelled on their own or were recruited. Concentrating on the two districts with probably the largest number of Ndzundza-Ndbele at that time, Bethal and Middelburg, the following picture emerges. Of the 1270 workers from Middelburg who travelled to employment elsewhere during that year, only 70 were engaged through labour agents. The rest all moved independently. None of the 493 workers from Bethal were recruited. The numbers are not broken down according to tribal origin, so we don't know how many of these workers were Ndbele, rather than Pedi<sup>6</sup>. We don't know anything about the identity of the recruited workers either. Nevertheless, recruiting does not seem to be a very significant factor in the flow of Ndzundza-Ndbele from these districts, at least at this stage. One can conclude from this that the costs of migration were, at least in the early years of the century, indeed a constraint on Ndzundza-Ndbele participation in labour migration to the growing urban economy of the country.

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<sup>6</sup> Because Pokwani is listed separately, one can assume that the proportion Ndzundza-Ndbele in the Middelburg figures were high. As was pointed out in chapter 6, Pokwani was part of the Middelburg district at that stage, and was home to a large part of Middelburg's Pedi population (see the 1909/1910 figures provided in that chapter).

The destinations to which these workers travelled are listed in the tables below. It is clear that the Witwatersrand was the single biggest destination for both groups of workers. Distance seems to be a factor in the selection of destinations. While Pretoria is the closest destination to Middelburg, the Witwatersrand is located more advantageously for Bethal residents. This helps to explain the low numbers of Bethal, as opposed to Middelburg, workers going to Pretoria.

**Table 7.1**  
**Destinations to which Middelburg workers travelled - 1911**

	<b>Witwatersrand</b>	<b>Pretoria</b>	<b>Other Transvaal</b>	<b>Elsewhere</b>
Mines	281	148	176	0
Other	176	235	209	4
<b>Total</b>	457	383	385	4

**Table 7.2**  
**Destinations to which Bethal workers travelled - 1911**

	<b>Witwatersrand</b>	<b>Pretoria</b>	<b>Other Transvaal</b>	<b>Elsewhere</b>
Mines	23	0	0	0
Other	248	29	188	4
<b>Total</b>	271	29	188	4

**Source:** Union of South Africa (1913:84).

#### 7.3.4 THE DECLINE OF THE LABOUR TENANCY SYSTEM AND THE INCREASED MOVEMENT FROM THE FARMS RESULTING FROM THIS

By the 1940's, the number of tenants still committed to the farming life began to decline. Due to the increasing use of tractors, farmers had less need of the draught cattle of the tenants. In

addition the expanding market for agricultural products increased the value of agricultural land, with the result that farmers became more restrictive with regard to the amount of grazing and arable land allocated to tenants, and started putting pressure on them to sell their cattle (Schirmer 1996:136, Morrell 1983:178). The expanding market had another effect. Farmers started to make more demands on the labour time of tenants, with the result that the period that tenants had to work for the farmer increased. Contracts for three months labour time in a year became less common and were replaced by contracts of up to six months. My interviews suggest that until the 1940's workers were only bound to render four months of free labour on the farms near Kafferskraal. By the 1950's this had changed to six months<sup>7</sup>.

Another sign that labour tenancy started to come to an end, was the fact that tenants and farmers came into conflict over the former's children more frequently. Education in particular became a bone of contention (Schirmer 1996:127, Delius 1989:250). Education became more readily available, as schools spread through the rural areas. In De Lagersdrif, the Dutch Reformed Church established a school, associated with its mission station, in 1953. Farmers often put up resistance to the tenants' children going to school, because they, correctly, realised that it would give those children more alternatives in the urban economy and make them more likely to abscond. Tenants, on the other hand, increasingly realised that an education would in future become essential for the advancement of their children. In this respect the fathers, especially, underwent a change of heart, as they were previously more concerned about their children looking after the cattle than them going to school (Schirmer 1996:126).

Increased possibilities for off-farm employment in the booming wartime economy and the laxer application of the pass laws (Duncan 1995:99) made it both more attractive and easier to leave for an urban job. It is also clear from the evidence provided by Schirmer (1996:129) about the children of labour tenants in Lydenburg that the aspirations of the youth increased at this time. More value was placed on Western clothes and other consumer articles, with the result that the attractions of a cash income to be derived from an urban job started to increase. It was therefore not surprising that migration to more distant destinations such as Pretoria and Johannesburg increased. While older people still worked locally in their off-time, the youth used this time to

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<sup>7</sup> Interview with S.S.

leave for the cities<sup>8</sup>. Migrant labour now became much more of a mass phenomenon, especially among the youth. Some of this movement was sanctioned by farmers. Farmers who did not previously give passes for longer periods adapted to this pressure for off-farm employment and began to give passes for longer periods of employment (Schirmer 1996:130). Much of this movement probably was against the wishes of farmers, however. In increasing numbers, children left the farms for long periods, often permanently. The following case study<sup>9</sup> of the migration history of S.S., who was born on the farm Paardekloof in 1926, demonstrates this dynamic:

When he grew up, tenants worked for 4 months for the farmer and 8 months for themselves. He started off-farm employment when he was 19 years old. He took the bus from Paardekloof to Stofberg, got on the train there and went to Pretoria. His parents gave him money for the journey, so one can assume that he left with their sanction. His uncle, who lived in a back yard shack in Lady Selborne in Pretoria, fetched him at the station. S.S. got a job through the intervention of a friend of his uncle, who worked in Robert's Heights. Since this was 1945, it was not difficult to find a job in Robert's Heights (Robert's Heights is a previous name for Thaba Tswane, the suburb of Pretoria where all the military units are situated.) He worked there continuously until 1949, when he was retrenched. The fact that he did not return in that period to work for the farmer does not seem to have caused any irreparable conflict between him and the farmer, because when he was retrenched, he went back to the farm, and worked for the farmer for 8 months. His father kept on working for the farmer during this time. It is unclear whether this arrangement satisfied the farmer, or not. When he left again for Pretoria, in 1950, he only stayed for 6 months, however, working on the railways, and living in the hostel in Potgieter Street. Soon after that his first child, Jan, was born. After six months he returned to work on the farm, and continued with this pattern for six years (in the mean time, labour tenancy contracts had shifted from 4 months on, 8 months off to 6 months/6 months. On one of these trips he was so cash strapped when he left that he had to travel to Pretoria on his bicycle. This trip took him one and a half days. During these six years he got married (in 1953) and built a house on Paardekloof. His wife was from Kafferskraal, a neighbouring farm. In 1956 he left the job at the railways and started working for Zylstra Construction. He worked there for 16 years, until 1972, on the 6 months/6months system. In that year he came into conflict with the farmer over the labour time of his children. His oldest child was then 22, and the second oldest was only 11. As a result of this conflict, he left the farm and came to live in Nkosini. When he tried to go back to his job in town, he ran into difficulties with his pass. He was told that he had to go back to Nebo and report at the labour bureau to be recruited. He did so, and got a job at Bester construction in Witbank. He worked there for only five months, whereupon he got a job at the Dutch Reformed Church in Faerie Glen in Pretoria, where he still works.

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<sup>8</sup> Interview with J.R.

<sup>9</sup> Interview with S.S.

This case-study suggests that, by the 1940's, farmers did not necessarily evict the whole family when a son of a labour tenant left the farm on a semi-permanent basis. During my interviews I came across a few other residents of Nkosini that worked in town for years, while their dependents stayed behind on the farms. One of these was M.M.. His family lived on Blinkwater for 25 years, while he worked elsewhere: first in Springs, then Pretoria and then in the roller mill in Kafferskraal. During this time his wife worked for the farmer, however, and this seems to have satisfied the farmer. Whether these case studies indicate that off-farm employment was less of a problem all along than is suggested in the literature or that it had changed by that time, is difficult to say. The fact is that when this kind of off-farm employment becomes very widespread, there is not much farmers can do, given that they cannot evict all their labour tenant families.

Returning now to S.S., the fact that he decided the second time around to return after six months, suggests that the farmer's dislikes did play a role in how he arranged his migration. It is significant that his child was born around the time of his second migration. Perhaps his new responsibilities as father impressed on him the need to ensure a secure base for the mother of his child, which made it important that he maintained a good relationship with the farmer. That the issue of the employment of children, whether that be the employment of school going children or of adults, was a cause for conflict, is attested by the fact that S.S. eventually left Paardekloof because of differences with the farmer about this issue.

It is clear that by the 1950's, labour tenancy ceased to be a setup that could (within the constraints of the generalised powerlessness of black people) accommodate both the interest of white farmers in a cheap labour force and the desire of black tenants for access to land. The system did not collapse overnight, however. Most of the residents of Nkosini left the farms only during the 1960's and 1970's, as was pointed out previously in chapter 6. Labour tenancy was only officially abolished in 1967 in the Middelburg district (Surplus People Project 1983:120). Nevertheless, the history of the Ndzundza-Ndbele as labour tenants on white farms slowly started to come to an end. As conflict escalated between tenants and farmers about grazing for cattle and the labour power of the youth, farmers began to evict rising numbers of tenants (Delius 1989:250). At the same time more and more tenants started to leave out of their own accord. Besides the factors

mentioned already, there were further reasons for this parting of the ways. Technological advances such as herbicides and harvester combines reduced the labour needs of farmers. The new technologies were introduced, as one can expect, for reasons of profitability, but this should not only be understood in the conventional sense. According to the farmers, the new generation of labour tenants were increasingly becoming deskilled as far as traditional technologies were concerned<sup>10</sup>. It became less common to find a person with the skills to inspan oxen among the new generation of farm workers. This is probably not surprising, given that the youth's motivation to work on farms fell as their aspirations for urban wages increased.

As we recall from the previous chapter, the Ndzundza-Ndbele had in the mean time acquired access to trust land in the area around Nkosini. For the first time since their defeat by the ZAR sixty years ago, the Ndzundza-Ndbele had an alternative rural base, apart from labour tenancy on white farms. Many of them left for the trust land, as it provided some (albeit increasingly limited) grazing for their cattle, and an alternative rural base from which to engage in migrant labour. Those with fewer rural assets to defend presumably were more inclined to move away on a more permanent basis to the growing urban areas, although, as Schirmer (1996) points out, the distinction between migrant labour and permanent migration was probably not always so clear cut: quite a few 'permanent' urban migrants still had cattle that grazed on white farms where some of their relatives worked or on the trust land.

#### **7.4 THE SELECTIVITY OF MIGRATION DURING THE LABOUR TENANCY YEARS (UNTIL ABOUT 1945)**

It is appropriate now to review the argument about selectivity that serves as a connecting thread throughout this thesis. Massey and his co-workers believe that the selectivity of migration changes as the migration stream matures. They distinguish between two stages in the development of a migration stream, with two corresponding states of selectivity. During the first stage, participation in migration is low in the community of origin. Exposure to migration is just beginning during this stage. The migration stream is very selective because the costs and risks of migration are relatively

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<sup>10</sup> Interview with J.R.

high. Only a few individuals in the community among those motivated to migrate can afford to take on these costs<sup>11</sup>. Later, as migration becomes more diffused throughout the community, the costs of migration are reduced because those who are already in the destination area help those who have been left behind to migrate as well. Because of the operation of migrant networks the costs of migration are now less of a barrier to those who want to move. This is the second stage distinguished by Massey et al. in the development of migration from the area of origin to a particular destination. During this stage, the migration stream is less selective.

In my discussion of Massey et al.'s theory I said that I agree with their characterisation of the first stage in the development of selectivity, but that the model should be modified with respect to the last stage. This is because the poorest are likely to be excluded from migrant networks, with the result that the costs of migration will continue to be an obstacle to their migration. The selectivity of migration will consequently not be reduced for people in this category.

The history of the Ndzunza-Ndbele's involvement in migrant labour, as it was revealed in the above discussion, makes it clear that the community of Nkosini never, **as a community**, experienced the first stage in the development of migration, as delineated by both Massey et al. and myself. The residents of Nkosini generally became involved in migrant labour before they moved to Nkosini. In fact, their ancestors were participants in the migrant labour system a few generations before that, as we saw in the beginning of this chapter. This movement came to an end upon their defeat and subsequent indenture in 1883. It did restart slowly during the course of the nineteenth century, as we saw above, and by the time people moved to Nkosini, they were heavily involved in migrant labour. There was consequently never a stage in the life of the community of Nkosini qua community when labour migration had just started - it started earlier, before the community was formed. As I shall point out below, this complicates the study of selectivity considerably.

The information about work histories collected as part of my survey confirms that labour

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<sup>11</sup> Massey et al. believe, as do many others, that the wealthiest individuals in a community are unlikely to be among the migrants. The people most likely to move initially are those who are not too poor that they cannot afford the costs of migration but poor enough so that access to urban employment opportunities will improve their income.

migration started before Nkosini was formed. In interpreting this information it is necessary to arrive at a cut off date by which one can say that the early stages<sup>12</sup> of the community's migration history is finished. In the case of Nkosini, the end of the 1970's suggests itself as the most likely date. Readers will recall from the discussion in chapter 6 that very little in-migration took place to Nkosini during the first few decades of the community's existence. In-migration only took off during the 1960's, with most people arriving during that decade and in the 1970's. By the end of the 1970's most of the originators of the existing households had arrived and the population of Nkosini had stabilised significantly. If we concentrate on people who arrived until the end of the 1970's and who were adults at the time, the following picture emerges:

Twenty three people arrived as adults in Nkosini from elsewhere. Of three of these I don't have any information about the time of their arrival in Nkosini or their work histories. Of the other twenty, only five were not active as migrant labourers by the time they came to live in Nkosini (one of these started out upon arriving here)<sup>13</sup>. These five were all female, and except for one whose husband deserted her upon arriving there, all had husbands who were employed as migrant workers. Except for the one who took up migrancy upon arrival, these five were all working on the farms as domestics before they came here. The other 15 were working in town (mostly Pretoria, although a few were also working on the East Rand, and in Middelburg and Johannesburg).

To this figure we must add the three people in my sample who were born in Nkosini and who were adults before the end of the 1970's. This is in order to get a picture of the migration of everybody in Nkosini who were capable of labour migration at the time. All three of these were involved in migrant labour at some<sup>14</sup> stage before the end of the 1970's.

Massey et al.'s first stage consequently does not apply to Nkosini as a community, but predates it. By the time Nkosini was formed, its residents were already in the second stage, the stage of mass migration. In order to present the data, I am therefore going to distinguish between three phases in the development of Nkosini migration: the first phase when they were still living as

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<sup>12</sup> What I call the first phase in the history of Nkosini's involvement in migrant labour is not the same as that meant by Massey et al. when they talk about the first stage in the development of labour migration. It is my attempt to identify a relatively stable stage in the beginning of the community's history.

<sup>13</sup> A few women, for whom moving to Nkosini coincided with marriage, stopped their involvement in migrant labour when they moved there.

<sup>14</sup> People who were only intermittently involved in migrant labour during this period were also counted as migrants.

labour tenants on farms (until around 1945), the second phase when they were already engaged in mass migration but had just arrived in Nkosini (that is, from 1945 to 1979), and the present day situation.

The type of community that Massey et al. have in mind for their description of the initial stage of migration is a more stable peasant community that offers alternative employment opportunities so that community members do not need to leave to work somewhere else in order to survive. Agriculture in particular would be a viable alternative to outmigration. Nkosini never satisfied these criteria. Because of limitations on land availability and the distance of the community from available land (see chapter 6 above), the possibilities for agriculture are limited and have been so since the inception of the community, even though more land was available initially. According to James (1987:65), more agricultural land was available shortly after 1943 when the Trust bought the farms that became the Mahlangu tribal area than at present. She is speaking specifically about the situation in the village she studied, Morotse, but this would also have applied to Nkosini because the agricultural land allocated to residents of Nkosini are close to Morotse (the topography of the area around Nkosini makes cultivation impossible). As a result more farming was done initially. As residents streamed into the area, less land was available for each household, however. This was confirmed by betterment planning done by the Trust, which continually shrunk the amount of land for cultivation allocated to each household. Even at the beginning, there was not enough land available to residents of Nkosini to make migrant labour to distant places unnecessary. This situation decreed that, if people did not have jobs by the time they came to Nkosini, they had to find them fast in order to survive.

The lack of agricultural resources was not the only reason why Nkosini residents were so strongly involved in migrant labour since the community's inception. Another factor was the absence of old age pensions in the early years. In contrast to the present situation, where many households in the rural areas depend very strongly on pensions for their survival, old age pensions did not feature as a source of income to rural black people in those years. The state started providing pensions for rural blacks only from the mid-1960's (DeLius 1996:150). Given the lack of local opportunities for survival, there was therefore little by way of an alternative to migrant labour in those days if a household was going to survive.

The fact that Massey et al.'s first phase cannot be applied to the community of Nkosini is not, in itself, problematic for their theory. The problems thrown up here are an artifact of the peculiar unit of analysis applied rather than a reality. The unit of analysis, the community of Nkosini, did not exist before the late 1930's. It is the product of immigration<sup>15</sup> from the surrounding farms. The fact that labour migration to distant destinations existed before the community came into being does not falsify the idea of two distinct phases as such, but merely suggests that the unit of analysis should be changed for the discussion of the first phase. Ideally speaking we need to go back a generation or two to the labour tenancy setup in order to trace the beginning of migrant labour to distant destinations.

In this endeavour we are hamstrung by a lack of data, however. The information with regard to the period preceding their arrival in Nkosini is particularly sketchy, and is restricted to the historical information presented in section 7.3 above. There is another problem, however, which relates to the measurement of selectivity. Massey et al.'s argument is that there is a particular pattern of migrant selectivity that corresponds to each phase of the development of migration and it is especially important, in the light of the focus of this thesis, to get some picture of selectivity in the first phase of migration. Ideally speaking we need information about the demographic characteristics of the migrant stream, as well as the characteristics of the community of origin, since selectivity is measured by comparing those two (see chapter 3 above). If the characteristics of the two are different, migration can be said to be selective. If the two are similar, migration is not selective. With regard to data about the community of origin, the unit of analysis problem rears its head again. The community of origin for Nkosini residents is, given that labour migration started before the community was formed, a virtual community, consisting of individuals spread throughout the Middelburg district and beyond and who, themselves or through their children, eventually came to live in Nkosini. Needless to say, it is in principle difficult to get information about such a group of people. In addition, it is difficult to get information about the characteristics

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<sup>15</sup> Care must be taken not to confuse the two kinds of migration we are dealing with here. The focus of the selectivity argument is on labour migration to a distant locale. The immigration of people into Nkosini in order to live there is totally different for our purposes. It is similar to their previous movement from farm to farm in order to find more congenial surroundings. Even though selectivity might be a factor here as well, in the sense that particular kinds of people probably chose to live here rather than elsewhere, we shall not pursue this selectivity in the context of the present argument.

of the migrants who themselves, or represented through their children, later became Nkosini residents.

Because comparing data about such vaguely defined entities is going to be difficult, if not impossible, I am therefore not in a position to say much about the selectivity of migration of the labour migrants originating in the virtual community of future Nkosini residents. The only information that I have relates to the Ndzundza-Ndbele in general. It is their selectivity that I shall now pursue.

When one surveys the history of Ndzundza-Ndbele migration, it is apparent that the restrictions imposed on their migration played an important role in structuring its form. While they were living on the farms as labour tenants the Ndzundza-Ndbele were to some extent, especially in the early years of this century, a captive labour force. As we saw above, these restrictions were often flouted, but they must nevertheless have had an impact. It is this impact, among others, that will feature in my discussion of the different kinds of selectivity in the next few pages.

#### 7.4.1 GENDER SELECTIVITY DURING THE LABOUR TENANCY YEARS

The historical discussion presented above makes it clear that when migration had just started, men were more likely to be migrants than women. This was because, while living on the farms, men had more opportunities for migration. They were more readily given passes for off-farm employment by farmers, while legal restrictions contained in laws such as the Urban Areas Act and the Native Service Contract Act discriminated against the migration of women. Parents were also more open to sanctioning the absence of sons than of daughters. Wives, in addition, were expected to be at the side of their husbands. The reason for this seems to be primarily patriarchal attitudes that prescribed that a woman's place is in the home (see the references to Schirmer 1995 and 1996 above). These attitudes were not restricted to the Ndzundza-Ndbele, as my citations of Bozzoli (1991:89) in chapter 3 above makes clear. Bozzoli reports that women in the area around Phokeng in the current Northwest Province were not allowed by chiefs to purchase train tickets. It is not clear how relevant the other factor, which was isolated in chapter 3 as being responsible for the initial lack of women in migrant streams, is in this context. This factor is the gender

division of labour in agriculture. Although women certainly worked on the fields during the period of labour tenancy, and fulfilled an important role during harvesting and in hoeing the crops in the growing season, it is not clear that this can be a reason for farmers being less inclined to let them, rather than the men, go. One possibility is that the contribution of women may have been needed more consistently during the year (hoeing during the off-season, for example) but in the absence of more information about the gender division of labour on white farms, this remains mere speculation. A factor that certainly did play a role was the function of women as domestic workers. The fact that there is no off-season for this kind of work must have helped to disqualify them from off-farm employment.

In the previous paragraph I have catalogued a list of restrictions that initially would have made women less likely to be labour migrants than men. As we saw, these restrictions range from the macro level (such as the pass laws) to the micro levels of the farm and the tenant household. These impediments add a new dimension to the study of selectivity. Massey et al.'s theory explains the selectivity of migration largely with reference to the costs and risks of migration. Except for the attention it gives to border controls, it assumes that labour is, in principle, mobile. This clearly was not the case for women in labour tenant households in the early years of the previous century. More attention will be given to this issue in paragraph 7.4.3

#### 7.4.2 AGE SELECTIVITY DURING THE LABOUR TENANCY YEARS

It has emerged above that young people were the pioneers in migrant labour to distant destinations. This escalated in the 1940's during the labour tenancy years as farmers and their tenants more often came into conflict about the labour time of the youth. The youth, because of their greater aspirations for a cash income, preferred to work in the towns during the off-season rather than on neighbouring farms.

#### 7.4.3 INCOME SELECTIVITY DURING THE LABOUR TENANCY YEARS

In section 7.3.3 it became evident that the costs of migration were an obstacle to Ndzundza-Ndbele labour migration, not because they were so high but because the Ndzundza-Ndbele had

such low cash incomes initially. In order to evaluate the extent of income selectivity experienced in Ndzundza-Ndbele migration streams, it is necessary to gather information about the cash incomes received by them later on. This will give an indication of how common migration to distant destinations subsequently became, as well as the potential for selectivity that existed in that period. During the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, the Ndzundza-Ndbele participated in two distinct, yet closely related, economies. The one related to their work as tenants on farms, as well as the farming they could do on their own account. The other resulted from the periods of off-farm employment they were allowed, and that were, as we saw above, the major sources of a cash income for them. The two economies are related because wages earned through off-farm employment could be used to buy cattle. Cattle, on the other hand, could be sold for cash. In the next few paragraphs I shall look at each of these two kinds of economic activity to see what role they played in the migration process.

Because off-farm employment was in the immediate vicinity of the farms at first, we can separate this logically (as an independent variable) from labour migration to distant destinations, which is our dependent variable. It seems that employment in the vicinity was generally a precondition for employment in more distant destinations, because this was the most likely way for tenants to acquire the cash necessary for the move. The extent to which this was allowed varied, as was pointed out in section 7.3.1, with the result that the restrictions on mobility from farms affected migrant labour not only directly, but also indirectly, in the sense that it also rendered its precursor and necessary condition, off-farm employment in the vicinity, very difficult.

Besides off-farm employment, cattle accumulation was another method for the Ndzundza-Ndbele to finance the money costs of migration. We know that after they were defeated, the Ndzundza-Ndbele lost all their cattle. During the course of the twentieth century, they started to accumulate cattle. By the 1940's and 1950's the size of the cattle herds of tenants became a point of conflict between tenants and white farmers. Farmers had less need of the draught power of tenants' cattle, as they mechanised, while they were less willing to provide valuable agricultural land for the tenants to graze their cattle on. We therefore have a picture of relatively little differentiation initially in the farming economy initially, followed by increasing differentiation, which came to an end again from the middle of the century as tenants were increasingly squeezed by the growing

capital and land intensity of white agriculture, as well as legal provisions against sharecropping and labour tenancy. This is the general picture of rural differentiation. This process did not necessarily occur in such a unilinear fashion for all tenants, however (Beinart & Delius 1986:38-39). As we saw above, for example, rich tenants were more likely to live on the land of poor farmers because the latter had less bargaining power in their dealings with tenants. The land of poor farmers was therefore often a haven for rich tenants squeezed by these processes, with the result that some of them could resist these forces working for their dispossession. Over the long run, however, the direction of change was clear: towards increasing dispossession of labour tenants. As the availability of a rural income decreased, exposure to a wage income earned elsewhere became more necessary. Those who were lucky and who already had access to such an income were obviously in a better position to survive the end of the labour tenancy system.

It is thus clear that until the middle of the previous century, the number of people with the income needed to finance migration would have increased. This, together with the growth of networks would have made the income selectivity of migration less over time. We can therefore postulate a move from high income selectivity of migration initially, to lower selectivity over time. If there had been a significant amount of recruiting of migrants by the mines and other organisations, income selectivity should not have been very high in the beginning since it would have lowered the costs of migration. As we saw in pp. 178-180 above, there does not seem to have been much recruitment, so it is unlikely to have influenced the composition of the migrant stream significantly, however.

Another factor, besides recruiting, that would have had an impact on income selectivity was the restrictions on the mobility of Ndzundza-Ndbele labour tenants. It became apparent in my discussion above that these restrictions varied over time, between regions and between farms and depended on factors such as the legal framework, the willingness of government to enforce laws, and the bargaining position of tenants. The ease with which a labour tenant could leave the farm was therefore partly determined by extraneous factors, in other words factors whose severity did not **directly** depend on the income of the tenant. Or to put it differently, migration was difficult for labour tenants, not only because of costs, but also because of restrictions on mobility that varied, at least partly, independently of costs and income. In so far as this was the case, the

income of the tenant household would not have been the only factor influencing their ability to undertake migration and this would have reduced the impact of income selectivity. However, there were causal links between income and mobility restrictions, running in opposite directions, which limited the extent to which these restrictions would have reduced the income selectivity of migration. In the first place, better off tenants would have been in a better bargaining position vis a vis the farmer than their poorer cousins, and thus could overcome these restrictions more readily than the latter. Off-farm income, furthermore, was an increasingly important part of household income over the years, and this depended, as we saw, on the restrictions imposed by farmers. As a result, the tendency for migration to be selective in terms of income would be reduced, but not by as much as otherwise would have been the case.

## **7.5 INVOLVEMENT IN MIGRANT LABOUR IN THE EARLY YEARS OF THE NKOSINI COMMUNITY**

The period that I am covering in this phase is from about 1945 to the end of the 1970's. It is more complex to measure selectivity over a period of time, rather than at a specific date, because it may change over this period. Given that the community I am studying arose out of immigration from the farms and materialized over this period, I do not have any other option. The question I am concerned with in this phase is whether the individual concerned was involved in migrant labour at the time s/he moved to Nkosini. The move to Nkosini could have been at any time over these 35 years. The information that I gain from this is only an indirect measure of income selectivity. Migration is an innovation that diffuses through the community of origin. If I know that there are some households that have not yet produced migrants, I can deduce that there is some amount of selectivity of migration as far as income inequality between households are concerned. Given that I do not have information about whether those households are rich or poor, it will however be difficult to say anything about which kinds of households are selected and which kinds not.

### **7.5.1 GENDER SELECTIVITY DURING THE EARLY YEARS**

According to Schirmer (1996:132), women started to leave the farms in the Lydenburg district

from the 1940's onwards. Initially this movement was quite limited, but over time numbers started to increase. Speaking about the whole of Sekhukhuneland, of which Nkosini forms the southern, Ndbele-speaking extreme, Delius (1996:148) claims that the mass migration of women to work in town started in the 1960's. Certainly by the 1970's a large part of the women in my sample were active in migration, although there was still a greater tendency for men to engage in labour migration than women. Of the twenty three people in my sample who were adults and who were living in Nkosini by the end of the 1970's, four people, who were all female, did not engage in migrant labour at some stage or another during that period. These four did work, but on the white farms. Of the twelve women who worked elsewhere, eight stopped doing so upon marriage (or, upon moving to Nkosini). Ideas about the proper place of a wife in the family clearly played a role in regulating their migratory behaviour.

#### 7.5.2 INCOME SELECTIVITY DURING THE EARLY YEARS

Only five adults were not migrant workers when they came to Nkosini, and these were all women who had husbands who were working elsewhere (one of these was subsequently deserted by her husband when he went to look for work). This suggests that there were no households who did not engage in migrant labour over this period at one stage or another, and that the migration innovation had diffused throughout the community. It is, however, very difficult to know what to make of this information. In the black rural areas, the pattern is that households who cannot provide for themselves tend to merge with households who do. In the light of the importance in areas such as Nkosini of a migrant labour income for survival, it is unlikely that households that failed to send migrants would still be around to be observed many years later when I did my survey. There is also the likelihood of self-selection. Only those households who already had access to migration are likely to have moved from the farms to Nkosini out of their own accord (as opposed to those who were evicted). If the households who had moved to Nkosini were all involved in migrant labour, it does therefore not mean that the Ndzundza-Ndbele in general could be said to be in the phase of mass migration. It must also be noted that I am talking about a period of 25 years here, and not a cross-section of Nkosini residents at any particular time. Having migrated once is no guarantee that a household will continue to migrate, given that all kinds of disasters, such as retrenchment, can occur. The conclusion one can draw from this discussion is

that it seems as if there was no income selectivity by the time the phase of mass migration arrived, based on the observation that no household was reported to be uninvolved in migration, but that interpretation problems cast some doubt about the validity of this observation.

It is evident that migrant networks played an important role in reducing the income selectivity of migration in this period. The case study presented on p. 182 is an eloquent demonstration of the importance of migrant networks. S.S. was given the money to pay for transport by his parents. He was fetched at the station by his uncle, in whose shack he slept initially and he got his first job through the good offices of a friend of his uncle. Without the intervention of these contacts, S.S. would have found it difficult to migrate successfully. Similar stories were told to me endlessly by my respondents - in fact I did not find a single case in which a migrant gained entry into the urban environment in a different fashion. This suggests that migrant networks were well developed by the time people moved to Nkosini. Readers will recall that in chapter 6 it became evident that Nkosini residents mostly originated on farms close to Nkosini (the Kafferskraal farms), and that in this respect they were probably not representative of the movement of the majority of the Ndzundza-Ndbele into the Mahlangu tribal area. I concluded that their more concentrated settlement pattern facilitated the growth of strong rural networks, characterised by high density and intensity. These rural networks could easily have been extended into migrant networks, which suggests that Nkosini residents were in an advantageous position, in terms of access to migration, relative to others who were not so well integrated into networks (see chapter 4 for a discussion of the migration enhancing effect of dense and intense local support networks). This helped to reduce the income selectivity of the migration of Nkosini residents. This observation points to a dimension of network dynamics that has not yet received attention in the literature reviewed in chapter 4: restrictions on the farm-to-farm mobility of potential migrants, as occurred in the case of Ndzundza-Ndbele labour tenants, can limit their ability to live in the vicinity of family members, and thus restrain their ability to cultivate networks. Conversely, those who succeed in overcoming these restrictions to some extent, are in a better position with regard to the maintenance of networks.

The question arises why all households seemingly could gain access to migrant networks, given my earlier insistence that the poorest would be excluded from them. In the absence of more

information about the functioning of these networks at that time, one can only speculate. I have already alluded to one explanation above, which is that Nkosini residents were better integrated into networks than other Ndzundza-Ndbele labour tenants. It could also be the case that their networks corresponded at that stage more closely to Sahlins's category of generalized reciprocity (see chapter 4 above). When this kind of exchange is practised, less emphasis is put on the need to reciprocate, with the result that those who are unable to reciprocate would not be banished from the network so readily. Such an assertion would make sense in the light of my discussion below (in section 7.6.3) of the changes that have occurred in Ndzundza-Ndbele networks as they have become more integrated into the urban, industrial economy. In that section I point out how the original Ndzundza-Ndbele homestead structure was eroded, with a concomitant decline in the intensity of mutual help networks. Since the period we are discussing in the current section is largely located before those changes, it is not unlikely that network support was more unconditional then than at present.

The distinction made above between those households who left the farms out of choice and those who were evicted from the farms has implications for differentiation. It is not unlikely, as James (1987) claims, that the former engaged in migration to urban destinations much more from a position of strength than the latter. Those who were evicted were forced to find waged work quickly if they did not already have access to such jobs, with the result that both their move to Nkosini and their further labour migration was unprepared and an act of distress (see chapter 5 above for a discussion of the inequality producing effect of push as opposed to pull migration). James (1987) uses this distinction to support her argument that the early migrants from the farms to Morotse, a closer settlement not far from Nkosini, were more likely to be better off after their move than the later migrants. More of them left of their own accord, and arrived at a stage before the pressure on cattle herding by tenants intensified. Their herds were therefore larger than those of later arrivals.

Up to now I have tried to keep the migration to Nkosini and labour migration to distant locations separate. It is impossible to study selectivity without separating these movements. These two were, however, closely linked historically, and in their combination, had the potential to worsen inequality. The link between the two is that, prior to their move to Nkosini, households were not

fully committed to labour migration. The wages earned during the off-season were merely a supplement to the agricultural produce of their own plots on the farms (and the other types of in-kind remuneration they received from the farmer). They were also generally prevented from working elsewhere on a sustained basis (as we saw above). It is difficult to be promoted in a job that one cannot occupy for more than a few months every year, which was the case for Ndzundza-Ndbele labour tenants. After leaving for Nkosini, households were forced to depend much more on a wage income for their survival on the one hand, and they had much more freedom to pursue opportunities in wage labour on the other. Those who left earlier could establish themselves better in urban labour markets than the others who were still labour tenants, at a time when the booming economy of the period between the 1940s and the 1960s offered many opportunities for doing so. By being in the front of the queue, so to speak, their networks could acquire more resources and advance the migration of additional household members more successfully. This is another outcome of the fact that Nkosini residents were involved in migrant labour before they came to live in Nkosini, and clearly, not one that Massey et al's model of migration allows for.

As a group, the Ndzundza-Ndbele of the South Eastern Transvaal (compared to those living in the early version of Kwandbele north of Pretoria, as well as other groups) became involved in migrant labour at a late stage. This applies even to the earliest urban migrants among them (in the 1940's). Their position on the farms limited both their commitment to urban occupations (given their self-perception as rural people) and their ability to find and then pursue them. After being totally immobilized on the farms for five years, they became labour tenants. As such, they were not allowed to leave the farms for more than a few months every year, which limited their upward mobility. As we saw, the costs of migration further constrained the labour migration of the Ndzundza-Ndbele, especially in the beginning when the cash incomes they earned were low. Their late transformation as fully committed urban workers also limited the amount of training they could acquire for urban occupations. After migrating to Nkosini the Ndzundza-Ndbele did not face these obstacles any more, but by then they were already inserted into unskilled occupations, with the result that this disability endured into the later years. As we saw in our discussion of network channelling, such inherited disadvantages can be reproduced over time through migrant networks.

That the Ndzundza-Ndbele were limited to unskilled occupations is confirmed by Van Vuuren (1992:14-15), who mentions the clustering of the Ndzundza-Ndbele in occupations such as building work (and domestic service for women), especially in the earlier period. Of my own sample of Nkosini residents, all the older women (over 50 years old) who worked were employed as domestics. The men were mostly employed in roller mills, in building work, and in brickmaking. Other jobs that were mentioned were working in a butchery, repairing fridges, gardening, cattle herder, janitor, body guard for a Kwandbele taxi boss or working in a nursery. Two worked for Spoornet, one worked in a steel factory in Johannesburg, and one worked for ISCOR. One reported working for the TPA and one worked in the tribal office. Except for those who worked in the steel industry, Spoornet or the TPA (these jobs provided more security and possibilities for upward mobility) almost all of them were confined to jobs that offered few possibilities for promotion. From this one can deduce that the Ndzundza-Ndbele were disadvantaged by their late entry into urban occupations and that this disadvantage endured into their residence in Nkosini.

## **7.6 PRESENT DAY INVOLVEMENT IN MIGRANT LABOUR**

It has emerged in the previous section that by the time the community started, its members were deeply involved in migrant labour. Over time, this involvement has been maintained at high levels so that presently, many Nkosini residents are migrants. The network of former migrants that prospective migrants could draw upon to lower the costs of migration contributed to maintaining the high levels of migrancy, as suggested by Massey et al. In this section I investigate the spatial form of present day migrancy from Nkosini, as well as the impact that networks have on its selectivity. The necessity for migration flows from the absence of local income earning opportunities, which is what I address in a brief interlude below.

In Nkosini itself there is almost no economic activity. Besides the local shop or work as a taxi driver, the only other options are driver or gardener for the chief, and building-work. The roller-mills at the cooperative near Luckau and in Stofberg are other possibilities. In addition, white farmers in the vicinity recruit seasonal labour (Surplus People Project 1983). The closest town of any significance is Groblersdal, which is about 40 km's away. There is a daily bus service to

Groblersdal, but it is very slow since the bus stops at all the villages on the way to Groblersdal. There are also taxi's that go to Groblersdal. A single taxi-trip to Groblersdal costed about R7,90 in 1996. There seems to be only a limited amount of commuting to Groblersdal, as well as to the handful of employment opportunities offered by surrounding villages (government employment in Nebo, shebeens, bottle stores, shops and taxis elsewhere). Commuters to Groblersdal are more likely to move to Tafelkop, which is a large village on the road to Groblersdal.

#### 7.6.1 SPATIAL ASPECTS OF MIGRANCY FROM NKOSINI

The destinations to which migrants<sup>16</sup> from Nkosini travel are listed in the table below (table 7.3).

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<sup>16</sup> I identified migrants by enumerating all the children of senior household members who now live or work elsewhere (whether their absence is permanent or temporary), plus those senior household members who currently do so. This assumes that all of them lived in Nkosini at some stage, which is, generally, a safe assumption. The senior household members have, with few exceptions, been living here for decades, so one can expect their children to have grown up here as well. In a few cases there were grandchildren who were old enough to be migrants, but these were not enumerated. This method of identifying migrants (and non-migrants) is different from the one commonly used (where respondents are asked to name those who belong to their household and who are absent), in the sense that it will capture, in addition, many of those who have since established households of their own elsewhere. Those senior household members, and their children, who have since left Nkosini for good will still escape this net, of course. There does not seem to have been many of these, however. Gathering data about the migratory behaviour of family members of respondents was necessary for another reason: family connections play a vital role in the formation of migrant networks. In this respect I was particularly interested in knowing whether potential migrants from Nkosini had connections in town that were in principle, if not necessarily in practice, available to facilitate their migration. See my discussion of this aspect below.

**Table 7.3**  
**Migration destinations of Nkosini residents (current migrants)**

<b>Pretoria</b>	<b>Johannesburg</b>	<b>East Rand</b>	<b>Midrand</b>	<b>Wtbk/Mdbrg*</b>
46	18	27	2	7
<b>Kwdbl &amp; P*</b>	<b>Kwdbl &amp; ER*</b>	<b>Kwdbl only</b>	<b>Elsewhere</b>	
7	1	5	2	

n = 115

\*Wtbk/Mdbrg = Witbank/Middelburg

\*Kwdbl & P = Kwandbele and Pretoria

\*Kwdbl & ER = Kwandbele and East Rand

Comparing this table with table 7.1, it is clear that Pretoria has assumed a much stronger position as a migration destination over the years. This is in part due to the declining importance of mining employment. As I pointed out, mining employment was very unpopular and served generally only as a point of entry into the urban economy. Already in 1911, Pretoria was the most important source of non-mining employment, as table 7.1 indicates.

As the above table (table 7.3) begins to show, Nkosini residents participate in migratory moves which are extremely complex and sometimes very ambiguous. Movement to Kwandbele is one example of this. In total 13 people moved to Kwandbele. This total consists of 5 who left for Kwandbele only and a further 8<sup>17</sup> who moved to Kwandbele and another place. Because Kwandbele is much closer to Pretoria than Nkosini, it is a better place to seek work from (interview with G.M., see De Wet [1995:186] for a similar comparison of two communities in the Eastern Cape, one within commuting distance of East London and another too far for commuting to be possible). People commute on a daily basis to Pretoria from Kwandbele. This is different from the situation in Nkosini where people only come home on month ends. News

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<sup>17</sup> This includes one person who lives in Soshanguve. Soshanguve is a peri-urban settlement near Pretoria that does not form part of Kwandbele.

about new employment opportunities received from town are therefore much fresher if one's base is Kwandbele than if it is Nkosini. Once one has found work in Kwandbele, the possibilities for daily commuting to town makes it an easier place to combine work and family life. Because Kwandbele was a homeland area, it was not subject to influx control and it was relatively easy to get a residential site there. This suggests why there was some outmigration from Nkosini to Kwandbele. As we saw in the previous chapter, Kwandbele was the official homeland of the Ndzundza-Ndbele. Those who have been enumerated as leaving for Kwandbele only do not have a job in town, and are unemployed, or housewives, or, in one case, a teacher. Those listed as combining residence in Kwandbele and another place are those who use the former as a base to commute to Pretoria and (in one case) the East Rand.

The latter case demonstrates the complexity of migratory moves. She (S.M.)<sup>18</sup> has a house in Kwandbele that her husband uses to commute (presumably) on a daily basis to Ekangala, an industrial area near Bronkhorstspuit. She, by contrast, works in Kempton Park as a domestic and is, due to the distance and lack of transport to that place, not able to come home more than once a week. In this case movement to Kwandbele implied also a commitment to long distance, weekly, commuting to another destination.

There is another example of such complexity involving Kwandbele. J.M.<sup>19</sup> lives in a hostel in Pretoria, and has consequently been enumerated as having left for Pretoria. He is not permanently employed and survives doing piece jobs. He is unmarried, but has three children with the same women, whom he still sees. She lives in KwaMahlanga, Kwandbele. The children live with their mother. He seems to have three places that he can call home: his parents' home in Nkosini, his hostel room in Pretoria, and his wife's place in KwaMahlanga. This ambiguity<sup>20</sup> in the definition of his place of residence seems to be a result of his inability to consolidate his residence anywhere in particular - he probably does not earn enough to get married and build his own house.

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<sup>18</sup> Interview with S.M.

<sup>19</sup> Interview with J.M.

<sup>20</sup> See Gelderblom & Kok (1994) for a discussion of this ambiguity of residence in the context of circular migration.

The extent to which migrants invest in their accommodation in town vary, suggesting lesser or greater intentions to live there permanently. If the migrant lives with his/her spouse in a shack (which is their property<sup>21</sup>) in the East Rand for example, one can take this as an attempt to consolidate their residence in town. Some (or all) of their children may still live in Nkosini with the grandparents, or elsewhere. As long as children remain behind, their parents are supposed to contribute to their maintenance, and in this way they continue to be involved in households back home. Sometimes both husband and wife will live in Pretoria, but this is no indication that they regard their stay there as permanent. E.M.<sup>22</sup> and his wife both stay in Pretoria, in the same room (it is not clear if this is a suburban domestic's room or if it is a room in a township). Both have jobs in Pretoria. Their two children live with the grandparents in Nkosini and the two often come home together to visit their children. They are currently (1996) building a house in Nkosini, which indicates that they intend to live there at some stage. In other cases a person will invest in a house in Nkosini while living in a hostel in town. The investment in the rural house indicates a preference for living there, but then s\he would live in the hostel for many years, calling into question this preference. S.S. is 73 years old (see p. 182 above) and has a house in Nkosini (one of the bigger ones, in fact). Yet he is still living in a hostel in Mamelodi and has been doing so for around 25 years. He can go on pension, but keeps doing his job as a cleaner cum gardener in a church in Pretoria and continues to live in the hostel. His wife has been dead for many years. All of his children, except for one child, have left the house in Nkosini, but his (or his wife's - it is not clear whose) father lives there still, as well as a granddaughter (the daughter of his dead daughter). S.S. visits home on a monthly basis.

I have not enumerated in table 7.3 those Nkosini residents who moved away from Nkosini to build their house in one of the settlements in the vicinity. Many young people have left Nkosini for places such as Monsterlus or Mandela, just up the road from Nkosini, because these places are considered to be more progressive. Nkosini residents are very conservative, and, unlike other settlements in the vicinity, do not make demands to be provided with electricity, for example (interviews with W.S. and A.M.). Another, probably more important, factor is the availability of

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<sup>21</sup> It is not unusual for people to live in shacks that are rented (or borrowed from friends) - interview with J.M. They are less likely to do so as couples, however.

<sup>22</sup> Interview with J.M.

open stands in Mandela.

Table 7.3 demonstrates that current migrants from Nkosini, like their predecessors mentioned in the previous section, still prefer Pretoria as their major migration destination. Pretoria is followed in popularity by the East Rand and Johannesburg. Distance seems to play a role in this hierarchy, with Pretoria being the closest metropolitan destination, followed by the East Rand and then Johannesburg. The popularity of Pretoria may also be the result of the networks formed as a result of recruiting to the Premier mine near Bronkhorstspuit outside Pretoria in the beginning of the century. Even though the original members of these networks have long since died, it is not inconceivable that a channelling effect between Nkosini and Pretoria can continue to operate years later as result of a growing density of network connections between these two places. Only 7 Nkosini residents moved to Witbank or Middelburg, which is surprising, given that these two towns are the closest major urban centres to Nkosini. Those Nkosini residents who have moved to Witbank or Middelburg often have a house in Nkosini as well, and commutes back and forth every weekend.

The channelling effect of network connections is visible as well with regard to migration to the "Moot" area of Pretoria. Van Vuuren (1992:15, fn. 76) relates that Ndbele women have managed to gain an ethnic monopoly on domestic work in this area<sup>23</sup>, and that they are quite willing to defend this by assaulting others who trespass on their turf. Under such circumstances, new Ndbele migrants are more likely to find employment here as domestics, and they are more likely to come here because of the concentration of people who can help them. This may apply to gardening jobs for men as well. I did not probe this issue specifically in my interviews, but it is significant that in the four cases where this kind of information was volunteered, areas in the Moot were mentioned. Two respondents referred to working in Parktown, Pretoria (one as a domestic and one as a gardener), and one worked in Riviera. Another respondent's mother worked in Villieria, while his sister worked in East Lynne. He found gardening work in Waverley (interview with G.M.). All of these are suburbs in the 'Moot'.

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<sup>23</sup> James (1991:12) gives another example of how women from the Malebogo district near Bochum managed to establish a monopoly over domestic work during the early 1970s in Braamfontein and Vrededorp in Johannesburg.

## 7.6.2 GENDER SELECTIVITY OF MIGRATION FROM NKOSINI

The distribution of men and women between the migrant and non-migrant categories is depicted in table 7.4. This table represents all the adult men and women who lived in Nkosini at some stage in their lives and that could be traced. Only those who are currently away were enumerated as migrants (in other words those who are now living in Nkosini but who migrated at some stage in the past were regarded as non-migrants).

**Table 7.4**  
**Gender selectivity of migration from Nkosini (current migrants)**

Female			Male		
<b>Non-migrants</b>	33	40%	<b>Non-migrants</b>	20	23%
<b>Migrants</b>	49	60%	<b>Migrants</b>	66	77%
<b>Total</b>	82	100%	<b>Total</b>	86	100%

n=168

This table makes clear that, although the majority (60%) of women do migrate, they are still less likely to do so than men. Seventy seven (77) per cent of the latter were migrants. We have already mentioned the patriarchal attitudes of migrant men, who believed that their wives should stay behind to look after their rural homestead and their family members, as a factor in explaining the lower participation of Nkosini women in migration (see Sharp & Spiegel 1990, Bozzoli 1991, and James 1991:8).

Their lower participation can also be explained with reference to differences in the operation of male and female migrant networks. In an interesting paper, James (1991) points to the discontinuities experienced by women from the Northern Province in the operation of their networks. She primarily has urban-based social support networks in mind, but her argument also applies to migrant networks. According to James (1991:6-11), age based groupings of women who have been initiated together in the rural areas form, as with men, the basis of networks of

mutual support. Unlike men's networks, however, the solidarity of female networks is undermined by the patrilocal settlement pattern upon marriage. Women who marry leave their rural area of origin and settle with the husband's family in stead. As a result married women tend to lose contact with their friends from their age group. At their new homes they can develop relationships with women who are neighbours or relatives of their husbands, so there is the possibility of establishing new networks, but it is clear that they are generally at a disadvantage relative to men when it comes to the formation of networks (James 1991:6). If they do want to migrate, they are dependent on the support of these new networks, or of their husband's family. The support of the latter group, given the attitude of many men that the city is an inappropriate place for a married women to live in, is in many cases unlikely to be forthcoming. In cases where they do migrate, it is often because their husbands wanted their wives to join them in town. Female networks in the city are also broken up by the fact that women tend to go back to the rural areas to have babies.

Unmarried women also lose out as a result of this settlement pattern, because they must forfeit the support that those who have left to marry could have provided to them. Another problem they face, according to James (1991:11), is that their place at their natal home is increasingly replaced by their married sisters-in-law as time goes on. As a result, the support offered by their own family networks (consisting primarily of fathers and brothers), also tend to wane as their sisters-in-law become established at home. There is consequently a danger that they may become isolated from support networks. Especially vulnerable, according to James (1991:19), are those women, and to a lesser extent men, who originated in communities that were subject to removals in the recent past (see De Wet [1995:13] for a discussion of the impact of resettlement on networks). In these communities, networks had less time to become established compared to more stable communities, which compounded the instability already faced by female networks.

It follows from this that women who divorce their husbands, and do not return to their own parents' households, but keep on living in the same village, are also very vulnerable. If her husband's family refuse to have anything to do with her, she is likely to be isolated from the support offered by this family (James 1985:178-179). Given that she will not have anybody to help her with childcare if she has small children, she may find it difficult to leave her home to look for work. But even if she returns to her parents' household, she still has to compete with her sisters-in-

law, as we saw above. It is for these reasons that small female headed households, headed by younger women whose children are too small to contribute to household income, are more likely to be threatened by destitution (James 1985:178, Delius 1996:153).

The following example of a female headed household demonstrates the danger of becoming isolated from people who have access to a wage income<sup>24</sup>.

It is headed by two sisters, G.M. and S.M. who are respectively 26 and 23 years old. Both are still at school, and in this respect they (although a bit old) approximate the phenomenon of the youth headed household seen more commonly in South Africa today as a result of, *inter alia*, the AIDS epidemic. The house they live in is very dilapidated (at that stage it probably looked worst of all the houses in Nkosini). I interviewed both, and they provided somewhat conflicting accounts of why their parents do not support them any more, but as far as I can figure out, the situation is as follows. Their parents divorced some time ago. The father had an accident, and was disabled as a result. He now lives with his parents in another settlement in the vicinity. The mother hasn't come home for two years, and has stopped supporting them. She works as a domestic in Pretoria and seemingly has another boyfriend. G.M. has three children who live with her. It is unclear whether it is with the same man or not, but he (or they) do(es) not seem to support her. S.M. has two children, whose father is still at school. Both had their schooling disrupted as a result of the pregnancies, and this contributed to them still being at school at such a late stage in their lives. They have a sister (L.M.) and a brother (M.M.). M.M. does building work in Johannesburg, while L.M. works as a domestic in Johannesburg. L.M. has a child who lives in the house. Altogether six children live in that house. L.M. sends money intermittently to help support her child. The two also feed their grandmother from time to time who lives close by, and they might receive some money for this. Besides this, the household does not seem to have any visible source of support.

This female headed household is, except for the links to the other sister and the grandmother, isolated from immediate family networks. It is an extended and rather big household, contrary to the picture presented above by James, but it is similar to that example in that it does not have significant access to an external wage income. The need to look after small children (and the fact that they are still at school) also seems to make it more difficult for G.M. and S.M. to look for work.

### 7.6.3 INCOME SELECTIVITY OF MIGRATION FROM NKOSINI

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<sup>24</sup> Interview with S.M.

I have pointed out above that Massey et al view the development of selectivity as a process of diffusion. It starts with the better-off people in a rural community and then spreads through the socio-economic hierarchy. At the end of this process, one can expect the income selectivity of migration to have been much reduced. My criticism of this view was that it would not be reduced to the same extent for the poorest, because they do not have access to migrant networks. One can therefore expect that even in the mature phase of the development of selectivity, there would still be households who have never produced migrants. As a result, the diffusion process would remain incomplete.

In my review of migration in the early phases of the Nkosini community, I have stated that, as far as I can see, all households had access to migration by the time that they came to live in Nkosini. This statement has to be qualified, as I also said above, by the fact that the dynamics of households in black rural areas may make those households who did not have such access invisible to the current observer, as well as the observation that self-selection probably tied the move to Nkosini to pre-existing migrant labour. Nevertheless, it does seem that the diffusion of the migration innovation, as far as income levels are concerned, was indeed completed for those who had moved to Nkosini (as we saw above, significant gender selectivity remained). Migration had percolated down into all socio-economic groups by that time, unlike what one would expect from my version of the development of selectivity.

In updating the unfolding of migration from Nkosini to the present time, the question arises what happens to access to migration after Massey et al's two stages have been completed. Does the phase of mass migration continue indefinitely, or can there be reverses? In the rest of this chapter I shall argue that there are forces that can reverse this diffusion process.

I base my argument on what I perceive to be an increasing disjuncture between the demands placed on migrant networks on the one hand and their capacity to satisfy these demands on the other. Demands are increasing at the same time as the bonds cementing these networks are becoming eroded. The reader will recall that in chapter 4 I said that the contribution of networks rises and falls in line with trends in the costs of migration. If the costs of migration are rising, the role of networks in reducing these costs becomes more prominent. Over the years, some of the

costs of migration from South African rural areas have declined. I am thinking in particular of transport costs (measured in both time and money) and the psychological costs, which have decreased due to improved transport and communication links, as well as the spread of attitudes (and knowledge) appropriate to an urban cultural environment. One important cost that has increased, however, is the subsistence cost while looking for work.

Under circumstances of generalised unemployment, the time taken by a new migrant to find work increases. Due to a surfeit of demand for jobs over the supply of them, access to them is rationed. Besides an increase in the time it typically takes to find the job, it is quite possible that after a few months of trying, the new migrant may have to leave town and return to his/her place of origin without having achieved success and without being able to reciprocate at a later date to the network members who helped him/her. N.M. is an example of this.

Soon after she received her matric results at the end of 1995 (she upgraded her matric after first matriculating in 1994), she left for Pretoria to look for work. She went there with her sister who had a job as a live-in domestic in a white suburb. She slept in her sister's room except when her sister's boyfriend came to visit (then she had to sleep in the small kitchen of the domestic's quarters). She started off looking for work in an old age home (where a relative worked), then she tried a textile factory, a Checkers shop and a shoe factory (they wanted to know if she did maths at school, which of course she didn't). These attempts continued until September 1996, but she never found anything. She then came back to Nkosini. Since her return she has fallen pregnant, which will keep her from trying to look for work for a year or so. This will be her second child. The first child stayed with N.M.'s mother while she was looking for work.

Family members in town have to accommodate the work seeker and often help with training costs. J.M. for example<sup>25</sup>, attended courses at the 'Africa School of Skills' in Johannesburg for training to become a petrol attendant. These courses were paid for by his brother in whose shack he was staying at the time. The importance of family connections to get jobs or to get information about jobs increase as well, given the scarcity of jobs. It is most likely that the increase in these costs outweigh the decline in transport and other costs (especially in the light of the fact that recruiting subsidised some of these costs initially) and that, in consequence, a higher subsidy is demanded from networks to facilitate migration.

At the same time that more demands are placed on family networks, the ability of networks to

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<sup>25</sup> Interview with J.M.

satisfy these demands seems to decrease. This is particularly true of family networks. James (1987:76-78, 95-98, 103-104, also see Delius 1996:152) describes the changes that have occurred in family life in Morotse in particular and rural South Africa in general. These changes revolve around the fact that the classical homestead, or lineage segment, of the precolonial period, which consisted of a number of related (along the male line) men and their wives and children and who lived together in a cluster of houses, has broken up. The different households that made it up have become isolated as a result. This had a negative impact on the relations of mutual help that previously existed within the homestead. The foundations of the cooperative relationships that have been essential in getting work done in agriculture, and elsewhere, have consequently been eroded. James describes how the work party, which earlier consisted of a number of relatives that helped each other to build a house or to cultivate the land has changed into a disguised form of wage labour. Even though the rhetoric of mutual help is still used to describe these relationships, it is difficult, especially for those households who are less established in the community, to get anybody outside of their immediate family circle to help them if they cannot pay them in some form or another. As a result, people who do not have access to pension money or remittances from migrant labour struggle to get their fields ploughed.

It is evident that this type of network setup is unlikely to satisfy Sahlins's condition of generalised reciprocity (see chapter 4 above), with the result that they tend to exclude those who are too poor to reciprocate. Consequently they will not be available to facilitate the latter's migration, with the implications for the selectivity of migration that were spelled out in detail in chapter 4. This situation contrasts with the description given in section 7.5.2 of the networks of Nkosini residents when they had just settled there, in the sense that networks are now not as supportive of the migration of the poorest as they were, in all probability, at that stage.

The decline of mutual help also had an impact on the fortunes of the different kinds of households (James 1987:97):

For the slightly larger households, with absent migrants, this means the concentration of these migrants' incomes exclusively within their households; for the smaller household, often female-headed and lacking a migrant's wage, it means the concentration within the unit of unremitting poverty. Here, then, the isolation and shrinking of the household is associated with an economic differentiation between households.

James (1987:97-98), following Murray (1981), emphasises that this change cannot simply be

described as a change from an extended to a nuclear family. Only some of the households in her sample can be described as nuclear. There is in fact a large variety of household types, with some households continuing to be extended (albeit in a restructured form, being much smaller than the classical homestead).

From James's quote it is clear that economic differentiation was made possible by the decline in the intensity of mutual help between households. Economic differentiation also has a reciprocal influence on mutual help, however. As some households become more prosperous, they feel less inclined to help those who are less fortunate. This is, *inter alia*, probably because they regard it as unlikely that they will ever need the help of the latter households in return (see my discussion of this phenomenon in chapter 4 above). I probed the issue in my interviews and this perception was often confirmed. As one of my respondents put it (referring to those living in the tiled roof houses): 'Daardie mense is diep in die skuld' (Those people are highly indebted). It seems that those who are less well off think that their richer relatives have too many commitments in terms of hire purchase agreements, etc. to help them. This confirms the comments to this effect by Sharp and Spiegel (1990), quoted in chapter 4 above.

These observations do not imply that relatives have ceased to be a source of support for would be migrants. I have come across many cases where migrants used the homes of their relatives as a base from which to look for work. It does suggest, however, that the support offered by family members is not unconditional and that a time will come when one's family will make one understand that one has perhaps overstayed one's welcome. The contradictory position in which potential migrants find themselves therefore is that while their need for social capital increases, due to high unemployment, that capital seems to be depreciating. Under such circumstances those with numerous and close family members, preferably in different towns, are in a more advantageous position.

It is perhaps as a result of the devaluation of family networks that alternative sources of support has come to the fore. One of these is the Zionist churches (Delius 1996:166). James (1991) refers to another one: music and dance groups for men and women respectively called *dinaka* and *koša*. Despite the rise of alternative networks, family members are still preferred to friends as sources

of support because it is reckoned that the support of family members is still less unconditional than that of friends (interview with M.S.)

There are also practical problems that may limit the help that family members and friends can offer. Numerous informants told me that because of reasons of privacy it is unacceptable to stay with a family member and his/her girlfriend/boyfriend if they only have a one-roomed shack. In a shack settlement this might not be a major obstacle, as an extra room can always be added. Most backyard shacks are however not the property of the people living in them and in those cases it would not be possible to extend. Employer housing often present similar problems to a prospective migrant.

Those who are most vulnerable to the erosion of networks are the poorest. This is because they are the most dependent on networks to subsidise the costs of migration and because they are the most likely to be excluded from them. In saying that the poorest are the most likely to be excluded from networks one runs the risk, in a context where the largest part of household income is derived from migrant labour remittances, of circularity. Such a circular argument has two legs. The first claims that households are poor because their members don't have access to migrant labour. By definition then, the poor do not have access to urban based family members who can facilitate their migration, which is the second leg. The statement that the migration of the poorest is constrained by their lack of network access would then add no new information.

One way in which to avoid circularity is to make a clearer distinction between network and household and say that the first leg refers to income derived from urban based household members and the second to help received from the wider network. The absence of remittance income does not therefore imply a similar absence of network connections. The fact that household and network overlap to some extent is a complicating factor, but as long as they do not overlap completely one can escape the charge of circularity. In the earlier stages of the diffusion of migration when many households still have access to a significant non-remittance income (such as from farming), one can use the non-remittance income as an indication of how poor a household is. In this way one can also escape circularity. Because remittances are at present, besides pensions, in the majority of cases the mainstay of household income in Nkosini this method

of identifying the poorest is not appropriate at the current stage of development of migration in that community, with the result that this option to avoid circularity is not available.

I do not have information about the income selectivity of migration as such. Measurements of household income are notoriously unreliable and would not have been useful in any case, given that I need premigration income to test selectivity (see chapter 3 above). My first thoughts of using educational level as a proxy for socio-economic status also proved unworkable when I discovered that educational level is almost directly associated with age in Nkosini. All of the older generation had very low levels of education, and almost all of the under 30's had matric. Because educational attainment varies much more between than within generations, one needs a bigger sample that can control for age to make meaningful conclusions.

Given these difficulties, I concentrated my energies on trying to identify individuals whose migration was constrained by a lack of network connections. This would not have yielded information about selectivity as such, but it would have helped to test the assumption that lack of network access can be a constraint on migration. A couple of respondents<sup>26</sup> did tell me that they couldn't go out to look for work because their family members in town were unable to help (another reason that was often given was that they were needed at home to look after children or parents), but it wasn't always clear if this was a rationalization for inaction or a real constraint. The interview would typically go like this: I would ask them if they couldn't go and stay with family member X, and they would say that X lives as a domestic with white people and they would not be welcome; probed as to why they can't live with Y, they would say that Y has gone off to live in Kwandbele; Z on the other hand, lives in employer accommodation - same story. Nkosini is full of young people in their early twenties who hang about in the community and who seem to experience an extended adolescence. Delius (1996:160) describes them as living in social limbo. The young men (and increasingly young women as well) realize that they need to find a job to get married, but do not make any effort to move out to look for work. There may be many reasons for this. They may be discouraged in the face of high unemployment that will make their job search enterprise very difficult. Or the support provided by their families allows them to survive without working, while relaxed social mores make it easier to have sex without getting married. Or they

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<sup>26</sup> Interviews with M.S. and N.M.

may validly not have the social capital with which to look for work in town.

It is clear that my research has not exhausted the study of the constraints placed on potential migrants by their lack of networks connections in town. Further study is needed of this aspect of the increasing inequality separating households in the rural periphery of South Africa.

## 7.7 CONCLUSION

I started this chapter by saying that I intend both to measure the model of the unfolding of selectivity against a case study of migration and to use this model to interpret the migration patterns uncovered in that study. As far as the first of these two objectives is concerned, I identified a number of shortcomings of the model. It is firstly clear that the characterization of the two phases needs to be revised. Mechanisms such as recruitment can lower the costs of migration in the first phase of migration, leading to a reduced level of selectivity relatively early in the development of migration. Another factor that will have an impact on selectivity in both phases is immobility induced by legal and social restrictions. In this chapter it was made clear that the mobility of Ndzundza-Ndbele labour tenants was constrained by their legal status as a trapped labour force. This entrapment was by no means total: there were, firstly, legal ways in which they could become temporary migrants. The Ndzundza-Ndbele labour tenants were, in the second place, by no means powerless to flout these restrictions. Their ability to do so increased over time (at least until the 1940's), and depended on the outcome of a struggle for autonomy between them and their employers. This struggle, in turn, was influenced by a struggle for labour power between farmers, miners and secondary industry in the early years of the previous century (as well as between different farmers) which increased the bargaining power of tenants. It was also influenced by the state's capacity and willingness to enforce these restrictions, which fluctuated over time. These constraints on the mobility of labour tenants had the effect that the question whether they could or could not migrate did not only depend on their income, but also on the strength of the immobilising forces. This reduced the impact of income selectivity as such. In this vein I also pointed to the fact that although the gender selectivity of migration was indeed reduced over time, it never disappeared altogether. Two reasons came to the fore for this. The first is the impact of

legal and cultural restrictions on the mobility of women. Another important factor that needs to be considered is James's assertion that women's networks are more difficult to consolidate, given the patrilocal nature of black families. This reduced the ability of networks to facilitate female migration.

Despite these shortcomings, the case study presented in this chapter did confirm that the costs of migration constitute an important barrier to migration, especially when incomes are low. It proved to be the case in the beginning of migration to distant locations, when it, in combination with the Ndzundza-Ndbele's position on the farms (first as indentured labourers and then as labour tenants), retarded their full participation in labour migration to urban destinations and left them, even after they had moved from the farms, at a disadvantage with regard to participation in urban labour markets. The networks they built up over time continued to channel them into unskilled occupations. It is therefore not surprising that, especially, the older generation of Nkosini residents were restricted to lower skill occupations. The cost of migration was also responsible for the initial income selectivity of migration, which was reduced as a result of the network subsidy over time.

The importance of networks in subsidising the costs of migration and reducing the income selectivity of migration was very apparent in the second phase in the development of migration to urban destinations. It appears that they could do so because network members were initially more unconditional in the support they extended to others, with the result that nobody was, in principle, isolated from them. In addition I argued that the strength of the network connections of Nkosini residents, as deduced from their concentrated settlement pattern before their move to Nkosini, played a role in ensuring their almost total participation in migrant labour.

It was tentatively suggested that the costs of migration may again act as an obstacle to migration at present. Consequently, it may sometimes be necessary to distinguish between three instead of two stages in the unfolding of migration. Once the migration innovation has diffused through a source community, we cannot assume that it will continue to be available for everybody in that community. If the first phase is the phase of high selectivity due to high costs, and the second supposedly the phase of mass migration, it is quite possible for a third stage to emerge when the costs of migration increase and the ability of networks to subsidise those costs decline, as was

outlined in paragraph 7.6.3 above. Massey et al.'s argument is based on an implicit assumption that the ability of networks to subsidise migration can only increase over time, and does not give enough attention to forces that may erode that ability. In addition they do not properly consider the way in which the costs of migration can develop independently of the operation of networks over time: the cost of subsistence while looking for employment is indeed reduced by the fact that one may have friends or family in the destination area (as they say), but this cost is also determined by factors such as unemployment, which lengthens the time needed to find work. Consequently the increase in costs as a result of the latter can easily outweigh the decrease in costs effected by the network subsidy. I also argued that participation in the capitalist economy can erode the ability of network to subsidise migration, with the result that potential migrants in the area of origin can be caught in the vice formed by increasing costs and decreasing network support.

## CHAPTER EIGHT

### CONCLUSION

#### 8.1 MIGRATION AND THE REPRODUCTION OF INEQUALITY

The aim of this thesis is to develop a theory of the inequality producing effect of migration. This effect resides in the tendencies of migration to exclude the poorest and to advantage those who participate in it. These tendencies are based on certain typical characteristics of the migratory move, which can be summarised in the following four propositions:

- a) The costs of migration can be an obstacle to the migration of poor people;
- b) Networks can reduce the effect of these costs over time, due to their ability to subsidise these costs;
- c) This ability is restricted by the tendency of networks to exclude the poorest; and
- d) Migration improves the position of the migrant (as I said in footnote 1 of chapter 1, I do not consider forced migrations such as slavery or refugee movements in this thesis, as these are not cases where migrants are likely to benefit from migration).

These four propositions can be grouped into two categories: (a), (b) and (c) deal with the extent to which the costs of migration are an obstacle of the poorest, while (d) is concerned with the extent to which those who move away benefit relative to those who stay behind. If both aspects are present, in other words if the costs of migration are an obstacle to the poorest, and if migration benefits the migrant, migration can lead to inequality.

That is the theory in a nutshell. In the course of this thesis I have identified a number of variables that affect the extent to which these four characteristics will appear in a particular empirical case. The thesis, especially chapters 3 to 5, can be seen as identifying the conditions under which migration will lead to inequality in the real world, on the basis of these variables. Here is a list of some of the most important variables, as they have featured in this thesis.

- a) The costs of migration vary over time and space. Some of the costs are related to distance, for

example transport costs. The costs of job search, as well as living costs while looking for work depend on levels of unemployment. Technological developments tend to reduce distance costs, but are implicated in structural unemployment, which increases the costs and the duration of job search and with it, the living costs of this period. When labour is scarce, especially in the beginning of a migration process, employers' need for labour power can result in extensive recruiting, which reduces the costs of migration. The migration constraining effect of the costs of migration depends on the level of these costs relative to the income of the people in the area of origin. If incomes are low, as it was in the case of the Ndzundza-Ndbele (discussed in chapter 7), the costs will be more of a constraint, and vice versa. Another factor that surfaced in the case study is the extent to which these costs are expressed in money terms, as compared to the extent to which the remuneration of people is in cash as opposed to in kind. Capitalist modernisation is likely to increase the importance of the money component of these costs, as well as the cash component of wages (with the decline of arrangements such as labour tenancy).

b) Networks subsidise the costs of migration. Their ability to do so varies, depending on a host of factors. Here I shall list only some of these. Networks of high density and intensity can be expected to facilitate migration more readily. Another variable is network resources. Well-resourced networks, containing many useful contacts, and channelling migrants into expanding regions and economic sectors, will provide a higher subsidy.

c) This subsidy is not necessarily available to the poorest group in the area of origin, who are precisely the people who need the network subsidy the most. There are broadly two reasons for this. i) Networks firstly have a tendency to either exclude the poorest or to be deserted by those who are unlikely to need them again. ii) The networks of the poorest, furthermore, are more precarious. i) To begin with the first reason. As a result of contact with the modernising influences of the capitalist economy, networks undergo a change from a more unconditional conception of mutual help to one that puts more emphasis on the need for reciprocation. The outcome of this is that modern networks tend to exclude those who cannot reciprocate, in other words the poorest. Whereas networks exclude the strata poorer than the relatively homogenous group who belong to the network, the latter are in turn cut off from middle class people, who are unlikely to need the assistance dispensed by the network and who see network demands as onerous. ii) The

instability created by poverty and disease makes it difficult for the poorest to maintain their networks. Because their networks are more vulnerable, the migration facilitating effect of their networks is also more doubtful.

d) The extent to which migration improves the economic welfare of the migrant depends on a number of factors. The amount of control the migrant has over his/her migration in terms of the timing of and preparation for the move affects the rewards to be derived from migration. The type of destination chosen is also a factor: rural-rural migration tends to be more common among the poorest and is typically less rewarding to the migrant. Men tend to gain more from migration than women, which suggests that gender is also a factor in determining how rewarding migration is. One can evaluate the impact of gender on migration with reference to two dimensions: the impact of migration on the income earning capacity of women on the one hand and the effect it has on the control a woman has over her own income as well as that of other members of her household on the other. There is much empirical variation with regard to these two dimensions. Some of the variables that play a role in determining these outcomes are the marital status of the woman (which helps to determine how much control she has over her movements), rural and urban income earning opportunities for women, and the impact of migration on female autonomy. Despite the variety of outcomes, it seems that in most cases women do gain from migration, although perhaps not as much as men. Another factor influencing the extent to which migration is advantageous for the migrant is the difference between the leaders (in other words the innovators) in a particular migratory move and the followers. The former tends to gain more from migration than the latter. The differentiations that result from the migratory moves of the leaders versus the moves of the followers, or the movement of the migrants versus the immobility of the non-migrants, is lastly ameliorated by the redistribution of the migrant's remittances in the community of origin.

I have now summarised the variables affecting the four characteristics of migration that enter into my theory. In the last section I specifically focussed on the factors affecting the extent to which migrants benefit from their moves. This section can be read not only as contributing to an assertion that migration may reinforce inequality between migrant and non-migrant, but also as an assertion of the differentiation that can result among migrants as a group. If some categories

of migrants benefit more than others from migration (for example pull versus push migrants, or male versus female migrants) migration can lead to inequality in a different, albeit related, way. Pursuing the latter differentiation was a secondary aim of this thesis, besides the main one of examining the differentiation that can result between migrants and non-migrants, as I stated in chapter 2.

I had another secondary aim (see p. 2 above). This was to show that the immobility of the poorest can worsen rural-urban inequality. I did not discuss this in any detail in the thesis, as it follows rather directly from the statement that the immobility of the poorest is to their disadvantage. If those who move away to the cities gain, and those who stay behind in the rural areas are relatively worse-off, it can contribute a situation of worsening regional inequality. For this to happen the micro-differentiation between migrant and non-migrant must be repeated many times, so that it will eventually have an impact on the macro-differentiation between regions. In other words, once the population redistribution caused by migration becomes significant in terms of absolute and relative population numbers, migration will also have an impact on regional inequality.

## **8.2 MIGRATION AND INEQUALITY: DOES IT MATTER?**

I have until now assumed that the reader will accept that the topic I am pursuing is worthwhile. Perhaps the time has now come to make a few final remarks about the wider significance of this topic. One implication of this study is the realisation that vertical and horizontal social mobility are more intimately connected than commonly recognised. It is common knowledge that vertical and horizontal mobility often go together, as in the case of a person who relocates upon receiving a promotion. What I am suggesting here goes beyond this: horizontal mobility has the capacity to reproduce, and change, the vertical mobility that accompanies it. From this it follows that class structure also has a spatial dimension, embodied at least partly in the geographical mobility of the population.

I think that the thesis also illuminates a hitherto neglected aspect of rural poverty. Poverty is certainly a multidimensional phenomenon, consisting, as it does, of many layers of exclusion and

many different kinds of entrapment. This study brings to the fore the spatial dimension of this entrapment, insofar as it refers to the immobility of the poorest in a peripheral area. The spatial, objective, immobility is accompanied by a subjective dimension, as became clear to me during my fieldwork. Certainly part of the phenomenology of rural poverty is a feeling of isolation and irrelevance to the wider world, which is reinforced by the reality of physical immobility.

The argument about the immobility of the poorest is not restricted to the rural poor. It can also be applied to a declining industrial area, as I pointed out in my first chapter. It can be generalised as a part of the wider argument about the increasing global mobility of capital not being matched by the mobility of labour (for an instance of this argument, see Castells 1996:232). Although capital has since the dawn of the industrial age been more mobile than labour, this contrast has grown much more glaring in the last number of years. As a result of the deregulation of capital markets and the growth of information technology, capital now circulates in an instant across the globe. Increasingly this is speculative, short term capital (Hoogvelt 1997) that is not tied to 'bricks and mortar' investment in employment creating projects (creating employment only in the burgeoning financial sector), with the result that the link between capital flows and employment creation has been severed to some extent. The diminishing portion of capital that is invested in productive enterprises such as mines and factories, is much more footloose than before.

This is among other things a result of the strategy of 'flexible accumulation' (Harrison 1994:135,209), whereby parts of the work that used to be performed within the boundaries of a vertically integrated mega-enterprise are spun off to a network of smaller and larger subcontractors<sup>1</sup>. The footwear manufacturer *Nike* is often cited as an example of this. Although the network relationship sometimes (especially in the Japanese case, Harrison 1994:157) contains an element of a longer term commitment to the subcontracted suppliers, in general it allows the big firms the flexibility to quit a particular supplier at very short notice, stranding many workers in the process (unless their company can establish a relationship with a new parent firm).

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<sup>1</sup> Harrison is at pains to distinguish his version of 'flexible accumulation' from the Post-Fordist, flexible specialisation arguments of writers like Piore and Sabel. He specifically does not think that it entails the end of the domination of economic life by large firms - they become vertically disintegrated but still tend to dominate. It also does not spell the end of the dominant role of Fordist mass production, according to him..

"Flexibility' in this context also refers to the lack of commitment of capital to particular regions and suppliers. Besides flexible accumulation, there are also other reasons why productive capital is more mobile than before, but I shall not discuss this here (see Hoogvelt 1997). In general, it is linked to the increasing globalization of production (Castells 1996:102).

In contrast to capital, labour, especially low skill labour, is not globalized to nearly the same extent. The obvious reason for this is the restrictions imposed by immigration authorities (which, despite the porousness of borders and the withering away of the nation-state supposedly accompanying globalization, are as vigilant as ever). Another reason for the immobility of labour over national boundaries is the costs associated with crossing boundaries. Despite my argument being formulated primarily in the context of a discussion of internal migration it also applies to international migration. The costs part certainly applies, as is attested to by Massey et al. (1994) who used the costs of migration as an important explanatory variable in their discussion of international migration.

The costs of migration imply that labour is, in general, less mobile than would be expected from within a neo-classical framework. The restriction imposed by costs do not apply across the board, however, as I have argued in this thesis. Many have the wherewithal to overcome the restriction imposed by these costs, with the result that one can expect a differentiated immobility of labour - those at the bottom of the stratification ladder will have their mobility curtailed much more than the rest. The outcome of this is that the struggle of the poor to find employment will be harder, not only because of the unemployment and insecurity of employment that characterise the globalization of capital, but also because of their lack of mobility to cope with the fluctuating fortunes of companies and regions.

The current, global age is typified by an increasing differentiation in the capacity of individuals, spread across classes, nations and regions, to respond to opportunities for advancement and threats to survival. It is my hope that this thesis has helped to demonstrate that the spatial dimension to these responses, as expressed in differentiated mobility, is a significant part of this overall differentiation in life chances.

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