

MIGRATION AND RETURN MIGRATION: the Case of Italian Migrants in Germany

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1 Introduction

The most important question pertaining to the sociology of immigration and migration research in general is why migration occurs and how it is sustained over time¹ or, in other words, why people go or stay.² This paper is written from the point of view of micro sociology. It is argued that an interdisciplinary approach linking economy and sociology can be conducive to advancing migration theory. In this respect the paper is in keeping with De Jong and Gardner or Portes.³ The main emphasis lies in the role of social networks and social capital in migration theory, as elaborated by Boyd or Faist.⁴ The paper is based on studies on migration of Italian migrants.⁵

Within the individualistic framework of rational choice theory, a focus on the impact of social networks on migration decisions is not a matter of course. Indeed, the meso-level perspective on migration poses a challenge for researchers interested in formulating systematic predictive models and setting up suitable data to test the theory. Therefore the task is to bridge the gap between clear-cut but unrealistic individualistic decision models on the one hand, and various phenomena of migration networks and chain migration proven by qualitative social research on the other. This article proposes an analytical framework for analysing the role of social networks in migration decision-making. Transnational migration is interpreted against the background of social networks. The mechanism of social networks takes effect in the decision to migrate, to return, or to circulate. A case study – *Italian Migrants in Germany* – provides empirical evidence for the model. 1

Migration Decision-Making and Migration Networks in Sociology

“Talking across disciplines” provides a good starting point for taking into account different approaches, research issues, methods and results from various disciplines.⁶ But interdisciplinary research requires taking the next step of establishing links and common ground between disciplines. The following section begins with an introduction to rational choice theory as providing the basis for such an interdisciplinary approach.

2 Decision Theory and the Sociology of Migration

Rational choice theory has evolved into one of the leading, though disputed, approaches in migration sociology.⁷ The most important features characterising the rational choice approach in sociology are the actor’s perspective and the micro-macro link.⁸ When applied to migration research, the actor’s perspective implies that migration processes are explained by an individual’s behaviour. Micro-macro modelling implies that the sum of individual decisions results in a macro outcome.⁹ Rational choice theory is strongly influenced by the economic approach on the one hand and behavioural decision theory in social psychology on the other. Following the economic model, rational choice theorists see social interaction as a process of social exchange.¹⁰ Individuals are seen as resourceful actors who select from sets of alternatives, while constraints and opportunity structures impose restrictions on their choice. A cost-benefit approach underlies the decision-making process. The core of rational choice theory is the subjective expected utility model.¹¹

Some of the theoretical concepts and predictions of rational choice theory are akin to neoclassical micro-economics. In this context, migration is regarded as a rational action, maximising the individual’s net benefits.¹² Human capital is a determining factor in migration decisions, as the qualification level correlates with the probability of finding a job and the wage level at the place of destination. Both monetary and non-monetary costs and benefits can be included in the economic model.¹³ While non-monetary determinants of migration decisions may be included, however, in most applications they are not regarded as key factors. One important contribution of the neo-classical approach to migration research is that it helps to explain the selectivity of migration.¹⁴

Research on the household economy has contributed further to an understanding of how incomes and benefits are distributed within households. The theory of the new migration economy assumes that the household income, rather than the individual income, is maximised; it expands the actor’s perspective to the household level.¹⁵ Migration is therefore

1 Schmitter-Heisler, Barbara: The Sociology of Immigration. In: Brettell, Caroline B./Hollifield, James F. (eds.): *Migration Theory: Talking across Disciplines*. New York: Routledge 2000, p. 77.

2 Hammar, Tomas/Tamas, Kristof: Why do People Go or Stay? In: Hammar, T./Brochmann, Grete/Tamas, K./Faist, Thomas (eds.): *International Migration, Immobility and Development*. Oxford: Berg 1997, pp. 1-19.

3 De Jong, Gordon F./Gardner, Robert W.: *Migration Decision Making. Multidisciplinary Approaches to Microlevel Studies in Developed and Developing Countries*. New York: Pergamon 1981; Portes, Alejandro (Ed.): *The Economic Sociology of Immigration: Essays on Networks, Ethnicity, and Entrepreneurship*. New York: Russell Sage Foundation 1995.

4 Boyd, Monica: Family and Personal Networks in International Migration: Recent Developments and New Agendas. In: *International Migration Review*, 23/3 (1989), pp. 638-670; Faist, Thomas: The Crucial Meso-Level. In: Hammar/Brochmann/Tamas/Faist 1997, pp. 187-217.

5 Haug, Sonja: Soziales Kapital und Kettenmigration. Italienische Migranten in Deutschland. Opladen: Leske + Budrich 2000; Haug, S.: Kettenmigration am Beispiel italienischer Arbeitsmigranten in Deutschland 1955–2000. In: *Archiv für Sozialgeschichte* 42 (2000), pp. 123-143; Haug, S.: Migration Networks and Migration Decision Making. In: *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies* 34/4 (2008), pp. 585-605; Haug, S./Heins, F.: Italian Migrants in Germany. A Statistical Overview and a Research Bibliographical Note.

In: Studi Emigrazione/International Journal of Migration Studies 158 (2005), pp. 227-244; Haug, S.: Italiener in Deutschland – Migrations- und Integrationsgeschichte der ehemaligen „Gastarbeiter“. In: Der Bürger im Staat. 2 (2010), pp. 228-233; Haug, S.: Die Integration der Italiener in Deutschland zu Beginn des 21. Jahrhunderts. In: Janz, Oliver/Salla, Roberto (eds.): Deutsche Vita. Frankfurt [forthcoming].

6 Brettell, C.B./Hollifield, J.F.: Migration Theory: Talking across Disciplines. New York: Routledge 2000.

7 Nauck, Bernhard: Sozialstrukturelle und individualistische Migrationstheorien. Elemente eines Theorienvergleichs. In: Kölner Zsr. für Soziologie und Sozialpsychologie 40 (1988), pp. 15-39; Kalter, Frank: Stand und Perspektiven der Migrationssoziologie. In: Orth, Barbara/Schwietring, Thomas/Weiß, Johannes (eds.): Soziologische Forschung. Stand und Perspektiven. Opladen: Leske + Budrich 2003, pp. 323-338.

8 Opp, Karl-Dieter: Contending Conceptions of the Theory of Rational Action. In: Journal of Theoretical Politics 1/2 (1999), pp. 171-202; Voss, Thomas/Abraham, Martin: Rational Choice Theory in Sociology: A Survey. In: Quah, Stella R./Sales, Arnaud (eds.): The International Handbook of Sociology, London: Sage 2000, pp. 50-83; Coleman, James S.: Foundations of Social Theory. Cambridge: Belknap Pr. 1990.

9 Schelling, Thomas C.: Micromotives and Macrobehavior. New York: Norton & Co. 1978.

10 Scott, John: Rational Choice Theory. In: Browning, Gary K./Halcli, Abigail/Webster, Frank (eds.): Understanding Contemporary Society: Theories of The Present. London: Sage 2000, pp. 126-138.

11 Esser, Hartmut: Soziologie. Spezielle Grundlagen. Vol. 1: Situationslogik und Handeln. Frankfurt: Campus 1999.

12 Todaro, Michael P.: Internal Migration in Developing Countries: A Survey. Geneva: International Labour Office 1976.

13 Sjastaad, Larry A.: The Costs and Returns of Human Migration. In: The Journal of Political Economy 70 (1962), pp. 80-93, here p. 84f.

in essence a family strategy. This theory can help to explain temporary migration and the separation of families in the context of the division of labour, the diversification of risks within households and remittances.¹⁶ While the theory can explain remittances and risk diversification strategies of families, the determinants of family re-unification and chain migration are not explicitly part of the model.

Following the rational choice approach of the value expectation theory of migration, an actor chooses his place of residence from a set of alternative places by maximising the sum of utilities over several dimensions.¹⁷ De Jong and Fawcett's model defines the intention to migrate as the sum of the expected utilities, with expected utilities categorised according to the dimensions of wealth, status, comfort, suggestion, autonomy, affiliation and morality.¹⁸ Certain characteristics affect the decision indirectly by influencing the value or expectation components. These characteristics include, firstly, individual features and features of the household, particularly in connection with demographic or socio-economic variables, secondly social and cultural norms, thirdly personality factors such as a readiness to take risks or adaptability, and fourthly the opportunity structure.

Of paramount importance to the value expectancy theory is affiliation, that is, the utility of living near family members or being part of a group or community.¹⁹ Social relationships provide specific capital that is connected to the actual place of residence and that significantly influences decisions.²⁰ Migration takes place when a comparison of the outcomes of either staying at the place of origin or at the place of destination reveals the latter alternative to be more attractive.

One important factor in evaluating the utility of a place of origin or a potential place of destination is the concept of place utility.²¹ The idea of place utility or location-specific capital focuses on the territorial restriction of the utility of the individual's resources.²² This means that human capital or social capital cannot easily be transferred from one place to another. Location-specific capital ties persons to particular places, referencing goods which are not available everywhere, assuring that utility would be lost or diminished if the person were to migrate to another place. The idea that a decision to leave implies the partial or complete loss of location-specific assets has been little explored in economic migration research.²³

2.2 Social Networks and Migration Theory

Some researchers of international migration have begun to formulate a new approach to the sociology of migration on the basis of networks.²⁴ The notion of social networks refers to the embeddedness approach in economic sociology.²⁵ The meso-level of households, kinship networks and social networks links the social structure to the individual decision maker.²⁶ A migration network can be defined by a composite of interpersonal relations in which migrants interact with their family or friends. Social networks provide a foundation for the dissemination of information as well as for patronage or assistance.

Interactions among social networks make migration easier by reducing the costs and risks of moving. The social network paves the way for establishing transnational migration networks.²⁷ Given the multiplier effect of social networks, they may result in a migration chain. Informal networks help migrants to finance their travel, to find a job or even accommodation. Migration networks enable migrants to cross borders, legally or illegally.²⁸ Personal relations which connect migrants, former migrants and non-migrants with each other in the places of origin and destination increase the probability of international labour migration in connection with circular migration and chain migration processes.²⁹ As social networks are extended and strengthened by each additional migrant, potential migrants are able to benefit from the social networks and ethnic communities already established in the country of destination.

Migration research has established that social networks are commonly an important determinant of migration plans and the choice of destination.³⁰ Being embedded in social networks thus has a significant influence on migration decisions. The social and cultural context influences whether direct or indirect economic factors such as life cycle or education positively affect migration decisions.³¹ Social and cultural factors determine firstly whether migration takes place, secondly in what form migration takes place, i.e. whether it is perma-

14 Massey, Douglas S./Arango, Joaquin/Hugo, Graeme/Kouaouci, Ali/Pellegrino, Adela/Taylor, Edward J.: Theories of International Migration: A Review and Appraisal. In: Population and Development Review 19/3 (1993), pp. 31-466, p. 435; Massey, Douglas S./Arango, J./Hugo, G./Kouaouci, A./Pellegrino, A./Taylor, E.J.: Worlds in Motion. Understanding International Migration at the End of the Millennium. Oxford: Clarendon Pr. 1998, p. 19.

15 Stark, Oded: The Migration of Labour. Oxford: Blackwell 1991.

16 Massey/Arango/Hugo/Kouaouci/Pellegrino/Taylor 1993, p. 439; Massey/Arango/Hugo/Kouaouci/Pellegrino/Taylor 1998, p. 21.

17 De Jong/Gardner 1981.

18 De Jong, G.F./Fawcett, James T.: Motivations for Migration: An Assessment and a Value-Expectancy Research Model. In: DeJong/Gardner 1981, pp. 13-58, here p. 50; De Jong, G.F.: Expectations, Gender and Norms in Migration Decision-Making. In: Population Studies 54/3 (2000), p. 311.

19 De Jong/Gardner 1981, p. 50.

20 DaVanzo, Julie: Repeat Migration, Information Costs, and Location Specific Capital. In: Population and Environment 4/1 (1981), pp. 45-73.

21 Wolpert, Julian: Behavioral Aspects of the Decision to Migrate. In: Papers and Proceedings of the Regional Science Association 15 (1965), pp. 159-169; Brown, Lawrence A./Moore, Eric G.: The Intra-Urban Migration Process: A Perspective. In: Geografiska Annaler 52B (1970), pp. 1-13.

22 DaVanzo 1981.

23 Fischer/Straubhaar 1997, p. 89.

24 Boyd, Monicy: Family and Personal Networks in International Migration: Recent Developments and New Agendas. In: Intern. Migration Rev. 2/3 (1989), pp. 638-670; Massey, D.S./Alarcón, Rafael/Durand, Jorge/González, Humberto (eds.): Return to Aztlan. The Social Process of International Migration from Western Mexico. Berkeley: Univ. of California Pr. 1987.

25 Granovetter, Mark: The Strength of Weak Ties. In: American Journal of Sociology 78/6 (1973), pp. 1360-1380.

ment or circular, thirdly the choice of destination, and fourthly migrants' experiences in their new environment. The demographic structure, that is, size of family, age and sex, stage in the life cycle, and various aspects of the social structure of families such as kinship patterns, influence the availability, expectations, motives and incentives with regard to migration.³² These four components of migration motivation affect migration decisions. Thus, the family is an important determinant of migration. This becomes especially evident when considering the influence on migration motives of the individual's role in the family, the socialization within the family, and the social network provided by the family. This means that the central significance of the social context with regard to decisions by potential migrants is expressed in different ways. The following hypotheses refer to this influence of community and kinship ties on migration decisions.

1. *Affinity hypothesis*: The existence of relatives and friends at the place of residence reduces the tendency to migrate. Non-economic factors such as close links to a community, strong local kinship ties, high investments in a community as well as assimilation difficulties in a new community all reinforce the tendency not to migrate.³³ Social networks at the place of residence are a preventive factor.
2. *Information hypothesis*: When relatives and friends are already living in different places, the propensity to migrate increases.³⁴ In addition, migration to these places becomes more attractive because the living conditions (e.g., job opportunities) are known.³⁵ The larger the distance between the place of origin and the place of destination, the less information circulates. The more social relations one has at the place of destination and, consequently, the more information channels these relationships provide, the more influential such information is on the decision to migrate.³⁶ Social networks at the place of destination are a pull factor.
3. *Facilitating hypothesis*: Relatives and friends promote and channel migration to their own place of residence by facilitating adjustment to the new location, e.g. job search, material support, encouragement, provision of new social ties.³⁷ Social networks at the place of destination are a pull factor.
4. *Conflict hypothesis*: Intra-familial conflicts within the community also cause migration.³⁸ Social networks at the place of residence can serve as a push factor.
5. *Encouraging hypothesis*: Families may encourage members of their family to migrate for work, e.g., as a strategy to secure the household income.³⁹ Social networks at the place of residence are a push factor.

A systematic model is needed to formulate the influences of migration networks on migration decision-making. As social networks can be seen as a push or a pull factor, it needs to be established exactly how social networks affect migration, and an integrated model needs to be developed. One important step in this direction involves the concept of social capital. The concept of social capital was integrated into migration research in the mid-1990s.⁴⁰ This is a further development of the network perspective and has evolved from different theoretical bases connecting human capital with social networks, such as the sociology of Bourdieu or Coleman.⁴¹ Applications are widespread in the field of political science⁴² and economic development.⁴³ A differentiated theoretical framework of social capital, applied to different fields, has evolved from the social network perspective.⁴⁴ The social capital approach in migration sociology has strong links with the economic approach in sociology.⁴⁵

2.3 Outline of a Model of Social Capital and Chain Migration

An explanation of migration processes in the light of rational choice theory and social capital has to address the empirical findings of research on chain migration. Chain migration, for example from Italy to the United States, can be described as a process involving three stages: (1) pioneer migration or migration of *padroni*, (2) labour migration, and (3) family migration.⁴⁶ Things are always much more difficult for migrant pioneers. They have to decide where to go and they have to find work quickly. Pioneer migrants are confronted with exceptionally high costs and risks because migration networks do not yet exist that would help to establish and maintain social ties and could thus provide useful resources. Migration

26 Faist, Thomas: The Crucial Meso-Level. In: Hammar, T./Brochmann, G./Tamas, K./Faist, T. (eds.): International Migration, Immobility and Development, Oxford: Berg 1997, pp. 187-217; Haug 2000a.

27 Faist 1997a; Pries, Ludger: Determining the Causes and Durability of Transnational Labour Migration between Mexico and the United States: Some Empirical Findings. In: International Migration 42/2 (2004), pp. 3-39.

28 Böcker, Anita: Chain Migration over Legally Closed Borders: Settled Immigrants as Bridgeheads and Gatekeepers. In: The Netherland's Journal of Social Science 30/2 (1994), pp. 87-106; IOM World Migration Report 2003. Geneva: International Organization for Migration 2003.

29 Boyd 1989.

30 Banerjee, Biswajit: Social Networks in the Migration Process: Empirical Evidence on Chain Migration in India. In: The Journal of Developing Areas 17 (1983), pp. 185-196; Böcker 1994; Boyd 1989; Bühner, Susanne: Soziales Kapital und Wanderungsentscheidungen. Zur Bedeutung sozialer Bezugsgruppen im Prozeß der Entstehung von Wanderungserwägungen, Wanderungsabsichten und Wanderungen. Hamburg: Kovac 1997; Faist 1997a; Fawcett 1989; Toney, Michael B.: The Simultaneous Examination of Economic and Social Factors in Destination Selection: Employing Objective and Subjective Measures. In: Demography 15/2 (1978), pp. 205-212; Wilpert, Czarina: The Use of Social Networks in Turkish Migration to Germany. In: Kritiz, Mary M./Lin, Lin L./Zlotnik, Harina (eds.): International Migration Systems, London: Clarendon 1992, pp. 177-189.

31 Hugo, Graeme J.: Village-community Ties, Village Norms, and Ethnic and Social Networks: A Review of Evidence from the Third World. In: DeJong/Gardner 1981, pp.186-224, p. 188.

32 Harbison, S.F.: Family Structure and Family Strategy in Migration Decision Making. In: DeJong/Gardner 1981, pp. 225-251, p. 233ff.

33 Ritchey, P. Neal: Explanations of Migration. In: Annual Review of Sociology 2 (1976), pp. 363-404, p. 389; Uhlenberg, Peter: Noneconomic

decisions take place only when the subjectively expected net utility of migration exceeds the expected net utility of staying at the place of origin. The migration decision-making of individual actors (micro-level) is embedded in social contexts (meso-level) and is based on underlying macro-structural conditions.⁴⁷

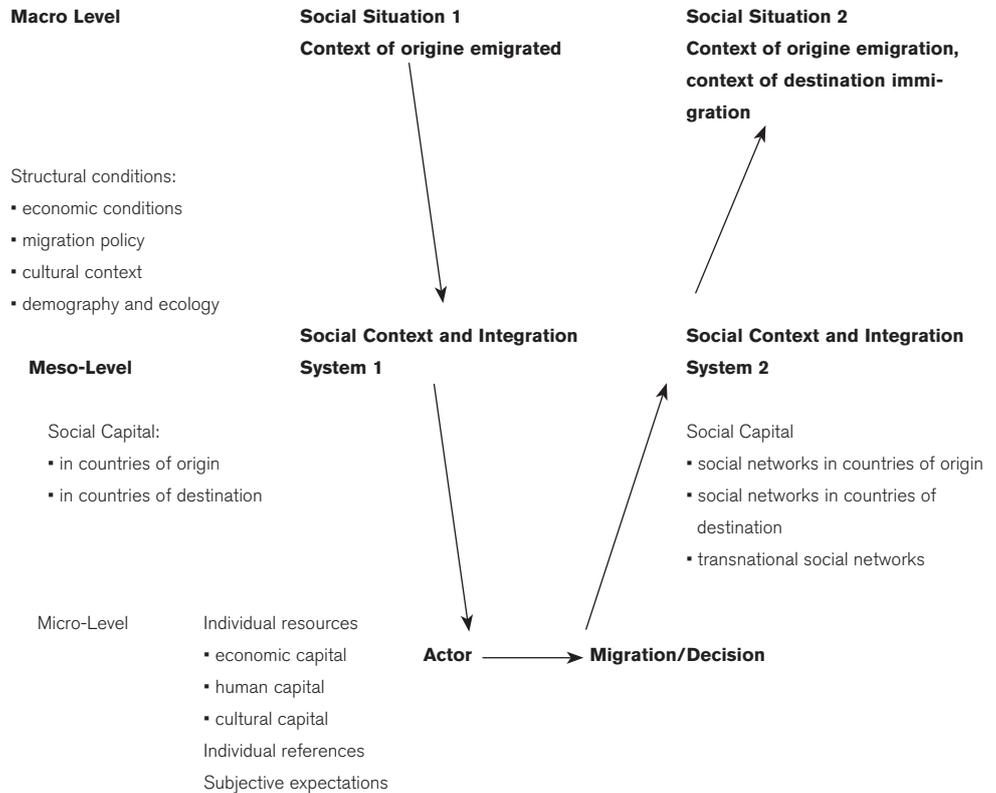


Figure 1: Multilevel Model of Migration Decision-Making and Social Networks

Once these pioneers have dealt with the risks of migration, potential migrants confront lower hurdles: the transfer of social capital and other kinds of capital is now easier. The information hypothesis and the facilitating hypothesis describe the decision basis for prospective migrants in the context of chain migration processes. Pioneer migrants and their successors provide information on opportunities, they provide support in the areas of travel, transportation, living, and work.⁴⁸ Some of the already established immigrants encourage the migration of further male workers from home; they provide work and maintain a dependency on the part of the new migrants, according to the so-called 'padroni system'. A series of flows of migrant workers then follows. These initially come without their families, at least until they decide to stay for a longer period. Family reunification is the third stage of this process, with the families also migrating to the new place of destination.⁴⁹

Location-specific social capital at the place of destination plays a decisive role in the migration decision of potential migrants. The attractiveness of places of residence is determined by the location-specific social capital, that is, by social affiliation or relations.

The critical point for the emergence of a migration chain is the decision to return or the migration of the family for the purpose of permanent settlement. All migrants who originally come for a limited period of work have to make this decision. The process of chain migration hinges on whether large numbers of migrants return to their country of origin or arrange for their family and kin to settle in the receiving country.

Chain migration processes can be modelled as diffusion processes which typically follow an s-shaped curve.⁵⁰ The infection rate increases slowly, then more strongly, before declining first at a fast rate then more slowly, until it drops to almost zero and the process comes to a halt. The infection rate is represented by a bell curve. In the course of time the

Determinants of Nonmigration: Sociological Considerations for Migration Theory. In: *Rural Sociology* 38/3 (1973), pp. 296-311, p. 309.

34 Ritchey 1976, p. 389.

35 Choldin, Harvey M.: Kinship Networks in the Migration Process. In: *International Migration Review* 7/2 (1973), pp.163-175; Coombs, Gary: Opportunities, Information Networks and the Migration-Distance Relationship. In: *Social Networks* 1 (1978), pp. 257-276; Jedlicka, Davor: Opportunities, Information Networks and International Migration Streams. In: *Social Networks* 1 (1978), pp. 211-284; Tilly, Charles/Brown, Harold C.: On Uprooting, Kinship, and the Auspices of Migration. In: *Intern. Journal of Comparative Soc.* 8 (1967), pp. 139-164..

36 Coombs 1978, p. 262.

37 Ritchey 1976, p. 389; Choldin 1973 Tilly/Brown 1976.

38 Hugo 1981, p. 196ff.

39 Ibid.; Stark 1991.

40 Portes, Alejandro: Economic Sociology and the Sociology of Immigration: A Conceptual Overview. In: Portes, A. (ed.): *The Economic Sociology of Immigration*, New York: Russell Sage Foundation 1995, pp. 1-41.

41 Bourdieu, Pierre: Ökonomisches Kapital, kulturelles Kapital, soziales Kapital. In: Kreckel, Reinhard (ed.): *Soziale Ungleichheiten, Soziale Welt. Sonderband 2* (1983), pp. 83-198; Coleman, James S.: Social Capital in the Creation of Human Capital. In: *American Journal of Sociology* 94, Suppl. (1988), pp. 95-120; Portes, A.: Social Capital: Its Origins and Applications in Modern Sociology. In: *Annual Review of Sociology* 24 (1998), pp. 1-14.

42 Putnam, Robert D.: *Making Democracy Work. Civic Traditions in Modern Italy*. Princeton: Princeton UP 1993.

43 Dasgupta, Partha/Serageldin, Ismail: *Social Capital: A Multifaceted Perspective*. Washington/DC: The World Bank 2000.

44 Lin, Nan/Cook, Karen/Burt, Ronald S. (eds.): *Social Capital: Theory and Research*. New York: De Gruyter 2001; Flap, Henk/Völker, Beate (eds.): *Creation and Returns of Social Capital*. London: Routledge 2004.

45 Portes 1995b; Portes 1998.

46 MacDonald, John S./MacDonald, Leatrice D.: Chain Migration, Ethnic Neighbourhood Formation and Social Networks. In: *Milbank Memorial Fund Quarterly* 42/1 (1964), pp. 82-97.

cumulative migrant population at the country of destination corresponds to an s-shaped curve, and the respective number of immigrants follows a bell-curve. With each new emigrant, the social capital at the place of destination increases for the potential successors. In the course of the migration process, the migration risk thus diminishes. The social capital declines at the place of origin, resulting in an attendant drop in the potential loss of social capital at the place of origin. Each emigrant increases the location-specific social capital at the place of destination and this accumulation of location-specific social capital at the place of destination reduces the opportunity costs of migration for successors. Additionally, staying at the place of destination becomes more attractive as a result of the rising social capital in kinship networks and ethnic community. The structure of social networks determines the channels of distribution and the infection speed of the behaviour of the migration within the chain migration process. The central characteristic of chain migration is the dislocation of social contexts. This process continues along the chains of migration, and develops into a self-perpetuating dynamic. Social relations from the society of origin are continued in the immigrant society and neighbourly relations are transplanted. The cumulative migration process is maintained through snowball effects resulting from networks, relatively independently of objective economic factors.⁵¹ Networks engender cumulative causation because every single migrant reduces the costs for potential migrants; this leads to more migration and new networks linking different individuals in the country of origin, in turn giving rise to renewed migration and new networks, and so on.⁵² In this way, migration maintains itself on the basis of social networks.

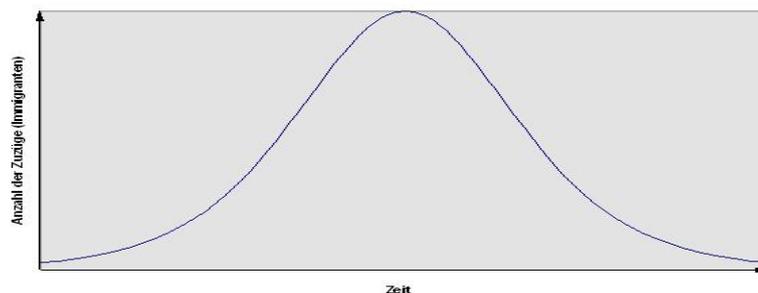


Figure 2: Cumulative Migration Process: Number of Immigrants and Time

A micro-foundation of the diffusion process has to be based on modelling of the distribution of threshold values for migration decisions within a population.⁵³ In the absence of networks, the cumulative causation of migrant networks would be limited.⁵⁴

3 Empirical Research on Social Networks and Migration

There has been extensive empirical research on the impacts of migrant networks on migration. The range of application covers immigration of migrant workers and recruitment strategies, post-guest workers, family re-unification, tied movers and marriage migration, illegal migration, human smuggling and trafficking in migrants, migration as a household strategy and remittances, circular migration, migration systems and return migration, ethnic communities, institutions and organisations. Empirical evidence of the importance of personal networks in migratory behaviour is to be found in several studies. The following review is not exhaustive but rather is intended to provide an idea of the different methods of research into how networks influence migration.

3.1 Macro-Level Studies

Aggregate official data are available on the number of migrants (emigrants in country of origin, immigrants in country of destination) or the foreign population in the country of destination.⁵⁵ Official data on foreign workers, data on ethnic segregation in certain regions or data on visas are also available. These data can provide indirect indications of the effects of networks. Examples are the number of emigrants (outflow) and immigrants (inflow) as

47 For an elaboration of the macro-micro-macro model cf. Coleman, James S.: *Foundations of Social Theory*. Cambridge: Belknap Pr. 1990; Esser, Hartmut: *Soziologie. Allgemeine Grundlagen*. Frankfurt/M.: Campus 1993, p. 113, fig. 1.

48 Hugo 1981, p. 202f.

49 Baily, Samuel L.: *Chain Migration of Italians to Argentina: Case Studies of the Agnonesi and Sirolesi*. In: *Etudes Migrations* 19/65 (1982), pp. 73-91.

50 Faist 1997a, p. 210; Haug 2000 (*Soziales Kapital*), p. 152, fig. 2.

51 Massey, Douglas S.: *Social Structure, Household Strategies, and the Cumulative Causation of Migration*. In: *Population Index* 56/1 (1990), pp. 3-26; Faist 1997 (*Meso-Level*).

52 Massey/Arango/Hugo/Kouaouci/Pellegrino/Taylor, 1993, pp. 431-466, p. 449.

53 Cf. Haug 2000 (*Soziales Kapital*), p. 153.

54 Fussell, Elizabeth/Massey, D.S.: *The Limits to Cumulative Causation: International Migration from Mexican Urban Areas*. In: *Demography* 41/1 (2004), pp. 151-171.

55 For an overview of data on migration and integration in Germany cf. Diehl, Claudia/Haug, Sonja: *Assessing Migration and Integration in an Immigration Hesitant Country: the Sources and Problems of Data in Germany*. In: *Studi Emigrazione/International Journal of Migration Studies* 40/152 (2003), pp. 747-771.

56 Haug 2000 (*Kettenmigration*), pp. 123-143.

57 Haug, S.: *Wanderungen zwischen Deutschland und den mittel- und ost-europäischen EU-Beitrittsländern*. In: *Wirtschaft und Statistik* 3 (2004), pp. 280-287.

58 Haug, S.: *Binationale Ehen und interethnische Partnerschaften in Deutschland – Datenlage und Erklärungsfaktoren*. In: *Zsr. für Familienforschung* 16/3 (2004), pp. 305-329.

59 Bähr, Jochen/Gans, Paul: *Bevölkerungsveränderungen und Migrationsmuster in den Großstädten der Bundesrepublik Deutschland seit 1970*. In: Friedrichs, Jürgen (ed.): *Die Städte in den 80er Jahren*. Opladen: Westdt. Verl. 1985, pp. 70-115.

60 Straubhaar, Thomas: *Ost-West-Migrationspotenzial: Wie groß ist es?* In: *Jb. für Nationalökonomie und Statistik* 222/1 (2002), pp. 22-41; Alvarez-Plata, Patricia/Brücker, Her-

well as the age and sex structure of the foreign population,⁵⁶ foreign workers from certain countries of origin,⁵⁷ the number of visas for spouses and children for the purpose of family re-unification⁵⁸ or regional clusters of immigrants or ethnic segregation.⁵⁹

One method of modelling network effects in economic migration research involves analysing the number of former migrants from a certain country of origin to estimate potential emigration from that region.⁶⁰

3.2 Meso-Level Studies

Hardly any data are available at the meso level. Qualitative social research has mostly been conducted to study ethnic communities, ethnic economies or other ethnic institutions.⁶¹ Other examples refer to the recruitment of workers through personal connections of members of social networks to employers in the case of 'guest workers' in Germany⁶² or Polish seasonal workers in Germany.⁶³ Another type of analysis focuses on the so-called migration multiplier, that is, the number of 'sponsorships' by pioneer migrants of subsequent family members immigrating to the US.⁶⁴ Some studies apply social capital in research on ethnic communities and integration.⁶⁵

3.3 Micro-Level Studies

Most data on migrant networks are derived from survey research. In Germany, there are many empirical studies analysing the living conditions and integration of foreign workers.⁶⁶ Some of these refer especially to family and social networks of working migrants. Few studies explicitly consider chain migration, although there are some pointers in this direction.⁶⁷ Examples here are time series analyses of the declining size of families staying in the sending country and the process of family re-unification,⁶⁸ the analysis of tied movers and marriage migration⁶⁹ or the size and composition of kinship networks in the country of destination.⁷⁰ The existence of social networks of immigrants at the place of destination prior to immigration (retrospective question), their influence on the selection of the place of residence,⁷¹ and the influence of household and family members living in the receiving country on immigration and return migration⁷² was analysed in the immigrant sample of the German Socio-Economic Panel.

4 Social Networks and Migration Decision Making: the Case of Italian Migrants

The example of Italian migrants in Germany shows how chain migration mechanisms function. Since data on actual migrants in the country of origin are lacking, analysis has to rely on official statistics and survey data on migrants in the county of destination.

Historical Overview on the migration process

Figure 3 shows the immigration and return migration of Italians in Germany since 1955 – when the recruitment of Italian workers began. The migration process is characterised by a high migration volume, and a classical sequence of pioneers, labour workers and families. In the case of Italian migrants, as citizens of the European Union, the immigration process is not as much dependent on immigration laws like citizens of Non-EU-countries. The recruitment began in 1955 with the bilateral contracts of Italy and Germany, and did not end up in 1973 when the labour recruitment was stopped officially. The transnational migration follows several stages, characterised by certain patterns of migration more than by legal aspects:

1. stage: recruitment of labour migrants and pioneer migrants (1955 to 1960)
2. stage: labour migration (1961 to 1966)
3. stage: family reunification (1968 to 1974)
4. stage: social networks (1975 to 1982)
5. stage: permanent settlement or return (1983 to 1992)
6. stage: transnational community (1993 to 1999)
7. stage: naturalization (since 2000)

bert/Silverstovs, Boris: Potential Migration From Central and Eastern Europe into the EU-15 – an Update. Report for the European Commission. DG Employment and Social Affairs. Berlin: Deutsches Institut für Wirtschaftsforschung 2003.

61 Cf. Wilpert 1992 on ethnic communities; on the ethnic niche economy cf. Pichler, Edith (ed.): Migration, Community-Formierung und ethnische Ökonomie. Berlin: Ed. Parabolis 1997.

62 Behrmann, Meike/Abate, Carmine (ed.): Die Germanesi. Geschichte und Leben einer süditalienischen Dorfgemeinschaft und ihrer Emigranten. Mit einem Nachw. v. Norbert Elias. Frankfurt/M.: Campus 1984; Wilpert 1992.

63 Dietz, Barbara: Gibt es eine Alternative? Zur Beschäftigung polnischer Saisonarbeitnehmer in Deutschland. München: Osteuropa-Institut 2004 (Working Papers 253).

64 Jasso, Guillermina/Rosenzweig, Mark R.: Family Reunification and the Immigration Multiplier: U.S. Immigration Law, Origin-Country Conditions, and the Reproduction of Immigrants. In: Demography 23 (1986), pp. 291-311; Jasso, G./Rosenzweig, M.R.: Sponsors, Sponsorship Rates, and the Immigration Multiplier. In: Intern. Migration Review 23/4 (1989), pp. 856-888.

65 Sanders, Jimmy M./Nee, Victor: Immigrant Self-Employment: The Family as Social Capital and the Value of Human Capital. In: American Sociological Review 61 (1996), pp. 231-249; Portes, A./Sensenbrenner, Julia: Embeddedness and Immigration. Notes on the Social Determinants of Economic Action. In: American Journal of Sociology 98 (1993), pp. 1320-1350; Zhou, Min/Bankston, Carl L.: Social Capital and the Adaptation of the 2nd Generation – The Case of Vietnamese Youth in New-Orleans. In: International Migration Review 28/4 (1994), pp. 821-845; Lever-Tracy, Constance/Holton, Robert: Social Exchange, Reciprocity and Amoral Familism: Aspects of Italian Chain Migration to Australia. In: Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies 27/1 (2001), pp. 81-99.

66 For a general overview of studies cf. Angenendt, Steffen: Ausländerforschung in Frankreich und der Bundesrepublik Deutschland: gesellschaftliche Rahmenbedingungen und inhaltliche Entwicklung eines aktuellen Forschungsbereiches. Frankfurt/M.: Campus 1992; Diehl/Haug 2003.

The immigration process of the Italian citizens shows a nearly parallel return migration process. The Return Migration Rate is 90% from 1955 to 2009, that means, only a small part of immigrants stay in Germany.

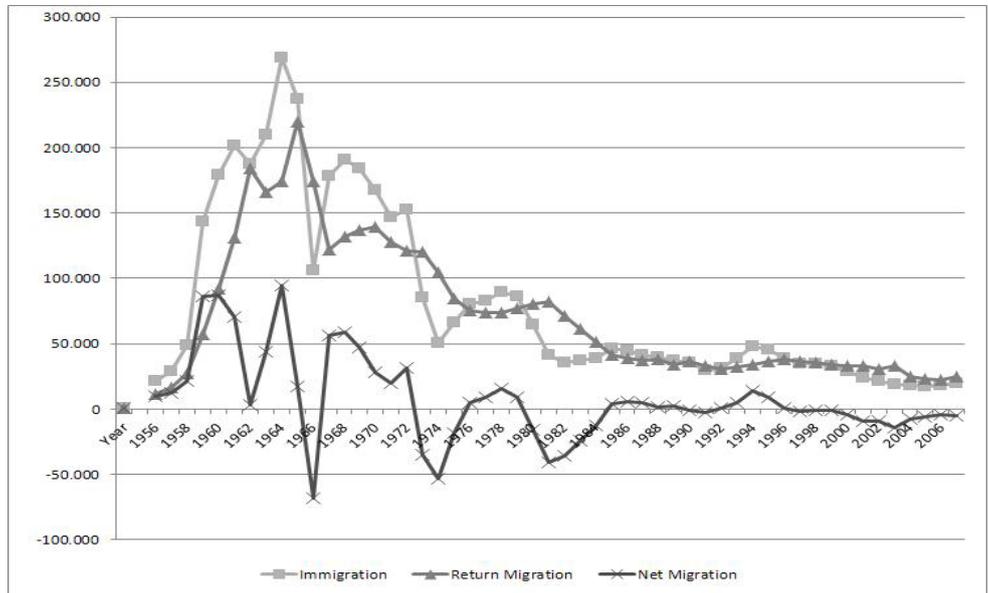


Figure 3: Migration and Return Migration of Italian Migrants in Germany
Data: Migration Statistics, Federal Statistical Office.

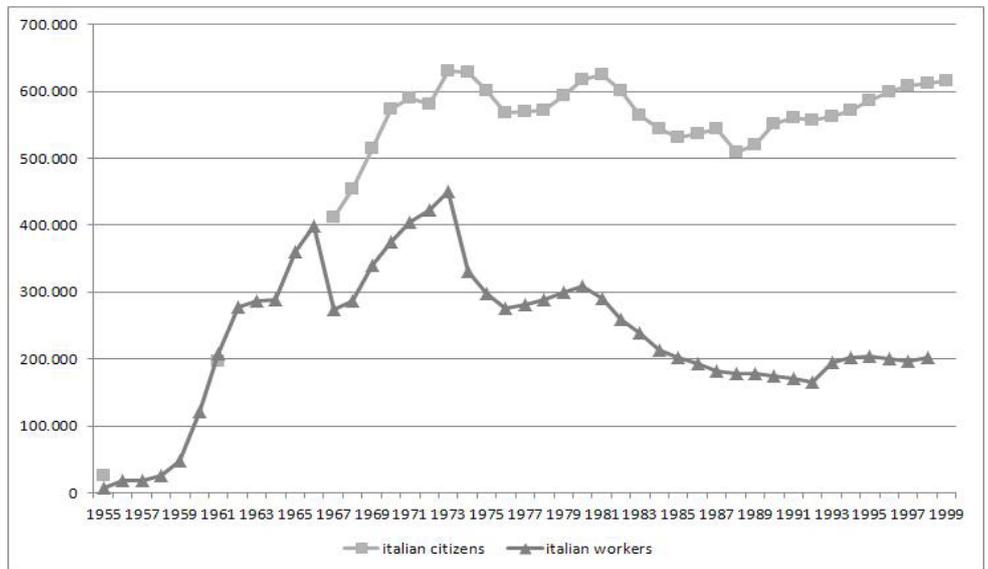


Figure 4: Italian workers and Italian citizens in Germany 1955–1999
Data: Federal Statistical Office, cf. Haug 2000a, 2000b

Whereas the family reunification of labour migrants from other countries was triggered in 1973, the family reunification of Italians started much earlier.

The Italian population is not growing since 1973, but sinking for the reason of return migration or naturalization (only a small group). Nowadays the third and fourth generation of Italian migrants are to some extent German citizens: there is a growing number of children of German-Italian parents and, since 2000, the implementation of the new law on citizenship (*ius soli*), the children of permanent aliens are German citizens.

67 Haug 2000 (*Soziales Kapital*), p.163ff.

68 Mehrländer, Ursula/Ascheberg, Carsten/Ueltzhöffer, Jörg: Situation der ausländischen Arbeitnehmer und ihrer Familienangehörigen in der Bundesrepublik Deutschland. Repräsentativuntersuchung '95 Forschungsbericht 263. Berlin: Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung u. Bundesministerium für Arbeit und Sozialordnung 1996.

69 Özel, Shule/Nauck, Bernhard: Kettenmigration in türkischen Familien. Ihre Herkunftsbedingungen und ihre Effekte auf die Reorganisation der familiären Interaktionsstruktur in der Aufnahmegesellschaft. In: Migration 1 (1987), pp. 61-94; Haug 2000 (*Soziales Kapital*).

70 Nauck 2002; Haug 2004b.

71 Bauer, Thomas/Zimmermann, Klaus F.: Network Migration of Ethnic Germans. In: International Migration Review 31/1 (1997), pp. 143-149.

72 Haug 2000 (*Soziales Kapital*).

73 Cf. for example Massey 1987.

74 Results are not shown here, cf. Haug 2000 (*Soziales Kapital*).

75 Haug 2000 (*Soziales Kapital*), 2001.

76 For a description of migrants in Germany cf. Münz, Rainer/Ulrich, Ralf: Germany and its Immigrants: a Socio-demographic Analysis. In: Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies 24/1 (1998), p. 25f.

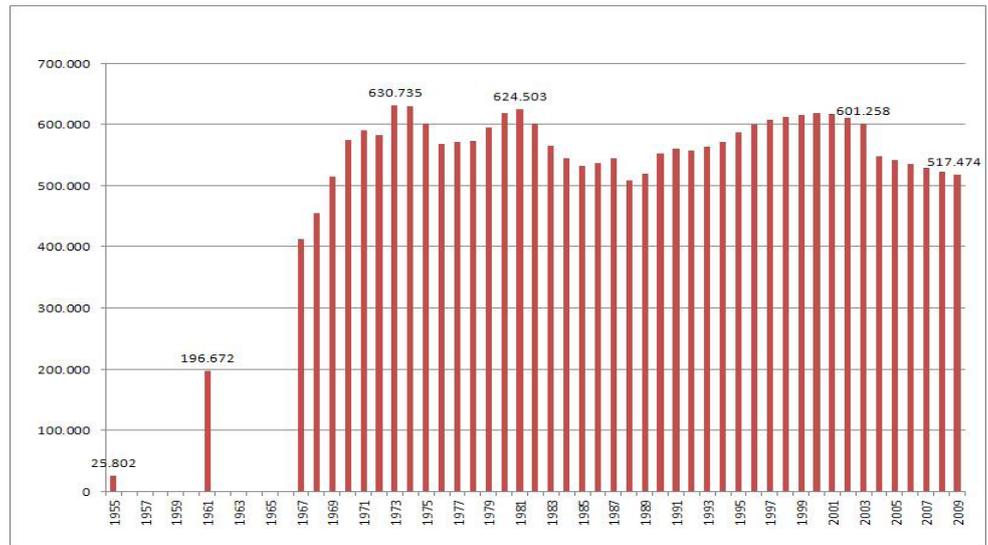


Figure 5: Italian citizens in Germany; Data: Central Register of Foreigners, Federal Statistical Office

4.1 To Stay or to Return: Italian Migrants in Germany

A transnational migration process has several stages, in which the decision to migrate or to return has to be taken. Circular migration is a result of these decision sequences, it is caused mainly by social networks in two places.

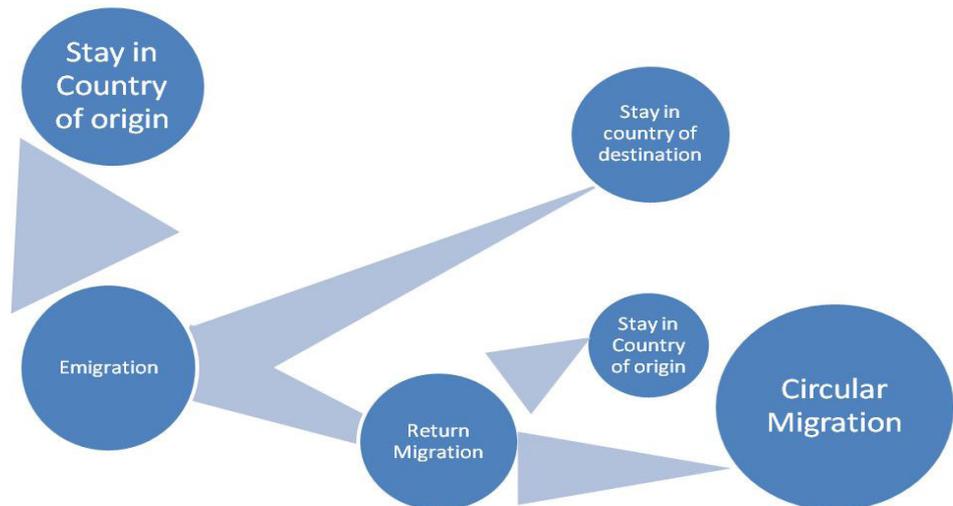


Figure 6: Decision to migrate and to return – circular migration

The whole process is very complex and it would be necessary to conduct a panel study, with interviews in the country of origin, in the country of destination and this over a large period of time.⁷³ The study on Italian migrants was conducted without a large amount of research funding, therefore an ideal survey design was not realistic. Qualitative interviews with twelve Italian families⁷⁴ were supplemented by an analysis of the return process based on a large panel study.

It can be assumed that return migration is driven by the same mechanisms as emigration decisions. Consequently, an analysis of panel data on migrants is suitable to demonstrate social network effects on return migration decisions.⁷⁵ The role of social networks in the migration process is studied in retrospect by a panel analysis of sequential migration processes within households. Data are taken from the German Socio-Economic Panel, a household panel data set collected each year since 1984 (SOEP group 2001). The sample includes Italian migrants who have entered Germany as guest workers since 1955.⁷⁶ The sample consists of 830 Italian migrants, of whom 177 returned to Italy during the period from 1984 to 1997 (21%).

77 Haug 2000 (*Soziales Kapital*), 2001.

Bivariate analysis reveals a large household size to have a restraining effect on return migration. Persons living as a couple are most likely to return, whereas persons living in larger households have a lower return probability (Table 1). Another finding is the positive effect of the number of household members who have returned to Italy before. When four members have returned to Italy in an earlier wave of the panel, 30.8% of the remaining respondents of households return themselves. When three household members have previously returned, 12% of the respondents return. This is an indicator of the sequential migration decision mechanism within households.

Household size	Return migration decision
1	1,6
2	3,4
3	1,7
4	0,7
5	2,2
6	1,9
7	0,9
8	0,9
9	0
10	0,8
14	0
Total	1,8
Household members having returned	Return migration decision
0	0,6
1	9,0
2	11,6
3	12,2
4	30,8
5	0
Total	1,8

Table 1: Household size, returned household members and return migration decision

Three different models have been tested in multivariate analysis to compare the effect of age and migration biography (Model 1), individual features such as return migration intention, human capital resources and employment (Model 2) and affiliation to spouse and household (Model 3). In Models 1 and 2 only a small number of factors have a significant influence on the return decision (Table 2). Being aged 60 or older, having an intention to return and not being in full-time employment increase the probability of return migration.⁷⁷

Predictor Variables	Model 1: Biography		Model 2: Individual		Model 3: Household		Model 4: Network	
	B	Odds ratio	B	Odds ratio	B	Odds ratio	B	Odds ratio
Age	0,28	1,33	0,23	1,25	0,44	1,55	0,29	1,33
Age 60+ (Yes/No)	1,78***	5,93	2,05***	7,74	1,54***	4,65	1,2	3,32
Immigration Age	-0,3	0,74	-0,33	0,72	-0,46	0,63	-0,27	0,76
Duration of Stay	-0,36	0,69	-0,37	0,69	-0,48	0,62	-0,23	0,8
Return Intention (Yes/No)			1,01***	2,73	1,33***	3,79	2,61***	13,69
Education in Germany (Yes/No)			-0,14	0,87	0,14	1,15	-1,1	0,33
Education in Italy (Yes/No)			0,25	1,28	-0,06	0,94	0,29	1,33
Full-time Employment (Yes/No)			-0,59**	0,55	-0,86***	0,42	-1,33***	0,26
Retired (Yes/No)			-0,61	0,54	-0,52	0,6	-0,53	0,59
Remittance (Yes/No)			0,00**	1	0	1	0	0,1
German Language Knowledge Scale			-0,05	0,95	-1,12**	0,88	-0,03	0,97
Married (Yes/No)					-0,46	0,63	-0,9	0,41
Number of Household Members					-0,66***	0,51	-0,54***	0,58
Number of Children					-2,01	0,13	-1,81	0,16
Number of Returned					2,02***	7,55	2,17***	8,72
Spouse in Italy (Yes/No)					-0,25	0,78	-0,94	0
Number of Children in Italy					0,1	1,11	1,06***	2,89
Kinship in Germany (Yes/No)					-0,14	0,87	1,36***	3,91
Family Network Size							0,04***	1,04
Family Network Size in Germany							-0,31	0,74
Family Network Size in Italy							-0,12	0,88
Constant	-1,73***		1,86***		-3,2***		6,99***	
Person Years	4,175		4,175		4,175		3,378	
Chi²	36,43		102,22		416,54		145,83	
(Cox/Snell) Pseudo-R²	0,01		0,02		0,1		0,04	

Table 2: Determinants of Return Migration (Logistic Regression Model)

Data: German Socio Economic Panel 1984 to 1997, person period record file, dependent variable: return migration, N=177, partial B coefficients, * p<.05, ** p<.01, *** p<.001. Model 4: the lower case number is due to the fact that only cases with valid data on family network collected in the 1991 wave are taken into account (cf. Haug 2000a).

The variables of Model 3 have a higher impact on return migration than those of Model 1 or Model 2 (Pseudo-R²). Note that an odds ratio above 1.0 refers to the odds that return migration occurs. The analysis shows two effects of household members on the return



78 Constant, Amelie/Massey, D.S.: Return Migration by German Guest-workers: Neoclassical versus New Economic Theories. In: International Migration 40/ 4 (2002), pp. 5-38.

migration decision in Model 3. Firstly, the probability of return migration diminishes as the number of persons currently living in the household rises. Secondly, the most important return migration determinant is the number of household members who have returned in earlier years. When the independent variable increases one unit, the odds that return migration occurs increase by a factor of 7.6, when other variables are controlled. Each case of return migration within the household increases the probability of return migration for the remaining household members.

The return migration decision of the household members thus affects the behaviour of other family members. These variables take precedence over almost all other effects of the household. Neither the number of children altogether nor the number of children in Italy nor the number of relatives in Germany influence return migration in Model 3. In the context of the modelling of chain migration processes, sequences of migration within households or networks are crucial. The mutual influence exerted by family members shows that every person contributes reciprocally for the other members of the family to their location-specific social capital.

To summarise, it can be stated that return migration decisions are determined primarily by social capital aspects, independently of individual aspects such as full-time employment or age. The migration behaviour of the Italian migrants is influenced by household size and location-specific social capital within households. Location specific capital at the place of residence has a hindering effect, whereas the loss of location specific capital at the place of residence is a push factor and location specific capital at the place of destination – that is the country of origin – is a pull factor.

The process of return migration has also been analysed by Constant and Massey.⁷⁸ The negative effect on return migration of full-time employment and of some form of social attachment, with the presence of a spouse and children providing the benchmark, is confirmed.



5 Conclusion

All in all, economic motives and, by inference, economic grounds explain a large proportion of decisions to migrate and international migration movements. Macro-economic approaches to migration are incomplete in explaining migration motives and processes. Micro-level economic migration theories take into account individual and structural conditions, esp. wage rates and unemployment levels, and explain the selectivity of migration. However, they neglect non-economic migration motives to a large extent and are hampered by empirical weakness and a lack of realism. Rational choice theory includes different utility dimensions and takes into account different kinds of costs and returns. Unfortunately, the weighting of different utility factors, the transitive ordering and the connection between monetary and non-monetary factors remains under-specified. Another problem is the range of different factors included in the model. One example of an elaborated model of rational choice in fertility decision research among migrants is the ‘value of children approach’. A set of economic-utilitarian, psychological-affective and social-normative utility factors is measured independently and linked to a prognosis of the fertility of migrants.⁷⁹ In migration decision research there is no consensus about a list of necessary and adequate push or pull factors.

In some areas, the disciplines of economics and the sociology of migration are converging and overlapping.⁸⁰ Economics research can incorporate social networks and non-economic decision factors in order to be more realistic. Sociological research can draw on economic models in rational choice theory and the social embeddedness of migration decisions to enhance theoretical clarity and concreteness. Theoretical models, esp. when adapted to a specific issue, and fragments of empirical evidence in several fields, show that migration networks play a major role in migration. The social network concept may improve and complement rational choice theory and contribute to the explanation of family re-unification and chain migration processes. This article makes a contribution to the economic sociology of migration by elaborating the concept of location-specific social capital. It has been shown that location-specific capital at the place of destination increases the probability of emigration intentions and therefore may increase the probability of emigration. The demonstrated influence of the migration behaviour of household members on the return migration



79 Nauck, Bernhard: Changing Value of Children: An Action Theory of Fertility Behavior and Intergenerational Relationships in Cross-Cultural Comparison. In: Friedmeier, Wolfgang/Chakkarath, Pradeep/Schwarz, Beate (eds.): Culture and Human Development. The Importance of Cross-Cultural Research to the Social Sciences. New York: Hove 2005, pp. 183-202.

80 Portes 1995.

81 Massey et al. 1987, p. 1498,
p. 1998.

82 Iglicka, Krystyna: Mechanisms
of migration from Poland before
and during the Transition Period.
In: Journal of Ethnic and Migration
Studies 26/1 (2000), pp. 61-73,
p. 67.

decisions of other household members can be explained by the mechanisms of location-specific social capital in interdependent migration decision-making and chain migration processes.

Difficulties arise in finding an acceptable concept to measure social networks beyond households and families and to measure utilities and threshold levels beyond the simplified concept of emigration intention. The main focus is either on surveys involving a small number of indicators but high sample numbers or on small, detailed, qualitative studies. What is lacking is an elaborated method to collect data on social networks of migrants at relatively low cost in order to be able to investigate network structures in migration contexts. Using the ethnosurvey methodology for the purposes of data collection in the country of origin and destination, it is necessary to identify emigrants' and immigrants' areas of settlement in the sending and receiving countries.⁸¹ It is a challenge for further research to identify migration systems within Europe and to apply a similar research design based on interviews in the country of origin and country of destination. One example is the migration system of Germany and Poland.⁸²



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