LIMITS TO THE URBANISATION OF POVERTY IN SOUTH AFRICA

Derik Gelderblom,
Department of Sociology, University of South Africa, Pretoria.
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Introduction

Besides the obvious racial element to inequality in South Africa, there is also a severe form of regional inequality. Particularly the areas set aside in the past for exclusive black settlement, the so-called African homelands, contained large numbers of poor people in the apartheid period. A number of policies of the apartheid government contributed to this situation (Gelderblom 2004). Influx control attempted (not always successfully) to restrict black rural-urban migration to breadwinners and exclude the rest of their households from entering the urban areas. Population removals exported poor black people to the homelands, and the provision of cheap residential land by apartheid planners in the homelands encouraged black settlement in those areas. Together, these policies helped to bottle up large numbers of poor people in the homeland areas where there were few local employment opportunities. Even though influx control was scrapped in 1986, and the homelands incorporated into the rest of the country in 1994, this situation has not changed dramatically. Those provinces that contain the previous homelands areas are much poorer than those that do not. Limpopo province in the north of the country which absorbed the Lebowa, Venda and Gazankulu homelands, and Eastern Cape province which contains the Ciskei and Transkei homelands, are the poorest of the nine provinces. KwaZulu-Natal, Northwest, Free State and Mpumalanga contain the remaining homeland areas, and they are also relatively poor. The heavily urbanised Gauteng and Western Cape provinces, by contrast, are the wealthiest by far.

Table 1 demonstrates that this situation has not changed by much in recent years. The only significant change in this table is the increasing importance of the Gauteng region to the South African economy. It was the economic heartland of the country to begin with, and it has reinforced this position in the period between 1996 and 2001. It, together with the Western Cape, is the only province whose income exceeds its population share, indicating that per capita incomes are highest in these two provinces. Despite having the lowest poverty rates, between 1996 and 2001 the proportion of the population of these two provinces that live in poverty has increased, however (Leibbrandt et al. 2004:87). In fact, their poor populations seem to have been
growing at a higher rate than any of the other provinces. This increase in the poverty stricken population, together with increasing per capita incomes, is an indication of increasing inequality within these two provinces. Leibbrandt et al. (2004:86, 88) also refer to the fact that these two provinces harbour an increasing share of the total number of poor people of the country. According to them, this is an indication that the poorest people have been leaving the poverty-stricken provinces of Limpopo and Eastern Cape to settle in the economic heartlands of Gauteng and the Western Cape.

Table 1: Provincial population and income shares: 1996 and 2001

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Province</th>
<th>1996 population share</th>
<th>1996 income share</th>
<th>2001 population share</th>
<th>2001 income share</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Western Cape</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>17%</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>16%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Eastern Cape</td>
<td>16%</td>
<td>9%</td>
<td>14%</td>
<td>8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Northern Cape</td>
<td>2%</td>
<td>2%</td>
<td>2%</td>
<td>2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Free State</td>
<td>6%</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td>6%</td>
<td>4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>KwaZulu-Natal</td>
<td>21%</td>
<td>17%</td>
<td>21%</td>
<td>16%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>North West</td>
<td>8%</td>
<td>6%</td>
<td>8%</td>
<td>6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gauteng</td>
<td>18%</td>
<td>35%</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>39%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mpumalanga</td>
<td>7%</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td>7%</td>
<td>5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Limpopo</td>
<td>12%</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td>12%</td>
<td>5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Leibbrandt, Naidoo, Poswell, Welch & Woolard 2004:111 (totals may not add up to 100 due to rounding).

If this was true, it would confirm a popular view that migration serves to equilibrate labour markets. Because the poorest part of the population has the greatest incentive to leave, it is assumed that they will in fact be over-represented in migration streams. It is generally believed that, by transferring poor people from poverty-stricken regions with high unemployment rates to
wealthier areas with lower unemployment rates, migration reduces regional inequality and improves economic efficiency. This view is stated most explicitly by the neo-classical economic theories of migration but it forms a widely believed assumption in the development field. If it is not true, it means that migration will not be able to reduce the spatial dimension of inequality in South Africa. In that case, social assistance policies for the poorest trapped in distant rural areas as well as regional policy issues will acquire an added urgency in post-apartheid South Africa.

In this paper, I intend investigating this assumption with reference to the South African case.

**The composition of migrant streams: what evidence do we have and what evidence do we need?**

The evidence provided by Leibbrandt et al. for their assertion that the poorest have been moving from disadvantaged to wealthier provinces is not satisfactory. The stock of poor people living in each province does not by itself provide any indication of the migration trends, or flows, of poor people. Before we can make any concrete inference about migration trends we also need information about economic and demographic changes internal to each province that may explain increases or decreases in the number of poor people in that province. Both Gauteng and the Western Cape have experienced a significant destruction of formal sector jobs in the period between 1996 and 2001. For example, the metal industries of the East Rand in Gauteng have been retrenching large numbers of people over the last decade or so. The same applies to the clothing industries of the Western Cape. These changes, rather than inmigration of poor people provide an alternative explanation for the increasing poverty shares of these provinces.

We thus need information on actual migration trends in order to answer this question. We can start to answer this question by investigating the trends in inter-provincial migration in South Africa. It is indeed true that Gauteng and the Western Cape have served as magnets for migrants from other provinces over the last few years. On the basis of an analysis of the 1996 census figures, Kok et al. (2003:37-38) have found that Gauteng has received a net number of 262 000
migrants between 1992 and 1996, by far the biggest of all the provinces. This number consists of 475 000 in-migrants minus 213 000 who have left the province, which indicates a large amount of mobility into and out of the province. The Western Cape comes a distant second with a net migration of 187 000 minus 44 000 (143 000 net migrants). The only other province that gained population through an excess of in- over out-migration is Mpumalanga (just under 20 000 people). The two poorest provinces, Eastern Cape and Limpopo, lost the largest number of people through net-migration: 206 000 and 137 000 respectively.

At first glance it may seem as if migration has been transferring the poorest people out of provinces such as Limpopo province and Eastern Cape into wealthier regions such as Gauteng province and Western Cape. The net migration trend has certainly been out of poverty stricken provinces into wealthier provinces, as the above figures confirm. But to generalise from the nature of the areas out of which migrants come to the characteristics of the migrants themselves, is to commit the ecological fallacy (see Lipton 1980). If an area is on average poverty-stricken it does not mean that all people that live there are poverty stricken. The provincial average may hide considerable variety, both in terms of vertical differentiation between rich and poor and in terms of finer scales of geographical differentiation (between richer and poorer magisterial districts, for example). It is therefore not inconsistent to assert both that poor provinces provide most migrants and that the migrants themselves do not fall among the poorest of the population.

This is certainly what Kok et al.’s (2003) multivariate analysis of Census 1996 information has revealed. They (2003:61) distinguish between labour migrants and migrants proper. Migrants, in their view, are those people who have made a permanent change in address during the last five years. Labour migrants, by contrast, are those people who are absent from their usual households of residence for more than a month each year for the purpose of employment. It is clear that ‘labour migrant’, as they use the term, is another word for ‘migrant labourer’, which was the more commonly used term, certainly in the past, or ‘circular migrant’. They (2003:62) found that the probability of having been a migrant increases significantly if individual monthly income rises above R3000 monthly, and reaches its maximum at a monthly income of around R13500.
Almost all labour migrants, by contrast, have individual monthly incomes lower than R3000. The probability of being a labour migrant increases as monthly income rises from the category of R100 to the category of R1250, where it reaches a maximum. It then declines to the category of R3000, and above this income level becomes negative.

The interpretation of their finding is clouded, however, by the 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 the selectivity of migration is measured through a cross-sectional comparison of migrants and non-migrants (Ritchey 1976:383). This is what has happened in the case of Kok et al.’s analysis. The comparison was 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).

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 labour migrants). 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. Pieter Kok at the Human Sciences Research Council in Pretoria has co-ordinated the first leg of such a longitudinal study. It consists of a nationally representative survey, based on a stratified random cluster sample of 3618 respondents, which was conducted in 2001/2002 and contains information on the demographic characteristics and migration intentions of respondents, among others. Detailed tracking information was collected for each respondent, facilitating revisits at a later stage. If funding can be found for the second stage, it will allow more insight into the nature of migrant streams in South Africa.

In the meantime, we have to make do with the information we have. In this respect, it is fortunate that Kok et al.’s (2003:62-63, 68) multivariate analysis on education as a predictor of being a permanent as opposed to a labour migrant confirms their analysis of the effect of income, thus increasing the confidence with which the connection between increasing income levels and the probability of migration can be asserted. As we have seen, educational level is not subject to the methodological objections that can be raised against income as a variable, since it is not affected by the act of migration. Since increasing educational levels are strongly correlated with high income levels, education can serve to some extent as a proxy for income. According to Kok et al., the probability of becoming a labour migrant is most strongly predicted by a low level of education. The probability of being a permanent migrant, by contrast, is most strongly predicted by the possession of a post-secondary education.

It thus seems that the empirical evidence does not support the contention that migrants are among the poorest sections of the population, even though they are more likely to come from poor provinces. In the rest of this paper, I will make a case for why this is in fact what is to be expected, based upon our knowledge of migration, both locally and elsewhere in the developing world.
The changing labour market in South Africa

One reason why one can expect more migrants among those with higher educational levels is located in the nature of the post-apartheid labour market. The analysis conducted by Burger (2004:56-57) among others, has indicated that since 1994, those sectors of the economy that have employed large numbers of unskilled labourers, such as mining and agriculture, have shed large numbers of jobs. And within those sectors, the skill demands for the remaining jobs have been climbing. The sectors employing more skilled workers, such as finance, real estate and business services, by contrast have been adding large numbers of new jobs. Consequently the demand for unskilled workers has slumped and the demand for semi-skilled and skilled workers has boomed. It is therefore only those with higher educational levels that are really in demand in the post-apartheid economy and that can easily benefit by relocating from poorer rural areas with few demands for their skills to urban areas where their skills are highly valued.

The nature of the labour market in South Africa also helps to explain why the poorer parts of the population (although not the poorest) are more likely to engage in circular migration. The jobs open to poor people are too insecure and provide too low an income for the household to depend on any single one of them. Poor households consequently combine income from a number of sources if at all possible. This may involve home-based enterprises, farming, informal sector activity as well as wage work. This has come to be known in the literature as the need to engage in multiple livelihoods (see for example the collection edited by Lipton, Ellis & Lipton [1996]).

In the light of this it is significant that the labour force participation rate in South Africa has increased significantly between 1995 and 2002: from 60% to 72% (Burger 2004:63). This means that, in 2002, 72% of those who were in the economically active age groups (that is all adults minus those who have reached pensionable age) were either in employment or looking for work, compared with 60% before. It is an indication that many people (for example housewives) who were previously not part of the labour market have now tried to find employment. Our previous discussion of the need for multiple livelihoods helps to make sense of this change. Because there
was a decrease in formal sector jobs and a subsequent growth in casual employment, households now need to increase the number of income earners to counter the growing insecurity of employment faced by breadwinners.

The link between multiple livelihoods and migration is as follows: Wage work is often not available in the immediate vicinity of the household, with the result that the household's labour allocation strategy may demand that one of its members become involved in circular migration. This allows household 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 wageworker 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, amongst others, because water and firewood can often be collected from communal sources. Accommodation is also cheaper. In the South African case, households will also retain their rural home because there is no housing market in the former homeland areas, which means that there is no incentive to sell their rural houses in which they have invested a significant amount of their limited capital (Baber 1996:282).

Scrambling the categories: anthropological observations on mobility and migration

Census 1996, which was the basis of Kok et al.’s analyses, made an attempt to account for the complexity of people’s mobility in South Africa by asking about the movements of labour migrants. It firstly asked whether perhaps any of the currently present or absent household members is a migrant labourer or not (‘absent for more than a month each year from home for work purposes’). By finding out about those currently present as well as absent, it covered the origin as well as destination side of migratory moves (thus perhaps leading to overcounting of labour migrants?). It also enquired whether the place of enumeration was the usual dwelling place (‘lives there for at least four nights a week’) of the respondent, and if not, where that usual dwelling place was. It did this to account for the fact that many people are away from their home base for the purposes of work for part of the year. Their ‘usual dwelling place’ would then be the
urban (work-related) destination. That this is not an uncomplicated distinction is indicated by Kok et al.’s (2003:41) apparent misconstrual of ‘usually resides’, now associating it with the home base whereas it actually represents the work base of the migrant.

Even if we add the distinction between ‘labour migrant’ and ‘migrant’ to our conceptual armoury, it still does not do justice to the actual complexity of the mobility of poor people in South Africa, however. Both of the terms used in the census question, i.e. ‘usually live’ and ‘moved’, can force the respondent to impose an artificial resolution on a reality that may be much more ambiguous. It is in the first place the case that some people, especially children, may not always have a place where they ‘usually live’. This is a special case of the argument regarding the ‘fluidity of household composition’ that anthropologists such as Andrew Spiegel (1987, and Spiegel et al. 1996) have been exploring in the South Africa context. In Southern Africa children are often moved between households in response to a variety of exigencies. For example, in order to reduce the number of mouth to feed, children may be ‘lent’ out to other households: young boys as cattle herders and girls as domestic help. As Kotze (1993), in his study of a village called Dixie in the former Gazankulu homeland reports, in extreme cases children may not identify with any particular household, because they cannot count on any of the possibilities on offer to provide a caring environment, and consequently circulates between all of them. They may be eating and sleeping in the household of a friend on one day, visit their migrant mother’s household over the weekend when she comes home, and sleep with the grandparents a few nights every week

This often happens in cases where there is conflict between the generations (Kotze 1993:81). Grandparents may come into conflict with their children about obligations to look after their grandchildren while the latter’s parents go off to work somewhere. Conflict can also erupt when their children do not provide the remittances needed to support the grandchildren. If remittances are not forthcoming from some children, grandparents may neglect the children of those who have not contributed.
Conflict along gender and age lines may result in a situation where little income sharing takes place between individuals in the household. This will make it impossible to harmonise individual and household goals, with the result that individualised rather than household strategies are pursued (Francis 2002, Bank 2001). Consequently the ability of households to engage in a multiple livelihoods strategy will be compromised. Children may refuse to remit money to their parents who stay at home, thus depriving them of a secure cash income. The same may happen to wives who have stayed behind to look after the household’s rural interests if their husbands desert them. Husbands and wives may come into conflict over ways in which to spend money, thus discouraging sharing of income within the household (Sharp & Spiegel 1990).

The last ambiguity concerns the understanding of the term ‘to move’. For some people in South Africa migration is a process and not a once-off event (Gelderblom & Kok 1994). At any particular time, they may in their own understanding of their situation still be rooted in both their current place of residence and their original home. This is because their situation in the new environment may still be so weakly established and insecure that they do not consider it as permanent. When people leave for a new place they typically start off by staying with close kin while they are looking for some form of employment, often as boarders (Spiegel & Mehlwana 1997). Subsequently they may occupy a backyard shack somewhere (Crankshaw, Gilbert & Morris 2000). Later, when they are more established they will build their own shack, preferably in an area where they are close to the new social network connections that they have hopefully built. This progression to being more securely established will only occur if things go according to plan, and if they have managed to access some form of cash income. If things go awry, people may not be able to progress beyond the initial stages of the process, or they may try to return to the area of origin.

The costs of migration as an obstacle to the migration of the poorest

Kok et al.’s (2003) finding regarding the absence of the poorest among recent migration streams can be compared to evidence from other developing countries. These suggest that internal
migrants in developing countries are generally poor, but they are not among the poorest (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, Bauer & Zimmermann 1995:105). These findings are in broad agreement with that of Kok et al., except for the fact that the latter believe that significant migration also takes place among the higher socio-economic groupings.

The exclusion of the poorest from migration streams can be explained with reference to their inability to afford the costs and risks of migration (Gelderblom 1999, Kothari 2002, Skeldon 2003). The following monetary costs comes into play in the decision to migrate: transport costs, the cost of lodging in town while looking for work and the costs associated with acquiring information about work and housing opportunities (Lipton 1980:9). People can make decisions regarding migration only on the basis of the information at their disposal regarding opportunities elsewhere, and it is not costless to acquire such information. Illiteracy, poverty and lack of education are major obstacles to the diffusion of knowledge about migration opportunities (Hammar 1995:181, Fischer, Martin & Straubhaar 1997). The poorest may simply not be aware of opportunities elsewhere and do not have the resources to acquire information, which will reduce the likelihood that they will consider migration.

Another monetary cost to consider in the decision to migrate is the opportunity cost of migration, that is the earnings lost while the migrant is in the process of relocating (Chiswick 2000:62). This will be very low for the unemployed, however, so it is unlikely to be a factor in the exclusion of the poorest from migration opportunities. What is important however, is risk. To establish yourself in an unknown and often dangerous urban environment is risky. Poor people are often very risk averse, because their coping mechanisms are so limited, and this will also limit their migration. Risk aversion can work both ways however. The rural-urban migration of a household member is a way to secure an extra cash income for a rural household, and this makes that household less exposed to risks at home.
The costs of migration generally increase as the distance of the migratory move increases (Massey 1988). The connection between distance and costs helps to explain why the poorest are more likely to migrate over short distances. Transport and information costs in particular increase with the distance of the migratory move. According to Mlatsheni (2004:65) the distance of areas of black settlement from employment opportunities and the costs of looking for work has featured in the 2002 national labour force survey as a major reason given by young people for why they did not go out to look for work.

Transport and information costs are also affected by technical changes. Due to faster, and increased, telecommunication links, the amount of information people has about migration destinations increase. The implementation of universal education, with its impact on literacy levels and thus the amount of information at the disposal of people, similarly reduces the costs of acquiring information about distant places. Improved transport facilities on the other hand reduce transport costs. The large-scale introduction of kombi-taxis in South Africa has greatly increased the mobility of people. At present there are few places with significant concentrations of people that are not served by kombi-taxis.

While transport and information costs are reduced, others may rise over time. If unemployment levels in destination areas increase, as has indeed been the case in South Africa, it takes longer to find work. If this is added to increased costs of living the costs of subsistence while looking for work increases. Due to the variability of the costs of migration, it is therefore necessary to get an idea of what these costs are at a particular moment. One should also try to ascertain the minimum income levels below which individuals would not be able to afford these costs, and at which the costs of migration become an obstacle to migration.

The costs of migration are a structural obstacle to migration for the poorest. They should therefore be expected to, on average, reduce the amount of migration taking place. Not all poor individuals will be discouraged equally by these costs however. Those individuals who are
prepared to suffer more severe deprivation (e.g. hunger and homelessness) and to carry higher risks in pursuit of a life elsewhere, will be less discouraged than others. Poor people are therefore not robbed completely of their agency by the costs of migration.

**Social networks as mechanisms to reduce the costs of migration**

Another way in which poor people can exercise agency is to use their social network connections. Because social networks make 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. The obstacles placed in the way of the migration of the poorest by the costs of migration are therefore not insurmountable for all potential migrants. As a result, social networks can reduce the income selectivity of migration to some extent (Massey et al. 1994a).

Network connections assist aspiring 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. This reduces the costs of information search about opportunities elsewhere. For poor people, the most important information source regarding opportunities elsewhere is friends and family members who live in the destination area and who form part of the social network of the potential migrant. Information dissemination is the result of the social interaction that takes place between network members. They keep in contact through visits, phone calls and letters while information is disseminated through gossip or as a result of more directed enquiries. These are of course not costless activities, so one should not take the argument about the costs reducing properties of social networks with regard to information gathering too far.

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. Local network connections can also be the basis for the pooling of the savings of potential migrants to finance the trip. 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 can also help the adjustment of the migrant by fetching him/her at the taxi rank, for example, and generally 'show them the ropes' in the new environment (Fuller et al. 1990:535).

All of the above are ways in which networks subsidise the costs of migration. Because networks fulfil this cost reducing function, it follows that their role in migration becomes more important if the costs of migration are high and migrants are too poor to easily afford these costs. If the costs of migration are low, we can expect networks to play a lesser role and migrants will move on their own without seeking the help of friends and family members.

Limits to the ability of social networks to subsidise the costs of migration

The impact of poverty and disease on the effectiveness of social networks
The amount of support a specific migrant can expect from network connections is not invariant, but depends on a number of factors. The first and obvious factor is that of network resources. In general, the bigger the amount of resources controlled by a network, that is the more information and cash at its disposal, the better it will be able to support migration. Following on this, it may be the case that friends and family are prepared to help the potential migrant but do not have the resources to extend significant help.

Because money has to be expended in keeping contact with friends and family, poverty can make it impossible to maintain 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 Eastern Cape 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 that the recent migrants previously formed part of cannot be maintained. This reduces the chances of those who were left behind in the rural areas to migrate in turn, and it also makes it difficult for the recent migrants to return home when
they reach the end of the road in their attempts to establish themselves in Cape Town. Migrants can therefore also become trapped at the urban end, forcing them into a permanent choice for the urban area at a stage of the migration process when they are not ready for it. According to Kothari (2002:15), this can be the final straw that tips those people into chronic poverty.

Meagher (1997:89) also points to the negative impact of poverty on the maintenance of social networks. Structural adjustment policies in Nigeria had the effect of reducing inflation-adjusted incomes in both rural and urban areas. This ‘left households on both sides less able to maintain ties and contribute to extended family needs’. Rural households could no longer afford the inputs needed to produce food surpluses. The steep rise in transport costs reduced the frequency of visits between urban and rural households. Consequently less food was sent to urban friends and family, and the counter-flows in the form of remittances from the towns also declined. Increasing poverty 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).

In the sub-Saharan context especially, HIV-AIDS is another factor reducing the effectiveness of social networks. Besides the direct impact of the disease in terms of killing people who might have been possible sources of support for potential migrants, it also has the indirect effect of impoverishing households by directing human resources out of income-earning activities. Household members spend an increasing amount of their time (and money) on activities such as visits to clinics, acquiring medicines and organising funerals. This adds to the instability of household membership and places more stress on wider social networks to help the surviving household members, especially children. This help would often be in the form of transferring them to other households, as we saw above, and can thus lead to increasing migration. This migration can be in either a rural-urban or the opposite direction, and is unlikely to have an impact on the net migration rates that are the focus of this paper. In general, one can assume that less help would be available to support rural-urban migration attempts of the more planned and less risky kind.

Differential access to social networks
People may differ with regard to the extent of their access to support networks. James (1991) pointed to the discontinuities experienced by women from Limpopo Province in the operation of their 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. 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 either the support of these new networks, or that 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 woman, is often not forthcoming. 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 an unmarried woman may face, according to James (1991:11), is that her place in the natal home is increasingly usurped by her married sisters-in-law as time goes by. This of course assumes that one or more of her brothers are in a stable marriage relationship, which is, given the relatively low marriage rates in South Africa rural areas, not as common as elsewhere. At any rate, if this does occur, the support offered by her own family networks (consisting primarily of fathers and brothers) will tend to wane as her sisters-in-law become established at home.

The better-off may disengage
A problem often faced by network members is that those among them who have been upwardly mobile, and who are therefore most able to help, tend to disengage from the network (Sharp and Spiegel 1985, Sharp 1994:78, Spiegel and Mehlwana 1997:33, Delius 1996:152, also see Lomnitz
1977:134 for ethnographic evidence to this effect from Mexico). Successful migrants may feel so secure in their new environment that they do not think they need the insurance offered by their past links in the home village. They also believe that they may never want to return to the home village, which reduces their incentive to help those who have been left behind. They now might experience the claims of others on the resources they have accumulated as a strain rather than as a source of security. This means that they are no longer available to sponsor the migration of family and friends left behind in the rural areas.

Conclusion

This leads us to the conclusion that the ability of networks to facilitate the migration of potential migrants may sometimes be quite limited. This applies especially to those who are most in need of network support: the poorest, as well as women. If the networks of the poorest are very tenuous and break up, or if past migrants no longer feel obligated to help those who stayed behind, support networks may lose the capacity to help new migrants. Rural women, who face structural limitations to their ability to build support networks, can be in the same position. Social networks will thus be limited in their capacity to reduce the income selectivity of migration, and the costs of migration will be a greater obstacle to migration than it would otherwise have been. This will reduce the ability of migration to weaken the spatial dimension of social inequality in South Africa.
List of sources


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