

# “Les mouvements méthanastasiques”: Jovan Cvijic and migration theory

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## Abstract

*The tenth and eleventh chapters of « La péninsule balkanique » are devoted to the study of contemporaneous migration for which Cvijic suggests the term “méthanastasiques” from the greek “change of habitat”. Whereas chapter 10 offers a description of the main historic migration flows in the Balkan region, chapter 11 is a very original attempt at enumerating the various causes of migration and paves the way toward building a theory. At that time, such an attempt was very rare in human geography and in social sciences in general. In the Ecole française de géographie of Vidal de la Blache the topic of migration was indeed nearly absent. The only predecessors of Cvijic are thus the XIXth century geographers Ratzel in Germany and Ravenstein in the UK, but I contend that Cvijic offers a broader and more exhaustive overview of migration drivers, which makes of him an important but forgotten figure of migration theory. The present paper will attempt to make this point by situating Cvijic’s specific contribution within the history of migration theory and by examining its’ current relevance, now that migration has moved from the margin to the center of human geography. The 3 first sections of the paper present an interdisciplinary overview of migration theories. I contend that although a distinction can be made between voluntary and forced migration, it evolves along a continuum of individual and contextual situations. The fourth section presents Cvijic views on migration and puts them in perspective with the previous.*

## 1. Introduction.

No clear cut delineation can be made between voluntary and forced migration but it is fair to say that most attempts at theorizing migration – in the sense of suggesting general frameworks of understanding based on regularities - address cases where potential migrants retain a fairly high level of agency and are not “forced” to move. However, with the growing salience of concepts such as “mixed migration” (Van Hear, Brubaker, & Bessa, 2009) and “survival migration” (Betts, 2013), and calls to go beyond the structure versus agency dualism in migration studies (Bakewell, 2010), a promising perspective of investigation opens up for a more inclusive migration theory framework (Hein De Haas, 2014).

It is interesting in that context to notice that some of the pioneers of migration studies – and most prominently the geographer Friederich Ratzel – indeed considered simultaneously political, environmental and economic drivers of migration which were later either put to the fore (economic drivers), dealt with by a specific subfield of study (political drivers within refugee studies) or nearly forgotten (environmental drivers) (Piguet, 2013). Jovan Cvijic is also among the few pioneers to present an integrative overview of migration drivers (Cvijic, 1918), but his work on migration is limited to a few chapters of his book and did not attract the attention it deserved. I will try here to give a brief overview of

some of the main theoretical directions suggested by researchers of both voluntary and forced migration and then to identify Cvijik main views on those issues.

## 2. Theories of voluntary migration

Why do people choose to migrate? For more than a century, the social sciences have been attempting to answer that question, which concerns geography as well as psychology, political economy and economics, sociology, anthropology and demography. As shown twenty years ago by Massey in his classic plea for theoretical pluralism in migration studies, one can consider each school of thought to have contributed valuable conceptual enlargements that are often complementary rather than antagonistic (Massey et al., 1994). They allow us to draw a reasonably coherent picture of the different factors and causal mechanisms that are at play in relation to migration. The recent history of migration studies can be understood, in that perspective, as a progressive enlargement of the spectrum of explanation mechanisms, although it is clear that no unified and specific theory of such a multifaceted phenomenon will ever exist.

Among the most used, the neoclassical school – not to be confounded with the much broader push-pull approach - points to the central importance of economic factors and to the process of utility maximization by individual agents that underlies migration decisions. The expectation of higher wages and better employment leads those people who are not averse toward risk and can afford the cost of displacement to consider migration, whereas others discard it (Harris & Todaro, 1970). Behaviourist geographers acknowledged this general framework but added —among other things—that actors have only limited access to information and that their rationality is thus bounded, leading them to pursue their satisfaction in an incremental way by seizing opportunities rather than by targeting the unique move that would maximize their utility in absolute terms (Wolpert, 1965). Considering the ways in which people are aware of migration opportunities and risk, and the ways in which they process this information, thus appears paramount. Both the neoclassical and the behaviourist conceptions fit nicely into Everett Lee's famous, but very general, push-pull model, which mentions demographic, economic and political factors in the areas of departure and destinations, along with intervening opportunities and obstacles, as interacting to produce migrations: *«No matter how short or how long, how easy or how difficult, every act of migration involves an origin, a destination, and an intervening set of obstacles. We include the distance of the move as one that is always present.»* (Lee, 1966: 49).

A significant conceptual improvement in migration theory can be associated with the "new economics of labour migration" (NELM) (Stark, 1991). Central to this approach is the idea that the household, rather than the individual, should be considered as the decision-making unit regarding migration. Phenomena that might appear irrational through the lenses of the preceding schools of thought can be understood as rational when viewed this way. It is possible, for example, that while the departure of one member of a household brings no absolute increase in earnings, it nevertheless makes sense as a collective risk-diversification strategy. Another important concept brought to the fore by the NELM is the importance of relative deprivation: the decision to move can follow a degradation of the situation of a person or household relative to the rest of society, without any change in its absolute purchasing power. This is a central element that complicates the relationship between migration and economic development and explains a possible migration hump where migration increases rather than decrease with growth (H. De Haas, 2007).

Theories rooted in social psychology and especially in theories of motivation and decision have also made a significant contribution to the understanding of migration intentions. Tartakovsky and Schwartz (2001) distinguish three types of motives for moving (preservation of the self and the quest for security; personal development; and materialism), whereas De Jong and Fawcett (1981) point toward seven categories of improvement expectations: material life, status, comfort, stimulation, autonomy, affiliation and morality. These motivations interact with social and cultural norms as well as individual characteristics such as gender and personality. The propensity to take risks and the locus of control (the extent to which an individual believes him- or herself to be in control of events that affect his or her life) are often seen as central psychological dimensions in this regard (Boneva & Frieze, 2001; Chirkov, Vansteenkiste, Tao, & Lynch, 2007; Winchic & Carment, 1989); they interact with the level of satisfaction or dissatisfaction and shape migration intentions (Stinner & Van Loon, 1992).

Among recent contributions to migration theory, the network approach—rooted in older concepts such as chain migration and social capital—is of great relevance. Central here is the idea that contacts with already expatriated friends or members of one's close or distant family are significant assets that usually facilitate and encourage migration (Gordon F. De Jong, 2000; Epstein & Gang, 2006).

The line of thinking pioneered by network theory stresses the linkages between expatriates and potential migrants and can be associated with the general paradigmatic shift that has occurred in migration studies, from a conception of migration as a once-and-for-all movement between two geographical spaces, to the conception of a transnational space of flow within which migrants move without losing contact with their region of origin (Faist, 1997; Palloni, Massey, Ceballos, Espinosa, & Spittel, 2001; Portes, 2001; Vertovec, 1999). Finally, many authors have advocated a “return of the state” in migration theory. They contend that even in times of globalization, migrations remain highly constrained by nation-state policies. Recruitment agreements, political partnerships such as the UE or MERCOSUR, colonial links, political antagonisms, asylum policies, visa policies and border control imply power relations between political spaces that have to be understood as major drivers of migration (Wayne A Cornelius, Martin, & Hollifield, 2004; W. A. Cornelius & Rosenblum, 2005; Hollifield, 2000). This obviously points toward a link between the traditional migration theories on the one hand and forced migration on the other.

### **3. Theories of forced migration**

What are the reasons which drive a person to flee his place of residence, and how does this person choose a destination? That simple question remained for a long time, and to a large extent still is, at the margin of migration studies. It seems obvious that, in a context of violence, emergency and danger, refugees are simply compelled to leave their home in hurry and move toward the first safe haven they encounter. The consequences for theory and empirical research are that the regularities necessary for theorization are lacking. This central idea was already well illustrated by Kunz (1973, p. 131) for whom “[*Refugee's*] progress more often than not resembles the movement of the billiard ball: devoid of inner direction their path is governed by the kinetic factors of inertia, friction and the vectors of outside forces applied on them”. As noted by Black (Black, 1991: 281): “Existing work has tended to view refugee flows separately as temporary, unique, one-off events”. A closer look is nevertheless warranted at three important contributions to forced migration theorization.

#### *The creation of nation states as push factor*

Relying on Hannah Arendt's *The Origins of Totalitarianism* (Arendt, 1958, pp. 269-290) Aristide Zolberg underlined how the creation of new states could become a refugee-generating process (Zolberg, 1983). The process is actually two fold. On the one hand, the creation of a new State is often associated with violence, revolution or annexation. On the other hand the creation of a Nation-state relies heavily on a process of exclusion which aims at creating a national identity (Geertz, 1973; Wimmer, 2002). As Zolberg explains:

*“Imperial government generally requires only minimal involvement on the part of the subject population; its demands upon them are limited to obedience and material tribute. Cultural diversity does not matter much because the system of rule is largely indirect, with traditional elites of the various groups acting as go-betweens. (...) The organizational imperatives of the nation-state are much more demanding in this respect, since the persistence of relatively autonomous sociocultural communities negates its very existence. In order for the nation to come into being, the population must be transformed into individuals who visibly share a common nationality; the process entails an actualization of the myth that they are quite literally “born together,” that they constitute a natural community”* (Zolberg, 1983: 36).

Zolberg's insights were strikingly prescient when considering the refugee flows that followed the disintegration of Yugoslavia and recent attempts at creating new national entities such as South Sudan.

### *The political economy of forced migration*

Whereas Zolberg underlines through state formation a common feature of different historical episodes of flight, Stephen Castles considers the continuous growth of refugee flows, which characterized the end of the 20th century (Castles, 2003). He sees this evolution in the framework of political economy, as the product of a general process of globalisation that created *“a system of selective inclusion and exclusion of specific areas and groups, which maintains and exacerbates inequality”* (p. 16). His statement that *“Forced migration is not the result of a string of unconnected emergencies but rather an integral part of North-South relationships”* (p. 17) leads to the necessity of considering a very general framework of explanations, loosely connected to world system theory, and which could be summarized with the label *“social transformations”*. In simple terms, globalization increases economic inequalities around the world, undermines traditional regulation mechanisms, and fosters conflicts and human rights abuse, even as it simultaneously increases the level of connexion between the different parts of the world through a process of transnationalisation. This in turn leads to a massive surge in various forms of migration which, to a certain extent, *“blur[s] the distinction between forced and economic migration”* (p. 17).

### *Exit instead of voice or loyalty*

The previous two lines of arguments explain forced migration on a macro scale, but do not consider the possible agency of refugees themselves. In this sense they do not depart from the old assumption mentioned above that refugees are merely passive victims. A third line of thought suggests that in certain circumstances the flight and the direction of the flight can be an autonomous choice. Albert O. Hirschman's *“Exit, Voice and Loyalty”* (1970) undertakes a study of *“responses to decline in firms, organizations and states”* that considers the triad of Exit (i.e. emigration), Voice (protest) and Loyalty as mutually exclusive alternatives available to citizens of an unsatisfactory state. Hirschman provides insights into the conditions under which emigration becomes the response when individuals face violence,

insecurity or persecution that undermine their loyalty, while the authoritative control of the State on freedom of speech and political association makes the “voice” option too dangerous.

Hirschman refined his theory after applying it to the disintegration of the German Democratic Republic and the sudden outflow of refugees it generated in 1989. In the case of Eastern Germany, the relation between emigration and contestation at home (voice) appeared to be that of a tandem where both “reinforced each other, achieving jointly the collapse of the regime” (Albert O. Hirschman, 1993, p. 13 in the reprint version). Other recent studies relying on Hirschman’s framework, such as Hoffmann (Hoffmann, 2004) on Cuban refugees, offer evidences that in other cases the inverse relationship suggested by Hirschman between exit and voice remains valid: some government have deliberately tolerated or even encouraged the exit of refugee in order to ease the contestation within the country.

In any case, although Hirschman’s contribution remains more “a conceptual framework” than an operational model or a grand theory (Hoffmann, 2004, p. 35) it is of great interest for forced migration theory building because it underlines the possible margin of action of certain refugees and call for a global analysis of the alternatives which are open to potential migrants. A second, even more important contribution is that Hirschman reintroduces the role of the State of origin in the analysis of refugee flows. By opening or closing its borders, by actively seeking to curb emigration or on the contrary by encouraging it, the State of origin plays a central role in shaping refugee flows. This role was often neglected, under the assumption that the country of origin of refugee would be, by definition, in turmoil and unable to control the movements of its citizens.

Our very sketchy overview of migration theories allows us to turn now toward the work of Jovan Cvijic and to appreciate the originality of his contribution.

#### **4. Jovan Cvijic and migration theory**

The tenth and eleventh chapters of « La péninsule balkanique » (Cvijić, 1918) are devoted to the study of migration and their causes whereas chapter twelve analysis discuss their consequences. Contrary to other parts of the book related to so called “zones of civilization” which were linked to publications by Cvijik in English speaking journals such as the *Geographical Journal* (Cvijik, 1918), the ideas of Cvijik on migration were not made available beyond a French or Serbo-Croatian speaking public. Whereas chapter 10 offers a description of the main historic migration flows in the Balkan region, chapter 11 is a very original attempt at enumerating the various causes of migration. It hence paves the way toward building a theory. At that time, such an attempt was very rare in human geography and in social sciences in general. In the *Ecole française de géographie* of Vidal de la Blache the topic of migration was indeed nearly absent<sup>1</sup>. The only predecessors of Cvijic are thus the XIXth century geographers Ratzel in Germany (Ratzel, 1882, 1903) and Ravenstein in the UK (E.G. Ravenstein, 1885; E.G. Ravenstein, 1889). Ratzel mainly considered migration at the very broad scale of “Völkerwanderung” (Migration of large groups of related individuals such as tribes or kinships). In that context he identified three main drivers of migration: 1) insufficient crop yield and soil resources, 2) “political” expulsion by another group, 3) conquest of another territory. Ravenstein took a very different path. Based on the observation of internal migration within the United Kingdom and of international migration among nineteen countries around the world, he attempted to identify regularities in migration processes (his famous laws of migration) at

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<sup>1</sup> The issue of temporary migration (nomadism) is addressed by a famous follower of Vidal: Jean-Brunhes (Brunhes, 1910).

various scales. He considered that economic drivers were prominent<sup>2</sup> beside unpleasant climate, bad or oppressive laws, heavy taxation, uncongenial social surroundings and compulsion but did not attempt to enumerate the main drivers of migration within a coherent theoretical framework. A few years later and despite the fact that he does not make any reference to their work, how to place Cvijic contribution beside the pioneer work of Ratzel and Ravenstein ?

### *Definition of migration and sources*

Cvijic suggests the term “métanastasiques” from the greek “change of habitat”<sup>3</sup> to define the focus of his investigations. The main aim of this new terminology is for him to differentiate modern migrations from older currents. It is nevertheless interesting to note that by focusing on the change of habitat, Cvijic differentiates migratory movements from shorter term forms of mobility. He suggests in that sense a definition that was not present in the works of Ratzel and Ravenstein and is actually close to the contemporaneous definition of migration by the United Nations which – although there is no formal legal definition - is also focused on a change of residence (= habitat): a migrant is someone who changes his or her country of usual residence, irrespective of the reason for migration or legal status<sup>4</sup>.

The main source for Cvijic reconstruction of past migration in the Balkans are family registers<sup>5</sup> (citulja) and the ethnographic studies of his collaborators. The 1/200'000 map mentioned in p. 114 seems to be very unfortunately lost. Cvijic also identifies the main itineraries of migration and what he calls “cols et vallées métanastasiques” (metanastasic mountain passes and valleys). This echoes one of Ravenstein’s laws: “Migratory currents flow along certain well defined geographical channels” (1889: p. 284). Areas producing important currents of migration are named “pays-ruches” (hive countries) whereas Ravenstein would have used “counties of dispersion”. Cvijic also notes that “les émigrants se dirigeaient rarement d'une seule traite des pays-ruches, d'où la population essaimait comme d'une ruche, vers ceux où ils voulaient s'installer, vers les pays de colonisation. Pour des causes multiples, ils s'arrêtaient un ou deux ans, parfois une dizaine d'années dans quelque contrée intermédiaire, près des routes transversales, ou même un peu à l'écart de celles-ci: des pays de séjour temporaire » (p. 114). This point echoes the « step by step » process outlined by Ravenstein (1885, p. 199) but is indeed different. Ravenstein had more of a “domino effect” in mind: “The inhabitants of the country immediately surrounding a town of rapid growth, flock into it ; the gaps thus left in the rural population are filled up by migrants from more remote districts, until the attractive force of one of our rapidly growing cities makes its influence felt, step by

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<sup>2</sup> « It does not admit of doubt that the call for labour in our centres of industry and commerce is the prime cause of those currents of migration which it is the object of this paper to trace. » (1885, p. 198).

<sup>3</sup> « Pour caractériser les migrations dont je parle. pour les différencier, d'une part des invasions et des grandes migrations du début du Moyen-Age, de l'autre des migrations qui s'opèrent au cours des conquêtes et de l'agrandissement territorial des Etats balkaniques entre le IXe siècle et l'invasion turque, et pour en mieux faire ressortir le caractère et la grande importance ethnique, je les désignerai d'un nom spécial : mouvements métanastasiques (du mot grec qui signifie changement d'habitat) » (p. 113).

<sup>4</sup> Generally, a distinction is made between short-term or temporary migration, covering movements with a duration between three and 12 months, and long-term or permanent migration, referring to a change of country of residence for a duration of one year or more (<https://refugeesmigrants.un.org/definitions>). Interestingly IOM adopts a much broader – and problematic – definition of migration irrespective of the length of stay (International Organization for Migration, 2016) <https://www.iom.int/key-migration-terms>.

<sup>5</sup> A kind of source that was also central for two other pioneers of migration studies : Adam Smith and Thomas Malthus. In their case parochial registers.

step, to the most remote corner of the kingdom.”. Cvijic points more toward a progressive individual process stretching over long periods of time.

### *Causes of metanastasic movements*

Chapter 11 of la Péninsule balkanique intends to identify the causes of migrations and constitutes the most innovative contribution of Cvijic on this issue. A distinction is made between “historic causes” (related in the case of the Balkans to the Turkish invasion) and “economic causes” but they overlap so that a synthetic list of what could be named “Cvijic laws of migration”:

- 1) Upheaveal against political oppression often lead to emigration, especially among populations with a national consciousness (p. 126)
- 2) Oppression, violence and more generally insecurity regarding goods and populations are causes of departure (p. 126)
- 3) There is an inverse link between soil property and migration: landless families (tenants or peasant without properties) are always the ones who leave first (p. 128)
- 4) There is a class dimension regarding migration: wealthier populations leave first and poorer families at a later stage (p. 128) [although one could note that this might contradict 3]
- 5) The natural environment plays an important role on migration as it impact on economic productivity and resources<sup>6</sup> (p. 135). Soil infertility and bad crops are important drivers or accelerators of emigration<sup>7</sup> (p. 133/5)
- 6) Emigration are often produced by a growing population density (p. 134)<sup>8</sup>
- 7) Some populations do have a psychological propensity to migrate (p. 134)<sup>9</sup>
- 8) Economic development of industries, mines and rail infrastructure are already attracting migration in Western Europe and will do so in the Balkan in the future (p. 137).
- 9) Superstition and fears can also act as drivers of migration<sup>10</sup>.

Beside these regularities, Cvijic also note some other features of migration that are in line with very contemporaneous issues. Regarding what would be now called “transnationalism” or “network migration” he notes that strong links are sometime kept between those who stayed and those who left and that these connections allow complex time-space configurations of migration: “Suivant une vieille coutume, un membre; de la zadruga restait avec sa famille dans l'ancien foyer; on lui laissait les immeubles et les meubles grossiers qu'on ne pouvait pas transporter. Les autres étaient portés par les chevaux qui

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<sup>6</sup> « Les mauvaises récoltes, la famine, les épizooties accélèrent le cours normal des migrations économiques. Les régions karstiques, en effet, souffrent de la sécheresse d'été plus que tout autre terrain : la végétation est rapidement brûlée et la population privée de récoltes et de foin pour le bétail. La disette s'aggrav[e] par le manque de communications qui empêch[e] le blé d'arriver en quantité suffisante. » (p. 135)

<sup>7</sup> « On constate une différence très nette entre le pays-ruche, qui est en même temps une région de ressources médiocres, et le pays de colonisation, qui se distingue toujours par une grande fertilité. » (p. 133)

<sup>8</sup> « Chaque migration puissante est précédée d'un accroissement de population tel qu'il aboutit au surpeuplement de la montagne; les moyens de subsistance deviennent alors insuffisants. »

<sup>9</sup> « La mobilité est parfois favorisée par un trait psychique spécial; par exemple, la population do la basse Herzégovine, plus avide de bien-être et de richesse, se décide plus facilement à l'exode. »

<sup>10</sup> « Il arriva un jour qu'un aigle survolant l'oro, tandis que les jeunes gens dansaient, laissa tomber un morceau de viande ; on considéra le fait comme un mauvais présage, annonçant de prochains carnages, et les paysans se décidèrent à changer l'emplacement du village. » (p. 137)

marchaient en colonne en avant de la troupe. A cette caravane se mêlaient quelques brebis, des veaux et des vaches mais presque jamais les boeufs de labour. Chaque grande migration était précédée par quelques éclaireurs qui choisissaient des contrées de colonisation et y séjournaient parfois quelques années avant le départ définitif. (...) Les groupes émigrants faisaient-ils partie d'une tribu ou de grandes zadrugas apparentées, ils installaient alors quelques-uns de leurs membres à proximité des cols et des gués qui servaient de passages; et ces « maisons » bien connues, souvent réputées, accueillaien., et hospitalisaient les nouveaux venus pendant plusieurs générations; ainsi se trouvait assurée la sécurité de la région et des troupes d'émigrants. Il y avait là tout un système de précautions prises en vue des migrations. » (p. 128).

## 5. Conclusion: Cvijik and contemporary theories of migration

The three first part of this paper have summarized a well-developed and structured, if not fully coherent, corpus of theories of “voluntary” and “forced” migration. In the fourth part we have added to this picture a synthesis of the neglected contribution of Jovan Cvijik to migration theory at the beginning of the XXth century. Although they were developed on the sole basis of the Balkan case, Civjik analysis are strikingly in line with current discussion on migration theory. Cvijic is indeed among the few who put side by side “economic” drivers and “political” drivers of migration, a conceptualization that was outlined by Ratzel only very broadly and that is not to be found in the work of Ravenstein, the other major pioneer of migrations studies.

Looking at the impressive list of migration drivers identified by Cvijik one must admit that he offers a rich material for migration theorization. Some of his statements are outdated: as mentioned in the first part of this paper the psychological approaches toward migration do not consider some specific populations as having neither collective nor individual characteristics that would make them more or less migratory. Other statements, on the contrary, are fully in line with contemporaneous research questions linked to transnationalism (Dahinden, 2017) or the links between class and migration (Van Hear, 2014). Just as Ravenstein’s laws, they suggest research hypotheses that are as valuable today as they were 100 years ago. This makes of Cvijic an important but forgotten figure of migration study.

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