

Chapter 2

Theoretical Perspectives on International Migration and Livelihoods

In order to interpret the data and to answer the research questions of this study, different theoretical perspectives on migration and livelihoods will be considered. As migration and livelihoods are interdisciplinary fields of research, only the most appropriate theories and approaches from different disciplines will be presented and applied in this work. The theoretical part begins with a consideration of migration theories, which help to explain migration processes ranging from the causes to the consequences of migration and ending with a consideration of the sustainable livelihood approach with reference to the various impacts of migration on livelihoods.

2.1 Theories of International Migration

Since Ernst Ravenstein, an important pioneer in migration studies, first formulated his central ideas in the classic study, “The laws of migration” (Ravenstein 1885), a significant number of migration theories have been developed. In fact, research on international migration has developed a broad range of theoretical approaches and concepts in order to explain migration processes. For example, based on the analysis of numerous foreign and domestic writings, the Russian scientist Iontsev (1999) formulated the classification of 17 major scientific approaches to the study of international migration, including 45 research directions, theories and concepts. However, there may potentially be even more theories and concepts. This classification includes the following approaches: economic, demographic, migration, sociological, political, systemic, geographical, ecological, historical, ethnographic, psychological, biological, genetic, philosophical, juridical, typological, and methodological (Iontsev 1999). In order to understand the socio-economic aspects of international migration, a significant amount of interest will be paid to economic and sociological approaches within the framework of this study. As migration is a multidisciplinary field of study, it would be impossible to use only one approach or

theory in this study to adequately explain its processes. I would like to note that according to Ogden, “Given the great variety of migration, it is not perhaps surprising that there is no comprehensive theory of migration. Nevertheless, successful attempts have been made to integrate migration into economic and social theory, spatial analysis and behavioral theory and the body of theory available across the relevant disciplines is now quite substantial” (Ogden 2000: 504 based on Ogden 1984). Migration processes today are more complicated and diverse. The impacts of migration on many aspects of human life also became diverse due to many socio-economic, political, cultural changes that occurred day by day, and it should be noted that the role of migration in people’s livelihoods has become more and more significant at the present time. According to Massey and his colleagues: “At present, there is no single, coherent theory of international migration, only a fragmented set of theories that have developed largely in isolation from one another, sometimes but not always segmented by disciplinary boundaries” (Massey et al. 1993: 432).

Based on the analysis of scientific literature on international migration, I found the following approaches and theories useful to my study: For the economic sphere, I made use of the new economics of migration and segmented labour market or dual labour market theory. Considering the fact that the radical economic changes that occurred during the transformation period in Kyrgyzstan have played an important role in migration, using economic approaches to study migration emerged as the most suitable way to identify reasons, factors, dynamics and the character of these processes. For sociological questions, the network theory, and transnational migration and transnational social spaces that can shed light on many social aspects of international migration were considered.

2.1.1 The New Economics of Migration/The New Economics of Labour Migration

The new economics of migration starts with Stark (1978), who introduced a new theoretical approach to international migration by considering migration “in the context of household economic relationships, and by placing the household in the context of the imperfect credit and risk markets that characterize migrant-sending areas in the developing world” (Taylor et al. 1996: 403). Stark placed individual decision making in a broader social context, and the family or household was viewed as the most relevant unit of decision making (de Haas 2010: 242). In this regard, Stark (1984a: 220) argued “a large entity—the family—is very often the effective decision-making unit. Taking note of the existence and intensity of the interactions usually taking place between a migrant and his family which stays behind (e.g., remittances) supports the view that the family role in non-family migration is much more important than is commonly assumed.” Katz and Stark (1986: 136) agreed, observing, “there are strong theoretical and empirical reasons

to suggest that the decision-making entity is often the family, of which the individual is a member. Migration by a family member is then warranted when it facilitates reduction in total familial risk via diversification of earning sources." Additionally, both migrant and non-migrant family members are better off because "an exchange of commitments to share income provides coinsurance" (Stark and Bloom 1985: 175) and one of the significant direct returns to non-migrants are remittances from the migrant member of the family (Stark and Bloom 1985: 174). According to the new economics of labour migration, these remittances are perceived as one of the substantial motives for migration (de Haas 2010: 243). Furthermore, this theoretical view moves the focus of migration theory from "individual independence to mutual interdependence", with migration seen as a "calculated strategy" (Stark and Bloom 1985: 174–175). This supports the idea that "a wider social entity is collectively responsible for individual migration" (Stark and Bloom 1985: 175).

According to the new economics of migration, migrants do not make migration decision individually but often jointly, so that the decision becomes a household or family strategy to minimize risks, increase income and to overcome and ensure against the effects of market failures (Stark and Levhari 1982; Stark 1984a, 1991; Stark and Bloom 1985; Katz and Stark 1986; Taylor 1999; Massey et al. 1993; Iontsev 1999). As Taylor (1999: 74) wrote, "Market failures include missing or imperfect credit and insurance markets, which force household farms to self finance their production and to self-insure against income risk", and households do this through investment in the migration of their members (Taylor et al. 1996: 404). What is more, Taylor and his colleagues mentioned that from the perspective of the new economics of labour migration, market failures (credit and risk markets) are viewed as the primary reason for international migration, and that in order to decrease migration outflow, governments should endeavour to correct failures in these markets (Taylor et al. 1996: 405).

Along with criticism of Todaro's work (1969) based on individualistic context, Katz and Stark (1986: 136) offered "an alternative theory drawing on the characteristic features of LDCs' capital markets", which, unlike Todaro's theory, allows for an explanation of temporary migration (Katz and Stark 1986: 136). According to them, "migration takes place because it enables a person to overcome a constraint imposed by the rural capital markets" (Katz and Stark 1986: 140). Unlike developed countries where income risks are minimized via insurance markets, well-developed credit markets or programs from the government, developing countries experience a lack of such institutional mechanisms for minimizing risks, which in turn gives people (families, households) the stimulus to diversify risks via migration (Massey et al. 1993: 436). Additionally, in the absence, lack or unavailability of insurance markets and credit markets (capital markets), households or families become motivated to insure themselves, so they undertake migration strategy by sending one or more members abroad with a view to minimizing risks (crop failure, price risk, loss of income, unemployment etc.) (Massey et al. 1993: 436–438, Arango 2000: 288). Based on household data from India and Botswana, Stark and Rosenzweig (1989) and Lucas and Stark (1985) give evidence that "families insure

themselves against risk by placing members in labour markets outside of their village, where incomes are not positively correlated with local farm incomes” (Taylor et al. 1996: 404).

According to the new economics of labour migration, migration strategy is undertaken not only to maximize income but also to minimize risks (Massey et al. 1993; Arango 2000; de Haas 2007, 2010), and therefore one of the concepts of this theory is risk diversification. In their article, “On Migration and Risk in LDCs¹”, Stark and Levhari (1982) consider risk to be “an explanatory variable of rural-to-urban migration.” Family manages to supervise the risk via diversification of the family’s incomes through migration (Stark and Levhari 1982: 192). When alternatives for income diversification in a rural area are insufficient or do not exist, then “migration of a family member—is the clear strategy to follow” (Stark and Levhari 1982: 193–194).

The other concept of the new economics of migration is that of relative deprivation, according to which “the decision by households to send migrants to foreign labour markets is influenced by their initial perceived relative deprivation within the reference group” (Stark and Taylor 1989: 4; see also Stark 1984b; Stark 1991; Stark and Taylor 1991; Massey et al. 1993; Iontsev 1999). Using data from rural Mexican households, Stark and Taylor give empirical evidence that relative deprivation plays a significant role in explaining migration from Mexico to the United States (Stark and Taylor 1989, 1991), and that “controlling for initial absolute income and the expected income gains from migration, the propensity of households to participate in international migration was directly related to the households’ initial relative deprivation” (Stark and Taylor 1991: 1163).

The new economics of migration “highlights the role of families and households, underlines the importance of remittances, and pays more attention to information and to the complex interdependence between migrants and the context in which they operate” (Arango 2000: 288). And more importantly, the new economics of migration revitalized the debate on the developmental effects of migration. Taylor considers these effects and argues: “A number of empirical studies from diverse regions support the new economics of labour migration (NELM) hypothesis that migration and remittances have positive indirect effects on incomes in migrant sending households, easing capital and risk constraints on local production” (Taylor 1999: 80). Based on the premises of NELM, Taylor (2004: 157) states that migrants’ remittances and savings both directly and indirectly contribute to the income of those households receiving remittances and that the contribution may be significant.

Research into the new economics of labour migration indicates the important role that migration can play in giving households the opportunity to overcome credit and risk restrictions, and to invest funds in activities with a relatively high return. When migrant family members promote the flow of investment into new household activities by providing liquidity in the form of money transfers, and also

¹ LDCs—Less developed countries.

income security in the case of adverse income shock, they can also allow rural households to overcome local market failures (Wouterse and Taylor 2008: 626–627, 638).

Having examined the basic concepts of the new economics of migration/the new economics of labour migration and linked its relevance to my study, I would like to emphasize that in a developing country such as Kyrgyzstan, an insurance market system that manages the risks to which a household's income is exposed is almost entirely absent. Additionally, social and economic risks such as unemployment, insufficient income or loss of income, instability and inconstancy of income due to crop failures, the drop of market prices or other factors significantly increased with the transition to a market economy. Under such conditions, households have to insure themselves and adopt their own strategies. Today more and more households, especially in rural areas, are diversifying their income while minimizing their income risks through internal and international migration and reliance on remittances.

As my study is based at the level of the household, I expect that the new economics of migration will be useful in understanding the process of decision-making from this perspective. It can help to explain the causes of international migration, how households control and minimize their income risks, and how households diversify risks or accumulate capital. It will also help to answer the following questions: Does international migration reduce the social and economic risks of households? In what way does international migration contribute to improvements in a household's well-being, and does it become one of the main livelihood strategies for households? What is the role of remittances and into which fields are people investing them? When investigating the causes of migration at the household level, it is also important to identify answers to the following question: Does the likelihood that migration will occur grow because of changes in other households' incomes? This theory also can help us to understand the effect remittances have on the degree of inequality among households.

2.1.2 Segmented Labour Market or Dual Labour Market Theory

Michael J. Piore (1979) developed the main ideas of this theory in his book, "Birds of Passage: Migrant Labor and Industrial Societies." According to this approach, the labour market is divided into two sectors: primary and secondary. The secondary sector is inhabited by migrants, whereas the primary sector is largely occupied by native workers (Piore 1979: 35). The primary sector is characterised by "relatively high wages, fringe benefits, satisfactory working conditions, and employment security" (Hagner 2000: 23); while in the low wage secondary sector "benefits are minimal or nonexistent, work conditions are less desirable, lay-offs and periods of unemployment are more probable, and supervision styles and work rules can be

somewhat more harsh or arbitrary” (Hagner 2000: 23). Additionally, secondary sector jobs bring greater risks—including actuarial risks and job-related injuries—than jobs in the primary sector (Hagner 2000: 23–24 based on Graham and Shakow 1990).

Piore (1979: 13) argues that it is the demand for migrant workers, and not the supply, that produces migration. There are several explanations for the demand for a foreign labour force in industrial countries. First, taking structural inflation into account, “[...] the fear of the leverage that wage increases at the bottom would impose on their own internal wage structure that leads employers to seek out and encourage foreign migration” (Piore 1979: 32). It stands to reason, then, that attracting natives during labour shortage periods is costly and disruptive for employers, while attracting migrants who will agree to low salaries is easier and cheaper (Massey et al. 1993: 441). Additionally, for migrants from low-income countries, low salaries at the destination country are generally high compared to the standards at home (Arango 2000: 289). Second, job hierarchies led to motivational problems, especially at the low levels. In this regard, migrants provide a solution, remaining in the job despite their low social status (Piore 1979: 33–34). Migrants are able to tolerate this because they view themselves as a part of their home society rather than a member of the receiving society, and the labour abroad and remittances they earn bear significant prestige and status within their home community (Massey et al. 1993: 442). Moreover, “[m]ost migrants begin as target earners, seeking to earn money for a specific goal that will improve their status or well-being at home—building a house, paying for school, buying land, acquiring consumer goods” (Massey et al. 1993: 442). The temporary character of their migration, undertaken to achieve specific material goals, helped them to endure the undesirable conditions of secondary jobs. Third, economic dualism, the duality between labour and capital in developed economies, creates differences among workers that are related to the segmented labour market structure (Piore 1979: 37, Massey et al. 1993: 442). Fundamentally, it is difficult to attract natives to the second segment or secondary jobs because of the work conditions; therefore, in order to compensate for the scarcity of labour, employers attract migrants (Massey et al. 1993: 443). This is supported by Joaquin Arango, who notes that “[...] the fact that in advanced economies there is a permanent demand for foreign labour [...] that native workers in advanced societies shun low-paid, unstable, unskilled, dangerous, demeaning, low-prestige jobs—are well-known empirical observations” (Arango 2000: 288).

According to Kenneth Hudson, a number of recent studies on “nonstandard and contingent work arrangements” have relied on dual labour market theory, for instance, “[n]onstandard jobs are more likely than traditional work arrangements to pay low wages and less likely to provide health insurance and pensions” (Hudson 2007: 287). Furthermore, the new segmentation hypothesis claims that “nonstandard work and citizenship status now rival sex and race as important mechanisms for allocating workers into discrete segments of the labour market” (Hudson 2007: 288).

Empirical studies in labour economics and the sociology of work supports this theory. As such, primary sector labour market compensation tends to grow along with an increase in working skills, experience and education; whereas in the secondary sector, compensation remains at a low level and there is little or not enough return for investment in skills, experience or education (Hagner 2000: 24). Hudson notes that this “two-tiered” labour market, which often operates within the same company and industry sector, allows employers to deny some employees fair pay, working benefits and conditions (Hudson 2007: 307).

I expect that the dual labour market approach can shed light on several aspects of my research, including the labour market at the migrants’ destination and spheres of occupational activity of migrants as well as the question of whether migration happens because of a structural demand for migrant workers in the destination countries. It also will help to answer the following questions: In which labour markets are migrants from the study involved, and why? And is this helpful in determining whether migrants from Kyrgyzstan begin as target earners?

2.1.3 Migration Network, Chain Migration and Migration System Theories

Economic reasons alone cannot explain the migration process, and sociological approaches along with a system approach to migration help to fill this gap. In contrast to an economic approach, a sociological approach—in particular network theory—views international migration as “an inherently social process that is organized through networks forged from everyday interpersonal connections that characterize all human groups” (Massey et al. 1987: 169)

Massey and his colleagues define migrant networks as “sets of interpersonal ties that connect migrants, former migrants, and nonmigrants in origin and destination areas through ties of kinship, friendship, and shared community origin” (Massey et al. 1993: 448). A key insight provided by the network theory is that migrant networks enhance the likelihood of migration because the costs and risks involved are reduced. Through networks, potential migrants can gain access to information, jobs, accommodations, higher wages and a variety of assistance, including financial, at the destination (Taylor 1986; Massey et al. 1987, 1993, 1998; Massey 1990). Migrant networks provide migrants with “a valuable adaptive resource in a strange environment” (Massey et al. 1987: 147). They reduce the costs of migration, increase the likelihood of employment at the destination and reduce the likelihood of deportation (Jennissen 2007: 431). For first-time migrants (or ‘pioneers’) going to a new destination, the migration is costly, but costs for relatives, friends and other social ties following them are lowered (Massey et al. 1993: 449). Furthermore, networks can have a demonstration effect on migration, prompting nonmigrants to seek employment abroad as they see the actions and successes of members in their network (Arango 2000: 291).

Massey and his colleagues view these networks as a form of “social capital” and wrote: “family and friendship connections build up among migrants with time, therefore, providing new aspirants with a kind of ‘social capital’ they can draw upon to begin a migrant career” (Massey et al. 1987: 150). This makes international migration enormously attractive as a risk diversifying strategy by making migration a dependable and safe source of income (Massey et al. 1993: 449). As Monica Boyd (1989: 645) noted, “Migration can be an important strategy for generating income in the form of remittances.” Networks, as well, “shape migration outcomes, ranging from no migration, immigration, return migration or the continuation of migration flows” (Boyd 1989: 639).

Networks play an important role in the geography of migration, too. According to Massey and his colleagues, “More migrants move to a particular place because that is where the networks lead, and because that is where the social structure affords them the greatest opportunities for success. As more migrants arrive, the range of social connections is further extended, making subsequent migration to that place even more likely” (Massey et al. 1987: 153). To a certain degree, networks determine which destination places are more likely to receive migrants from a specific origin, as well as the type of job new migrants will take (Velazquez 2000: 159). Maritsa Poros (2001: 244) observed this too, mentioning that networks “channel immigrants into particular occupations at particular destinations, and link local labour markets in the process.”

This theory also explains why migration is an ongoing process due to the fact that “[o]nce the number of network connections in an origin area reaches a critical threshold, migration become self-perpetuating because each act of migration itself creates the social structure needed to sustain it” (Massey et al. 1993: 449). And it is also important to note that “[t]he development of social networks may explain the continuation of migration independently from the causes that led to the initial movement. In fact, social networks may often be the foremost predictors of future flows” (Arango 2000: 292). A major role that migration networks play in migration process is shown from empirical evidences in a number of fields (Haug 2008: 600). The process of globalization, too, has served to increase the importance of this social factor in the development of migration processes in recent time.

Stressing the importance of network theory for migration, Arango said, “[...] networks rank among the most important explanatory factors of migration. Many migrants move because others with whom they are connected migrated before. Migration networks have a multiplier effect, which is implicit in the formerly fashionable expression ‘chain migration’” (Arango 2000: 291–292). Chains are shaped via interpersonal bonds that manage the selection process in accordance with personal relationships and social commitments to family and community (Poros 2001: 246). According to Sonja Haug (2008: 591), “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.”

In comparison to single migrants, chain migrants have a number of common advantages such as access to information on labour market opportunities in the destination country, assistance in finding a job, and lower accommodation costs

(Helmenstein and Yegorov 2000: 308). In short, the theory of migration chains acknowledges “the nature, shape, and form of migration progress like links in a chain” (O’Reilly 2012: 48).

The theories considered above are closely connected to the migration system theory, as was emphasized by Boyd (1989), Massey and his colleagues (1993) and De Haas (2007). According to them, migration systems “[...] are characterized by relatively intense exchanges of goods, capital, and people between certain countries and less intense exchanges between others” (Massey et al. 1993: 454). One of the beneficial characteristics of this theory is that it emphasizes the various linkages between places and these linkages include flows of people, goods, information, ideas and services (Fawcett 1989: 672–673). James Fawcett classified the linkages in a migration system into four categories: (1) state-to-state relations, (2) mass culture connections, (3) family and personal networks and (4) migrant agency activities (Fawcett 1989: 673).

As Joaquin Arango (2000: 292) wrote, “Migration systems are spaces characterized by the relatively stable association of a group of receiving countries with a number of areas of origin.” According to migration system theory, the geographical proximity between countries within a migration system can play an important role—it can facilitate the shaping of exchange relations, for instance. Even so, geographical proximity is not indispensable to the formation of migration systems (Massey et al. 1993; Iontsev 1999). Additionally, countries can belong to more than one migration system, and multifold membership is more widespread among migrant-sending countries (Massey et al. 1993: 454). As was mentioned by Hein de Haas (2007: 33), “migration system theory draws a two-way, *reciprocal* and *dynamic* link between migration and development, and therefore seems particularly relevant for elaborating a theoretical framework, which puts migration in a broader development perspective.”

Today both the strengthening of the globalization process and the involvement of an increasing number of nations in the international migration process are contributing to the emergence and development of international migration systems. Additionally, geopolitical, political and socio-economic changes occurring in the world have a significant impact on entity and development of international migration systems. For instance, the dissolution of the Soviet Union has led to the emergence of new international migration systems, with Kyrgyzstan being an active part in this process as a country from where migrants originate.

The migration networks, chain migration and migration system theories can help us to understand and explain several aspects of international migration, and to a certain extent, why it is an on-going process. I anticipate that in my study migration networks and chain migration theories will assist in explaining the following questions:

- How do migrants organize their migration abroad?
- Which factors influence them in choosing their destination?
- How do migrants gain access to jobs and organize their life at the place of destination?

- How do migrants solve any problems that they encounter at the destination?

In order to shed light on certain aspects of my study, such as migrants' motivations, geography, scale and dynamics of migration, choice of occupation, and links between migrants and households, it is necessary to consider these theories.

2.1.4 Transnational Migration and Transnational Social Spaces

Active discussions and debates concerning transnational migration have been conducted for a few decades, particularly with the development of new means of communication and technologies and the strengthening of the globalization process. In fact, social and anthropological scientists began to uncover new patterns in immigrants' lives across borders and migrants' ties with their places of origin during their field research. A workshop in May 1990 brought together this group of researchers, and their discussions defined the migrants' new way of life as 'transnationalism' (Glick Schiller et al. 1992: ix). This phenomenon was not unique to the 1980s or 1990s, however, and according to Ulrike Schuerkens, it could already be extensively observed in the 1960s (Schuerkens 2005: 538). Nevertheless, it has been presented as a new field arising at a global level, primarily because of the intensification of relations between states (Thieme 2008: 54).

Nina Glick Schiller and her colleagues developed the following definitions of transnational migration and transmigrants: "Transnational migration is the process by which immigrants forge and sustain simultaneous multi-stranded social relations that link together their societies of origin and settlement" (Glick Schiller et al. 1995: 48). And: "Immigrants are understood to be transmigrants when they develop and maintain multiple relations—familial, economic, social, organizational, religious and political—that span borders" (Glick Schiller et al. 1992: ix). Transmigrants differ from other migrants in that "[...] they move back and forth between different places and develop their social space of everyday life, their work trajectories and biographical projects in this new and emerging configuration of social practices, symbols and artifacts that spans different places" (Pries 2001: 21). Nina Glick Schiller and her colleagues argue that the current linkages of migrants to their home societies are different than in the past, and she attributes this to the transformations in communication and transportation technologies (Glick Schiller et al. 1995: 52).

In their research, Portes and his colleagues identify two necessary conditions that make transnationalism possible: technological innovations and networks across space (Portes et al. 1999: 223–224). Technological progress and new capabilities in communication and transport technologies (planes, telephone, Internet, etc.) facilitate migrants' connections with their home society, making them faster, easier, cheaper and more accessible and frequent than in the past (Glick Schiller et al. 1995; Portes et al. 1999; Levitt 2001; Pries 2001, 2005). Since the growth of transport and of electronic communication, it has become possible for the

migrants to have ‘multiple localities’ and ‘multiple identities’; consequently, family and kin-based bonds have shifted to a great extent from a local to a global dimension (Al-Ali and Koser 2002: 3). Additionally, “the impacts of transnationalism are identified in practice—in the everyday lives of migrants—rather than, as so often the case, in theory only” (Al-Ali and Koser 2002: 1).

As for transnational practices, they “are the political, economic, social, and cultural processes occurring beyond the borders of a particular state, including actors that are not states but that are influenced by the policies and institutional arrangements associated with states” (Levitt 2001: 202 based on Glick Schiller 1999). Their scale and intensity varies significantly, and when “transnational social fields are institutionally complete [...] then more transnational practices are likely to occur” (Levitt 2001: 198). However, according to Itzigsohn and his colleagues (1999), broad transnational practices are described “as those that are not well institutionalized, involve only occasional participation and require only sporadic movement” (Levitt 2001: 198). According to Nadjé Al-Ali and Khalid Koser (2002: 6), “one implication of emerging and increasing transnational practices among international migrants is that the ‘meaning of home’ has been changing and evolving.” Living across national borders, transnational migrants respond to the restrictions and requirements of more than one country (Glick Schiller et al. 1995: 54).

What is important is that transnational family strategies allow families to survive uncertain economic circumstances (Glick Schiller et al. 1995: 54) since “the social, economic, and political ties linking migrants and non-migrants are so deep and widespread that they fundamentally change the ways individuals earn their livelihoods [...]” (Levitt 2001: 196). Another important aspect of transnational migration is its developmental capability. Through transnational migration, migrants can improve their situation in either their host country or home country. Their social standing, in particular, can also improve through earning higher salaries, sending remittances to their family left behind or creating development projects (Schuerkens 2005: 539).

Further discussions about transnationalism contributed to the emergence of the theoretical concept ‘transnational social spaces’ (Faist 1998; Pries 2001, 2005). Transnational social spaces are defined as “dense, stable, pluri-local and institutionalized frameworks composed of material artefacts, the social practices of everyday life, as well as system of symbolic representation that are structured by and structure human life” (Pries 2001: 8). In the broadest sense, they can be understood as “pluri-local frames of reference which structure everyday practices, social positions, biographical employment projects, and human identities, and simultaneously exist above and beyond the social contexts of national societies” (Pries 2001: 23). According to Thomas Faist, such spaces are “characterized by triadic relationships between groups and institutions in the host state, the sending state (sometimes viewed as an external homeland) and the minority group—migrants and/or refugee groups, or ethnic minorities” (Faist 1998: 9). Additionally, they “have a multipolar geographic orientation, rather than one limited exclusively to a single coherent geographic space” (Pries 2001: 6). Different processes within

the transnational social spaces, such as economic, political and cultural processes, involve the exchange of economic (financial), social and human capitals, and through this exchange, transnational lives can become a survival and improvement strategy in their own right (Faist 1998: 8). Pries and his colleagues argue that transnational social spaces have become widespread only in the past decade, and that this is both a significant result and form of the globalization phenomenon (Pries 2001: 23).

After the dissolution of the Soviet Union, migration processes in post-Soviet countries changed significantly, and transnational migration has become one of the manifestations of the new forms of migration. Rapid economic growth in some countries and economic slowdown or even economic crisis in other countries of the post-Soviet space has led to migration flows, especially labour migration to the economically advanced countries of this region. Transnational migration was also promoted by such factors as the availability of transport communication, geographical proximity, historical and cultural ties, and the presence of networks from Soviet times. Difficult socio-economic conditions at the migrants' countries of origin have led to migrants maintaining their lives across borders, some of them commuting between two countries, and others settling in a host country while still keeping a close connection with their home society—especially family left behind—through remittances, regular contacts and visits.

These two concepts will shed light on the social, economic and political aspects of my study, as well as clarify relationships between migrants and the households or families they left behind, and between the migrants' places of origin and destination. They will also provide a better understanding of how migrants cooperate in networks and maintain ties to their own country. It is important, too, to identify how Kyrgyz migrants experience the transnational life and become transnational migrants and how their transnational practices impact their livelihoods and families left behind. Additionally, as was mentioned by Thomas Faist (1998:7), “the development of transnational social spaces now offers a unique opportunity to look into the formation of groups that span at least two nation-states”, in my case the two nation-states of Kyrgyzstan and Russia. These concepts are also relevant to understanding the phenomena of cyclical migration, chain migration and return migration among Kyrgyz migrants.

2.2 Sustainable Livelihoods Approach

Due to the increase in poverty, as well as the growing impact that climate change and other natural hazards have on people's livelihoods, scientists and development donor agencies are paying more and more attention to the sustainable livelihoods approach. The definition of sustainable livelihoods was developed by Robert Chambers and Gordon Conway in their work “Sustainable Rural Livelihoods: Practical Concepts for the 21st Century” (1991):

“A livelihood comprises the capabilities, assets (stores, resources, claims and access) and activities required for a means of living: a livelihood is sustainable which can cope with and recover from stress and shocks, maintain or enhance its capabilities and assets, and provide sustainable livelihood opportunities for the next generation; and which contributes net benefits to other livelihoods at the local and global levels and in the short and long—term” (Chambers and Conway 1991: 6).

The concept of sustainable livelihoods was further developed as an approach by the British Department for International Development (DFID), which integrated it into its development programs (Kollmair and Gamper 2002: 3). It has also been applied by development agencies such as Oxfam, UNDP, CARE International and the World Bank in their work (Knutsson 2005; Thieme 2008).

The sustainable livelihoods framework, which shapes the basis or core of the sustainable livelihood approach, includes vulnerability context (shocks, trends, seasonality); livelihood assets; transforming structures and processes, which within this framework comprise the institutions, policies and legislation; and livelihood strategies and outcomes (DFID 1999, see also DFID 2000; GLOPP 2008). Livelihood assets are at the core of the framework and consist of human capital (skills, knowledge, education, health, ability to labour), social capital (networks, membership of more formalized groups, relationships of trust, reciprocity and support), natural capital (land, forests, water, biodiversity, etc.), physical capital (basic infrastructure such as transport, secure shelter and buildings, water supply and sanitation etc., and producer goods such as tools, equipment and different technologies) and financial capital (wages, pensions, savings, remittances, debts, etc.) (DFID 1999; Kollmair and Gamper 2002; Serrat 2008). Livelihood strategies are closely connected to the livelihood assets listed above and seek to achieve livelihood outcomes. In turn, livelihood outcomes—the outputs of livelihood strategies within the above framework—include: more income, increased well-being, reduced vulnerability, improved food security, and more sustainable use of the natural resource base (DFID 1999; Kollmair and Gamper 2002; Serrat 2008). In a few words, “the framework depicts stakeholders as operating in a context of vulnerability, within which they have access to certain assets. These gain their meaning and value through the prevailing social, institutional and organizational environment (transforming structures and processes). This context decisively influences the livelihood strategies that are open to people in pursuit of their self-defined beneficial livelihood outcomes.” (Kollmair and Gamper 2002: 4–5).

Sustainable livelihood thinking is aimed at developing an understanding of poor people’s livelihoods and ways that this can be improved, and it seeks to achieve a reduction in poverty through “inclusive, people-centred development” (Carney 2002: 13, 28). This approach attempts to understand the “complexity and diversity of how people make a living” by analysing people’s access to different types of resources, and their strategies for using them (Steimann 2011: 33). Moreover, this approach recognizes the link between people in a region and the effect that their environment has on the success of their livelihood strategies (Serrat 2008: 1). Additionally “it brings attention to bear on the inherent potential of people in

terms of their skills, social networks, access to physical and financial resources, and ability to influence core institutions” (Serrat 2008: 1).

One of the livelihood strategies that can contribute to the reduction of vulnerability and poverty is migration. The relevance of migration strategy becomes higher especially when the opportunities for livelihood diversification are very limited, which is more often characteristic of rural rather than urban areas. Accordingly, this phenomenon helps to explain why the majority of labour migrants are originally from rural areas. There is a global tendency to increasingly diversify livelihoods among rural households, which is often associated with increased mobility and better access to internal and external labour markets (Steimann 2011: 37). It is not only the financial capital (earnings, savings and remittances) obtained by a migrant during migration but also the skills and knowledge gained that may contribute to the improvement of his/her household’s well-being. As was mentioned by Frank Ellis, (2003: 9), “Migration is *seen* to contribute positively to the achievement of secure livelihoods, and to the expansion of the scope for poor people to construct their own pathways out of poverty.”

However, it should be mentioned that migration strategy does not always have a positive impact on livelihoods; this depends on the migrant’s experience influenced by a variety of factors found mainly at their destination. Examples of positive and negative impacts of migration on livelihoods and further influencing factors will be discussed further in chapters seven and eight of this work. Nevertheless, “[...] migration has been increasingly recognized as one of the main elements of the strategies households employ to diversify, secure, and, potentially, durably improve, their livelihoods” (De Haas 2010: 244). Applying the sustainable livelihoods approach in studying the Far West Nepalese labour migrants in Delhi, Susan Thieme wrote: “The sustainable livelihoods approach is used to reflect the diversity and complexity of ways in which people make a living [...] It reveals that most rural households rely on multiple income sources and adopt a range of livelihood strategies, such as labour migration.” (Thieme 2006: 40).

Recent studies have started to relate processes of rapid change to the growing uncertainty of livelihoods (Thieme 2010; Steimann 2011). In the context of post-socialist transformation, uncertainty has been primarily attributed to the “collapse of the former economic and political order, as well as to the fundamental redefinition of property rights after 1991” (Steimann 2011: 35, see also Thieme 2010).

Since the transition from a planned to a market economy, there have been radical changes in the livelihoods of the Kyrgyz people. As Bernd Steimann (2011: 35) wrote, “[...] the Soviet collapse can be seen as a shock, and the subsequent neoliberal reform policy as a trend, which both have deeply affected people’s livelihoods.” People confronted with new challenges to diversify their livelihood strategies to cope with the new conditions. Due to economic instability, household difficulties, and an increase in poverty, households started to adopt a range of livelihood strategies. As migration has become one of these livelihood strategies, especially for households in rural areas of Kyrgyzstan, the sustainable livelihoods approach will help me to identify and understand the specific links between migration and livelihoods. Applying this approach in my study will contribute to

an understanding of the livelihoods of people, the role of migration in reducing vulnerability and poverty reduction, and will help to answer the main research question of my study: “In what way does international migration influence local livelihoods?”

- Some sub-questions will additionally be addressed: In what way does international migration contribute to improvements in household livelihoods and does it become one of the main livelihood strategies for the households?
- Does international migration reduce the households’ social–economic risks?
- What are the main sources of income in each household, and what kind of changes occurred after sending household members abroad?
- What are the main consequences of international migration and does it have developmental effects?

The above set of international migration and livelihood approaches can be considered the most appropriate theoretical perspective for studying the international migration and its impact on livelihoods, and will be used further to develop the empirical evidence in this study.

2.3 Analytical Framework

Migrants and their households were chosen as the units of analysis in this study. However, the analytical framework goes beyond the micro level of analysis to include regional, national and international levels. The analysis also includes multidimensional perspectives and historical context. Since the migration processes and social and economic transformations that took place in Kyrgyzstan during the Soviet years have direct and indirect influences on contemporary migration trends and livelihood patterns respectively, the historical context will be discussed with the purpose of showing these influences and relationships. The economic, social, cultural, and communicational ties created during the Soviet time have contributed to the development of the current migration systems and relationships. This is well expressed in labour migration and transnational migration patterns today.

Furthermore, migration processes in the sovereign Kyrgyz Republic will be discussed in order to present the recent transformations in livelihoods and migration and to reveal the impacts of migration on people’s lives. The empirical data will be analysed by taking two main aspects of migration into consideration: its structural characteristics and its impacts. This is presented in Fig. 2.1.

First, the structural characteristics of migration will be analysed from a causal dimension and a geographical dimension (consisting of spatial and temporal aspects), as well as through the economic activities of migrants. The causal dimension is viewed in the context of vulnerability, poverty and risks that households experience, which leads to specific decisions and livelihood strategy adaptations. The spatial dimension of migration comprises the geographical communication between territories (countries and regions) through the movement of people and

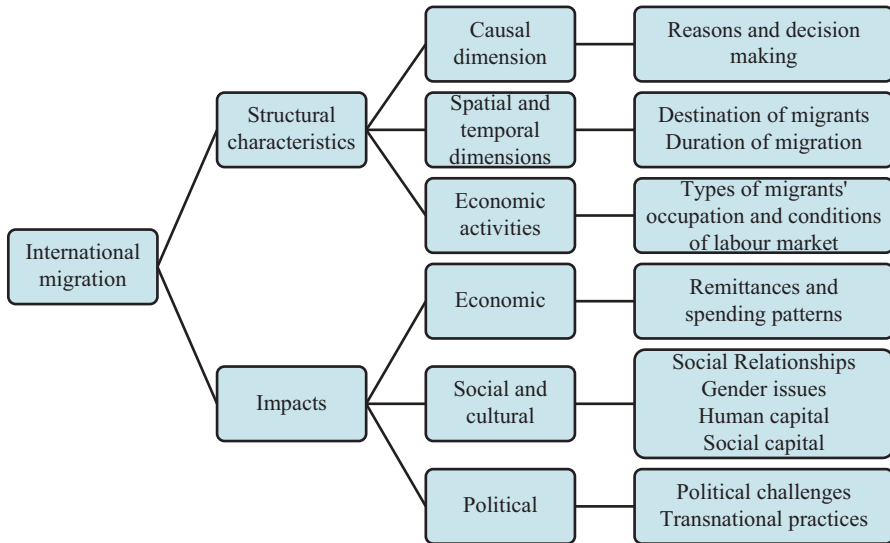


Fig. 2.1 Analytical framework. Design: Sagynbekova 2014

determines interrelations between them. These territories are linked to each other through the movement and exchange of different resources: people, labour, financial resources, natural resources, and goods, among many others. The temporal dimension examines questions about the duration and frequency of migration processes. For instance, seasonal, temporary and permanent migration can be distinct from each other. However, each temporal form also has the ability to change into another, as the circumstances of the migrant change. The characteristic of migrants' economic activities reflects the conditions of the labour market in the receiving country and its demand for labour and skills, the types of jobs available, the working and payment conditions, and access to information. Social networks have a special role in the analysis, since they are not only directly involved in migration processes, but also influence the resulting characteristics in many respects.

These migration characteristics frame the other important focus of the analysis—the economic, social (including cultural), and political impacts of international migration, which are seen not only within a local context, but also a regional, national and international context. The analysis of the economic impacts of migration focuses on the acquisition of financial capital (earnings, savings and remittances) and its further conversion to other forms of capital (human, physical and natural). Primary attention is given to remittances and how they are used, as well as to investments, which may not only change the wellbeing of the households, but may also have developmental effects on the respective villages, regions and the country. The stress here is placed on migration as a livelihood strategy that can help households to move away from poverty and reach sustainability. The transnational practices of migrants maintaining their livelihoods across the borders will also be discussed, with the intention of showing not only this international migration

pattern but also of seeing what changes and effects such practices bring to people's lives.

The social and cultural impacts are mainly analysed in the context of the different relationships between migrants and their families left behind. Special attention is paid to the role of human and social capital and to the role of gender in the migration process.

The analysis of the political impacts examines the legalisation context, official migration policies, and questions of citizenship and includes different actors, stakeholders and organizations. The different challenges and risks faced by migrants at their destination and the ways they cope with them is also an important issue within this context.

Ultimately, all of these angles of analysis point towards the relationships between migrants and the families they have left behind, as well as the impacts of migration strategy on people's livelihoods.

Having considered the theoretical and analytical frameworks and the main research questions of this study, I will discuss the methodological issues and appropriate research methods which I applied to my empirical study in the next chapter (Chap. 3).

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