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REVISED Humanising research on migration decision-making: a situated framework

[version 2; peer review: 1 approved, 4 approved with reservations]

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Abstract

The question of why some people (re)migrate while others choose to stay remains one of the important preoccupations in migration studies. It underlines the need to further conceptualise transnational migration to identify the drivers behind individuals' aspiration or intention to (re)migrate or stay where they are. Drawing from several migration theories and perspectives in various disciplines, this paper proposes the situated framework of "humanising research on migration decision-making", that is, highlighting its human aspects. This scholarly enterprise is critically important as mainstream migration theories put more emphasis on individuals' rationality and some life dimensions, thereby overlooking other human aspects of migration and stasis. Viewing individuals as persons, this framework offers three ways to humanise the analysis: thick contextualisation, life dimensions-focused analysis, and time-situated inquiry. It also calls for the engendering of the analysis and decolonising the methodologies adopted in the study of (non-)migration decision-making.

Plain language summary

This paper proposes an analytical framework to address the question of what drives people to migrate, remigrate, or stay where they are. To do so, it draws from existing migration theories in different disciplines and situates itself within the vast literature theorising migration. The resulting framework focuses on (non-)migration decision-making, specifically the drivers of migration aspiration and intention. It views individuals as persons with internal processes in cognitive, emotional, and relational terms; subjectivity; agency; social world; and lived experiences. This humanising framework not only calls for engendering research on (non-)migration decision-making but also suggests several decolonising data-gathering techniques. It offers three analytical ways: thick contextualisation, life dimensions-

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focused analysis, and time-situated inquiry. Its humanising approach to individual (non-)migration decision-making is a response to several calls to make scientific inquiries more humane, inclusive, and grounded.

Keywords
humanising research, (non-)migration decision-making, thick contextualisation, life dimension-focused analysis, time-situated inquiry, societal drivers, engendering, decolonising



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REVISED **Amendments from Version 1**

The following modifications can be found in this revised paper, which address the comments of the reviewers. First, the use of the term "transnational migration" and of the qualifier "humanising" has been explained. Second, Figure 1 has been modified and the major lacunae explained in the state-of-the-art section have been elaborated. Third, a few clarifications have been introduced in the methodological section regarding quantitative methods and focus-group discussion. Fourth, the contributions and limitations of the paper have been highlighted in the conclusion section. And fifth, some minor changes have been introduced in the title, abstract, and plain summary of the paper, as well as in the names of two frameworks cited.

Any further responses from the reviewers can be found at the end of the article

Introduction

The geographic movements of people across nation-state borders – have increasingly diversified in terms of the countries of origin, routes, destinations, and socio-demographic characteristics of the individuals involved (Brettell & Hollifield, 2023; Castles & Miller, 1993; Vertovec, 2007). These movements can be described as "transnational", as they stem frequently from non-institutional actors' initiatives and sustained efforts "across national borders" and take place most often "outside the pale of state regulation and control" (Portes, 2001, 186). The global COVID-19 pandemic, which started at the end of 2019, has affected the dynamics of transnational migrations, slowing it down by 27 per cent in 2020 (UN DESA, 2019). Despite this effect, the overall population of transnational migrants has continued to rise: from 272 million in 2019 to 281 million in 2020 (McAuliffe & Triandafyllidou, 2021, 3). The way in which this fast-growing phenomenon has been unfolding despite global challenges underlines the need to further conceptualise transnational migration to fully understand why some people move and others not.

Several decades of theorisation have produced a wide array of analytical frameworks that aim to uncover what drives people to migrate, remigrate, or stay where they are. Migration theories, notably classical ones, focus on individuals' rationality to uncover the logics behind their spatial mobility, thereby neglecting other important dimensions of human lives. Consequently, such theories can only grab a fraction of the whole picture and miss equally significant triggers to migration. An increasing number of migration theories in the past three decades have taken into account the different dimensions of human lives, notably in relational, experiential, and perceptual terms. Nonetheless, the temporal and psychological dimensions, including emotions as well as other cognitive processes, have remained largely overlooked as recent works point out (e.g., Griffiths *et al.*, 2013; Koikkalainen & Kyle, 2016). To capture the whole picture, the present paper delves into individuals' (non-)migration decision-making and proposes a "humanising" framework highlighting the different life dimensions of individual decision-makers. The adjective "humanising" is used here to depart from the qualifiers "humanist" and "humanistic" that have acquired problematic connotations due to their links to humanism and humanistic psychology, respectively (see Graumann, 1981). Drawing from the field of pedagogy at the crossroad of psychology and sociology, "humanising" appears appropriate to employ when the focus includes individual's voices and experiences. As Kerr (2007) remarks, "humanising' means '*making better*' or 'improving'" (Kerr, 2007, 6). In this sense, its usage avoids dichotomic thinking in terms of good and bad or humane and inhumane. As regards the term "(non-)migration decision-making", it refers to the process during which individuals "come to a decision not just as after-the-fact listing of good or rational reasons" (Koikkalainen & Kyle, 2016, 759) to migrate or not. It is employed in this paper to recognise that an individual's decision to move can change over time. Aware that decision-making is a long and fluid process that is susceptible to changes, this paper pays attention to both voluntary and "involuntary immobility" (Carling, 2002) in which people aspiring to move may not be able to do so due to the lack of mobility options (De Haas, 2021). In other words, it considers migration and immobility as part of a socially, temporally, and psychologically situated continuum.

This paper builds its proposed framework by drawing from existing migration theories and perspectives in different disciplines, namely sociology, anthropology, geography, and psychology. By doing so, it situates the framework within the vast literature of migration theorisations to which it intends to contribute fresh insights. The resulting framework focuses on the "drivers" of migration aspiration and intention. "Drivers" pertain to the "external material forces that influence mobility" (Van Hear *et al.*, 2018, 928) and to the internal and relational processes in which individuals are enmeshed. The term "aspiration" is understood in this paper as one's "wish" to migrate or not, whereas "intention" means the individual's "preparation to migrate" or, in short, the "ultimate step of an individual migration project" (Migali & Scipioni, 2019, 182). Including intention to migrate in the paper's proposed framework can allow scholars to "capture future migrants" (ibid., 192) in their respective studies and understand the "involuntary immobility" (Carling, 2002) of others. Heeding the recent call to include time in the analysis of migration (Griffiths *et al.*, 2013; King *et al.*, 2006), this paper integrates the time dimension in its analytical framework.

Before introducing its proposed framework to humanise research on (non-)migration decision-making, the paper starts by revisiting the existing theories of migration. This exercise aims to identify the lacunae in migration theorisations, which provides the ground from which to build its analytical framework. The core of the paper presents the constitutive elements of the framework: its decolonising and engendering approaches as well as its concrete analytical ways to emphasise the human aspects of (non-)migration decision-making. The paper also suggests some methodological directions in how to pursue humanised research on the topic. It ends with reflections on the scientific strengths and possible social impact of the framework.

Revisiting theories of migration

Since the advent of migration studies, scholars in different disciplines have explained human spatial mobility in many ways.

The frameworks they crafted can be generally understood based on their disciplinary embeddedness, dimensional orientation, level of analysis, and the way they perceive migration.

In terms of disciplinary embeddedness, widely utilised migration theories as shown in Figure 1 have been designed in the field of economics: for example, the relative deprivation theory (Stark, 1984), neoclassical economics (Todaro, 1989), and the dual labour market theory (Pryor, 1979), among others. These classical theories emphasise the economic benefits that migration brings to households, communities, and nations. They explain migration as resulting from a disequilibrium between labour demand and supply and underline the rationality of individuals. Their fixed focus on the economic aspects has been criticised by scholars for neglecting the non-economic determinants of migration and the individual's "agency" – the ability "to make independent choices and to impose these on the world and, hence, to alter the structures that shape and constrain people's opportunities or freedoms" (De Haas, 2021, 14). Theories of migration in other disciplines provide alternative lenses. For instance, sociological theories go beyond the economics of migration (Richmond, 1988) by scrutinising the impact of societal changes (Massey, 1990), social networks/capital (Choldin, 1999; Massey *et al.*, 1998), and global systems on the individual's migration decision (Sassen, 1988; Wallerstein, 1974). Geographical theories explain migratory phenomena through the analysis of spatial patterns of human mobility (Ravenstein, 1885), as well as the individual's aspiration (i.e., wish to move or stay) and ability to move (Carling, 2002; Carling & Collins, 2018) situated in its social contexts. Anthropological theories pay attention to multifaceted social links, power asymmetries in the local and transnational arena, as well as tangled forms of mobilities (Fresnoza-Flot & Liu-Farrer, 2022; Glick Schiller *et al.*, 1992; Mahler & Pessar, 2001; see also the reviews by Brettell, 2000 and Horevitz, 2009). These frameworks encompass different levels of analysis, but many of them pay limited attention to the temporal and psychological dimensions of individual's migration decision-making.

Regarding dimensional orientation, migration theories focus mostly on the role of social networks and the impact of the individual's immediate entourage on his/her migration decision. Concerning the latter, individuals who have children or ageing parents may opt to stay in their country of birth or, if they are migrants, they may decide to return to their country of origin (Achenbach, 2017). The rise of the "Gender and Migration" scholarship has reinforced this focus on the relational dimension of migration by critically analysing power relations in which migrants and non-migrants, women and men, as well as children and parents, are involved in the realm of home and workplace. This engendering of migration studies has accompanied the emergence of gender-focused migration theories. The term "gender" refers to a socially constructed institution that prescribes roles and behaviour to men and women (Lorber, 1994). Gender can also be considered as a process that requires "performance" (Butler, 1990). For example, the perspectives of the "new international division of reproductive labour" (Parreñas, 2000), the "global care chains" (Hochschild, 2000), the "feminisation of survival" (Sassen, 2000), and the "gender

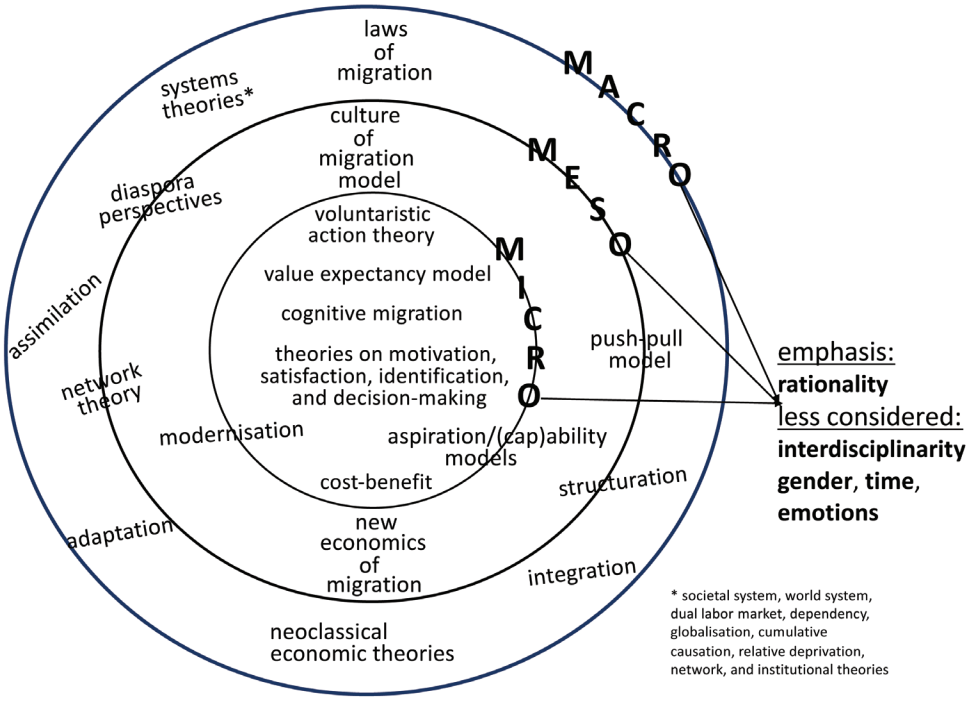

Figure 1. State of mainstream migration theorisations.

geographies of power" (Mahler & Pessar, 2001) have all helped scholars unveil the (re)production of unequal power relations in gender terms in which migrants (notably women) experience and participate. These theories have emerged at the same time as others focusing on "transnational families" and households (Bryceson & Vuorela, 2002; Le Gall, 2005), in which members are physically separated from one another due to migration but maintain a sense of solidarity across national borders (Baldassar & Merla, 2014). This specific literature on transnational families/households documents the way in which gender norms and expectations, as well as the normative ideals of "good" mothering and fathering, influence an individual's decision to migrate or stay. Despite the rich literature on families/households and gender and migration, gender-focused theories remain at the fringe of the mainstream migration theorisations and are most often forgotten in reviews of analytical frameworks explaining migration. Mainstream migration theories continue to be either gender neutral or to treat gender as a variable like social class, age, ethnicity, and nationality.

Another dimension most often overlooked in existing theories of migration concerns emotions and other cognitive processes, which is partly due to the scholarly emphasis on an individual's rationality during migration decision-making. The emotional process involves feelings such as fear, sadness, and guilt, whereas the cognitive process refers to individual's imaginaries, memories, and "cognitive map" (Gärling & Golledge, 2000). For the last few years, certain theories and empirical works have pointed out how imaginaries and emotions affect an individual's decision-making process (Boccagni & Baldassar, 2015; Carling & Collins, 2018; Wang & Chen, 2021). Despite this development, the internal processes (cognitive and emotional) of individuals remain rarely treated together in the analysis. In addition, scholars increasingly criticise the neglect of the temporal dimension in the analysis of migration (Griffiths *et al.*, 2013). A few studies that do so locate migration decision-making within the past and present situations, which underplays the future and the change(s) that may arise for aspiring (re)migrants.

As regards level of analysis (see Figure 1), macro-level migration theories unravel the socio-political and economic forces driving migration and identify the demographic characteristics of migrants (Pryor, 1981; Richmond, 1988). These theories have been criticised for neglecting individual agency. Meso-level migration theories have examined so far the role of social networks and ties, specifically social capital (Bourdieu, 1986) based on kinship, household, ethnic, and diaspora affiliations, among others (Boyd, 1989; Faist, 2020; Massey, 1988; Van Praag *et al.*, 2021). This focus overlooks the structuring influence of larger societal forces such as restrictive migration policies on an individual's choice of which social ties to tap into, reinforce, or set aside during migration decision-making. Contrary to macro- and meso-level theories, micro-level analytical frameworks underline individual agency, psychological factors, and social identities (e.g., gender, age, social class) to explain migration. Their individual-focused analysis is often viewed as insufficient to capture macro- and meso-level structuring factors such as the impact of gender norms and social networks on migration decisions. Whereas macro-level theories have been widely adopted in migration studies for their generalising power, meso- and micro-level frameworks, specifically their combination and articulation with macro-level lenses, remain scarce (e.g., Carling's aspiration/ability model and De Haas' aspirations-capabilities framework).

Finally, based on how they view migration, theories can be functionalist, historical-structural, or agency-focused (De Haas, 2021). Functionalist theories perceive migration "as a way to create more equality within and between countries", whereas historical-structural theories see migration "as a way to maintain and reinforce existing inequalities between and within countries" (Van Praag *et al.*, 2021, 19; see also Morawska, 2015). These conventional perspectives fail to fully grasp how individuals and groups "exert agency within broader structural constraints" (De Haas, 2021, 14), a limitation that agency-focused theories address. This latter set of theories highlights micro- and meso-level factors by examining individual social networks at local, transnational, and diasporic spaces (e.g., Faist, 2004); migration systems (Massey, 1988); and culture of migration (Timmerman *et al.*, 2014), among others (e.g., Van Praag *et al.*, 2021). Nonetheless, in their analysis, these theories do not pay sufficient attention to the power of emotions and cognitive processes.

The above review highlights the major lacunae in migration theories, which Figure 1 above summarises. First, there is the need for migration theorisation to be more interdisciplinary (Fresnoza-Flot, 2022; Hondagneu-Sotelo, 2011; Koikkalainen & Kyle, 2016) to address its limited attention to the temporal and psychological dimensions of individual's migration decision-making. Drawing from disciplines in which these dimensions have been widely considered in the analysis can further enrich migration theorisation. For instance, Koikkalainen and Kyle (2016) underline the potential contributions that "social psychology or cognitive social sciences" can provide, as "(t)he interdisciplinarity of migration research has not fully extended" to these disciplines "where a dynamic research agenda has examined human decision-making processes" (759). Although several migration theories adopts an interdisciplinary approach, they mostly remain within their respective disciplines. This multidisciplinarity in migration theorisation, in which scholars draw from different disciplines but remain within their "disciplinary boundaries" (Choi & Pak, 2006, 359), echoes the compartmentalisation in migration studies itself and underlines the need for more interdisciplinarity (i.e., "the reciprocal interaction between […] disciplines […] in order to generate new common methodologies, perspectives, knowledge, or even new disciplines": ibid.). For example, in the research field of gender and migration, Hondagneu-Sotelo (2011) observes that researchers in different spheres of studies "are mostly not in conversation with one another" due "to the increasingly specialized and balkanized nature of social science research today" (277). In migration and integration research, Dahinden (2016) proposes "to link migration research issues more closely with social science and theory in general" as one of several strategies to "de-migrantize" the said field (2214). Second, migration theories focus either on a

single level of analysis (as in the case of classical theories focusing on the macro level) or on two levels of analysis but very rarely articulates the micro and meso levels with the macro one. When the three levels are taken into account, scholars most often examine them separately, during which some nuances of the analysed data may elude their critical gaze. Third, multidimensional perspective appears less attractive than unidimensional approach. For instance, classical migration theories tend to focus on the rational and systemic dimensions (see Figure 1), whereas more recent theories highlight most often in separate ways dimensions such as the relational and gender ones (as explored in Gender and Migration research). In other words, several theories in the past three decades have extensively addressed the human dimensions of migration. Nonetheless, as scholars observe (e.g., Griffiths *et al*., 2013; Koikkalainen & Kyle, 2016), not all dimensions are taken into account, notably internal processes (emotional and cognitive), time (stages and timing), and individual's social locations "within interconnected power hierarchies" (Pessar & Mahler, 2003, 816). Rationality persists in being central to the analysis, which overlooks other life dimensions, which needs to be rethought in the present context where a call for a more reflexive migration studies is on the rise (Fresnoza-Flot, 2024). To sum up, the lacunae above suggest the critical importance of increased interdisciplinarity, as well as multilevel perspectives and multidimensionality, in theorising migration. When considered together, these epistemological stances form a framework highlighting the human aspects of individuals' (non-)migration decision-making as the next section unveils.

Framing (non-)migration decision-making using a humanising lens

By adopting an interdisciplinary, multidimensional stance based on multilevel perspectives this paper provides a framework that views individuals in holistic way as persons with internal processes in cognitive, emotional, and relational terms; subjectivity or sense of self; agency; social world; and lived experiences.

The proposed framework is called here "humanising migration decision-making" (see Figure 5) for three reasons. First, it avoids a dichotomic approach by considering rationality and emotionality as part of the same internal process of individuals. Rationality and emotionality are mutually reinforcing psychological mechanisms and favouring one over the other in the analysis de-humanises individuals. Second, the proposed framework underlines that the individuals' decision to migrate or not is a "social fact" (Durkheim, 1894), reflecting not only the psychological processes they underwent and/or are experiencing but also the broader structural situations in which they are enmeshed. It emphasises the importance of identifying from different angles the drivers of individuals' aspiration or intention to migrate. Third, building from gender and migration scholarship, it calls for the "engendering" (Mahler & Pessar, 2006) of the mainstream migration theories in which gender remains at the fringe. It recognises the importance of gender in the study of migration decision-making to deeply understand what drives people to migrate or to stay. To highlight the human aspects of (non-)migration decision-making, it offers three concrete analytical ways: thick contextualisation, life dimensions-focused analysis, and time-situated inquiry.

Thick contextualisation

Since "macro-level factors" can shape "the contexts that affect meso- and micro-level factors" (Van Praag *et al.*, 2021, 28), it is crucial to grasp what factors are through thick contextualisation. Inspired by Geertz's (1973) "thick description", thick contextualisation means providing detailed information about the specific social world an individual inhabits. It implies paying critical attention to societal drivers (see Figure 2) that motivate individuals to migrate or to stay.

Societal drivers are akin to what Van Hear and colleagues call "external material forces" and can take four forms: "predisposing" (structural gaps between two countries stemming from the "global macro-political economy"), "proximate" (factors emanating from "deep-seated structural features"), "mediating" (meso-level factors that "enable, facilitate, constrain, accelerate", consolidate or diminish migration), and "precipitating" ("identifiable event or events" directly affecting families and households) (2018, 931–932).

At the macro level, predisposing (e.g., economic disparity between countries) and proximate factors (e.g., effects of climate change and new employment opportunities) appear to be powerful societal drivers. For example, the disparity in terms of affordability between healthcare services in Thailand and those in foreign countries drive Western retirees to migrate to the former (Sunanta & Jaisuekun, 2022). Likewise, employment opportunities drive people to move first across transnational and then local borders (Ng, 2023). Other important societal drivers are legal and gender norms. Legal norms concern "regimes of mobility" (Glick Schiller & Salazar, 2013) in the country of residence of aspiring re/migrants and their desired country of destination. They are the reflections and direct results of states' "governmentality", that is, the management of their people through "institutions, procedures, analyses and reflection" (Foucault, 1991, 102). Legal norms in the form of state policies on human spatial mobility are an instrument to manage, regulate, and control people's movements. These norms influence individuals' strategies to attain their migration project for themselves and/or for reuniting family members through the help of membership intermediaries (Bonizzoni & Fresnoza-Flot, 2023). For example, mobility policies with strong social class or economic capital criteria incite elite migratory movement, such as that of people with Chinese citizenship in Portugal thanks to the golden visa scheme in this country (Gaspar & Ampudia de Haro, 2020). Since gender is part and parcel of broader social processes, gender roles and expectations on men and women in the family and larger society should be taken into account as they may motivate these individuals to migrate or to stay. For instance, whereas Vietnamese parents migrate "*because* of their kids" (Souralová, 2014, 175), Filipino lone mothers leave abroad to be "good" mothers to their children (Asis & Ruiz-Marave, 2013). Gender ideology – "a set of attitudes

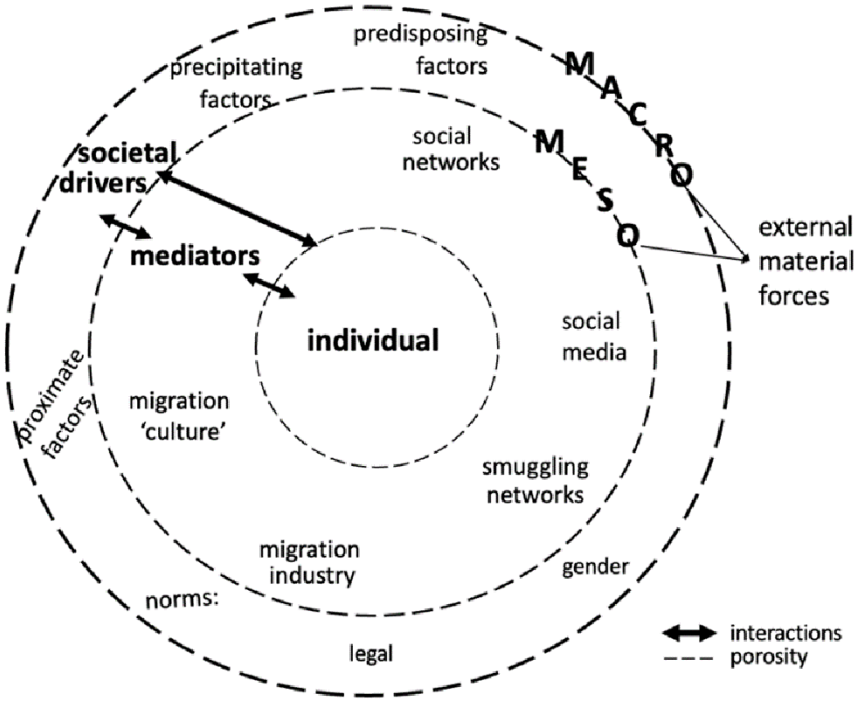

Figure 2. Thick contextualisation of individual aspiring to (re)migrate or stay.

about the appropriate roles, rights, and responsibilities of men and women in a given society" (Lucas-Thompson & Goldberg, 2015, 13) – shaped by religion and/or other dominant societal perspectives may also act as a strong driver for individuals' migration aspiration. At the meso level, gender ideology mediates factors that are essential societal drivers. They have various forms, namely social media, smuggling networks, migration culture, and the migration industry. These factors provide individuals with information about possible ways to migrate and to reach their destination country. At the micro level, precipitating drivers (e.g., insufficient welfare services, economic crisis, sudden unemployment) can directly affect individuals' well-being and motivate them to aspire to migrate.

Figure 2 illustrates the articulation of the micro- (the individual), meso-, and macro-level structural factors with one another, which can reveal the porosity of the supposed boundaries between them. Thick contextualisation may be descriptive, but it is indispensable to comprehend what an individual undergoes in psychological and relational terms when thinking, imagining, feeling, or planning to migrate.

Life dimension-focused analysis

The framework "humanising migration decision-making" entails a rigorous analysis of individuals' internal processes, that is, their different cognitive, emotional, and relational life dimensions as shown in Figure 3. It can show that rationality and emotions are mutually reinforcing dimensions and that social relations play a key role in decision-making.

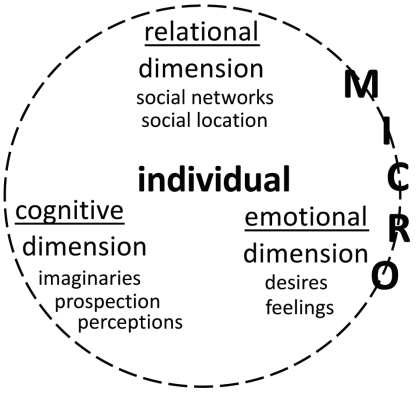

Figure 3. Internal processes at the micro level.

To examine the cognitive dimension, it is important to build on several perspectives exploring the mind and consciousness. Koikkalainen and Kyle's "cognitive migration" framework that underlines the "role of imagination and prospective thinking in migration decision-making" (2016, 769) appears useful in this regard. Two other frameworks offer innovative insights: first "legal consciousness", which unveils how ordinary people view the law and talk about it in their everyday lives (Ewick & Silbey, 1998); and second, "transnational consciousness", which uncovers migrant's "abstract awareness of one's self, diaspora and multiple belonging" (Ghosh & Wang, 2003, 278). These frameworks bring attention to individuals'

imaginaries, that is, their mental images, visions, ideas, thoughts, stereotypes, fantasies, memories, and clichés (Salazar & Graburn, 2014). They also emphasise the need to consider individuals' prospective thinking, notably the way they view and plan the future. Perceptions of macro (cultural, historical, economic, political, and environmental) and meso structural factors, as well as their embeddedness in broader social networks, can help pinpoint which societal drivers play an active or passive role in individuals' (non-)migration decision-making.

As regards the emotional dimension, the fast-growing literature on emotion and migration highlights the importance of focusing on individuals' desires and feelings (e.g., guilt, fear, sadness, excitement, satisfaction, dissatisfaction) as they envision and imagine migrating or staying. For instance, what impede Asian highly skilled migrants to leave Japan are their affective and social ties developed from staying longer in the country and/or marrying a Japanese citizen (Liu-Farrer, 2023). By considering emotions, the analysis avoids over-simplification and brings the psychology of migration directly in dialogue with existing migration scholarships in which migrants and individuals aspiring to migrate or stay are viewed as rational actors.

Concerning the relational dimension of an individual's psychology, the privileged focus is on interpersonal ties that individuals view, consider, or believe as composing their social universe. This dimension encompasses the realm of the family and household, the public realm where individuals construct social ties, and the work environment (Achenbach, 2017). Drawing from the aspiration/ability model (Carling & Collins, 2018) and the aspirations-capabilities framework model (De Haas, 2021), this paper accentuates the need to scrutinise how individuals' local and transnational social networks (family, household, community, friendship, migrant traffickers) affect their ability/capability to aspire to migrate or not. Social networks are important to include in the analysis as they shape people's imaginaries and expectations regarding migration (Hernández-Carretero & Carling, 2012; see also Ryan, 2023).

In addition, it should be noted that the relational dimension of human life is amplified by interpersonal interactions, during which individuals' social locations (i.e., different social identities based on gender, social class, age, and so on) intersect with one another, making it easy or difficult to "access […] resources and mobility" (Pessar & Mahler, 2003, 817). This articulation of various social identities is important to understand as they shape, discipline, and position individuals within power hierarchies (Mahler & Pessar, 2001). In this case, Crenshaw's "intersectionality" (1989) perspective appears useful to highlight the social mechanisms behind the (non-)migration decision-making of social minorities, notably women. This perspective unpacks how the simultaneous interaction of social identities (e.g., gender, social class, age, among others) (re)creates individuals' marginality and precarity.

The internal processes described above and exposed in Figure 3 need to be thickly contextualised in order to grasp their dynamics and the factors shaping them. Nonetheless, locating them within macro- and meso-level social situations appears incomplete without situating them in time that shapes cognitive and emotional processes during decision-making.

Time-situated inquiry

Drawing from time-sensitive studies on (non-)migration decision-making (Achenbach, 2017; Griffiths *et al.*, 2013; Kley, 2011; Van der Velde & van Naerssen, 2011), the proposed framework in this paper focuses on two aspects: the stages of (non-)migration decision-making, and its timing. Whereas stages refer to the evolution over time or the successive phases of an individual's aspiration and/or intention to (re)migrate or not, timing refers to the turning points or the specific moment(s) of change(s) in individuals' decision about whether to (re)migrate or stay. Given the unpredictability of individuals' behaviour, these temporal aspects of decision-making take place in a circular way, as Figure 4 shows, rather than in a linear fashion.

Decision-making may start with a wishful thinking of migrating, or in other words, "aspiring to migrate". After this stage, the individual may embark on "situation analysis" (Achenbach, 2017), weighing up the pros and cons of as well as the resources available for (re)moving or staying. The result of this analysis may either be the state of "considering migration" (Kley, 2011) (i.e., "mental threshold" or individual's mindset: Van der Velde & van Naerssen, 2011) or the decision not to pursue migration. This stage may also include a "locational threshold" (Van der Velde & van Naerssen, 2011), during which an individual chooses a destination country. Once an option is chosen, the next stage may be the evaluation (i.e., situation analysis) of such a choice (Achenbach, 2017). If the final choice is migration, the individual concerned may embark on "planning migration" (Kley, 2011) or a "trajectory threshold" (Van der Velde & van Naerssen, 2011), during which specific migration routes are identified to reach the target destination. This stage can also be called the phase of "preparation to migrate" (Migali & Scipioni, 2019). The final stage of decision-making would be the act itself of migrating, i.e., "realizing migration" (Kley, 2011). These stages appear limited as they may overlook the "on-going complex and often opportunistic rather than planned" individual's decision-making (Griffiths *et al.*, 2013, 16). They may neglect intermediary phases during which several temporalities may arise, such as "waiting" and "being still" (ibid.).

To address this limitation and to capture all the stages of the decision-making process of aspiring (re)migrants, it is essential to consider the timing of the individual's aspiration and/or intention that is shaped by his/her past life, present situation, and imagined or desired future (McCormack & Schwanen, 2011). Since individuals experience time differently depending on their social locations, social capital, and available financial resources, the duration of each stage and intermediary step of their (non-)migration decision-making may vary from one moment to another. Duration also refers to the time frame of a particular external driver of migration (see Figure 4), such as political crisis and economic turmoil (Van Hear *et al.*, 2018), and the way in which individuals experience such a duration is important to note to understand the link between

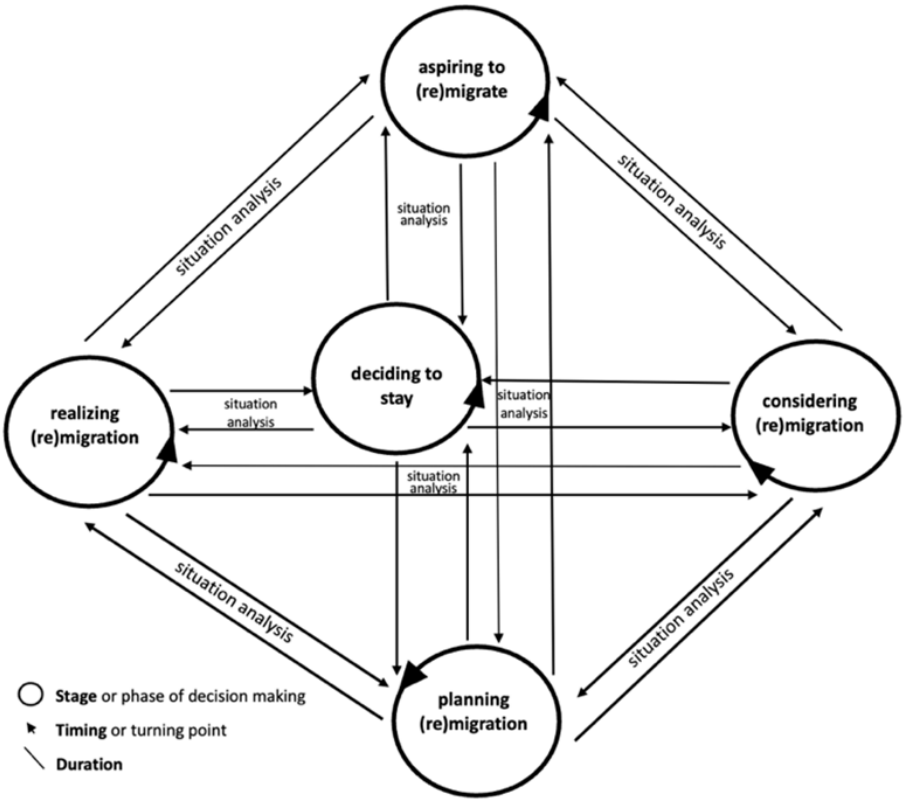

Figure 4. **Temporality of migration (non-)migration decision-making inspired from existing models.**

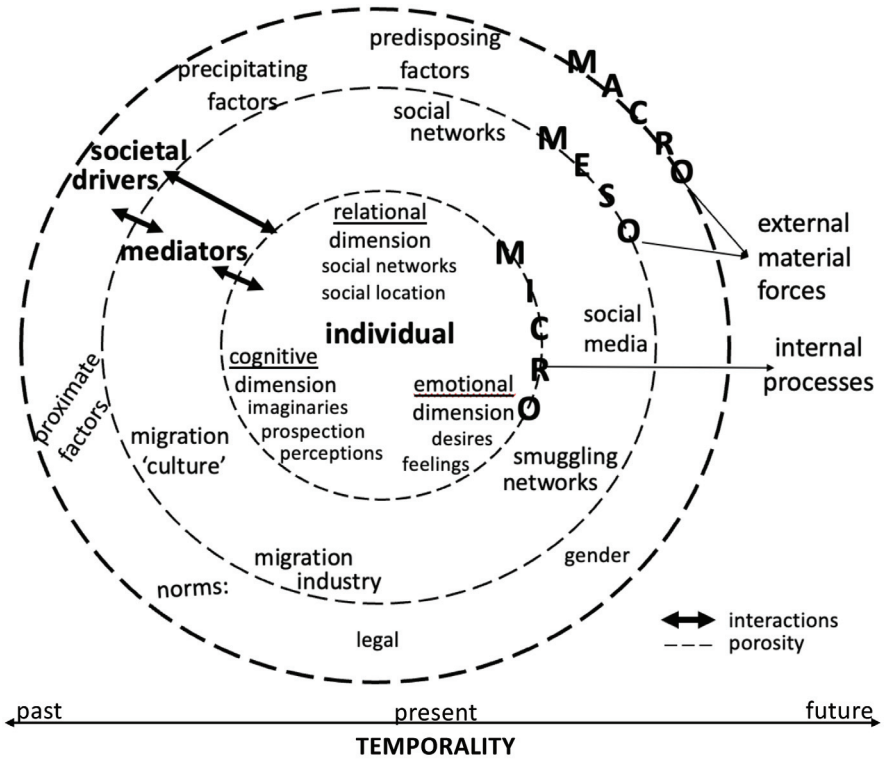

Figure 5. **The "humanising migration decision-making" framework.**

time and the aspiration/intention to move or not. Besides, mobility involves discontinuities or ruptures not only in emotional terms but also temporalities (see Korpela, 2023).

A time-situated analysis can facilitate the identification of the specific stage in which societal drivers such as spatial mobility policies of the target country of destination matter in the decision-making of aspiring (re)migrants. As Figure 5 suggests, it is an integral part of a humanising approach to migration decision-making as it provides an interesting ground on which thick contextualisation and life dimensions-focused analysis can be fully carried out.

Humanising methodologies

The framework "humanising migration decision-making" aims at "decolonizing" (Lincoln & Gonzalez y Gonzalez, 2008; Smith, 2021) methodological approaches by putting emphasis on emic perspectives (i.e., individual's points of view) and diversity of voices, discourses, and experiences. Decolonisation as a "psychological project" (Bhatia, 2020) involves disruption of conventional research approaches to embrace ethical, reflexive, and empirically grounded ways of knowledge production in which the voices of marginalised people are valorised and those of the socially visible are decentred (Smith, 2021). In other words, it brings to the fore "vernacular knowledge", that is, mostly "orally transmitted knowledge" (Tilley, 2010, 112). In the context of research, this form of knowledge can be wholly captured through a triangulation approach combining qualitative and participatory methodologies. This approach does not completely exclude the possibility of adding quantitative methods into the equation, but for a framework that adopts a "decolonising" stance, qualitative and participatory methods appear sufficiently effective to access "orally transmitted knowledge" (ibid.).

Whereas qualitative methods value the depth and critical analysis of empirical data, participatory methods include the active involvement of study participants in data collection, thereby promoting the co-production of knowledge. Both methods promote participants' voices and agency, allowing the researchers to capture aspiring individuals' decision dynamics regarding (re)migration and stasis. There are several possible data collection techniques that can be qualified as qualitative and/or participatory. Considering the analytical ways of humanising research on (non-)migration decision-making exposed in the previous section, this paper provides some examples of techniques that can highlight the human aspects of (non-)migration decision-making. These examples represent a pool of methodological possibilities from which researchers can choose the most appropriate data-collection technique(s) for their respective studies.

To pursue thick contextualisation of aspiring or intending migrants' decision-making, researchers need to provide detailed information about the social world these individuals live in. This means exploring the possible pertinent contexts of their social world: for instance, its (colonial or post-colonial) historical embeddedness and its "external material forces" in all their forms (Van Hear *et al.*, 2018). Aside from the social world, the natural environmental contexts should be given critical attention as they also strongly shape individuals' everyday lives. Archival and other forms of documentary research, as well as content analysis of selected documents (e.g., texts of laws and policies, historical accounts, journalistic and government reports, or statistical data), appear heuristic approaches to produce thick data and a solid analysis. Nonetheless, having thick data at hand is insufficient if they are not empirically grounded. This means establishing a link between the empirical data collected from study participants and the contextual data at hand. Doing so allows researchers to determine which specific contextual data are pertinent to and should be highlighted in their respective studies.

The empirical data that will be used as the ground of contextualisation can be obtained in several ways. One example is the participatory technique called "focus group discussion" (Seal *et al.*, 1998), during which researchers provide the setting for a dynamic dialogue around specific topics among informed consenting participants. As Bergold and Thomas (2012) remark, focus group discussion ranks second after interviews as the most frequently used instrument in participatory research. It creates a "communicative space", where "participants are given the opportunity to enter into conversation with each other in a safe setting" (ibid., 209). It also a site of meeting between the researchers' perspectives and the participants' insights (see Bloor *et al.*, 2001). To reinforce the decolonising aspect of focus group discussion, researchers should take into account its ethical dimension. For example, there is a need for a transparent research protocol and a thorough reflection on how to address the questions of who will be invited to take part in the discussion, how their participation be compensated, or how their personal data will be protected. Another data collection technique that can yield rich insights is to conduct individual semi-structured interviews revolving around issues concerning migration or non-migration decisions. This technique is also effective in gathering data about different life dimensions of aspiring or intending migrants, allowing to obtain data about the reasons behind their migration aspiration and to generate narratives replete with emotions. Regarding the relational dimension of human lives, although semi-structured interviews can gain information about aspiring migrants' social networks, the technique called "social network analysis" (Froehlich *et al.*, 2020) remains to date the most widely employed method. It can be carried out in many ways: for example, through "concentric circles method" (Van Waes & Van den Bossche, 2020) or through participatory social-network mapping using online tools or specific software.

To situate (non-)migration decision-making in its temporality effectively, a life course perspective (Kley, 2011) relying on biographical interviews appears useful. Nonetheless, since this data collection technique is mostly retrospective and much less prospective, it can benefit from integrating a prospective dimension. Biographical-prospective interviews can capture the intersecting effects of an individual's (non-)migration decision past, present, and imagined future. These interviews yield insights into both retrospection and "prospection" (Seligman *et al.*, 2013). Such an approach allows researchers to identify

the different emotions, imaginations, and expectations that come out during each narrative of study participants and, most importantly, to determine at what stage of the decision-making process these individuals are situated: at the beginning when they are aspiring to move, in the process of preparing their voyage, or about to change their decision? Another data gathering technique that can capture the temporality of (non-)migration decision-making is the collection of solicited diaries – "diaries that people have been asked to keep for a particular reason, notably for research purposes" (Bartlett & Milligan, 2021, 3). They can be in one of the following formats: written (Rauch & Ansari, 2022), audio (Monrouxe, 2009), video (Zundel *et al.*, 2018), or photographic (Swallow *et al.*, 2015). Such technique allows researchers to observe the evolution of participants' migration aspiration over a given period of time, specifically the transition from one stage to another and the timing of their decision-making. It can be short-term (e.g., during one year) or longitudinal, spanning several years. It can also unveil the stage(s) during which specific societal drivers and mediators affect or influence the participants' decision to move or to stay.

Like other qualitative and participatory methods, the data collection techniques described above, when adopted, require dynamic reflexivity of the researchers to be aware of and to try to reduce inequalities between them and the participants during the research process. As Smith argues in her work *Decolonizing methodologies* (2021), researchers working with marginalised groups need to "pay particular attention to matters that impact on the integrity of research and the researcher, continuously develop their understandings of ethics and community sensibilities, and critically examine their research practices" (261).

Conclusion

This paper proposes a framework that aims to humanise research on (non-)migration decision-making. Its focus is the individual who is aspiring or intending to migrate, remigrate, or stay. To capture the dynamics of people's (non-)migration decision-making, it underlines the importance of viewing individuals as persons embedded in their social world and with cognitive and emotional processes, as well as multiple social links. This framework has potential analytical and methodological contributions, as well as possible social impact.

In analytical terms, unlike most mainstream migration theories, the framework advanced in this paper adopts an interdisciplinary, multi-level perspective, and multidimensional posture. It does so by building from different theories and perspectives on migration in various disciplines; by articulating the micro-, the meso-, and macro-level structural factors with one another; and by considering the rationality, emotions, and relational dimension of aspiring migrants. Through its epistemological stances, the framework offers three concrete ways to humanise research on (non-)migration decision-making, which will allow scholars to identify the specific drivers of individuals' aspiration or intention to migrate or not. First, it calls for thick contextualisation of the individuals' lives by inquiring into the characteristics of their social world and by empirically grounding this inquiry by putting emphasis on the link between individuals' lived experiences and the contexts they live in. Second, it encourages an analysis focused on life dimensions by delving into individuals' internal processes in cognitive and emotional terms and their social relations while paying a critical attention to their intersecting identities such as gender, social class, and other parameters. And third, it promotes time-situated inquiry by paying attention to the stages and timing of (non-)migration decision-making, which remain largely neglected in mainstream migration theories. Through these analytical ways, the framework proposed in this paper provides a holistic approach to the study of (non-)migration decision-making, highlighting an individual's agency and situating it in broader social contexts and temporalities. Across the analysis, it also integrates a gender approach, specifically calling for the "engendering" (Mahler & Pessar, 2006) of the study at the macro, meso, and micro levels. By doing so, the framework can provide more nuances in the way (non-)migration decision-making has been understood, thereby avoiding generalising discourses regarding transnational migrations.

Regarding its methodological contributions, in line with its engendering approach and inspired from "decolonising methodologies" (Smith, 2021), the framework brings further to the fore what qualitative researchers and critical feminist scholars have been doing – valorising the voices and perspectives of socially invisible groups. It does so by endorsing a triangulation approach combining several qualitative and participatory data collection techniques, which can facilitate step-by-step thick contextualisation, life dimension-focused analysis, and time-situated inquiry. It prioritises methodological techniques that bring out the human aspects of individuals by treating them wholly as persons with rationality, emotions, and changing behaviour situated in time and social contexts. It also emphasises the importance of researchers' reflexivity when engaging in humanising methodologies to ensure ethical and respectful knowledge (co-)production. In other words, the paper's proposed humanising methodologies can provide rich contextual and empirical data, which can further clarify the whole picture of (non-)migration decision-making and therefore reduce the risk of a biased portrayal of the said process.

Considering its scientific contributions, the framework proposed in this paper will be particularly useful to studies inquiring into the causes of a specific migratory phenomenon (such as migration or remigration) and aiming to influence policy-making. Its holistic approach to individual (non-)migration decision-making is a response to several calls to make scientific inquiries more humane, inclusive, and grounded. A human approach to (non-)migration decision-making is critically important to understand not only migration dynamics but also voluntary and "involuntary immobility" (Carling, 2002) against the backdrop of nation-states' control of transnational migrations in which individuals are often treated as void of "bare life" (Agamben, 1998). When treated as filled with life, these individuals are "primarily considered as either productive workers (with skills of varying desirability in different sectors of the economy) or reproductive laborers (with character traits

suitable for marriage partners)" void of emotions (Liu-Farrer & Fresnoza-Flot, 2022, 252). The insights resulting from the use of the framework proposed here will inform policymakers and migration agents on the indispensability of viewing and treating migrants not just as rational, objective persons but also as emotionally sensitive social beings.

As a review essay, the present paper presents some limitations. First, it stems from a corpus of works it mobilised and not from first-hand empirical data. This highlights the need for a follow-up article that will be empirically grounded and will provide insights into the analytical power of the proposed framework. Second, given the vastness of the migration literature, there are certainly works, written in English as well as in other languages, that escaped the analytical gaze of the paper. International collaborations with scholars of different countries and regions of the world appear an effective way to address this limitation in the future. And third, given the number of disciplines involved in migration studies, the paper could not bring them all at once to the fore in its present format. This gap represents an interesting track to address in future reviews of migration theorisations.

Ethics and consent

Ethical approval and consent were not required.

Data availability

No data are associated with this essay as it is the fruit of the author's analysis of existing literature.

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Open Peer Review

Current Peer Review Status: ? ✓ ? ? ?

Version 2

Reviewer Report 21 January 2025

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Nils Witte
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The manuscript has been submitted for the format “essay”. According to the ORE-guidelines “essays are analytic or interpretive compositions on a single topic. This could include articles outlining an argument or personal point of view.” The author describes the format as a review essay, a format that ORE does not define. What the manuscript does, however, is to develop a holistic theoretical model of (non)-migration decision making. The theoretical model is combined with instructions of how to do empirical research in order to live up to the moral and scientific goals of this model. So that fits the category offered by ORE of “outlining and argument”. So, I will evaluate whether the argument is coherent and convincing.
The ambition of the essay is laudable, an encompassing theory of transnational migration would be a welcome contribution to migration research. Even if a general theory cannot be achieved, it is important to question existing theories and reflect how they can be complemented and improved. In its current form, however, there seems to be too much antagonization of existing migration theories and empirical migration research. Strategically, it might be a better alternative to frame the endeavour as a synthesis of existing theories. The synthesis can then be improved by the contributions proposed by the author.

My concerns have been largely addressed by previous reviewers of this manuscript and its earlier version. My impression is that the author does not intend to substantially overhaul the structure or argument of the manuscript. Instead she has successfully taken the comments as an opportunity to improve the manuscript in its current form. That is fine but I will therefore, not repeat all of the previous reviewers’ comments.

The author has already responded to the concern that the claim of “humanizing migration research” comes across as moralizing and a critique of previous research on migration research. I have the impression that this notion remains. The abstract suggests that classical theories of migration dehumanize migrants by suggesting rationality. One could hold against that that rationality is a human characteristic and that there are various theories in the “classical” canon and some include ideas of bounded rationality, sociality, and households as decision making units.

Each one of these approaches has their merits and their weaknesses. My feeling is that the model promoted in this essay could be made more acceptable to readers if it acknowledged the contribution of (classical) migration theories and softened the moral judgement.
As a theory, the outlined model aims to humanize research subjects and give them a voice and decolonize migration research. Less holistic theoretical models might not achieve these same goals, but they have other strengths including parsimony and the ability to generate testable claims and generalize beyond individuals as persons (to take the other extreme, which seems to be favored in this essay). Depending on the research question and the scope of the study, one or the other approach will be more fitting to achieve the research goals.

What is the value added of emotions and cognitive processes in migration decision making? In one of the examples given to underline the significance this boils down to being married to a national of the residence country or feeling attached to it. This is conveniently integrated in quantitative surveys and modelled by existing migration theories. Maybe the author finds other examples of emotions and cognitive processes that illustrate why we need a new theoretical model.

Analytical precision remains an issue. The text contains some tautological statements (e.g., "Perceptions of macro (cultural, historical, economic,
political, and environmental) and meso structural factors, as well as their embeddedness in broader social networks, can help pinpoint which societal drivers play an active or passive role in individuals' (non-)migration decision-making").

While the conclusion claims that the model will help identify causes of migratory phenomena, the figures suggest that elements of the theory mutually cause each other or interact (in particular Figure 4). The explanatory value would be higher if the assumed relations were more specific.

Is the topic of the essay discussed accurately in the context of the current literature?
Partly

Is the work clearly and cogently presented?
Partly

Is the argument persuasive and supported by appropriate evidence?
Partly

Does the essay contribute to the cultural, historical, social understanding of the field?
Yes

Competing Interests: No competing interests were disclosed.

Reviewer Expertise: skilled migration; migration from the Global North; crisis migration

I confirm that I have read this submission and believe that I have an appropriate level of expertise to confirm that it is of an acceptable scientific standard, however I have significant reservations, as outlined above.

Reviewer Report 20 December 2024

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Andrew Geddes
European University Institute, Fiesole, Italy

The article has a high level of ambition, which is very welcome. It covers a very extensive literature and is clearly written. I am aware of the guidelines for this review and will comment in a way that is consistent with the terms that are provided for reviewers.

My overall impression is that this is a book manuscript squeezed into an article. The ground that is covered is vast, which makes it hard to follow the argument at times because so many elements of the debate are covered. For example, lots of other researchers' work is referred to, but the analysis can seem superficial because it's not possible to report all the claims that are made in the very many sources that are referred to

The paper advocates a humanising perspective as opposed to what it characterises as narrow more rationalist accounts of migration that cannot account for contemporary transnational migration. It also argues for a greater emphasis on temporal and psychological dimensions, including emotions and cognitive processes. I think these are good points, but the way they are presented as being new insights is hard to sustain.

For example, the core claim made by the article seems to me to be quite surprising. In my view, there is a large amount of work in a variety of disciplines that places the human dimension of migration at the centre of its approach with an emphasis on migrants lives, voices and experiences. It also seems to me that this article also indirectly acknowledges this because it refers to much existing research that I think does humanise migration in the terms defined by this paper. In that sense, the term humanising loses its analytical value because it contains within it a wide range of ontologies and epistemologies and can't easily be aggregated into one humanising approach.

If the argument is about temporal and psychological dimensions then it could make sense to make these more central to the article and to strengthen the focus on these without feeling the need to cover so much ground.

The author might like to reflect whether the term 'humanising' is the best way to frame this analysis given that there is a lot of other research on migration that is consistent with such an approach. In such terms, perhaps it might be more feasible to not represent this as though it is a new approach, but, rather, represent the article as an attempt to synthesise and organise a wide range of material that seeks to place the experience of migrants at the core of its approach. Like this, the article is not explicitly criticising migration researchers for missing or ignoring this human angle - which is not a claim that can be substantiated given the huge amout of work that does

precisely this. Rather, the article seeks to bring together work that locates and contextualises migrant agency and experiences. The paper's ambition could then be to synthesise rather than to develop a new theorisation which also has the disadvantage of seeming to suggest that researchers have somehow 'dehumanised' migrants.

It seem to me that it could be feasible to say more about the temporal and psychological dimensions in relation to engendering and decolonising. Both the gendered dimension of migration and colonial/neocolonial links have been and still are important parts of the debate about migration. I do see a quite strong temporal focus in much research (most obviously in decolonising work), but I would like to read more about psychology, the role of emotions etc. The references in the paper to emotions are at a more general level, but, if the aim is to build bridges with psychology, then it could perhaps be helpful to look beyond migration research and to consider more generally & with what effects emotions are activated & which emotions are activated etc.

Is the topic of the essay discussed accurately in the context of the current literature?
Partly

Is the work clearly and cogently presented?
Partly

Is the argument persuasive and supported by appropriate evidence?
Partly

Does the essay contribute to the cultural, historical, social understanding of the field?
Partly

Competing Interests: No competing interests were disclosed.

Reviewer Expertise: The global poliitcs of migration, mobility and asylum

I confirm that I have read this submission and believe that I have an appropriate level of expertise to confirm that it is of an acceptable scientific standard, however I have significant reservations, as outlined above.

Reviewer Report 13 May 2024

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Ulrike Schuerkens
University Rennes 2, Rennes, France

The article is interesting and witnesses of a large literature review of the author. However, the article is for me more or less a short introduction of a specialized monograph that would discuss with many details the theoretical topic of migration studies. In the form presented here, the large theoretical discussion in the field doesn't appear with the details of approaches that are needed to confirm the necessity of the changes that the author wishes to see in the field of migration studies.
I can agree to the three fields that the author suggests to modify. However, a scientific research project only turns around a small part of research questions and cannot tackle the many different methods and topics that the author wants to see in migration studies. These many research endeavors may become research projects that the author would study over the rest of her professional life as a social scientist with colleagues in the field of migration.
Moreover, I cannot follow the author in her emphasis put on "humanising research". Migration studies in sociology and anthropology focus on humans, their agency, their fears and intentions. Perhaps this term should be replaced by another term that considers in a better way the long tradition of migration studies.

Is the topic of the essay discussed accurately in the context of the current literature?
Partly

Is the work clearly and cogently presented?
Partly

Is the argument persuasive and supported by appropriate evidence?
Partly

Does the essay contribute to the cultural, historical, social understanding of the field?
Yes

Competing Interests: No competing interests were disclosed.

Reviewer Expertise: Migratiion theory, migration and development, African migrations South of the Sahara, theories of social change and empirical studies.

I confirm that I have read this submission and believe that I have an appropriate level of expertise to confirm that it is of an acceptable scientific standard, however I have significant reservations, as outlined above.

Version 1

Reviewer Report 16 October 2023

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Saara Koikkalainen
[1] Karelian Institute, University of Eastern Finland, Joensuu, Finland
[2] Karelian Institute, University of Eastern Finland, Joensuu, Finland

The article discusses an important and partly understudied topic: migration decision-making. It includes an excellent overview of the state-of-the-art of the field and has an extensive list of references, which serves as a great starting point for anyone interested in this topic.

The article proposes a framework for understanding why some people in comparable situations migrate, while others do not. This the author calls "humanising research on (non-)migration decision-making". Having the (non-) included in the name of the framework makes sense, as the author wants to highlight the fact, that some of those who think about migrating never realise their plans. However, I would stress this fact in the text of the article but would drop it from the title and name of the framework, as it makes it a bit cumbersome to read and use.

The author argues that there are three key aspects of research that can humanise migration research: thick contextualisation, life dimension-focused analysis, and time-situated inquiry. These are well presented and seem very valid in the pursuit of understanding migration from the individual's perspective. Taking account of these three aspects can be useful when planning new research on a particular migration phenomenon.

The article includes five figures that are meant to clarify mainstream migration theorisations, thick contextualisation, migrant's internal processes, temporality in migration decision-making, and finally the "humanising (non-)migration decision-making framework.". Some of the figures contain too many levels and issues to really be useful for the reader. One wonders if they are all necessary? Yet the final figure does portray the key ingredients of the proposed framework in a neat and informative manner and is, therefore, a good addition to the article text.

One minor change that I would recommend is to edit the first sentence of the abstract as this is not the clearest or most inviting opening line: "Recent global challenges such as the COVID-19 pandemic, economic crises, and wars have not impeded transnational migration to continuously unfold." The article does not really discuss the impact of such events on migration decision-making, so I would just replace it with the opening of the plain language summary.

In conclusion, the article is an important contribution to the field of migration research and it can be recommended for all those who wish to better understand how the individual perspective and life situation of current and future migrants influence the formation of migration patterns.

Is the topic of the essay discussed accurately in the context of the current literature?
Yes

Is the work clearly and cogently presented?
Yes

Is the argument persuasive and supported by appropriate evidence?
Yes

Does the essay contribute to the cultural, historical, social understanding of the field?

Yes

Competing Interests: No competing interests were disclosed.

Reviewer Expertise: Migration decision-making

I confirm that I have read this submission and believe that I have an appropriate level of expertise to confirm that it is of an acceptable scientific standard.

Author Response 01 Feb 2024

Asuncion Fresnoza-Flot

Replies to the review of Saara Koikkalainen (16 October 2023): The article discusses an important and partly understudied topic: migration decision-making. It includes an excellent overview of the state-of-the-art of the field and has an extensive list of references, which serves as a great starting point for anyone interested in this topic.
- Thank you for this positive review of the paper.

The article proposes a framework for understanding why some people in comparable situations migrate, while others do not. This the author calls "humanising research on (non-)migration decision-making". Having the (non-) included in the name of the framework makes sense, as the author wants to highlight the fact, that some of those who think about migrating never realise their plans. However, I would stress this fact in the text of the article but would drop it from the title and name of the framework, as it makes it a bit cumbersome to read and use.
- Following your suggestion, I deleted the prefix “(non-)” in the title and in the name of the proposed framework.

The author argues that there are three key aspects of research that can humanise migration research: thick contextualisation, life dimension-focused analysis, and time-situated inquiry. These are well presented and seem very valid in the pursuit of understanding migration from the individual's perspective. Taking account of these three aspects can be useful when planning new research on a particular migration phenomenon.
- Thank you for this validation of the three key aspects advanced in the paper.

The article includes five figures that are meant to clarify mainstream migration theorisations, thick contextualisation, migrant's internal processes, temporality in migration decision-making, and finally the "humanising (non-)migration decision-making framework.". Some of the figures contain too many levels and issues to really be useful for the reader. One wonders if they are all necessary? Yet the final figure does portray the key ingredients of the proposed framework in a neat and informative manner and is, therefore, a good addition to the article text.
- Indeed, Figures 2 and 3 are partly redundant with Figure 5 as they zoom in on specific elements of this final figure. However, given that Figure 5 is quite complex, I prefer to keep Figures 2 and 3 to facilitate understanding of Figure 5.

One minor change that I would recommend is to edit the first sentence of the abstract as

this is not the clearest or most inviting opening line: "Recent global challenges such as the COVID-19 pandemic, economic crises, and wars have not impeded transnational migration to continuously unfold." The article does not really discuss the impact of such events on migration decision-making, so I would just replace it with the opening of the plain language summary.
- I deleted the sentence in question, but I did not move the opening of the plain language summary to the abstract, as it has the same idea as the new starting sentence of the said section.

In conclusion, the article is an important contribution to the field of migration research and it can be recommended for all those who wish to better understand how the individual perspective and life situation of current and future migrants influence the formation of migration patterns.
- Thank you for this positive assessment of my article's contribution to the field.

Is the topic of the essay discussed accurately in the context of the current literature? Yes

Is the work clearly and cogently presented? Yes

Is the argument persuasive and supported by appropriate evidence? Yes

Does the essay contribute to the cultural, historical, social understanding of the field? Yes
- Thank you for your constructive comments and validation of this proposed review paper to ORE.

Competing Interests: No competing interests

Reviewer Report 09 October 2023

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Jørgen Carling
[1] Peace Research Institute Oslo, Oslo, Norway
[2] Peace Research Institute Oslo, Oslo, Norway

This paper has the ambition to 'propose an analytical framework to address the question of what drives people to migrate, remigrate, or stay where they are.' This is a tall ambition, and a welcome one. The development of migration research benefits from papers that address the fundamental issues of the field, as this paper does.

However, the there are two related disjunctures with this submission. First, the scope and

ambition of the paper is, at the overall level, not matched by equally thorough and precise analysis and writing. The author engages with broad swaths of the relevant literature, but it is less clear what specific contributions the paper makes. I will return to examples.

Second, there is a bit of a mismatch between the ambition of the paper and the choice of outlet. Open-Research Europe (ORE) has a policy of publishing every submission that meets basic checks, and peer-reviewers are instructed to 'assess the validity of the article content, rather than the novelty or interest levels'. In other words, if the article contains nothing new or interesting, it should still pass peer review as long as it is 'scientifically valid'. This approach, is, founded on an epistemology of cumulative positivist science and, in the case of ORE, extended from biomedical disciplines to all scientific fields.

The nature of the article makes 'scientific validity' a challenging yardstick for assessment. The weaknesses in this paper can not be construed as a lack of validity, so I will approve it as a peer reviewer, in line with ORE's philosophy. In other words, there is nothing 'wrong' even though, in my opinion, the paper falls far short of its ambitions and is not (yet) a truly interesting or useful contribution to the field.

(An aside for the author's information: If I had reviewed the paper for a regular selective journal with demands for quality, novelty and interest, I would have recommended major revision. There is no prohibition against making suggestions for improvements in an ORE review. However, it is a better use of my reviewing capacity to do that for journals in which such improvements are criteria for publication. This paper apparently draws on the proposal for the AspirE project, and it might be that it has been submitted in order to create a citeable reference for this framework, without an ambition to increase its novelty or interest. This would be a fair motivation for selecting ORE as the target outlet.)

The ORE review form poses several questions, which I reproduce here along with my answers and justification.

Question: Is the topic of the essay discussed accurately in the context of the current literature?

Answer: Partly.

The paper cites a great deal of relevant literature. However, it does not always engage with that literature in a precise and useful way. I will give a few examples, but an exhaustive account would go far beyond the reviewer role.

The label 'humanising' is problematic for two reasons. First, the human dimensions of migration decision-making have been extensively addressed by other researchers and incorporated in theorizing over the past two decades. The claim that 'mainstream migration theories focus on individuals' rationality to uncover the logics behind their spatial mobility, thereby neglecting other important dimensions of human lives' might have been true 30 or 40 years ago, but the paper itself extensively cites migration theory from the past couple of decades that is both well-established and sensitive to human aspects.

Second, the label 'humanising' has a somewhat self-aggrandising, moralising ring. It implies that other scholars 'dehumanise' migrants and/or migration decision-making. It's never good to be

inaccurate about existing research, of course, but it is worse when it is done in a moralising way. I am sure this was not the author's intention, but it is the nevertheless the effect of the chosen framing.

Another problematic usage appears with 'transnational' and 'transnationalism'. The Introduction starts by defining the article's scope as 'transnational migration'. This term is avoided by many theorists, including myself. The study of 'transnationalism' and 'transnational practices' has been a key development in migration studies since the 1990s. Early on, it was noted that the word 'transnational' is often used loosely and inaccurately as a sign of sophistication rather than analytical specificity. Doing so creates confusion between international migration in general and the ways in which some migrants, but not all, engage in transnational practices and create transnational social fields. Later in the paper, 'Transnationalism' appears in the figure that displays 'mainstream migration theorisations'. But it is a misunderstanding that 'transnationalism' is (or was ever intended to be) a theory of migration.

The claim that 'each discipline offers a migration theory suited for a specific context and situation' and that de Haas is the only theorist that has offered an interdisciplinary approach is clearly a misleading representation. (A minor point on terminology in connection with this discussion: de Haas has developed the 'aspirations and capabilities framework' while Carling developed the 'aspiration/ability model'). There is one textbook that takes a discipline-by-discipline approach, but all the major migration journals are interdisciplinary, many leading migration research environments are interdisciplinary, and many theorists draw extensively on the work of scholars trained in disciplines other than their own. The emphasis on the value of interdisciplinarity is also a bit awkward in the context of this paper, which appears completely detached from quantitative methods.

The subsequent claims about scholars only analysing one analytical level and preferring unidimensional approaches are equally inaccurate, I think.

Perhaps these sweeping generalizations reflect the paper's origins in a research proposal? The pressure to obtain funding can result in exaggerated claims to novelty and dismissive blanket claims about existing research. Maybe that's just part of the proposal genre, but I don't think it is helpful as part of the scientific literature.

Questions: Is the work clearly and cogently presented? Is the argument persuasive and supported by appropriate evidence? Does the essay contribute to the cultural, historical, social understanding of the field?

Answer: Partly (to all three questions)

These questions are closely related, so I address them jointly. The paper's argument is, essentially, that the 'humanising (non-)migration decision-making' is a novel and useful contribution to the study of migration. I am not persuaded that it is. But, as noted above, this is irrelevant to the ORE peer review criteria.

I am completely sympathetic to most of the claims in the paper, for instance about the value of interdisciplinarity, the importance of human dimensions beyond rationality, and the need for incorporating analyses of gender relations in theory. However, I think all these points have been

made before, and in more analytical and precise ways. (Again, this is something that would have stood in the way of publication in a selective journal, but not under the publishing model of ORE.)

The paper seeks to extract and discuss the methodological implications of the proposed theoretical framework. This is a very welcome ambition. However, it might be overly ambitious, and is, in my opinion, not very successful. The thrust of the argument on methods almost seems to be that researchers must gain an overview of everything: 'researchers need to provide detailed information about the social world these individuals live in' as well as giving critical attention to 'the natural environmental contexts' and carrying out 'archival and other forms of documentary research, as well as content analysis of selected documents (e.g., texts of laws and policies, historical accounts, journalistic and government reports, or statistical data)'. This comes in addition to empirical data from research participants.

In practice, methodology is also about managing financial and intellectual resources in the best possible way for generating valuable new knowledge. In-depth investigation of social worlds, natural environments, archives, legislation, and historical accounts is possible, of course, but might preclude examining a diversity of contexts, for instance, or spending more time in the field with research participants. In short, 'more is better' is not very useful as methodological advice.

A more specific point in the discussion concerns participatory methods. Again, this is a valuable part of a holistic approach. However, the value of the discussion is limited by not problematizing key issues such as who should participate and what is the value for participants of contributing their time. It is also a concern, I think, that the text refers to 'the participatory technique called "focus group discussion"'. Focus group discussions are a widely used data collection format in migration study, but it is not inherently participatory.

In conclusion, I value the ambition of this paper and sympathize with much of its spirit, but believe that the quality, novelty and usefulness of the text itself do not match. Submission to a selective journal that apply such criteria would have resulted in an uphill struggle that might have ended with a much improved paper. The choice of ORE is a legitimate alternative strategy for making the text available and citeable. It is up to the author what more to aim for.

Is the topic of the essay discussed accurately in the context of the current literature?
Partly

Is the work clearly and cogently presented?
Partly

Is the argument persuasive and supported by appropriate evidence?
Partly

Does the essay contribute to the cultural, historical, social understanding of the field?
Partly

Competing Interests: No competing interests were disclosed.

Reviewer Expertise: Migration theory; migration decision-making; migration research methods;

interdisciplinary research.

I confirm that I have read this submission and believe that I have an appropriate level of expertise to confirm that it is of an acceptable scientific standard, however I have significant reservations, as outlined above.

Author Response 01 Feb 2024

Asuncion Fresnoza-Flot

Replies to the review of Jørgen Carling (09 October 2023): This paper has the ambition to 'propose an analytical framework to address the question of what drives people to migrate, remigrate, or stay where they are.' This is a tall ambition, and a welcome one. The development of migration research benefits from papers that address the fundamental issues of the field, as this paper does.
- Thank you for welcoming this effort to contribute to the development of migration research.

However, the there are two related disjunctures with this submission. First, the scope and ambition of the paper is, at the overall level, not matched by equally thorough and precise analysis and writing. The author engages with broad swaths of the relevant literature, but it is less clear what specific contributions the paper makes. I will return to examples.
- I added an explanation in paragraphs 2 and 3 of the Conclusion section to clarify the paper's contributions. First, I indicated that the proposed framework in the paper framework can "provide more nuances in the way (non-)migration decision-making has been understood, thereby avoiding generalising discourses regarding transnational migrations". And second, I explained that the paper's proposed humanising methodologies can "provide rich contextual and empirical data, which can further clarify the whole picture of (non-)migration decision-making and therefore reduce the risk of a biased portrayal of the said process".

Second, there is a bit of a mismatch between the ambition of the paper and the choice of outlet. Open-Research Europe (ORE) has a policy of publishing every submission that meets basic checks, and peer-reviewers are instructed to 'assess the validity of the article content, rather than the novelty or interest levels'. In other words, if the article contains nothing new or interesting, it should still pass peer review as long as it is 'scientifically valid'. This approach, is, founded on an epistemology of cumulative positivist science and, in the case of ORE, extended from biomedical disciplines to all scientific fields.
- My choice of ORE as platform to publish the proposed paper stems from three major reasons. First, it is aligned with the Open Science principle that the project in which the paper is inscribed intends to pursue. I was not aware of ORE's existence until the project started and I received an invitation to publish on the said platform. As the project is funded by the European Commission's Horizon Europe programme, I decided to submit my article there to support the Commission's ORE initiative. Second, since ORE attracts researchers from other disciplines, publishing a paper on its platform was a way for me to communicate the project's starting analytical framework to a wide, multidisciplinary readership. And third, my paper appeared well fitted to the criteria in the guidelines to authors of ORE according to which a review article should "provide a balanced and comprehensive overview of the

latest discoveries in a social science discipline and summarize topics that have not yet been covered in the same way in the existing published literature. Reviews should be based on peer-reviewed literature, and should not include new research, data or propose new hypotheses" (https://open-research-europe.ec.europa.eu/for-authors/article-guidelines/social-sciences/reviews). These criteria seem at odd with the instructions to reviewers you mention (which I discovered at https://open-research-europe.ec.europa.eu/for-referees/guidelines after are reading your review comments), according to which reviewers should "assess the validity of the article content, rather than the novelty or interest levels" of a paper. In my opinion, this instruction clearly does not apply to review papers since they do not contain any new data. I believe that ORE should clarify their instructions to reviewers to bring them in line to their guidelines to authors regarding review papers.

The nature of the article makes 'scientific validity' a challenging yardstick for assessment. The weaknesses in this paper can not be construed as a lack of validity, so I will approve it as a peer reviewer, in line with ORE's philosophy. In other words, there is nothing 'wrong' even though, in my opinion, the paper falls far short of its ambitions and is not (yet) a truly interesting or useful contribution to the field.
- Thank you for accepting to review the paper despite its limitations. I revised my article paper to address your comments and suggestions by highlighting its possible contributions to the research field on decision-making of aspiring (re)migrants. Given its very nature as a review essay, the paper's "truly interesting or useful contribution to the field" may not be immediately evident and may only come out once its proposed analytical framework is applied to empirical research. An empirically based paper using the said framework will be submitted for publication at the end of the project in which this review essay is inscribed.

(An aside for the author's information: If I had reviewed the paper for a regular selective journal with demands for quality, novelty and interest, I would have recommended major revision. There is no prohibition against making suggestions for improvements in an ORE review. However, it is a better use of my reviewing capacity to do that for journals in which such improvements are criteria for publication. This paper apparently draws on the proposal for the AspirE project, and it might be that it has been submitted in order to create a citeable reference for this framework, without an ambition to increase its novelty or interest. This would be a fair motivation for selecting ORE as the target outlet.)
- The paper is a review essay that unveils the conclusions of an evaluation of the literature on migration theorisations. Its ambition is to share this evaluation to the academic community at large and to receive feedback from experts in order to further improve the analytical framework proposed in the paper. Once validated by experts, this framework will serve as a starting analytical optic through which the empirical data in the AspirE project will be examined and interpreted.

The ORE review form poses several questions, which I reproduce here along with my answers and justification.
Question: Is the topic of the essay discussed accurately in the context of the current literature?
Answer: Partly.
The paper cites a great deal of relevant literature. However, it does not always engage with

that literature in a precise and useful way. I will give a few examples, but an exhaustive account would go far beyond the reviewer role.
- I hope that the revised version of the paper does not convey anymore this impression.

The label 'humanising' is problematic for two reasons. First, the human dimensions of migration decision-making have been extensively addressed by other researchers and incorporated in theorizing over the past two decades.
- In the last paragraph of the state-of-the-art section I added a sentence to emphasise that "several theories in the past three decades have extensively addressed the human dimensions of migration". In the previously submitted version of the paper, paragraph 3 in the state-of-the-art section already brought to the fore the contributions of gender and migration research in highlighting the relational aspects of migration through the gender lens. In paragraph 4 of the same section of the paper, it mentioned that "certain theories and empirical works have pointed out how imaginaries and emotions affect an individual's decision-making process", but that despite this development "the internal processes (cognitive and emotional) of individuals remain rarely treated together in the analysis". The previously submitted version also explained that "scholars increasingly criticise the neglect of the temporal dimension in the analysis of migration". To emphasise further these past efforts, I added a summary in the last paragraph of the state-of-the-art section in the revised paper stating that "not all dimensions are taken into account" in several theories of the past three decades, "notably internal processes (emotional and cognitive), time (stages and timing), and individual's social locations "within interconnected power hierarchies".

The claim that 'mainstream migration theories focus on individuals' rationality to uncover the logics behind their spatial mobility, thereby neglecting other important dimensions of human lives' might have been true 30 or 40 years ago, but the paper itself extensively cites migration theory from the past couple of decades that is both well-established and sensitive to human aspects.
- To better align the introduction of the paper with the state-of-the-art section that cited migration theories from the past couple of decades, I added a sentence stating that the mainstream migration theories referred to concern "notably classical" theories. I also added in paragraph 2 of the introduction two sentences summarising one of the key observations presented in the state-of-the-art section: "More and more migration theories in the past three decades take into account the different dimensions of human lives, such as in relational, experiential, and perceptual terms. Nonetheless, the temporal and psychological dimensions including emotions, as well as other cognitive processes, remain largely overlooked as recent works point out".

Second, the label 'humanising' has a somewhat self-aggrandising, moralising ring. It implies that other scholars 'dehumanise' migrants and/or migration decision-making. It's never good to be inaccurate about existing research, of course, but it is worse when it is done in a moralising way. I am sure this was not the author's intention, but it is the nevertheless the effect of the chosen framing.
- I clarified in the revised version of the paper the use of the qualifier "humanising" (see paragraph 2 of the introduction) to avoid giving the impression of implying that other scholars "dehumanise" migrants and/or migration decision-making. I explained that the adjective "humanising" is used in my paper to depart from the qualifiers "humanist" and

"humanistic" that "have acquired problematic connotations due to their links to humanism and humanistic psychology, respectively". Taking into account Kerr's (2007) definition of "humanising' as 'making better' or 'improving'" (6), the use of the said qualifier in my paper may avoid "dichotomic thinking in terms of good and bad or humane and inhumane". I also find "humanising" well "appropriate to employ when the focus includes individual's voices and experiences".

Another problematic usage appears with 'transnational' and 'transnationalism'. The Introduction starts by defining the article's scope as 'transnational migration'. This term is avoided by many theorists, including myself. The study of 'transnationalism' and 'transnational practices' has been a key development in migration studies since the 1990s. Early on, it was noted that the word 'transnational' is often used loosely and inaccurately as a sign of sophistication rather than analytical specificity. Doing so creates confusion between international migration in general and the ways in which some migrants, but not all, engage in transnational practices and create transnational social fields.
- I added in paragraph 1 of the introduction section an explanation about the logic behind the use of the term "transnational migration" in the paper. Drawing from Portes (2001, p. 186), I used the qualifier "transnational" to describe the geographic movements of people across national borders for two reasons: first, it signifies that the migrations I am referring to frequently stem from non-institutional actors' initiatives and sustained efforts "across national borders", and second, it indicates that they take place most often "outside the pale of state regulation and control". This choice of the qualifier "transnational" rather than "international" allows me to emphasise the "informal" dimension or the "bottom" aspect of (non-)migration decision-making.

Later in the paper, 'Transnationalism' appears in the figure that displays 'mainstream migration theorisations'. But it is a misunderstanding that 'transnationalism' is (or was ever intended to be) a theory of migration.
- This mistake in Figure 1 has now been corrected, thanks for pointing it out.

The claim that 'each discipline offers a migration theory suited for a specific context and situation' and that de Haas is the only theorist that has offered an interdisciplinary approach is clearly a misleading representation.
- I revised this whole paragraph to clarify what I meant. The paper does recognise that interdisciplinarity has been present in migration theorisation, but there is a need for more interdisciplinarity as some dimensions of human lives (e.g., temporality and psychological aspects) receive limited attention in existing theories.

(A minor point on terminology in connection with this discussion: de Haas has developed the 'aspirations and capabilities framework' while Carling developed the 'aspiration/ability model'). - Thank you for bringing this point to my attention, it is now corrected in the revised version of my paper.

There is one textbook that takes a discipline-by-discipline approach, but all the major migration journals are interdisciplinary, many leading migration research environments are interdisciplinary, and many theorists draw extensively on the work of scholars trained in disciplines other than their own.

- I agree that “all the major migration journals are interdisciplinary, many leading migration research environments are interdisciplinary”, but this interdisciplinarity is not generally the case in terms of migration theorisation as the state of the art in the paper shows. That is why I highlight in the last paragraph of the state-of-the-art section “the need for migration theorisation to be more interdisciplinary”. I also agree that “many theorists draw extensively on the work of scholars trained in disciplines other than their own”, but as I explained in the paper, the resulting theories mostly “remain within their respective disciplines” or fields of studies. In my opinion, this situation is not “interdisciplinarity” (i.e., “the reciprocal interaction between [...] disciplines [...] in order to generate new common methodologies, perspectives, knowledge, or even new disciplines”: Choi & Pak, 2006, 359) but rather “multidisciplinarity” in which scholars draw from different disciplines but remain within their “disciplinary boundaries” (ibid.). I added supporting references in the last paragraph of the state-of-the-art section, explaining that recent scholarly works observe the compartmentalisation in migration studies itself and underlines the need for more interdisciplinarity. I gave the following examples: in gender and migration research, Hondagneu-Sotelo (2011) observes that researchers in different spheres of studies “are mostly not in conversation with one another” due “to the increasingly specialized and balkanized nature of social science research today” (277). In the research field of migration and integration, Dahinden (2016) proposes “to link migration research issues more closely with social science and theory in general” as one of several strategies to “de-migrantize” the said field (2214). I also cited Koikkalainen and Kyle’s (2016) observation about the need for “social psychology or cognitive social sciences” to be incorporated in migration studies, in the study of (non-)migration decision-making.

The emphasis on the value of interdisciplinarity is also a bit awkward in the context of this paper, which appears completely detached from quantitative methods.
- Since the paper proposes a decolonising methodology for a study of migration decision-making, it privileges qualitative and participatory data collection methods that bring to the fore the “emic perspectives (i.e., individual’s points of view) and diversity of voices, discourses, and experiences”. This choice does not completely exclude quantitative methods, but qualitative and participatory methodologies appear sufficiently effective to access what Tilly (2010) calls “orally transmitted knowledge” central to the “decolonising” stance adopted in my article. I added this point in paragraph 1 in the section “Humanising methodologies”.

The subsequent claims about scholars only analysing one analytical level and preferring unidimensional approaches are equally inaccurate, I think.
- The paper does not claim that scholars only analyse one analytical level. What it explains is that what has “been widely adopted in migration studies” is macro-level migration theories and that theories with “meso- and micro-level frameworks, specifically their combination and articulation with macro-level lenses, remain scarce” (see paragraph 5 of the state of the art). I clarified in the last paragraph of the state-of-the-art section that classical migration theories tend to focus on one level of analysis (the macro level). Concerning unidimensional approach, I provided examples to strengthen the observation I laid out in the last paragraph of the state-of-the-art section.

Perhaps these sweeping generalizations reflect the paper’s origins in a research proposal?

The pressure to obtain funding can result in exaggerated claims to novelty and dismissive blanket claims about existing research. Maybe that's just part of the proposal genre, but I don't think it is helpful as part of the scientific literature.
- The paper does not intend to generalise beyond the corpus of scholarly works it reviewed (listed in the References section). There are certainly works written in English and other languages that escaped the analytical gaze of the paper, which is one of the limitations that I indicated in the revised conclusion of the paper.

Questions: Is the work clearly and cogently presented? Is the argument persuasive and supported by appropriate evidence? Does the essay contribute to the cultural, historical, social understanding of the field?
Answer: Partly (to all three questions) These questions are closely related, so I address them jointly. The paper's argument is, essentially, that the 'humanising (non-)migration decision-making' is a novel and useful contribution to the study of migration. I am not persuaded that it is. But, as noted above, this is irrelevant to the ORE peer review criteria.
- The paper proposes a framework that has not been applied yet to any empirical studies, hence it is difficult to assess its concrete contributions to the research field of migration decision-making and/or migration per se. I included this point in the discussion of the paper's limitations in the last paragraph of the conclusion section. In the meantime, the framework proposed in the paper based on a literature review is opened to be discussed and criticised for its further development.

I am completely sympathetic to most of the claims in the paper, for instance about the value of interdisciplinarity, the importance of human dimensions beyond rationality, and the need for incorporating analyses of gender relations in theory. However, I think all these points have been made before, and in more analytical and precise ways. (Again, this is something that would have stood in the way of publication in a selective journal, but not under the publishing model of ORE.)
- Yes, the aforementioned points have been made before, but they have been raised separately in several research fields and studies. What the paper proposed is to heed and take into account these separate calls into one framework so as not to overlook all aspects/dimensions of human life in the analysis of (non-)migration decision-making.

The paper seeks to extract and discuss the methodological implications of the proposed theoretical framework. This is a very welcome ambition. However, it might be overly ambitious, and is, in my opinion, not very successful. The thrust of the argument on methods almost seems to be that researchers must gain an overview of everything: 'researchers need to provide detailed information about the social world these individuals live in' as well as giving critical attention to 'the natural environmental contexts' and carrying out 'archival and other forms of documentary research, as well as content analysis of selected documents (e.g., texts of laws and policies, historical accounts, journalistic and government reports, or statistical data)'. This comes in addition to empirical data from research participants.
- The paper does not intend to convey that "researchers must gain an overview of everything". To clarify this point, I added an explanation in paragraph 2 of the section "Humanising methodologies" that the examples of data collection techniques provided in the said section "represent a pool of methodological possibilities from which researchers

can choose the most appropriate data-collection technique(s) for their respective studies". As already stated in its introduction section, the paper only "suggests some methodological directions" in how to pursue the analytical framework it proposes.

In practice, methodology is also about managing financial and intellectual resources in the best possible way for generating valuable new knowledge. In-depth investigation of social worlds, natural environments, archives, legislation, and historical accounts is possible, of course, but might preclude examining a diversity of contexts, for instance, or spending more time in the field with research participants. In short, 'more is better' is not very useful as methodological advice.
- I agree that "'more is better' is not very useful as methodological device" (cf. my reply to the previous comment). That is why the paper specifically highlights the value of qualitative and participatory methods and does not include quantitative methods. It does not completely exclude the possibility of adding the latter to the former but argues that for a framework with a "decolonising" stance qualitative and participatory methodologies appear sufficiently effective to access "orally transmitted knowledge" (Tilly, 2010). I added this point in paragraph 1 in the section "Humanising methodologies".

A more specific point in the discussion concerns participatory methods. Again, this is a valuable part of a holistic approach. However, the value of the discussion is limited by not problematizing key issues such as who should participate and what is the value for participants of contributing their times.
- Thank you for raising this point that I took into account in the revised version of the paper, specifically in paragraph 3 of the section "Humanising methodologies". I explained in this paragraph that "(t)o reinforce the decolonising aspect of focus group discussion, researchers should take into account its ethical dimension. For example, there is a need for a transparent research protocol and a thorough reflection on how to address the questions of who will be invited to take part in the discussion, how their participation be compensated, or how their personal data will be protected".

It is also a concern, I think, that the text refers to 'the participatory technique called "focus group discussion"'. Focus group discussions are a widely used data collection format in migration study, but it is not inherently participatory.
- I agree with your observation that "(f)ocus group discussions are a widely used data collection format in migration study, but it is not inherently participatory". That is why the section "Humanising methodologies" of my paper draws from outside of migration studies, specifically from psychology and sociology, where focus group discussions have been used as one form of participatory methods. I provided supplementary information about this use of focus group discussion in paragraph 4 of the section "Humanising methodologies".

In conclusion, I value the ambition of this paper and sympathize with much of its spirit, but believe that the quality, novelty and usefulness of the text itself do not match. Submission to a selective journal that apply such criteria would have resulted in an uphill struggle that might have ended with a much improved paper.
- This comment seems to imply that my paper could only be improved by sending it to another journal (not ORE). If this is what you mean, withdrawing my paper at this stage to resubmit it somewhere else would be difficult as I already morally engaged myself with

ORE. However, I will propose the empirically based follow-up paper of this review essay to a traditional peer-reviewed journal.

The choice of ORE is a legitimate alternative strategy for making the text available and citeable. It is up to the author what more to aim for.
- My choice of ORE was neither to escape rigorous peer review nor to use it as a mere “strategy for making the text available and citeable”. As explained at the beginning of my replies, the choice stemmed from the commitment of my project to Open Science, to my intent of sharing the project’s analytical framework with a wide readership across disciplines, and to the fact that my review paper seems to correspond well to the criteria set forth by ORE for a review article in a social science discipline. My aim is therefore to improve this review paper, and I hope that its revised version will now match your standards.

Competing Interests: No competing interests