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CITIES AND MIGRATION

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spoken by Tilly and George Coleman (Wayne State).  
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Charles Tilly, University of Michigan

## CITIES AND MIGRATION

COLEMAN: Introduction

TILLY: I want to talk about where cities fit into migration patterns, and how migrants fit into cities. People have lived in cities for eight or ten thousand years. Over those entire hundred centuries cities and migrants have had a love-hate affair going.

COLEMAN: A love-hate affair?

TILLY: Yes, it's a love affair, because cities and migrants have been unable to live without each other. But it's also a hate affair, because the people already in the city -- they are, of course, the earlier rounds of migrants and their descendants -- have usually kicked the newcomers around and blamed their troubles on them. The love affair and the hate affair are still going on in North American cities today.

COLEMAN: You mean that ethnic and racial conflict are nothing but newcomers against old-timers?

TILLY: No, but there are some connections we can talk about later. First, let's think about cities and migration in general. When people migrate in large numbers, they usually head toward cities. The longer-range the migration, the more often cities are the destination. That's not surprising. It's partly a result of the communications position of cities, partly a result of the kinds of opportunities they offer, and partly a result of their special population patterns. As a switchpoint in a set of large-scale communications systems, any big city has contact with millions of people spread all over the world. Cities offer the volume and variety of opportunities -- especially

job opportunities -- to attract people from distant places. And few cities have both a high enough birth rate and a low enough death rate for their natural increase to meet the need for new hands, and new heads.

COLEMAN: So what does that have to do with ethnicity?

TILLY: Well, because they feed on long-distance migration, cities are ethnic factories. They manufacture ethnicity. The process works in two ways, one obvious and one not so obvious. Here's the obvious part: because of their varied opportunities and large geographic range, cities recruit clusters of people who differ significantly in language, culture, religion, skills and experience of the world; when they come in clusters, those differences are the makings of ethnicity.

The less obvious part is that the structure of the city, and the way migration fits into it, combine to encourage people of similar origins to emphasize their differences and the privileges attached to their differences.

COLEMAN: For example?

TILLY: For example, Italians in early twentieth-century American cities began joining and building political organizations to protect their rights and ease their way to power over their own lives. As they did that, they developed an investment in those organizations and in being Italian. More important, they (and especially their politicians) developed an investment in other people's not being Italian.

Another example. When Macedonians build up a network which gives them the advantage in placing people in the restaurant industry, they make it easier for more Macedonians to pile up in restaurant

work. They develop an investment in making sure that Macedonians come first, and that non-Macedonians come second.

Or a third case. When Portugal travel agents specialize in flights to the Azores, in locating jobs for Azoreans in Toronto and in locating Azoreans for jobs in Toronto, they develop a vested interest in keeping Toronto's Portuguese community together. Priests, businessmen, politicians, foodsellers, doctors and many other influential members of a migrant community call on common origins to build and keep their clientele. All these people are manufacturing ethnicity.

COLEMAN: All right, but your examples all deal with overseas migrants.

What you say may apply to the great migrations of fifty or a hundred years ago, but what about now?

TILLY: You're right: Little Italys and Chinatowns are slowly thinning out in many cities. But plenty of people with distinctive cultures and languages are still arriving from far away. Puerto Ricans and Chicanos, for example, are building up the Spanish-speaking population in United States cities, and next door, in Canada -- well, it's a lot like fifty years ago. Anyway, I think the same general process works with migrants from the same culture. It's just not as visible.

COLEMAN: What process?

TILLY: The process of manufacturing ethnicity. Chain migration is right in the middle of it. You've already been talking about chain migration in this course: it's the arrangement in which a long chain of people connected by kinship and friendship move from one place to another. I'd distinguish it from two other main migration patterns: There's circular migration, in which a whole group moves from one

place to another for a while, and returns to its starting place; many migrant laborers run through an annual cycle like that. There's also career migration, in which individuals follow job opportunities in their field from one place to another; the lifetimes of engineers and of executives in big companies are often filled with career moves like that. While career migration is very important in America today, over the long run I'm sure that chain migration has brought many more people to cities.

COLEMAN: So the difference is that career migrants have jobs before moving, and chain migrants don't?

TILLY: Well, that's part of it. In chain migration, current information about jobs at either end moves back and forth along the chain. But so does information about housing and living conditions, not to mention news about friends and relatives. The people at the receiving end typically help their friends and relatives find jobs and housing. Sometimes they supply the jobs and housing themselves. The people at the destination often put up the cost of the next-comer's transportation and settling. So chain migration makes it easier for people to experiment: try out the city and see if they want to stay. In fact, back in the days of mass European migration to the United States, a quarter or more of the migrants in a given chain often returned home after trying American life. Some had made good and some hadn't, but back home in Greece or Italy they spread the word about opportunities in America.

COLEMAN: Now you're talking about the old days again.

TILLY: Right. But chain migration operates inside the United States as well. Most likely the majority of the millions of migrants who have

come to Detroit from the rural South since World War I have come as part of migrant chains connecting Detroit with some small town in Kentucky or Georgia. That applies to Blacks and Whites alike. Since World War II one common pattern has been for a carload of young people to drive back South for a long weekend, tell their friends about chances up North, and then return to Detroit with an extra rider: a cousin or a neighbor who will lodge temporarily with one of the drivers while he or she looks for work in the city. When you have thousands of chains like that, even though many people go back home the net effect is to empty the countryside of its extra hands.

COLEMAN: But what does that have to do with ethnicity?

TILLY: I admit I'm stretching the term to cover the creation of visible clusters of people who are self-conscious about having common origins. Chain migration itself helps manufacture ethnicity. For one thing, it guarantees that clusters of people with similar backgrounds, instead of a broad cross-section of all available migrants, will show up in a particular city. For another, finding jobs, housing and other things with the help of the same small group of fellow-migrants tends to locate people in jobs, housing and life situations that are closely connected to each other. If you're always next to people like yourself, then you're usually separate from people unlike yourself. So chain migration promotes social segregation.

COLEMAN: So all you mean by ethnicity is segregation?

TILLY: No, social segregation is likely to persist and to crystallize into genuine self-conscious ethnicity if the group is big enough and different enough from the rest of the population to build its own full round of institutions -- such as churches, social clubs and eating

places. Strong ethnicity is more likely to develop if other groups single out the migrants as different and undesirable, if other groups discriminate against it or compete for its jobs, housing and gathering places. Ethnic brokers such as ministers, travel agents and politicians often reinforce ethnicity. But they can only be effective under two conditions: if the group has a distinct heritage and internal connections in the first place, and if it brings or acquires some advantages the group members consider worth defending.

COLEMAN: It sounds like you're describing what other people have called the creation of urban villages. Basically, reestablishing rural life in the city.

TILLY: Yes and no. The Italian "urban village" that sociologists have described in the West End of Boston is a good example of the process we're discussing, but people don't have to be peasants or even from the country to form ethnic communities. In any case, for a long time most migrants to Detroit and other big cities haven't come from the country; they've come from other big cities and their suburbs.

COLEMAN: What about black migrants?

TILLY: Them, too. Remember that about ten years ago the proportion of American Blacks living in cities passed the proportion of Whites. The Black population is now more urban than the white. Of course, the huge migration of Blacks off southern farms toward the cities of South and North played the major part in that shift. For years there were three major streams of black migration in the United States: one leading up the East coast from Florida, Georgia, the Carolinas and Virginia to Washington, Baltimore, Philadelphia, New York and other northern cities; a second moving people from the Mississippi basin



and the rest of the old South to Chicago, St. Louis, Detroit and other Midwestern cities; and a third, smaller stream running from Texas, Oklahoma and western Louisiana out to California. But by the 1950s the cross-flow of black migrants among metropolitan areas was as important as the flows out of the rural South. Take a look at this diagram showing the movement of Blacks between 1960 and 1970. You can see the remains of the old South-to-North movement, but you can also see how many Blacks migrated among northern metropolitan areas, and made the big jump from East Coast to West Coast. By the 1970s, the northward streams were slowing down; there weren't many potential migrants left. After all, by that time only a few hundred thousand Blacks remained on farms anywhere, and the majority of the black population lived in the urban North.

COLEMAN: Does all this mean that migration is slowing down?

TILLY: It doesn't seem to be. Migration does slow down in bad times and pick up in good times. But over the long run of the last century there hasn't been any significant trend up or down. What's been happening is that as migration out of rural areas has slowed, migration between cities has grown.

That's sometimes hard to see, for two reasons: first, because we tend to ignore migration to and from the suburbs, which are really integral parts of the kinds of cities we now live in; and second, because the steady or declining population of most big cities leads us to forget the turnover within the population. For example, New York's population was almost constant at a little under eight million from 1960 to 1970. But when we break it down we find a net outmigration of almost a million and a net immigration of about 440 thou-

sand others, mostly Blacks. (Despite the net outmigration, the birth rate was high enough to keep the population about the same.)

COLEMAN: How many migrants altogether?

TILLY: I don't really know. I was talking about net migration, the difference between arrivals and departures. The number of people who actually migrated into or out of New York City during the ten years could easily have been ten million. The city is like a great river: the level stays the same only because new water constantly replaces the old.

COLEMAN: How many people pass through doesn't tell you how big an impact they really have on the city.

TILLY: That's right. But migrants are different, and they make a difference. On the whole, for example, they include many people in their late teens and twenties; they're young men and women within five years or so of leaving school. On the average the effect of heavy in-migration is to raise the educational level of the city's population.

COLEMAN: Are you sure about that?

TILLY: Well, it's not true of every group of migrants, but it's true overall. It's easy to forget that the young engineers and executives who move to Chicago or Detroit are also migrants. If we include the suburbs where so many of the better-off migrants go, the educational advantage of in-migrants over the metropolitan population as a whole is large.

COLEMAN: Then migration should really push up the educational level.

TILLY: Not necessarily, because out-migrants are also more highly educated, on the average. There's a flow of educated, skilled and pros-

perous workers from one metropolitan area to another, depending on opportunities in particular industries and occupations. That's the career migration we talked about before. Still, overall, the effect of substantial in-migration is to increase the numbers of young adults and single people, and to raise the average levels of education and occupational qualification.

COLEMAN: Obviously, that varies from one part of the metropolitan area to another.

TILLY: Right, there are high-turnover areas and low-turnover areas, and within the high-turnover areas some are mostly career migrants and others are mostly chain migrants. What's more, migrant groups move within metropolitan areas. As a very rough model, we can imagine the average metropolitan area as a series of pie wedges, with their points meeting at the transportation center of the central city.

COLEMAN: But most big cities can't be pie-shaped, because one side is a river, a lake or a harbor.

TILLY: Yes, whether the whole pie is there depends on the site. Look at these sketch maps of street patterns in Chicago, Milwaukee, Toronto and Cleveland, all cities on the Great Lakes. Each of our imaginary pie wedges has a major traffic artery leading from the center out toward the edge. The density of buildings and the intensity of land use go down from center to edge, but at different rates in different wedges.

COLEMAN: Where does migration fit in?

TILLY: Well, within many wedges we can see two fairly distinct sections of high turnover, one close to the center, the other out near the edge. Near downtown, in some wedges we find a small number of highly-

educated, prosperous migrants, typically young and childless. In others, we find a large number of relatively low-income, unskilled migrants, both single and in families. Comfortable cosmopolites in new high-rises, poor chain migrants in older housing, often rundown. Toward the edge of the metropolitan area we also find high-migration sections. Out there we're dealing with residential suburbs and relatively high-income families.

COLEMAN: You said migrant groups moved.

TILLY: Yes. Take a look at this map of the expansion of mainly Black residential areas in Chicago between 1920 and 1965. It clearly shows two main lines of growth away from the Loop: a main line in the wedge going south toward Gary and a second line almost due west.

COLEMAN: And other groups?

TILLY: Now and then if you walk around downtown you see a Pentecostal church that used to be a synagogue, or a Polish social club that has seen better days. You're seeing the remains of a group that has moved on. In our cities, one migrant group after another has made its first substantial settlement in the low-rent areas close to low-wage workplaces, which means especially near the city's center. Then members who have gotten better jobs and higher incomes have moved out along the major lines of transportation within their wedge until the migrant group was strung out through the wedge. Different ethnic groups spread radially from different points of origin in the central city.

COLEMAN: Can you be more specific?

TILLY: I can, if you'll let me take Toronto as an example. The Toronto metropolitan area shows these processes more dramatically than any

major city in the United States, because Toronto is still a major destination for overseas migration. Toronto is a bustling city which has stayed livable, partly through good management, and partly, I think, because of the diversity brought by its hundreds of thousands of foreign-born. It's not too hard to imagine dividing this street map of the metropolitan area into the pie wedges we were discussing earlier. (I can't resist sneaking in some maps of the city three of my children drew when we lived in Toronto about ten years ago. You see how the seven-year-old maps her own neighborhood, the nine-year-old has a basic grasp of the city as a whole, and the eleven-year-old carries around in his head quite a complicated map, even if some of the details are wrong.) In Toronto, to put it very roughly, relatively unskilled groups of migrants from elsewhere in Canada have tended to settle first on the east side of downtown, and then to work their way out toward the northeastern suburbs. Overseas migrants, on the other hand, have recurrently established beachheads on the west side of downtown, then spread northwest along major arteries such as Bathhurst Street. In the last thirty years, Eastern European Jews, Hungarians, Italians and, most recently, Caribbean Blacks and Portuguese have gone through some version of the same experience. We see here an Italian business area not far northwest of the city's center. In the next scene we move further northwest: I took three pairs of photographs in the early afternoon on a Friday, a Saturday and a Sunday. In each case, the photo on the left is a major shopping area on Bloor Street downtown, the one on the right an Italian area about a mile west on Bloor Street. We see the downtown area emptying out on Sunday, and the area further west turning into a Sunday promenade

for an almost entirely Italian-speaking population. In Toronto, chain migration is building distinctive ethnic communities. But it's only an unusually visible example of a very general process.

COLEMAN: If the process is that general, maybe it's one of the reasons so many cities are in trouble.

TILLY: To really go into that, we'd have to talk about what people mean by "trouble". All this ethnicity-building probably does contribute to competition over turfs, jobs and political advantages. On the other hand, what we've seen about migration throws up quite a challenge to the idea that the stress and strain of migration tears people and families up and makes them more criminal, disorganized, disorderly, and so on.

COLEMAN: How's that? You've hardly mentioned what happens to the individuals involved.

TILLY: No, I haven't, although I think the evidence against migration as a big disorganizer at the individual level is pretty strong, too. But remember that we've seen two main types of long-distance migrants. On the one hand, we have the relatively educated, skilled and prosperous people who move from one metropolitan area to another as they leave school or move from job to job. They may feel the stress and strain of moving, but they usually have the means to cope with it. On the other hand, we have the less educated, less skilled and less prosperous chain migrants from rural areas, from small towns and from other big cities. Migration does often present them with serious problems, like getting a job, finding housing, rearranging the family. But they have resources, too: they have the help and advice of friends, relatives and neighbors. Because they rely on

that help, the big city continues to contain many small clusters of people linked with each other by kinship, friendship and mutual aid. It also contains some clusters of clusters which are big enough and coherent enough to stand out as separate ethnic groups.

SLIDES FOR C. TILLY LECTURE: CITIES AND MIGRATION

1. Miletus (Blessing)
2. Rome 1549 (Argan 69)
3. Peking (Doc. photo)
4. Rio de Janeiro: favela (Doc. photo)
5. London: The City (Doc. photo)
6. London: Westminster Abbey and Parliament (tourist)
7. Bethlehem, Pennsylvania street by Walker Evans (International Museum)
8. Los Angeles interchange (Doc. photo)
9. Detroit Iron & Steel 1903 (Library of Congress)
10. Detroit up Woodward from Campus Martius c. 1890 (?)
11. No. Woodward 1905 (?)
12. Griswold South from Michigan Ave. 1905 (?)
13. Michigan and Griswold 1908 (?)
14. Upriver from Dime Bank Bldg. 1916-1920 (?)
15. Steerage deck of S.S. Pennland c. 1893 (?)
16. Immigrant processing at Ellis Island c. 1910 (?)
17. Russian family in Detroit 1915 (?)
18. Immigrants in New York c. 1915 (?)
19. Slavic lodging house in Pittsburgh 1903 (Pittsburgh survey)
20. One-room immigrant household, Pittsburgh 1903 (P.S.)

21. Night scene in Slavic lodging house, Pittsburgh 1903 (P.S.)
22. Poor white family in St. Louis, 1919-1920 (?)
23. Black tenement, Chicago 1941 (?)
24. Detroit skyline from Windsor (tourist)
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44. South along Detroit River (tourist)
45. Looking North over City (tourist)
46. Along East Jefferson Avenue (tourist)