

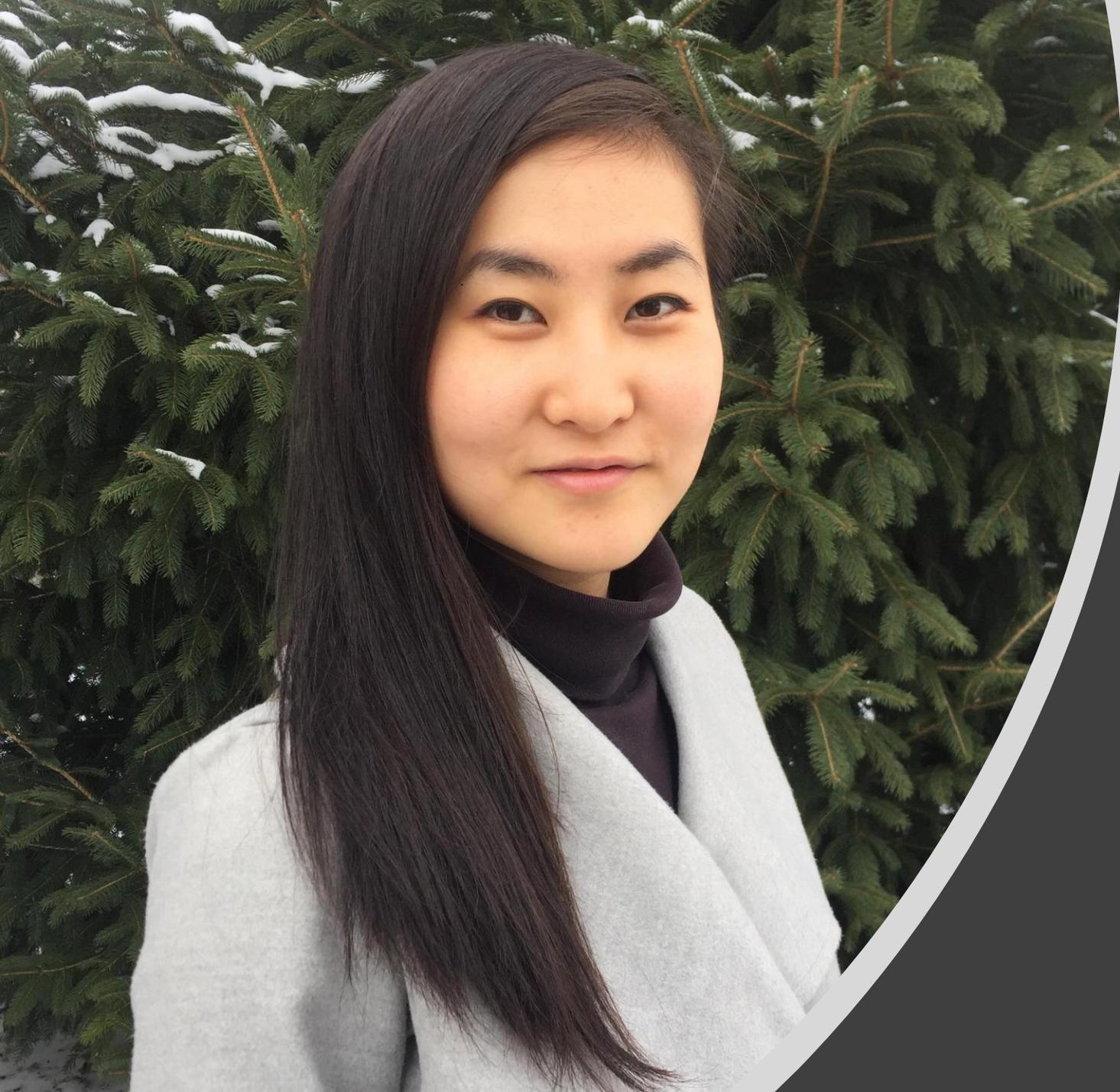
# Wisdom and decision-making in the context of migration uncertainty

Igor Grossmann

 @psywisdom



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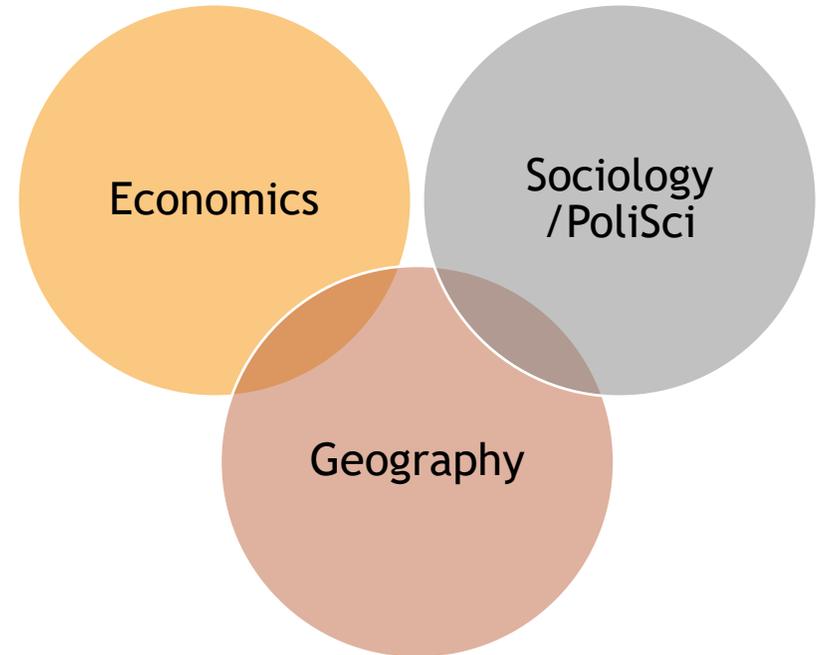


# Chelsea Chen

Brilliant collaborator

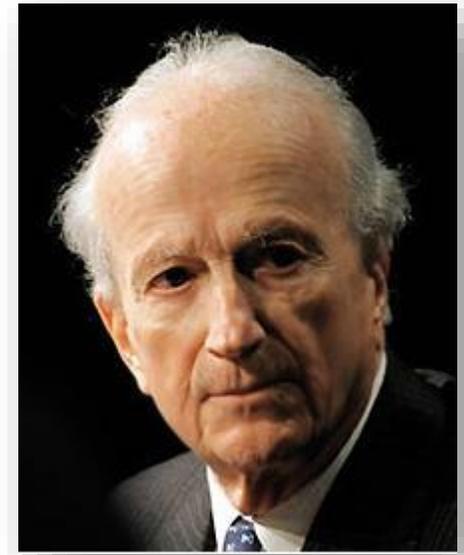
# Mainstream theories of migration

- Many approaches
  - Functionalist
  - Historical-structural
- Factors that impact migration
  - economic opportunity and earning potential
  - political stability
  - proximity of origin to destination country
- Macro-level
  - Sees migrants as a rational decision-maker
  - Focus on the receiving countries and implications for policy
- Little insight into migrants' psychology & their decision-making



# Rational choice theory

- Model of social behavior from behavior of individual actors
- Rational behavior:
  - Goal-oriented
  - Evaluative/reflective
- Choice axiom satisfaction
  - Self-interest axiom (*homo economicus*)
- Game theory & expected utility hypothesis formalized by von Neumann & Morgenstern (1953)
  - Focus on outcomes (not premises)



Gary Becker

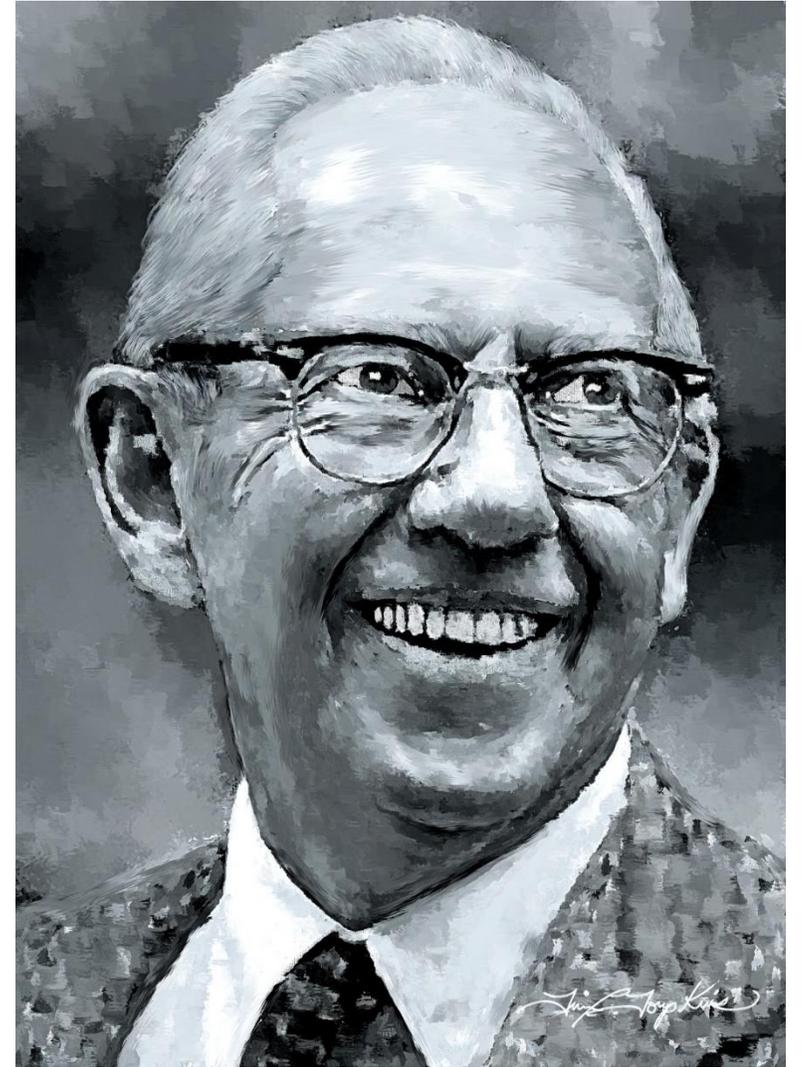


John von Neumann

# Rationalist tradition

The economist doesn't need ethics; only arithmetic. His task is to clear up social mistakes.

George Stigler, Nobel Memorial Prize in Economics, 1982



# Neoclassical models of decision-making are inadequate

- Social agents don't calculate based on abstract rational criteria
  - Rather: pragmatism / "feel for the game" (Bourdieu, 2005)
- Humans don't follow game theory principles
  - Act irrationally, prefer fairness
  - Show systematic **biases** in their decisions
  - Bounded by evolution & cog limits



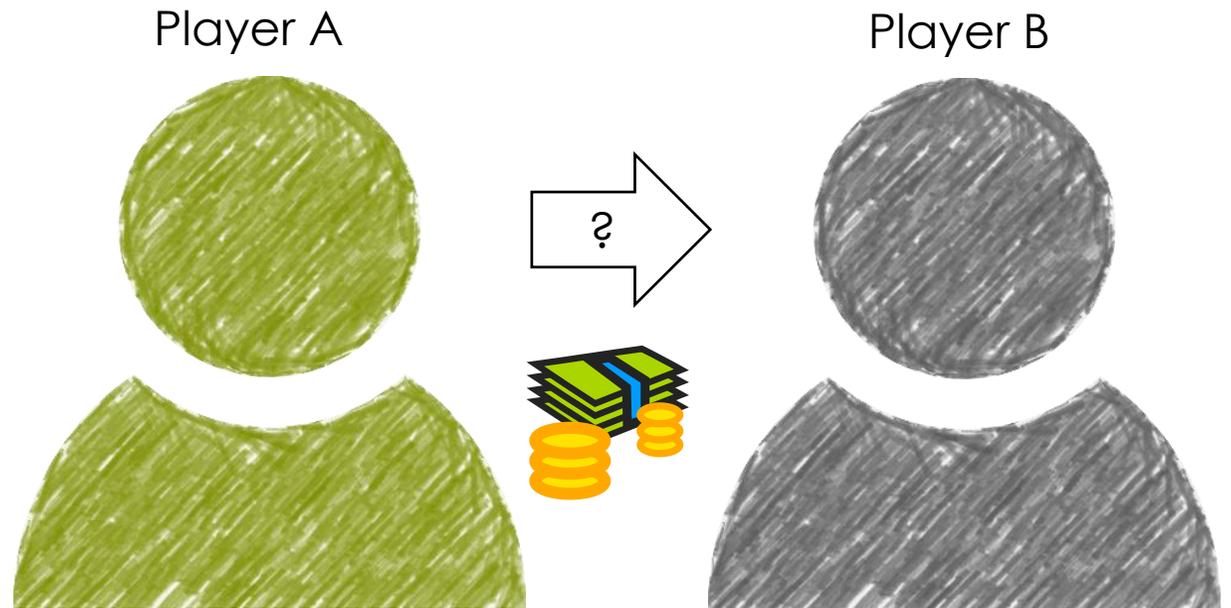
Daniel Kahneman



Richard Thaler

# People often act irrationally...

Player A can choose what fraction of a resource (\$10) to share with anonymous Player B, who must accept the offer.

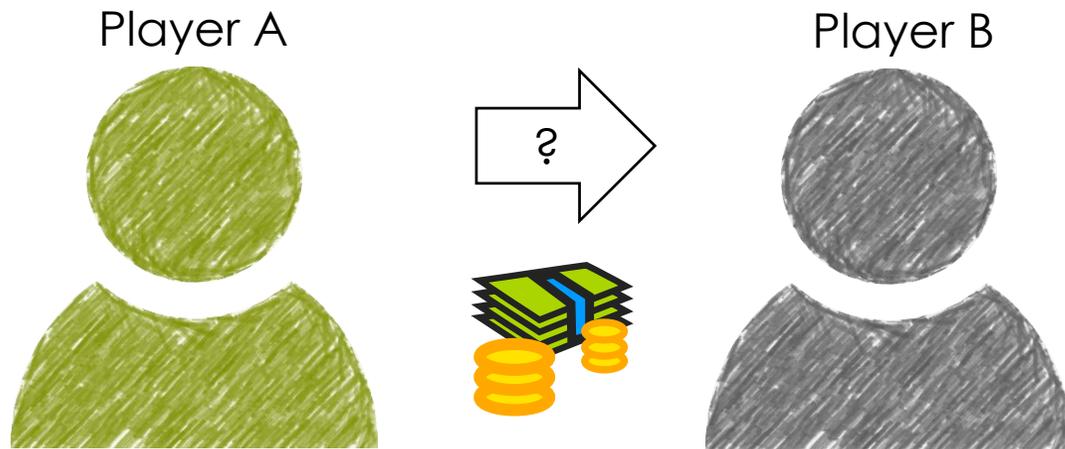


# Key question

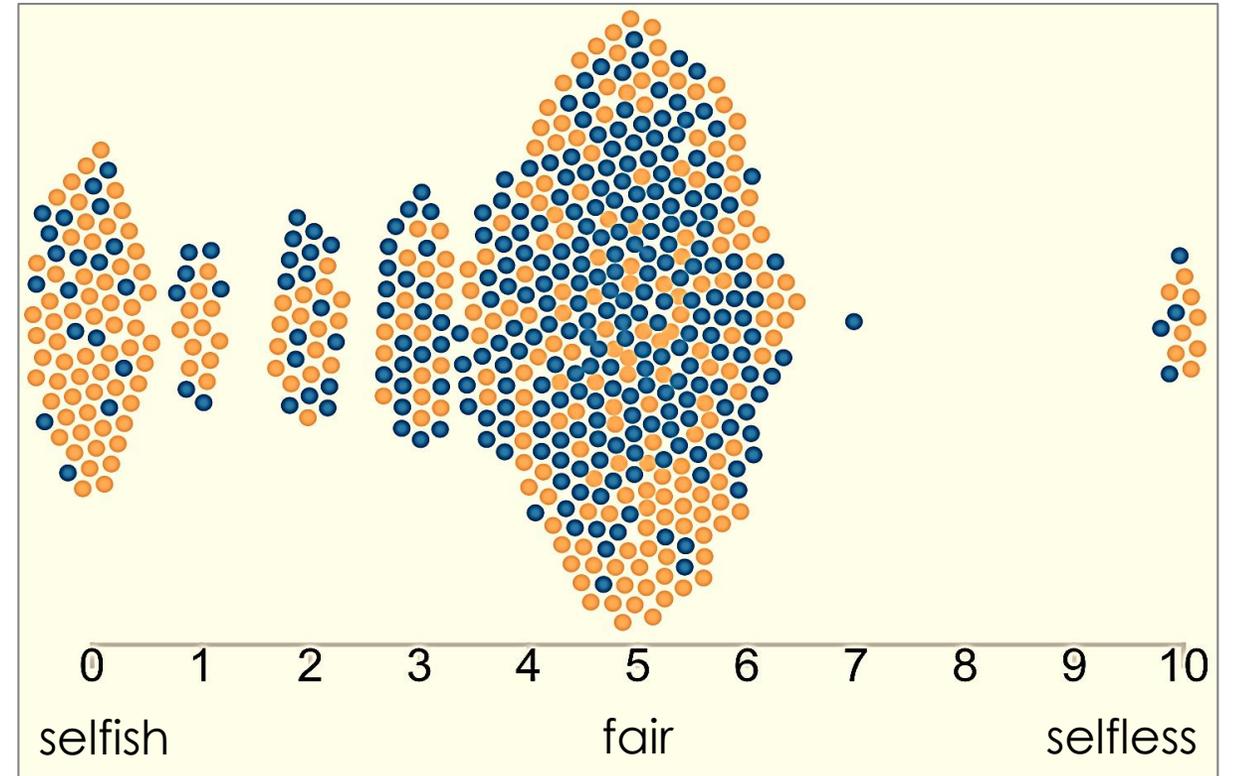
We know that some people apparently do follow rational self-interest. But others often choose not to do so. Why?

# DICTATOR GAME

Player A can choose what fraction of a resource (\$10) to share with anonymous Player B, who must accept the offer.



- reasonable
- rational



Contributions in a Game (\$)

## FOR MORE INFORMATION

I. Grossmann, R. P. Eibach, J. Koyama, Q. B. Sahi, Folk standards of sound judgment: Rationality Versus Reasonableness. *Sci. Adv.* **6**, eaaz0289 (2020)



Context matters

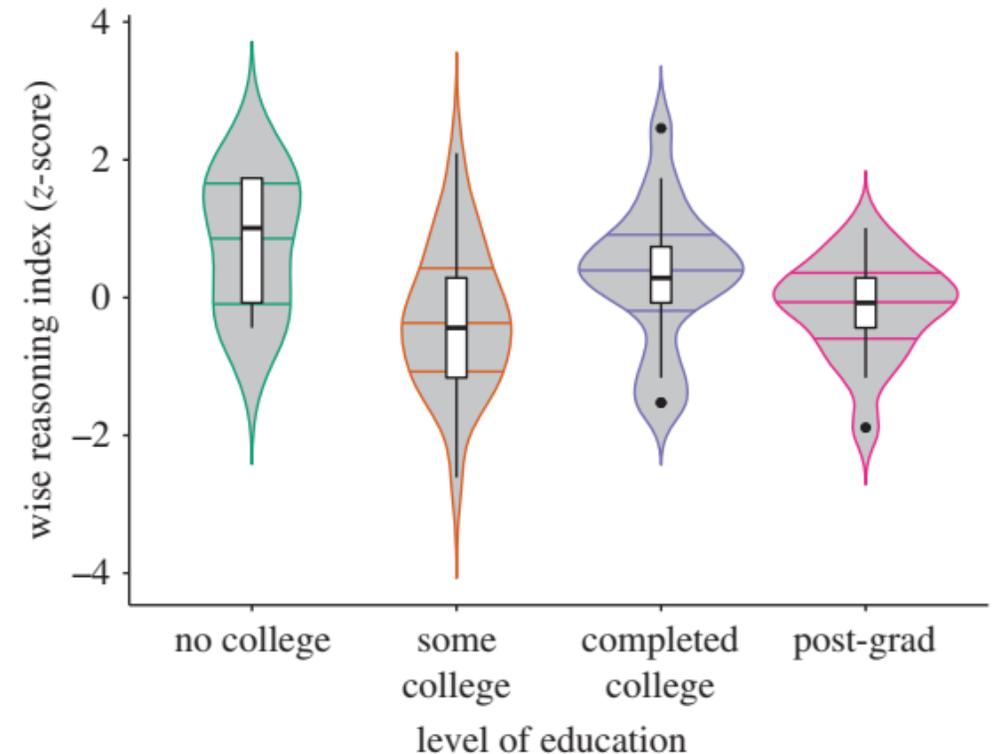
# Migrants have different motives and undergo a variety of challenges

- International student
  - initiative towards personal growth
- Temporary migrant worker
  - motivated by economic prospects
  - tend to experience insecurity and loneliness
- High-skilled migrant
  - low self-esteem, higher job dissatisfaction, and more work-related stress
  - tend to be underutilized in the workforce and underemployed



# Social class

- Rational/abstract decision-maker more descriptive of upper-middle class / highly-skilled migrant
  - Modernization thesis: White vs. blue-collar occupations afford & demand more autonomy and self-direction
    - → greater self-focus Grossmann & Varnum, 2011; Kraus et al., 2011
  - Pragmatic / context dependent reasoning more common in lower SES environments Grossmann & Brienza, 2017, *Royal Proceedings: B*



# Moral decision-making

- Different forms of social consideration in different cultures/groups Fiske, 1992; Rai & Fiske, 2011
- Perception of actions as moral depends on motives and relationships
  - Includes violence, inequality and “impure” acts
- Cultures vary in preferences for different forms of sociality

## Unity

- care and support for ingroup
- provide aid and protection

## Hierarchy

- respect social rank

## Equality

- balanced reciprocity
- equal treatment, say, and opportunity

## Proportionality

- rewards and punishment proportional to merit, contribution
- utilitarian cost-benefit

# Cultural change

Varnum & Grossmann, 2011

- **Digital nomads**
  - Relative number of international migrants have remained quite stable
  - More people from developed nations are becoming international migrants, choosing to work digitally in the growing gig economy
  - Globalization, technological advancements, transfer of products and labour
  - More economic opportunity without the need to migration
    - e.g., online commerce, growing gig economy



# Moving forward

Suggestions:

- Integrate theories from different disciplines
- Beyond policy-oriented research → also focus on fundamental scientific insights about migration

Consider:

- Decision-making from a psychological perspective
- Cultural and regional variations matter
- The changing nature of migration

# World *after* Covid.info



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Thank you!



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