Dialogue and discussion are necessary for the development of any new field of scholarship or analytical framework, especially when the point of contention is a long-established paradigm. However, the development of Transnational Migration Studies has been marred by something less salutary. Often scholars entering the field do so with the fervor of a convert, pronouncing that he or she has seen the light. Unfortunately, in their fervor, some converts tend to misread, misrepresent, put aside, or merely ignore all that has come before them. Among the latest set of scholars to see the transnational light are Roger Waldinger and David Fitzgerald. Because their article 2004 article, “Transnationalism in Question,” epitomizes the pitfalls of neglecting or negating fifteen years of scholarly development, we feel it deserves to be critiqued at some length.

Waldinger and Fitzgerald claim to be “rejecting the conventional views” and outlining “an alternative approach that emphasizes the interaction of migrants with states and civil society actors in both sending and receiving countries” (2004, p. 1179) They note that (p. 1181) “the absence of any concerted effort to analyze the relationship between immigrant transnationalism and receiving states and civil society actors is a fundamental omission” n work on transnational migration. It is time, they proclaim, to move beyond the container society and shed the methodological nationalism that has made it difficult to perceive and theorize the connections built and maintained by migrants and their descendants. Furthermore, they argue that rather than employing a static analysis of past and present by
drawing sharp lines between transnational processes then and now, a more historically nuanced, contingent reading of the data is needed.

Their catalogue of important conceptual tasks is a good one. The problem is that for more than a decade an ever expanding interdisciplinary group of scholars situated in Europe, Asia, Latin America, and the United States has been developing the positions that Waldinger and Fitzgerald belatedly claim as their own. In fact, Transnational Migration Studies has flourished despite naysayers who, in the name of the “new assimilation,” the “reinvention of the melting pot” and “integration theory” have not paid enough attention to how migrants incorporate themselves simultaneously within and across borders (Alba and Nee 2003; Bade, Bommes and Münz 2004; Brubaker 2001; Jacoby 2004). Despite the interdisciplinary nature of this field, Waldinger and Fitzgerald seem to have read mostly American sociologists and a few anthropologists, largely ignoring American historians and geographers and most of the international scholarship that represents important contributions to the field. They describe Transnational Studies as based on “international migrations to the United States from small weak countries on the U.S periphery” (2004, p. 1186) when, in fact, there is now a global literature documenting transnational migrations that connect locations in Europe. Asia,

---


2 Including the extensive collection of papers and books produced by an international group of scholars as part of the Directorship of the Economic and Social Research Council’s “Transnational Communities Programme” hosted at Oxford University’s Institute of Social and Cultural Anthropology (ISCA) http://www.transcomm.ox.ac.uk/. See among others, Al-Ali and Koser (2002); Jackson, Crang, and Dwyer (2004); Karim (2002); Kennedy and Roudometof (2001); Yeoh and Willis (1998); and Yeoh, Fakhri and Willis (2003).
Africa, the Caribbean and the Middle East, as well as within Asia. Although unacknowledged by Waldinger and Fitzgerald, a considerable body of work already directly addresses many of the points they have “discovered.”

To appreciate the utility of a transnational approach, in this rejoinder we first reflect on the scholarship that Waldinger and Fitzgerald largely ignore. We then highlight important emerging areas of study and future research directions. This is the kind of overview of the field is needed to drive theoretical progress. An accurate grasp of the basic premises of Transnational Migration Studies opens up new vistas for social theory and political possibility. Transnational Migration Studies encourages us to acknowledge that while the world is divided politically into nation-states, all aspects of our lives are penetrated by economic, social, and cultural processes that extend across borders. The study of transnational migration is part of a larger project in social theory that no longer equates social processes with the nation-state, while never minimizing the economic and military power of states such as the United States.

**Key Conceptual Developments in Transnational Migration Studies**

---

3 Just a small sample of this work includes Pal Nyiri’s (1999) work on the Chinese in Hungry Ana Margarita Cervantes-Rodriguez, (forthcoming) historical study of Spanish-Latin American transnational families; Ayse Caglar’s study of the “pink card” of Turkish Germans (2002), Aiwha Ong and Don Noninni’s (1997) edited volume on Asian historical and contemporary transnational migration, Ruba Salih’s (2003) book on Moroccan women in Italy, and Brenda S. Yeoh and Katie Willis’s (2004) edited volume *State/Nation/Transnation: Perspectives on Transnationalism in the Asia-Pacific*. Of course US neighbors such as Mexico and Brazil, which also have significant transnational migrations, are not actually small and weak” states.

First a word about the term “transnational.” Waldinger and Fitzgerald carve out their own analytical terrain by writing off the significance of much of the existing literature. They argue that the term “transnational” should only refer to the relationship between immigrants and nation-states because it is only in this domain that nationalism and states enter into the picture. There is, of course, a whole history behind why this term was chosen. The term was adopted to parallel work on “transnational corporations” about which there was already a well-established literature. They noted that while both migrants and corporations operated in cross border fields of action and articulated trans-border identities, restrictive state policies and the policing of borders were directed at migrants, but not at corporations.\footnote{In a series of articles beginning in 1997, Glick Schiller has emphasized the importance of defining the term transnational and distinguishing it from global and international, building on a distinction articulated by Daniel Mato (Glick Schiller 1997, 1999a, 1999b; 2003, 2004; Mato 1997); The term transnationalism or transnational processes emphasizes the ongoing interconnection or flow of people, ideas, objects, and capital across the borders of nation-states, in contexts in which the state shapes but does not contain such linkages and movements. In contrast, the term “global” global is best deployed for phenomena that affect the planet, regardless of borders and local differences. Capitalism, for example, is now a global system of economic relations that extends across the entire planet and has become the context and medium of human relationships, although with differential effects. The term “globalization” is a useful way to speak about periods of intensified integration of the world through capitalist systems of production, distribution, consumption, and communication.} By using a corresponding parallel term, scholars of migration in a range of disciplines were able to contrast the free movement of capital with the barriers to movement faced by labor.

Waldinger and Fitzgerald critique the use of the concept of transnationalism within the migration literature, claiming that it “cannot cover the many discrete, opposing phenomena to which its scholarly advocates would have it refer” (2004, p. 1183). Charging that major contributors to the field are misusing the term, they reduce the home ties that migrants maintain to their natal villages to “bilocality.” They apparently draw no distinction
between international migration and internal migrants who may also keep their homes (p. 1182).

Their position is unsustainable. On the very next page, they admit that “states make migrations international by bounding territories and defining the nations they seek to enfold. Population movement across state boundaries is inherently a political matter” (p. 1183). This was, from the outset, why scholars deployed the term “transnational”--to capture all of the cross border social relations of migrants. Even when migrants and their descendants are only interested in supporting their families and hometowns, because the social field in which they live crosses state borders, they are necessarily subject to the power of two or more nation-states. Although there are similarities in social processes between internal and international migrants, there is a crucial difference -- the state and its ability to police borders and delineate citizenships.

However, transnational migration studies are not, as Waldinger and Fitzgerald suggest, confined to the study of politics at the level of the nation-state, even though state institutions and actors are part of the social field. Transnational migrants engage in economic, social, religious, as well as political practices. Waldinger and Fitzgerald ignore the multiple layers and dimensions of the transnational social spaces that migrants inhabit.

As Waldinger and Fitzgerald note, pointing to Ralph Bourne’s long forgotten but now much cited 1916 article “Transnational America,” transnational processes are not new. And descriptions of the transnational connections of immigrants, religious authorities, political organizations, and intellectuals were widespread in scholarly writing before World War II. In point of fact, before the social sciences put into place the blinders of methodological nationalism, transnational connections were often taken for granted in many spheres of life. The scientific racism of the beginning of the 20th century equated nation and race and assumed that national identities, being racially based, were to a certain extent immutable.
Thus, it was natural for immigrants to maintain homeland ties because Italians would always stay Italian and Poles would always be Poles.⁶

But as students of migration have pointed out, and as historians have seconded, rather than being natural, many migrants learned to identify with a nation-state of origin in the context of the United States and in response to the discrimination they experienced (Foner 2000; Gabaccia 2000; Glazer 1954; Glick Schiller 199b; Park and Miller 1921). The literature on the history of transnational migration does not engage, as Waldinger and Fitzgerald (2004, p. 1185) suggest, “in anachronism when insisting that persons not yet knowing that they were Italians or Poles, but intensely loyal to this hometown and not its neighbor were nonetheless the ‘quintessential transnational(s).’” Instead, it documents that many members of earlier generations of migrants may have left home with village-based identities but in the process of migration and settlement they became participants in transnational processes of nation-state building and identity politics shaped by both “homeland” and receiving states (Gabaccia 2000; McKeown 2001; Laliotou 2004; R. Smith 1998). Scholars have noted that states as diverse as Greece, Korea, China, Italy, and Hungary created senses of national identity and a national history within transnational social fields. Key national leaders from Chang-Kai-Shek to Garibaldi were transmigrants and drew on globally circulating ideas about nation and race in constructing national ideologies (Glick Schiller 1999c; Glick Schiller 1999a, 1999b).

It was post-World War II social science, in forms ranging from Parsonian social systems theory to modernization theory, which legitimated and popularized the container perspective. These ideas rendered transnational connections either invisible, because they were not researched, or problematic, because they violated the desirable global order of a world divided into seemingly discrete nation states. Until recently, migration theory was so

⁶ See Glick Schiller (2005b) for a summary of ideologies that link national identity to concepts of blood.
strongly influenced by this perspective that observations of transnational processes, even when routinely made, did not change the direction of mainstream theory building. Even the development of different versions of systems theory, ranging from Wallerstein to Luhmann, did not convince migration scholars of the need to abandon their notions of “push” and “pull” factors operating between discrete and historically separate “sending and receiving societies.” New social histories, which conceptualized sites like the Atlantic as locations where ideas and people circulated, also seemed to have no impact on the way in which migration was theorized (Tilly 1990; Thistlewaithe 1964). In both the United States and Europe, integration into receiving societies remained the principal area of concern.\(^7\) There were, of course, numerous studies documenting what researchers called “circulatory migration,” “sojourners,” and “remittance societies.”\(^8\) The problem was that migration theory lacked the conceptual tools to adequately describe what was being observed.

The development of a transnational perspective on migration during the 1990s has provided social science with a vocabulary and a framework to analyze the way in which migrants and their descendants participate in familial, social, economic, religious, political, and cultural processes that extend across the borders of nation-states. We are now able to conceptualize simultaneity, the ways in which individuals settle into a new locality and also maintain various kinds of social relationships that extend into other nation-states (Glick Schiller 2003; Itzigsohn 2000; Levitt and Glick Schiller 2004). We can distinguish between migrants who actually have crossed borders to resettle, transmigrants who move often across borders, and persons who have never moved but who live within transnational social fields.

\(^7\) For an outstanding historical critique of Americanization literature that stays within a container perspective, see Gerstle (1999).

\(^8\) See for example, Bretell (1986), Chaney (1979), Grasmuck and Pessar (1991), Piore (1979), and Rubenstein (1983).
and therefore, along with migrants and transmigrants, engage in some degree of simultaneity (Glick Schiller 2003; 2005a). Transnational Migration Studies does not deny the significance of state borders; the varying degree of state economic, military, or political power; and the continuing rhetorics of national loyalty. Instead, this scholarship analyzes rhetoric and social practice, noting that networks of migrants and their descendants constitute social fields extending within and across nation-state borders. By so doing, it provides the conceptual space for scholars to study social processes and positions including gender, racialization, class, and identity, which are not contained within the border of a single state.

Waldinger and Fitzgerald also accuse transnational migration scholars of a false sense of history by creating a sharp and artificial dividing line between past and present migration processes. There have actually been sharp disagreements among scholars about how to read the history of transnational migration. Some scholars have argued for a form of technological determinism and stressed if not the novelty of transnational migration, than at least the increased importance of the phenomenon (Foner 1997; R. Smith 2003). Others have preferred to link the saliency of transnational social fields established by migrants to moments of intense economic interconnection or “high points of globalization” (Basch, Glick Schiller and Szanton Blanc 1994). This second school, building on an earlier body of scholarship articulated by Wallerstein and Braudel, linked trends in migration to changes in global flows of capital and trade in the 19th and 20th century (Held 1999; Portes and Walton 1981; Sassen 1992). These scholars recognized that intense economic global restructuring produced a wide range of transborder connections.

As Robert Cox (1996) suggests, in discussing globalization studies, a distinction must be made between the study of changing world processes and the emergence of new paradigms for understanding them. We argue that the transnational turn in migration studies is part of a broader development in scholarship that responded to and reflected on the most
recent period of globalization. In the late 1980’s, scholars in a number of disciplines began to highlight transnational processes. Some, like Castells (1996), traced communication networks. Others focused on diasporic identities (Tölölyan 1991; Cohen 1997). Still others focused on migration networks (Gurack and Caces 1992; Massey et al 1993; Massey, Goldring, and Durand 1994). A handful of migration scholars began to speak of transnationalism – the process of migrants becoming embedded in more than one nation-state at the same time. While, initially, some stressed the newness of transnational migration, it is now clear that scholars were actually describing two different but interrelated changes. First of all there was a reintensification of processes of globalization that reconfigured migrants’ transnational social fields. At the same time, scholars experienced and contributed to a dramatic paradigm shift that reflected on the global restructuring and its affects on migration. That is to say, the restructuring of capital and financial and political power that has marked the current period of globalization began to transform BOTH the way scholars thought about migration and the social processes of migration, settlement, and transborder connection so that they differ in some ways from previous periods. The sense of novelty reflected not the novelty of transnational migration itself but the change in analytical framework and the changing processes of globalization.

It was the changed paradigm that allowed scholars of migration to firmly shed the tendency to think of nation-states as the containers within which social processes should be analyzed. Waldinger and Fitzgerald claim that in the transnational migration literature “no disagreement exists regarding the relationship between immigrant transnationalism and receiving states, largely because the matter has not been raised” (2004, p. 1181). At first their statement seems extraordinary given that so many studies analyze the relationship between migrants, the states where they settle, and their homelands. As Bauböck (2003, pp. 701-2) has pointed out, political transnationalism “should not only refer to politics across borders but
ought to consider also how migration changes the institutions of the polity and its conception of membership.” One of the earliest attempts at theorizing transnational migration compared how Haitian, Filipino, and Eastern Caribbean migrants who found “themselves confronted with the nation-state building processes of two or more nation-states” and organized political responses that included participating in destination state politics (Basch et al 1994).

Since then, work by Itzigsohn (2000), Portes, Haller and Guarnizo (2002), R. Smith (2003), and others empirically examine how migrants engage in the politics of their homelands and their new localities at the same time. Pessar and Graham (2001) describe the interconnection between a sending country and U.S. political campaigns. In Europe, the impact of Turks and Kurds in various urban settings, and how they affect various aspects of sending-state functioning, from politics to corporate marketing, has been the subject of research and theory (Caglar 2004; Favell 2001; Kastoryano 2000; Layton Henry 2002; Mandel 1990).¹ Many scholars have looked at the pernicious aspects of long distance nationalism and its relationship to fundamentalist religious movements, as well as the ways in which migrants use receiving states to pursue foreign policy goals in their homeland (Bhatt 2001; Blom Hansen 1991; Fuglerud 1999; Kurien 2001; Mahler 2000; Østergaard-Nielsen 2002; Skrbi 1999.)

Although Waldinger and Fitzgerald (2004) echo a long list of scholars who have called for a movement beyond the container theory of society, it is their fundamental inability to make this conceptual leap that underlies their failure to see or understand much of the

---

¹ There is also a highly developed historiography that goes beyond national histories and documents the complex relationship between state position in the global hierarchy of power and emigrant influence in the state of settlement (Lesser 2003; Watanabe 1999). Ronald Takaki has noted that “Chinese Americans have long realized that their situation here has been tied to developments in China.” (1989:268).
literature. Instead, much of their article remains trapped by the alleged polarity between assimilationism and transnationalism, even though they argue specifically for a focus on the interaction between the two. Their container theory treats migrants as a single, unified, outside force who, by moving, threatens the stability of receiving states by unraveling the social fabric. Migration and cross border connections are problematic while the receiving state is the unproblematized unit of analysis. “[M]igratory and ethnic connections crossing state borders also provide the vehicle for diffusing conflicts from home country to host, adding international tensions to social antagonisms of mainly domestic origin. And alongside the benign activities emphasized by the literature, one has to note the more noxious record of those long-distance migrant and ethnic nationalists who have repeatedly used the most unsavory means” (p. 1185). Such comments contribute more to contemporary political rhetoric than scholarship and introduce container thinking in the form of a domesticated transnational studies. Ultimately Waldinger and Fitzgerald’s statement only makes sense when we understand that they are interested in the tried and truly methodological nationalist question of the impact of foreigners on the norms and values of the United States whose social fabric they judge to be threatened by newcomers who maintain loyalties to their homeland.

Despite their espousal of a new framework, Waldinger and Fitzgerald end up “seeing like a nation-state” and embracing the very methodological nationalism they warn against. Their view implies that migrants all subscribe to a single, essentialized, often dangerous

---

10 Among the scholars who have critiqued the container theory before Waldinger and Fitzgerald are Castells (1996) Gupta and Ferguson (1992), Luhmann (1982), Malkki (1992); Wallerstein (1974), Wimmer and Glick Schiller (2001 and 2002); Wolf (1982).
11 James Scott writes of “seeing like a state” (1998). It may be useful to extend his simile to methodological nationalists who identify with the interests of a nation-state and view social processes from that perspective, seeing like a nation-state.
identity and that they share the same homeland politics. The scholarship on transnational migration provides ample evidence that internal and international migrants are divided by class, gender, political, and economic interests, as are the native population of every state of settlement. Migrants maintain a myriad of relationships to their home, host, or other states. It is not the border that is the primary delineator of difference. Moreover nationalism, whether long distance or contained within a territory, expresses multiple understandings and political agendas within the same shared set of symbols (Glick Schiller and Fouron 2001; Jusdanis 2001). As such, their comments contribute more to contemporary political rhetoric than to scholarship.

The need to understand the relationship between an array of actors embedded within transnational social fields and the policing, citizenship regimes, and identity-making processes of states is certainly critical. In a post-September 11th world, state power can certainly restrict migration, the flow of remittances on which millions of people depend, and the freedom of migrants to openly build transnational connections. At the same time, and increasingly, there are other institutional actors and topics of concern that merit study but are ignored by Waldinger and Fitzgerald in their delineation of the field.

**Central Topics in Transnational Migration Studies**

From the outset, those who chose to focus on migration as a transnational process built upon the notion of simultaneity, noting that incorporation and enduring transnational attachments are not antithetical to each other (Basch et al. 1994; Benton 2003; Levitt 2001a; Morawska 2003b; Portes et al. 2002). Waldinger and Fitzgerald recognize that transnational migration paradigm arose as a critique of the assimilation literature which held as its central concern the embedding of migrants in a new nation-state. They therefore assume that

---

12 Aristide Zohlberg (1982; 1999) has for decades called migration scholars attention to the importance of theorizing the role of sending and receiving states in shaping migrant strategies.
transnational migration scholarship posits a dichotomy between the maintenance of transnational connections and incorporation into a new state.

There is no doubt that transnational migration scholars did not document migrant incorporation with the same fervor as transnational connections. Most researchers, however, assumed simultaneity and documented it in their work. In fact, a number of studies reveal that those who are most firmly incorporated in the new state are those who are the most highly-engaged transnational activists. The concept of a transnational social field as a network of networks---called by various authors a transnational space, circuit or social formation---allows us to examine how migrants can live within and across states at the same time (Faist 2000; Glick Schiller and Fouron 2001; Levitt and Glick Schiller 2004; Portes, Guarnizo, and Landolt 1999; Portes 2001; Pries 2001; Smith and Guarnizo 1998).

The implications of simultaneous incorporation are many. For example, what may appear as an “ethnic niche or enclave,” to those using a container society framework may actually be part of a transnational social field (Portes and Guarnizo 1991; Portes et al. 2002). It is for this reason that in a recent article, Min Zhou (2004) “revisits” the research on ethnic entrepreneurship, noting the way in which it reflects and strengthens simultaneous incorporation. Broadening the focus of the analysis across borders reveals the way in which an entrepreneur’s transnational embeddedness can simultaneously facilitate his or her incorporation in the new nation state. Political groups fostering involvement in U.S. politics have also been found to enable participation in the politics of sending states (Escobar 2003; Guarnizo, Portes and Haller 2003; Levitt 2001a, Graham 2001, Østergaard-Nielsen 2003b).

These inquiries into multiple embeddedness have gone in several directions, each producing new scholarship and new questions. Glick Schiller (2003), Itzigsohn and Saucedo (2002), Levitt (2001b), and Portes et al. (1999) have all proposed different ways of delineating the nature and degree of transnational connection. Others have concentrated on
the public identities and identity politics of migrants and their descendants (Ong 1999; Østergaard-Nielsen 2003b; Safran 1991; Tölölyan 2002). Increasingly, researchers have developed new perspectives on family, class, gender, race, and legal institutional form that take into account how these are constructed across national borders (Benda-Beckman et al forthcoming; Bryceson and Vuorela 2004; Gabaccia and Iacovetta 2002; Goldring 2002; Landolt 2001; Levitt 2001b; Nyberg Sorenson and Fog Olwig 2002; Pessar and Mahler 2003; Portes 2003). Scholars in the field of development have begun to think about how transnational ties alter the relationship between migration and development (Levitt and Nyberg Sorenson 2004; Van Hear and Nyberg Sorenson 2003). In each of these areas, the need to move the analysis beyond a single site to a social field was abundantly clear. The incorporation of migrants and their descendants into their nation-state of settlement are part of the inquiry but they are not its sole focus.

Current work at the intersection between globalization theory and Transnational Migration Studies is producing new insights into transnational processes that carry us past Waldinger and Fitzgerald’s archaic division between the state and civil society and call our attention to other important institutional players that they discount. We will mention three.

1. **Migrant Simultaneous Incorporation and City scale**

In a seminal work, Carolyn Brettell (1999) argues for the need for urban studies to pay much closer attention to the “city as context.” She stresses that urban theory often generalizes from one city to all cities but that, in fact, migrant incorporation differs within urban contexts. An interest in locality of settlement as well as place of origin and the global forces shaping both locations is an emerging aspect of transnational migration studies. Too many studies have generalized from small villages in migrant sending countries without addressing the specificity of locality; others have made general statements about migrant incorporation and transnational connection based on research in a gateway city. Now an
interest in the role of locality is emerging. As Ellis (2001, pp. 118-119) reminds us “Place-specific conditions matter” because “economic structuring …affects regions in very distinctive ways” (Ellis 2001, pp. 119).” By the 1990s, migration researchers in Europe had begun to note a relationship between the size and significance of particular cities and patterns of incorporation and settlement but efforts to develop an adequate theoretical framework based on these findings continued to lag (Rex 1996; Bommes and Radke 1996).

To move in that direction it is essential to note that in a post-Keynesian neo-liberal state, cities and regions have become global actors, competing for capital investment and unevenly-distributed state resources (Sassen [1994] 2000b; N. Smith 1993; Jessop 1999; Brenner 2004). Where migrants have settled has always influenced their incorporation trajectories but the forces shaping urban life are not contained solely in the city or nation-state of settlement. Various localities differ not on size alone but in their positioning within hierarchies of power and capital flows. These hierarchies are, in turn, structured by the interplay between state and global actors. The interplay between transnational movements of capital and the power and significance of specific places is of course not new. However, the recent restructuring of global capital has strengthened the significance of cross-border forces and brought them to the attention of researchers.

The term “scale,” as developed by Brenner (1998; 1999a; 1999b; 2004), N. Smith (1993) Swyngedouw (1992, 2004) and others, has emerged as a way to assess the differential positioning of cities with hierarchies of power.13 In the current period of neo-liberalism, the rescaling of cities creates new hierarchies of localized power that strongly influence migrants’ ability to settle and maintain transnational connections. An attention to urban scale in combination with comparisons of the immigration policies of nation-states allows us to see why the migrant experience of constructing transnational social fields in global cities can be

13 They built on initial formulations by Lefebvre (1991 [1974]).
so similar (Sassen [1991] 2000a; Eade 1997; Glick Schiller, Caglar, and Gulbrandsen forthcoming) The development of theories linking modes of migrant simultaneous incorporation to city-scale is just beginning, however, despite the fact that the terms like “global city” and “gateway city” center the analytical lens on the relationship between cities and their migrant populations (Clark 2004; Ley 2003; Waldinger 2001).

(2) Transnational Social Fields That Extend Between Several States Without A Homeland Politics

As Østergaard Nielsen (2003a:760) points out “[transnational] practices … are influenced by the particular multi-level institutional environment which migrant actors negotiate their way through. This environment includes not only political institutions in the sending and receiving country but also global norms and institutions and networks of other non-state actors.” Migrants or their descendents, located in multiple states, sometimes organize themselves to build their homelands but are often engaged in the pursuit of other kinds of projects (Anderson 1998; Totoricagüena 2004; Tölölyan 2002). By engaging in these activities, and by creating organizations within which to pursue them, migrants act as social citizens of many states. They become a social force, definitely constrained by legal status but not completely limited by it. The Kurds in Europe, for example, are political actors in several countries, whether they are asylum seekers, permanent residents or citizens. Japanese settled in many countries are now organizing networks and organizations that enhance their social capital in ways that promote their Japanese diasporic identity while keeping the Japanese state at a distance (Takenaka 2004).

Waldinger and Fitzgerald’s effort to belittle migrants’ claims to membership that are not based on citizenship makes them blind to potent political forces which can rally public opinion at critical junctures. In the 1980s Haitians living in a transnational social field that extended between New York City and Haiti led the struggle against labeling black
immigrants as sources of the AIDS epidemic. In the 1990s they took to the streets again to protest police brutality in New York. The demonstrations made world headlines and inspired others in the city to take up the issue. These demonstrations were empowered by a grassroots struggle for political voice based in Haiti. Undocumented, permanent residents, and US citizens all participated in an exercise of transborder citizenship (Glick Schiller and Fouron 2001, Glick Schiller forthcoming).

3) Globality

When we talk about processes that cross borders, we are also talking about scholarship that extends beyond migration to include flows of capital, media, objects, and ideas. All of these flows, as they are affected by global economic restructuring, shape the nature, pace, and processes of migration. In turn, there is a global component of transnational social field and identity construction. Migrants have been and continue to be parts of organizations and social movements that seek global influence and connections. These movements cross state borders but may not identify with any particular culture or ethnicity. Or the nationalism they espouse may be linked to an overarching ideological or religious cause (Gabaccia 2000). The international workers movement, the international women’s movement, the anti-nuclear movement, and the anti-globalization movement are such globe spanning solidarities that have included and continue to do so.

The study of the relationship of migrants as diffusers and transformers of religious institutions and belief systems is one of the cutting edge fields of interest in Transnational Migration Studies. Two variations of transnational connections practiced by migrants and

---

their descendants are being studied. In one scenario, migrants use religious arenas to maintain enduring home country ties. Sometimes religion and nationalism become a potent part of this set of transnational practices so that religious ideology justifies the building of the homeland. In the second scenario, migrants participate in religious multi-ethnic networks that connect them to co-religionists locally and globally. Their primary identification is not to the nation but to the global religious community. Yet, all the while, states matter because they regulate religious expression, related financial transactions, and the movement of practitioners across borders. They also frame expectations about the possibilities for diversity and pluralism.

**Conclusion: Beyond Transnational Migration**

In short, Waldinger and Fitzgerald ignore or dismiss large portions of an entire body of scholarship that responds directly to many of their concerns. As such, they do an injustice to transnational migration scholarship and to the field of Transnational Studies of which it is a dynamic part. As we indicated, Transnational Migration Studies emerged in the social sciences and the humanities as part of a broader analytical move to revisit the study of global processes. In light of contemporary globalization, scholars acknowledged that the sanctity of borders and boundaries is a recent development, both in human history and in social science theory. They also recognized that humans continually create boundaries and move, trade, and communicate across them, thereby making fluidity and change part of all human social formations and processes. Transnational migration studies has emerged as just one sub-field of a broader interdisciplinary Transnational Studies. Although this scholarship is carried out by researchers in many of the social sciences, they often treat their efforts as unconnected to each other. There is little synthetic theory building about what it means when governance, social movements, income-earning, and religious life are all enacted across borders.\(^\text{15}\)

\(^{15}\) There have been some recent efforts to begin conversations between those who study transnational phenomena (Khagram and Levitt 2004).
There is thus both tremendous value and potential in defining a field of Transnational Studies based on four intellectual foundations: (1) **Empirical Transnationalism** which on describes, maps, classifies and quantifies novel and/or potentially important transnational phenomena and dynamics, (2) **Theoretical Transnationalism** which formulates explanations and crafts interpretations that either parallel, complement, supplement or are integrated into existing theoretical frameworks and accounts, (3) **Philosophical Transnationalism** which starts from the metaphysical assumption that social worlds and lives are inherently transnational. Such a view requires an epistemological lens or way of researching, theorizing, and understanding social relations that allows analysts to uncover and explain the transnational dynamics in which ostensibly bounded and bordered entities are embedded and by which the latter are constituted, and (4) **Public Transnationalism** which creates space to imagine and legitimate options for social change and transformation that are normally obscured, by purposefully abandoning the expectation that most social processes are bounded and bordered. By letting go of this assumption, questions and problems can be reframed and innovative approaches may come to light (Khagram and Levitt 2004).

In light of all these developments, the need for migration studies within sociology to come to terms with transnational processes is obvious. As a part of this, the US sociology of migration can usefully build on the multidisciplinary and global scholarship of transnational migration that is itself reflective of and contributing to this broader field of scholarship. This task is particularly pressing at a moment in which scholars in many countries, including the United States, are confronted with an upsurge in anti-immigrant rhetoric. The response cannot be to re-embrace assimilationism on the grounds that there is evidence that migrants incorporate into the nation-state in which they settle. Of course they do. Nor is it adequate scholarship to argue that cross-border connections ultimately assist in incorporation. Instead, good scholarship requires us to place the cross-border actions of migrants and their
descendants, including their long distance nationalism, within an accurate accounting of the world of cross-border processes in which we all live. Migrants’ transnational social fields are one part of a larger global process. It is within questions about how power, privilege, surveillance, and movement are regulated within the global social fabric that our debates about transnational migration must be located.

**References Cited**


Cervantes-Rodriguez, Ana Margarita. forthcoming “Atlantic Countercurrents: Migration and Transnationalism between Spain and Latin America from an Historical Perspective.” *Journal of American Ethnic History*


Glick Schiller, Nina, Ayse Caglar, and Thaddeus Gulbrandsen. Forthcoming. “Moving Beyond the Ethnic Group as a Unit of Analysis: Locality, Globality, and Migrant Incorporation.”


