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In due time Linda, Celestina, and I learned, of course, that the term transnationalism was used by Ralph Bourne in an article in the *Atlantic* as early as 1916. Not only that. While we were hard at work defining the terms of our new “discovery,” on the west coast of the US anthropologists Michael Kearney and Roger Rouse were also beginning to speak about migrants who lived their lives across borders and had also called for a new scholarship of migration. Just a few years later, and independently of the work in US anthropology, Canadian sociologist Luin Goldring and US sociologist Peggy Levit initiated ethnographic transnational studies in their discipline, while in France Mirjana Morokvasic began to speak about transnational migration. The study of transnational migration was an idea whose time had come.

By the beginning of the twenty-first century transnational migration had become one component of a thriving field of transnational and global studies. This new field has the potential to make visible historical and political processes that have previously been obscured, and to contribute to social justice by participating in social movements sometimes collectively called “globalization from below.” It may, on the other hand, create its own forms of obfuscation. I begin this paper by examining the barriers that initially blocked the emergence of transnational studies, and the ways in which the new paradigm facilitates the analysis of structures of power that legitimate social inequalities. The paper concludes by returning to this theme, cautioning that as transnational studies emerge as a new hegemonic concept, it may obstruct some types of analysis, including the analysis of imperialism.

In order to proceed, it is important to distinguish between the terms “global” and “transnational.” When I speak about transnationalism or transnational processes I wish to emphasize 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. The exercise of political power by governments is within the scope of transnational studies. So too are specific national forms of “governmentality” that shape daily experience, the “everyday forms of state formation,” cultural subtexts, and identity markers that constitute nation-state building (Joseph and Nugent 1994).

In contrast, the term “global” is best deployed for the world-system’s phenomena that affect the planet, regardless of borders and local differences. Capitalism, for example, is now a global system of economic relations that has extended 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, and communication.

**Barriers to the Transnational Paradigm**

Transnational studies reminds us that nation-states, as products of modernism, arose from and contributed to the global development of capitalism. Nation-states are always constructed within a range of activities that strive to control and regulate territory, discipline subjects, and socialize citizens, but these processes and activities are not necessarily located within a single national territory. Transnational studies draws attention to this fact, and in the process challenges: (1) a bounded and
Unbouding concepts of culture and society

The sanctity of boundaries and borders is recent both in human history and anthropological theory. Until World War II scholars used concepts of culture and society that were not confined to the borders of nation-states. They understood that migration had been the norm through human history, including the history of the modern state, and that ideas as well as objects could travel long distances and not be associated with a specific territory. Today, the British diffusionist school of anthropology, which read the entire history of cultures as one of migration, is often used as an illustration of theory gone awry, as well as an example of the manner in which European scholars tried every possible means of dismissing indigenous creativity all around the world. But diffusionists were aware that cultural flows and social relationships are not limited by political boundaries; there are long-standing connections between disparate regions and localities. These insights informed the founders of US anthropology. Transnational studies have now begun to recover and reinterpret the strengths of cultural diffusionist perspectives.

To do so, it has been important to set aside the organic, territorially embedded view of culture popularized by British functionalist and structural-functionalist anthropology. This scholarship failed to examine social and economic relationships that shaped the history and political economy of a particular locality. It overlooked the influence of colonialism and capitalism on the subject peoples. Beginning in the 1940s, US anthropologists adopted a similar mindset by studying “communities” as if they were discrete units subject only to local historical developments and divorced from larger social, political, and economic processes. The popularization of Clifford Geertz’s influential work on culture as localized text continued this bounded approach to culture in anthropology, long after the demise of community studies and forms of functionalism. For Geertzian-influenced anthropology, culture is a discrete, stable, and historically specific local system of meanings.

Even when anthropology began to examine transnational processes, the legacy of this bounded theory of culture continued to impede historical analysis. Those anthropologists who work within the Geertzian tradition of cultures as discrete webs of signification spoke as if transnational processes were novel and transgressive, occurring in response to dramatic changes in communication technology and global capitalism. They framed the outcome of transnational processes as hybridity, which implicitly defined a previous stage of cultural production unblemished by diffusion. In the new “post-national moment” the borders and structures of nation-states would become increasingly meaningless.

Scholars who developed a transnational paradigm for the study of migration began with a very different approach to culture. Many of us deployed a broader and older Tylorian concept of culture that encompasses social relations, social structure, and trans-generationally transmitted patterns of action, belief, and language. We also utilized a body of theory, methodology, and data that was not place-bound. Especially important were the ethnographies of Southern Africa and the Copper Belt dating from the period between World Wars I and II, and the methodological approaches to complex societies and colonial relationships developed by Max Gluckman and the Manchester School.

The Manchester School researchers gave us a conceptual and methodological toolkit appropriate for the study of transnational processes. Because many of their studies were of the ongoing home ties of urban labor migrants, their observations of social relations extended across time and space. The development of ethnographies “as long stories of guerrel,” as Adam Kuper put it in Anthropologists and Anthropology: The British School 1922-1972, provided anthropologists with strategies for studying the embodiment of dominant values and their contestation and reshaping within the processes of everyday life. Manchester School anthropologists approached the study of networks and social situations as a study of dynamic processes. They were adept at “taking a series of specific incidents affecting the same person or group, through a period of time, and showing how these incidents, these cases, are related to the development and changes of social relations among these persons and groups” (Gluckman 1967:xxv).

In fact, these scholars were taking important steps in documenting the effects of globalization, although they described it as an industrial urban social system or in terms of colonialism. Using these methods, scholars of the Manchester School were able to show that rather than becoming accelerated and “deterritorialized” within urban industrial settings, African workers kept their home ties. In fact, their remittances home often helped maintain the rural “traditional” society. They placed the continuation of rural life and the persistence of home ties in the context of colonial and industrial structures of unequal power drawn along lines of race.

Other anthropological studies of migration, while less engaged in relations of power, also pointed to the significance of the rural–urban connections of urban migrants, and also provided an intellectual and ethnographic foundation for transnational studies. Research in West Africa noted the continuation of hometown ties in voluntary associations. Anthropologists working in Latin American cities challenged the view that migration always swiftly led to acculturation by writing about “peasants in the city.”

Methodological barriers to envisioning transnational processes

Methodological nationalism has been a potent barrier to the study of transnational processes. Methodological nationalism is an intellectual orientation that assumes national borders to be the natural unit of study, equates society with the nation-state, and conflates national interests with the purposes of social science (Wimmer and Glick Schiller 2002). If we shed the assumptions of methodological nationalism, it is clear that nation-state building was from the beginning a trans-border process. The political economy and the ideology of the modern state and of national populations developed across the borders of states rather than within territorially fixed spaces. From the earliest development of the nation-state, in the Americas and Western Europe, political boundaries have never confined or delimited its economic, social, cultural, or political activities. But you must think outside of the box of dominant national discourses to see the trans-border foundations of nation-states.
Modern states were formed within imperial projects through which distant lands were colonized or dominated. At first, persons in disparate territories saw themselves as creating home through ‘civilizing’ barbaric landscapes and habits. Benedict Anderson (1994) reminds us of this fact when he describes the experiences of a white woman kidnapped by Native Americans within the territory of the British 13 colonies. When this woman encountered the cultivated fields of the colonists, while being moved by her captors from one location to another, she saw those fields as part of England, differentiating herself and the cultivated spaces from the native people through her Englishness. England was a cross-border, transatlantic location for this eighteenth-century woman. In a related process, middle-class women in Birmingham, England, in the mid-nineteenth century came to see themselves as English in relationship to the building of a globe-encompassing British empire.

Scholars of colonialism and postcolonialism have demonstrated that concepts of the territorially based nation-state emerged within the context of empires. Faris Chatterjee’s new classic work, Nationalist Thought and the Colonial World, deconstructs the claim that Third-World nationalist ideology is a derivative discourse, and places the Indian nation-state building project within worldwide debates about the meaning of modernity.

The legitimation of modern states through Enlightenment ideologies of popular sovereignty and republicanism developed within colonial regimes in which independent states were differentiated from colonies. In point of fact, the ideologies that first delimated concepts of sovereign peoples and equated nation, history, territory, and culture—the foundational concepts of modern nation-states—were produced in trans-border debates about the rights of man and the nature of peoplehood. The American, Haitian, and French intellectuals who popularized these ideas in the first states founded on these ideologies participated in political dialogues that were not confined to national territories. However, if you accept the prevailing paradigm that divides a state’s affairs into internal, national matters and international affairs that have to do with state-to-state relations, the history of trans-border and transnational nation-state building becomes invisible.

The writing of national histories compounds this invisibility by confining the national narrative within the territorial boundaries of the state. This restricted view of national history became increasingly marked after World War I and continued until the end of the Cold War. While alternative histories developed during this period, including Immanuel Wallenstein’s world-systems perspective, and Eric Wolf’s historically informed anthropology, most historical writing about states viewed them as discrete entities. Relationships to other states were placed within a rubric of “international relations” or transnational processes (including the flow of ideas, people, goods, and capital) are minimized in these accounts. As Andreas Wimmer and I (2002:805) have argued, scholars were “deeply influenced by the methodological nationalist assumption that it is a particular nation that would provide the compact unit of observation through all historical transformations, the ‘thing’ whose change history was supposed to describe.” As a result, although transnational processes are as old as modern nation-states, transnational and global studies only emerged at the end of the twentieth century, during a high point of globalization.

In the 1970s and early 1980s, large corporations and financial institutions, aided and abetted by national and local governments, began a massive restructuring of capitalism around the globe. During the same period anthropologists noted aspects of this transformation, studying the global assembly line, rural–urban migration, the international division of labor, and the continuing and deepening dependency of peripheral states. However, neither anthropologists nor other social scientists developed a term or a theory to address the totality of the changes that link economic restructuring to global cultural processes. Even when they looked globally, researchers identified nationally and could not develop paradigms that took them beyond the interests of their own state. Divisions between the social sciences and the growing fragmentation of individual disciplines into separate fields of study, such as media, gender, migration, politics, economics, and identity, further impeded social scientists’ ability to look beyond dominant paradigms.

The specific case of migration studies and immigrant identities: assimilation, multiculturalism, and the return to assimilation.

A combination of methodological nationalism and bounded views of society and culture produced a particular kind of shortsightedness among scholars that excluded theory or methods to study transnational processes. Migration studies are a case in point. Scholars in both the United States and Europe looked at migration processes only through the political agendas of their own state and its particular migration policies. In the United States, until the 1960s and the turn to a more multicultural imagining of the national landscape, political leaders, historians, and social scientists expected immigrants to assimilate. The paradigm of assimilation was broadly disseminated beyond the borders of the US and had an impact on Latin American research on migration settlement. That is to say, there was a general expectation that migrants would and should abandon their own culture and identity and merge into or help forge the mainstream culture. This process was generally expected to take several generations and there might be ethnic communities formed along the way, but assimilation was the ultimate outcome and political goal.

Looking back at earlier scholarship, especially studies produced before World War II, it is interesting to note that many scholars actually documented the transnational ties of European and Asian immigrants, their patterns of sending home remittances, their continuing family ties, and their political engagement with homeland politics. Writing in 1949, the sociologist Schermerhorn used the term “home country nationalism” in his classic work, These Our People: Minorities in American Culture, to refer to the transnational political activities of immigrants. In 1954, Nathan Glazer (1954:161) reported:

in America, a great number of German immigrants came only with the intention of forming the development of the German nation-state in Europe . . . the Irish, the second most important element in the earlier immigration, were also a nation before they were a state and, like the Germans, many came here with the intention of assisting the creation of an Irish state in Europe. On one occasion they did not hesitate to organize armies in America to attack Canada.
Many of these earlier researchers also understood that many immigrants left home with only very local or regional identities and dialects, and actually learned to identify with their ancestral land only after they had settled in the United States. However, the home-country nationalism and the transnational ties of immigrants were portrayed as short-lived because migration theory took assimilation to be an inevitable process.

In the postwar years in the US, even an acknowledgment of the home ties of migrants tended to disappear with the popularization of Oscar Handlin’s highly influential work, *The Uprooted*, and his concept of immigrants as “uprooted,” that is, without transnational ties. This approach prevailed, even though Handlin himself was aware of transnational connections and return migration.

The multiculturist turn, first in the United States in the 1960s as cultural pluralism, and then in various forms of multiculturalism in Canada, Australia, the United Kingdom, and the United States, acknowledged that generations after migration, cultural differences and identities remained among some sectors of the immigrant population. However, this acknowledgment did not lead to a theory of transnational connection in migration studies. Instead, methodological nationalism prevailed and cultural diversity became an alternative narrative for celebrating national unity. Most recently, a significant group of sociologists in the United States has resurrected the term “assimilation,” critiquing multicultural theory with evidence that most immigrants become well incorporated into US daily life. French public policy-makers, after only a brief flirtation with multiculturalism, have continued with the project of shaping a single national culture. French social scientists, while they may document circularity migration and the cross-border trading patterns of migration, have tended not to theorize transnational connections. Only in Germany, which until very recently contended it was not an immigration country and made the acquisition of citizenship difficult and lengthy, are the homeland ties of migrants visible in the social-science literature. However, with some significant exceptions, such ties are seen as barriers which impede the integration of foreigners into the German social fabric.

The dominant paradigms have not only obscured the continuing transnational connections of immigrants, but have also made it impossible to see that many migrants simultaneously become incorporated into a new land while keeping some kind of transnational connection. The failure until recently to attempt to theorize or operationalize the concept of simultaneous incorporation is an outcome of methodological nationalism. It reflects the inability to observe and think beyond the borders of the nation-state.

**The Emergence of Transnational Studies**

We can use the enthusiastic reception of David Harvey’s *The Conditions of Postmodernity: An Enquiry into the Conditions of Cultural Change*, published in 1989, as an indicator of the moment in which the paradigm changed and transnational processes once again became visible. Harvey, a geographer by training, stepped beyond disciplinary boundaries to link changing structures of capital accumulation, which he called flexible accumulation, with cultural transformations, including the development of new analytical paradigms such as postmodernism. Beginning in the 1980s and with increasing momentum and confidence throughout the 1990s, a transnational perspective developed in anthropology.

**Divisions and Interconnections**

As the interest in global connections and transnational processes flourished, scholarship went in several different directions, which have emerged as distinct areas of transnational studies: trans-cultural studies; diaspora studies; migration; and globalization. Trans-cultural studies focuses on “global cultural flows.” With the growth of global communications, media, consumerism, and public cultures, these flows have rapidly and readily transcended borders. Anthropologists have been careful to insist that global flows should always be reinterpreted locally with a consistent consideration, hybridization, and indigenization rather than the homogenization of culture. However, many studies of global flows ignored “power relations, [and the] continued hegemony of the center over the margins. Everyone became equally ‘different,’ despite specific histories of oppressing and being oppressed” (Lave and Swedenburg 1996:3).

Meanwhile, a field of diaspora studies began to emerge, spurred by developments in literature and cultural studies. Scholars in this field were concerned more with identity than place. They examined narratives of identity that are legitimated by myths of common origin and dispersal. Because their focus of interest was on populations who maintain trans-border connections on the basis of a shared sense of history, culture, and descent, the first wave of diaspora studies focused more on cultural representation than on political practice or the state. The state entered the debate as a giver of passports or a source of narratives of transnational culture more than as a homeland with its own politics enacted within a transnational sphere of practice.

In this same period, researchers also began to study migration as a transnational process in which migrants maintain and construct social, political, and economic relationships across borders. The term “transnational community” became widespread, especially in the work of sociologists. Alejandro Portes (1997:812) refers to transnational communities as “dense networks across political borders created by immigrants in their quest for economic advancement and social recognition.” Other researchers used the term “transnational community” to refer to a specific locality in which a communal system of leadership and collective action extends across inter-national borders. Anthropologists, building on the critique of community studies and the concepts of social “network” and “field” developed by Manchester School scholars, preferred the term “transnational circuit” or “transnational social field” (Glick Schiller, Basch, and Blane Szanton 1992; Rouse 1991). I have defined “social field” as an unbounded network of multiple interacting egocentric networks. “Network” best applied to chains of social relationships that are egocentric and are mapped as stretching out from a single individual. “Social field” is a more encompassing term than “network,” taking us to a societal level of analysis.

Meanwhile a field of globalization studies emerged. At first, globalization studies was primarily the domain of geographers and focused on the reconstitution of space and time within global cities. New flexible ways of transferring capital had moved it beyond the boundaries and controls of states so that global cities flourished, while
their peripheries were stripped of services and infrastructure. As did the scholars in transnational studies, those who studied globalization emphasized the novelty of the current moment. Many researchers tended to see communications technology—computers, telephones, televisions, communication satellites, and other electronic innovations—as the motor of change. Suddenly we could all visually experience the same war, the same concert, or the same commercial and share the information age. The power of the new technology, combined with the insistence of postmodern theorists that the past was stable and the present fluid, led to a form of technological determinism. The impact of past technological leaps including the steamship and the telegraph, was dismissed or forgotten. In *Nation Unbound* (Bach, Glick Schiller, and Szanton Blanc 1994:24) Linda, Cristina, and I critiqued this trend, arguing that "the presence of technological innovation...[does not explain] why immigrants invest so much time, energy, and resources in maintaining home ties...Rather it is the current moment of capitalism as a global mode of production that has necessitated the maintenance of family ties and political allegiances among persons spread across the globe."

Whether or not the new technology was seen as key, there was a tendency among the first wave of studies to see transnational processes as phenomena linked solely to the current moment of capitalism. The fact that the current period is marked by both a paradigm change and a restructuring of processes of capital accumulation was not made clear, and the two related but different phenomena were conflated. There was a widespread acceptance of the previous hegemonic anthropological paradigm as an actual description of social relations, as if people actually lived within fixed, bounded units of tribe, ethnic group, and state. The past contained homogeneous cultures while now we lived in a world of hybridity and complexity. Scholars continued the myth that the subject of anthropological scrutiny had been small isolated societies and only now had the world become our reason.

A more historical turn, however, led by those in globalization studies, soon made it clear that while there are different ways to define and date globalization, people around the world have been affected by the same economic and cultural processes at least since the expansion of Europe. If we define globalization as the myriad of cultural, social, political, and economic processes that integrate the world into a single system of relationships and value, then it is clear that the period between about 1870 and World War II marked an intensive period of globalization. Contemporary globalization differs from previous processes of connection significantly in the ways in which capital is accumulated, the degree of the commoditization of everyday life around the world, and the rapidity of the movement of information and capital.

Currently scholars in all fields of transnational studies have turned their attention to a reexamination of state processes, noting that the current phase of globalization has been marked by the "hyper-presence" and "hyper-absence" of the state (Suárez-Orozco and Thomas in press). On the one hand, the state is absent to the extent that its regulatory mechanisms have been relaxed or abolished in the domain of financial markets, production, and the generation of information and communication. On the other hand, while during the previous stage of globalization passports were by and large abandoned, allowing for the free flow of labor, today in fortress Europe, the US, and among nations in Asia and Africa, borders are under surveillance, access to visas and work permits is restricted, sharp lines are drawn between citizens and denizens, and deportations are frequent. States maintain the role of identity containers, formulating categories of national identity through differentiating foreigners from those who can claim the rights to belong. These identity processes become the lens through which globally disseminated media, music, and commodities are experienced and consumed. However, tensions exist between the intensity of global connection and the production of differences of wealth, gender, race, religion, and nationality.

### Differentiating among transnational social fields, cultural practices, actors, and migrants

As transnational studies has developed there continues to be confusion about the subject of study. The division between the study of migration and the study of cultural flows has contributed to this confusion. By distinguishing between transnational social fields and transnational processes of communication, we will be in a better position to advance research and theory. Transnational cultural processes may include but do not depend on direct people-to-people relationships and interaction. In reading a book, newspaper, or magazine, listening to a radio or television, or surfing the internet one can obtain ideas, images, and information that cross borders. From the period in which political borders marked differentiated nation-states, people have lived beyond them through such means of communication. Sometimes the effect has been profound, contributing to various forms of transnational solidarity. The contemporary dissemination of the Bible and the Koran, and the growth of cross-border religious movements, are one such example. However, as this example makes obvious, while transnational cultural processes are increasingly communications that occur without direct relationships with other human beings, often people experience both kinds of cross-border connections. For example, since the fifteenth century Christian missionaries have been transnational actors who accompanied the dissemination of the written text, and who lived in transnational social fields which came to include the people they converted.

Transnational social fields include individuals who have never themselves crossed borders but who are linked through social relations to people in distant and perhaps disparate locations. The concept of transnational social field directs attention to the simultaneity of transmigrant connections to two or more states. It allows ethnographers to operationalize and investigate the ways in which transmigrants become part of the fabric of daily life in their home state or other states and participate in their forms of nation-state formation, while simultaneously becoming part of the world force, contributing to neighborhood activities, serving as members of local and neighborhood organizations, and entering into politics in their new locality. Transnational social fields are not metaphoric references to altered experiences of space but rather are composed of observable social relationships and transactions. Multiple actors, with very different kinds of power and location of power, interact across borders to create and sustain this field of relationships. As networks of interpersonal connections that stretch across borders, transnational social fields are people-to-people relationships through which information, resources, goods, services, and ideas are exchanged. Social fields form a network of networks that allows us to in
the indirect connections between disparate individuals who do not know each other or even know of each other, but yet are shaped by and shape each other.

In order to study transnational networks, the social fields they constitute, and broader cultural processes that link disparate individuals, we must disentangle actual migrants from persons who rarely or ever travel and yet actually live within transnational social fields that connect them regularly to persons located within the borders of other states. While making this distinction, we miss much of the significance of transnational connections if we confine our study to persons who frequently cross borders, as some researchers have suggested. Today, as in the past, the vast majority of the world’s people never move from their home locality, and large numbers of those who have migrated cannot or do not return to the place from which they originated. Nonetheless, through interpersonal relations and various forms of communication, large numbers of people in both categories are linked to others across borders. To build transnational theory we must reexamine the growth of ideas and identities, the development of cultural patterns, and the forms of political action, both past and present, by means of which people maintain connections within transnational social fields.

Stepping outside assumptions about history shaped by methodological nationalism, we can see that the national identities of the United States, and states in Europe, the Middle East, and Asia, were forged within the context of debates and intellectual exchanges that spanned borders, many of which took place within social relations that composed transnational social fields. Leaders striving to build Japanese, Chinese, Korean, and Philippine national identities used concepts of race, blood, and nation that were globally disseminated by European colonialism. Meanwhile, poor and disempowered migrants, as well as migrant political leaders and intellectuals, played an important and as yet unauthorized role in nation-state building in emigrant-sending countries such as Italy, Poland, Greece, Ireland, Hungary, Turkey, China, and Mexico.

Distinguishing between identity and social practice

As we develop transnational theory, it is also essential that we distinguish between transnational ways of belonging and transnational ways of being. Transnational ways of being include various quotidian acts through which people live their lives across borders. Here we watch people who, as members of a transnational social field, may not themselves frequently or ever cross borders but who interact across borders. They are transmigrants in terms of their life ways. They raise children, sustain families, and set out family tensions and rivalries within transnational networks. They juggle, build, and break social relationships with sexual partners, spouses, friends, business connections, and acquaintances who live elsewhere. They engage in trade, investment, and the transfer of goods and information across borders. Their actions are shaped by gossip, rumor, and cultural production which are generated within their cross-border social relations. The fact that these ways of being take place in transnational social fields tells us nothing about how these activities will be represented, understood, and translated into an identity politics, that is, into a transnational way of belonging.

When we study transnational ways of belonging, we enter the realm of cultural representation, ideology, and identity through which people reach out to distant lands or persons through memory, nostalgia, and imagination. They may do this, whether or not they live within transnational social fields. Transnational belonging while not rooted in social networks, is more than an assertion of origins, options, ethnicity, multiculturalism, or "roots," which are all forms of identity which place a person as a member of a single nation-state. Ways of belonging denote processes rather than fixed categories. Persons who adopt certain forms of cultural representation may find themselves as new participants in transnational social fields. Take, for example, New Hampshire politician who speaks no Spanish and has never visited Latin America but whose father came from Mexico. When this man, identified by his Spanish name, became known as the "Hispanic community," he was acting on an US-based ethnicity. However, as he asserted his Mexican roots, on some level he began to define his identity, not only as a member of a Mexican-American ethnic group but also as someone connected to Mexico, although he had never been there. If, as a result of such an identity claim, he finds himself working with representatives of the Mexican government to facilitate their connection to the Mexican migrant population in New Hampshire, he will have become a participant in a transnational social field.

On the other hand, persons who live in transnational social fields may adopt, at various times, different forms of cultural representation. Transnational belonging is an emotional connection to persons who are elsewhere—a specific locality such as a village, a region, a specific religious formation, a social movement— or are geographically dispersed but bound together within a notion of shared history and destiny. If these myriad types of transnational belonging that some scholars wish to term transnational communities, but more specific terms of reference seem warranted. Tolnay (2001) employs the term "exile nationalism" to focus attention on the nation-state building processes through which dispersed elites organize to establish or reestablish a political regime within a territorial homeland. He uses the term "diaspora nationalism" for the ideology and practices of belonging deployed by dispersed populations as part of a distant homeland after the establishment of a nation-state. I have suggested the term "long-distance nationalism" for a set of identity claims and practices that link together persons who claim descent from an ancestral land (Glick Schiller 1999; Glick Schiller and Patrakos 2002). These persons see themselves as acting together to constitute, strengthen, overthrow, or liberate a homeland.

In a path-breaking study of transnational Turkish media in Germany, Caglar (2002) demonstrated the complexities that underlie ideologies of belonging and transnational cultural politics. Seeking simple equations of cultural hybridity or cosmopolitanism, she provided an ethnography of Turkish and Kurdish media in Berlin to illustrate the practice of cultural politics that were neither fully within nor totally independent of the agendas of multiple states. Such ethnography necessarily combines the study of transnational social fields with the production and reception of transnational cultural flows. The result is a series of interlinked transnational political projects that bridge the domains of religion, homeland identifications, and the identity politics of disparate European locations.

Types of transnational actors

The growing interest in the state in transnational studies is a gratifying development for those of us who from the beginning have advocated this perspective. This new
scholarship provides the foundations for the exploration of everyday forms of transnational nation-state formation as they are experienced within the transnational cultural practices of home, community, school, and religious congregations. The standard textbook version of the nation-state envisions a polity in which the people within a territory share a history, culture, and government, and envision themselves as a nation. Today, both political leaders and disparate others are reviving and updating earlier notions of the state in which membership in the polity extends across state borders to include persons living or even born elsewhere. The people whom the government of a state claims and/or the people who claim the government may live outside its national territory.

Emigrant-sending countries, including Mexico, Colombia, the Dominican Republic, the Philippines, Eritrea, India, Croatia, Ecuador, Brazil, Portugal, and Haiti, have recently created or revived laws and policies that reach out to their diasporas, seeing them as a source of remittances, development capital, and funding for campaigns to maintain national independence or expand the borders of the state. The "Croatian diaspora" was allocated 12 of the 92 seats in parliament (Skrbić 1999:184). The Colombian Constitution now provides for the representation of populations abroad, while Portugal, Mexico, and Haiti have ministries or councils for their "communities abroad." The Eritrean rebels organized a referendum for independence which included the diaspora, and since independence have collected a voluntary tax of 2 percent from those living abroad (Ali-Al, Black, and Kosir 2001). Increasingly, emigrant-sending states see their populations settled in the United States as political lobbies that can defend the homeland. States as different as Ireland, Mexico, France, and China recognize various forms of dual nationality. States in all regions of the world now recognize dual nationality so that emigrants can carry two passports or dual citizenship, which extends voting to emigrants who have become citizens of other countries. Nonetheless, both emigrants and sending states often portray the connections of emigrants and their children to the homeland as blood ties, rather than a formal legal status, revalorizing notions of biological belonging. Such notions, which are the basis of racial categorization and hierarchies of essential difference that were popularized at the beginning of the twentieth century, are with us again.

In general, it is the political leaders of present or past emigrant-sending states that have recently worked to reconstitute their nations as transnational nation-states and to encourage long-distance nationalism among their emigrants, but there are significant differences in the degree to which and the ways in which migrants have responded to these state projects. In addition, political leaders of states that have had their borders reshaped by war are claiming populations beyond their borders. For example, the logic of blood ties that stretch across borders has been articulated by the Hungarian state, which has extended rights to "ethnic Hungarians" settled in neighboring states (Stewart 2002). The same kinds of symbols of blood ties and common history used by an emigrant-sending state such as Haiti to maintain the loyalty of remittance-sending emigrants and their descendants can be used for expansionist aims by states that wish to reclaim territories now held by neighboring governments. Because nationalist symbols are polyvalent, carrying multiple simultaneous contradictory messages, they can be used transnationally for disparate political agendas.

It is important to note that at the present historical conjuncture disparate situations seem to stimulate long-distance nationalism. We are seeing the flourishing of a politics in which ancestral identities are made central by diverse sets of actors, including emigrants, political refugees, homeland governments, and intellectuals. One can identify very different sets of actors with different or opposing sets of interests, who currently deploy a variant of long-distance nationalism.

Politicized transmigrants and homeland political leaders and officials are only two variants in a long list of types of transnational actors, if we define that term as persons who maintain ongoing connections across borders. Disparate sets of actors, who on a daily basis may engage in transnational relations and connections without engaging in culture representation or political activities, may in certain moments be drawn into transnational political activities to influence public policies. The list includes migrants and refugees and their descendants who maintain familial, economic, religious, or social forms of home ties, members of transnational organizations ranging from nongovernmental development organizations to various types of religious missionaries and activities, and the employees of businesses, corporations, and organizations who maintain transnational connections. A significant category of transnational actors are those who maintain illegal and hugely profitable businesses in trafficking drugs, sex workers, and arms. Their control of considerable amounts of capital makes these transnational businesses potent, although often unmarked, participants in political affairs.

**Transnational Theory: The Current State of the Art**

The exhilaration of new insights that comes from setting aside old paradigms continues to mark transnational studies. Here I focus on the second wave of scholarship that brings together the study of transnational migration and transnational cultural processes. I note three important and intertwined developments, each of which is being enriched by ethnographic interventions: (1) the critique of the concept of transnational community and the growing interest in the study of transnational social fields and their shaping by transnational cultural processes; (2) the increased efforts to study forms of simultaneous incorporation of migrants and their descendants; and (3) the study of cross-border social citizenship.

One cannot assume community or even shared identity when people participate together in a transnational network. Networks that stretch across borders may include actors with different class, gender, and power positions and conflicting politics. Many of the rich array of studies sponsored by the Oxford University Transnational Communities Project between 2000 and 2002 called into question the utility of the term. These studies distinguished between patterns of connections on the ground and the conditions under which ideologies of connection and community emerge, clarifying the distinction between ways of being and ways of belonging. They demonstrated that any social or cultural capital shared within kin networks or broader ethnic networks cannot be assumed to constitute a community of interest able to generate access to economic capital. As the recent comparative research of Edmund Gomez and Gregor Benton demonstrates, transnational family networks may provide resources to migrate and settle, but business networks are often built on cross-ethnic rather than inter-ethnic bases. The degree to which communalities of identity exist and can be used to generate material support must be investigated. Ethnic or national identifiers
such as "Chinese" are not descriptors of persons who necessarily share either a community of interest or connection.

Increasingly, researchers have put aside the rubric of transnational community and have explored the construction, maintenance, and meaning of transnational kinship. Studies of transnational kinship document that familial networks that stretch across borders are marked by gendered differences in power and internal rankings of status and class. There is the potential for kin networks to be used for exploitation, a process of transnational class differentiation in which the more prosperous extract labor from persons defined as kin. Even kin networks maintained between people who send remittances and those who live on them can be fraught with tension. Persons who live in the homeland live not only in a transnational field of social relations but within a domain of media and advertising. These portray life in the centers of capitalist power as one of luxury and opportunity for all. Increasingly, studies of transnational migrant connections must examine the way in which they are shaped by the flow of ideas and goods that fashion dreams, desires, and discourses for both migrants and those who are "left behind."

As it deconstructs transnational community and highlights contradictions and disparities within transnational social fields, the new research leads us to study and theorize the transnational intersections between specific kin, local, and national institutions. For example, we are now at the point when we can conceptualize and theorize the intersections of family networks that stretch between a village in the Dominican Republic and the United States, village-based institutions that extend between the US and the Dominican Republic, and the effects of the Dominican government and various political parties to develop transnational constituencies (Graham 2002). We can document the processes through which ways of being and ways of belonging become fused and the new tensions and contradictions that arise from such fusion.

Until recently, the excitement generated by the new paradigm of transnational studies, combined with the continuing blinding of methodological nationalism, led many researchers to neglect the study of the simultaneous incorporation of immigrants into multiple states, despite the fact that it is in some ways the most obvious and observable of social processes. People can readily be observed participating in different sets of activities as well as identities, some local, some national, and some transnational. And yet, simultaneity is just now beginning to be systematically studied and theorized. It contradicts established notions of society and the nation-state and seems threatening to the need of governments to ensure the loyalty of their citizens. Researchers are beginning to document that it is immigrants who have become citizens and have stable bases in the US or Europe who participate most frequently in transnational politics that connect them to a homeland. By maintaining transnational networks and identifying with their homeland, migrants are able to maintain their personal self-esteem despite experiencing a loss of social standing as they incorporate in a new land.

Often the same actors engage in homeland, new land, and international politics. Kurdish and Turkish migrants settled in Germany, the Netherlands, Denmark, and the UK become active participants in the political structures of sending states, receiving states, and transnational federations of migrants (Ostergaard-Nielsen 2002). In many cases the same political organizations may have dual agendas, addressing political issues in their host country, while they engage simultaneously in homeland politics. Activists create forms of struggle, religious and cultural identities, ideas about rights, and expectations about the state that transgress the established notions in both states and become a potent force for change. For example, Kurdish immigrants who seek cultural and religious recognition in Europe also send messages to Turkey, Syria, and Iraq, where their rights and cultural distinctiveness have been suppressed.

Research on simultaneity challenges strongly held ideas about immigrant incorporation. It sets aside the argument, which has become common sense in Europe, that differing "political opportunity structures of particular countries" shape the degree to which migrants become integrated into the political life of the receiving society or maintain transnational connections. The concept of simultaneity also challenges established notions of society, opening up new ways of understanding the structuring of social relationships, including trans-border citizenship.

In the initial development of transnational studies, migrants were sometimes portrayed as forging a new type of citizen, freed from the constraints of individual regimes. The second wave of transnational studies continues the discussion of citizenship, but this time within an analysis of the continuing viability of states whose legal systems limit movements across borders and extend or restrict legal rights. Trans-border citizens are people who live their lives across the borders of two or more nation-states, participating in the daily life and political practices and debates of these various states. As with all other citizens, they claim rights and privileges from governments, but trans-border citizens claim a relationship to more than one government. The fact that within the past decade an impressive number of states have adopted some form of dual citizenship or dual nationality is an important foundation of the development of cross-border citizenship. But an understanding of the development of trans-border citizenship takes us beyond legal citizenship into the subject of governmentality and social citizenship, while not abandoning an appreciation of the role of the state to restrict or eliminate rights.

In many states, migrants who have legal residence but not citizenship are given access to a range of rights, including access to state services, and many even participate in some form of local elections. Such persons are "social citizens" who comprise a population which is not accorded the same political role in the state as citizens, but which experiences the governmentality of the state in its positive form. Persons who are accorded rights from the state in which they reside often respond by acting as if they belong to the state that has accorded them rights. They organize to protect those rights, counter discrimination, or to make further claims to rights, services, and opportunities from the state. A considerable number of social citizens become simultaneously incorporated in more than one state, making such claims in several locations simultaneously.

Because trans-border citizens participate in the political processes and political cultures of more than one state, they may draw on concepts of the state and the ideas of civil and political rights of more than one policy. In so doing, they contribute to the development of the political processes and ideologies of more than one state and the lives of people within them. In the Haitian case, for example, many poor people became politically engaged trans-border citizens, with political repercussions in both the United States and Haiti. The Haitian trans-border movement...
product of local and transnational forces. From the 1950s, when large-scale Haitian migration to the United States began, to the 1990s, myriads of Haitians have lived within transnational social fields that connect family and friends abroad to those still living in Haiti. Within these social fields, people participated in and learned from transnational social movements, including liberation theology, the international women's movement, the US civil rights movement, immigrants' rights organizations, and community development agencies, as well as from UN discourses on rights. The movement in Haiti was a nationalist movement that demanded political empowerment for the poor, social justice, solidarity with oppressed peoples around the world, and the liberation of women. In the United States this grass-roots movement has taken up the issue of racial profiling and the murder of black people by the police.

To speak of a trans-border citizenship is not to assume that these citizens speak with a single political voice. While such a citizenship is united by a shared identity, as with any other citizenship, a trans-border citizenship will have political divisions based on differences in political party or ideology. In the Haitian case, political repression and assassination, competition for power in Haiti, and continuing intervention in Haitian affairs by the United States and international banking interests, has taken its toll.

Using a concept of trans-border citizenship that draws on notions of social citizenship, we can more fully comprehend the behavior of migrants, whether immigrants or refugees, who participate politically in states and make claims upon more than one state as trans-border citizens, even when they are not living within the territory of a state or are not legal citizens of a state. This use of the term “citizen” suffers from the same drawbacks as all concepts of social citizenship. Whatever their claims to membership, people who are substantive but not legal citizens face legal restrictions, lack legal protections, and while their lives may be lived in a transnational space, they have limited access to part of that space when they seek to flee repression or political chaos. The actions of the US government to jail and forcibly deport boatloads of Haitians who fled the collapse of the grass-roots movement in Haiti to seek safety in the United States reminds us of the brutal fact of uneven political power within transnational terrains.

**Thinking Beyond Transnational Processes**

While transnational studies has opened new ways of understanding cultural processes and representations, the location and nature of nation-state building, and migrant social practices, transnational research can generate its own blind spots. A focus on the various ways in which nation-state building intersects with transnational processes may distract us from the movements that respond to growing economic disparities and deprivations experienced by most people in the world. Discussion of the balancing acts that migrants stage through simultaneous incorporation can deter us from examining the tremendous and growing imbalance between concentrations of wealth and poverty, which make migration strategies and transnational families a necessity. We also may not see the degree to which migrant strategies are being undercut by worldwide economic collapse. Long-distance nationalism and the political agendas, dreams, and aspirations that such nationalist movements sometimes contain can contribute to movements toward globalization from below. In these movements, people are connected through the shared goals of just and more egalitarian societies. However, if we become too entrenched in the way transnational studies frames its problems, we may not be able to make the necessary connections between the transnational processes we are documenting and more global forces. Restrainted by our theory, our scholarship will be limited in its contributions.

Movements for social justice need to be built with an understanding of the transnational social fields within which various actors struggle over power, and the images and ideas through which power is legitimated or contested. Particularly missing in the literature on social movements is a consideration of the complex role of migrants and their long-distance nationalism. Migrants' long-distance nationalism, transnational fundamentalism, religious movements, and the progressive movements that make up the struggle for globalization from below — all, in their different ways, represent the aspirations of billions of people for a life in which there is respect, dignity, and equality. Transnational studies must not lose sight of the broader global picture in its concentration on the dynamics of specific transnational processes.

Transnational processes are linked to more global phenomena but are not identical to them. It is important to confront the current moment of capitalism and understand what we see and what we miss if we concentrate on the nation-state and its transnational processes. Frequently the literature of transnational studies fails to discuss the contemporary hierarchy of global military and economic power in which the United States dominates political processes throughout the world. Researchers need to take notice of the restructuring of states to serve as handmaidens of global corporations and financial interests. Their discourse of “the state” neglects the vast variations among states. Yet variations in states lead to very different futures for populations of poor and rich states, in a world dominated by those who control the accumulation and flow of capital. States that continue to control an impressive military capacity and states that serve as a base of transnational capital differ from most emigrant-sending states.

I suggest that to understand transnational processes and contemporary globalization, we need to revive and revitalize older notions of imperialism. Scholarship that can strengthen transnational studies by placing them within an analysis of global structures of power is emerging in contemporary debates about the past and future of the reemergence of imperialism. This is not the Haudt and Negri vision that heralds an almost emergent “emergence” in a description that is more celebration of power than an analysis of the new forms in which the US is a single power with vast military might is dominating the world.

We must think beyond transnational studies to examine the reconfiguration of power in the world structured by a neoliberal agenda backed by the US military. In this emerging world, few states have a domain of political action that is not directed toward implementing the goals of US power. Transnational studies cannot ignore the tendency in both Europe and the United States to create structures of decision-making which express corporate interests and which lie outside the reach of democratic processes. Nor can we ignore indications that the corporate interests that hold the largest degree of power are the ones linked to the US military. Without continually assessing the global dynamics of capitalism, and the contention between the few states who serve as central base areas for capital and corporate wealth, we miss the dynamics that underlie both the emergence of the transnational paradigm and the
movements toward globalization from below. As the US-led war against terror emerges as the new Cold War, it is clear that the new enemy in this war is movements from below, that only the rich and powerful are granted the right to mobility to networks that span borders. We can respond by remembering that we are participants as well as observers, and that we ourselves live in transnational social fields that connect scholars to people struggling for a more democratic and just future.

REFERENCES


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SUGGESTED FURTHER READING


