

# TRANSNATIONAL SPACES: DISCIPLINARY PERSPECTIVES

Willy Brandt Conference Proceedings

Edited by  
Maja Povrzanović Frykman



MALMÖ UNIVERSITY

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MALMÖ UNIVERSITY  
IMER

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Malmö University

International Migration and Ethnic Relations (IMER)

SE-205 06 Malmö

Sweden

[www.imer.mah.se](http://www.imer.mah.se)

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## PREFACE

This publication makes available the proceedings from the international workshop, *Transnational spaces: disciplinary perspectives*, held at the School of International Migration and Ethnic Relations (IMER), Malmö University, on June 10-11, 2003.

Along with the contributors to this volume, the following participants acted as discussants: Erica Carlström (Lund), Dimos Chatzoglakis (Malmö), Didem Danis (Malmö/Toulouse le Mirail), Andreas Ette (Bremen), Margit Fauser (Bremen), Björn Fryklund (Malmö), Jürgen Gerdes (Bremen), Kristina Grünenberg (Copenhagen), Jan-Erik Lundberg (Malmö), Philip Muus (Malmö), Ninna Nyberg Sørensen (Copenhagen), Kathrin Prümm (Bremen), Beate Rieple (Bremen), and Pia Steen (Roskilde). Some of their ideas and comments are referred to in the concluding remarks of Thomas Faist, well known for his work on transnational social spaces.

Both the workshop and this publication were made possible by the *Guest Professorship in memory of Willy Brandt*, which is a gift to IMER, Malmö University, financed by the City of Malmö and sponsored by *MKB Fastighets AB*. Thomas Faist participated in the workshop in his capacity of *Guest Professor in memory of Willy Brandt*. The organiser of the workshop and the editor of this volume held the position of Research Fellow in the frames of *Guest Professorship*.

The intention of the workshop was to bring together scholars of different disciplinary backgrounds who have an interest in transnational connections and imply transnational perspectives in their research. The initial idea was to only invite those scholars for whom some aspects of transnationalism (understood mainly as immigrants' transnational social spaces) are the particular field of research. Thomas Faist suggested that a more interesting and challenging approach – and which actually defined the final format of the workshop – would be to also include people who dealt with other kinds of transnational spaces.

## PREFACE

The participants were asked to focus on epistemological and methodological questions, using concrete research projects as the point of departure. They addressed the state of the art concerning transnational spaces within the conceptual universe of their respective disciplines. Another benefit was that, as they work in different countries, they were able to exchange insights into research politics and preferences in different national contexts.

The papers published in this volume range from elaborate disciplinary overviews to outlines of research projects yet to be undertaken. However, they all engage in answering the questions concerning definitions of the term and the appropriate methods of research into transnational spaces – in conceptual and empirical efforts towards the general study of transnationalisation.

In discussing the utility of and the need for concepts associated with transnationalism, this publication contributes to the general purpose of the *Guest Professorship in memory of Willy Brandt*, established to strengthen and develop research as well as to create closer international links in the field of international migration and ethnic relations.

*The Editor*

## NOTES ON CONTRIBUTORS

CONNIE CARØE CHRISTIANSEN holds a Ph.D. in Anthropology from the University of Copenhagen, where she currently works as Lecturer at the Institute of Sociology.

Planning a project on consumption and networks among Turkish families in Denmark, she is interested in transnational consumption patterns, social capital and cultural capital, news media consumption, diaspora, mobilities, and spatial segregation.

Her publications concerning transnationalism include "News media consumption among immigrants in Europe: the relevance of diaspora", *Ethnicities* (forthcoming), and "Islamischer Frauenaktivismus in Dänemark aus transnationaler perspektive", in Pusch, B. (Hg.), *Die neue Muslimische Frau. Standpunkte und Analysen* (Orient Institut DMG 2001) - also available in Danish as "Kvindes islamiske aktivisme i et transnationalt perspektiv", *Dansk Sociologi* 12(4), 2001.

BERNDT CLAVIER holds a Ph.D. in English from Lund University. He works as Lecturer at IMER, Malmö University.

His research interests include literatures in English, film and film theory, culture and politics, postmodernism and modernism; avant-garde aesthetics, literary theory and criticism, critical theory, Marxism, space and time, authenticity and ideology, travel literature & philosophy, realism.

Berndt Clavier is the author of the book *John Barth and Postmodernism: Spatiality, Travel, Montage* (Dept. of English, Lund University, 2002), and of the articles "Mobilizing Identities: John Barth and the Ideology of Travel", in *The Interpretation of Culture and the Culture of Interpretation* (E. Hemmungs Wirtén and E. Peurell, eds., Dept. of Literature, Uppsala University 1997), and "'The World Is Closer Than You Think': Travel, Antarctica and the Marketing of the British Airways", in *Text and Nation: Essays on Postcolonial Cultural Politics* (A. Blake and J. Nyman, eds., The University Press of Joensuu 2000).

#### NOTS ON CONTRIBUTORS

THOMAS FAIST received his Ph.D. in Political Science from the New School for Social Research in New York. He is Professor of Political Science and directs the International Study Programme in Political Management at the University of Applied Sciences, Bremen. He is director of the Centre for Study of Migration, Citizenship and Development.

His research focuses on international migration, ethnic relations and comparative politics. He currently leads an international project on the Politics of Dual Citizenship in Europe, funded by the Volkswagen Foundation. He also participates in the Special Research Unit on "Changing Statehood", supported by the German Science Foundation.

Thomas Faist is a member of the editorial boards of the journals *Ethnic & Racial Studies* and *The Sociological Quarterly*. His major book publications include *Social Citizenship for Whom? Young Mexican Americans in the United States and Turks in Germany* (Ashgate 1995), *The Volume and Dynamics of International Migration and Transnational Social Spaces* (Oxford University Press 2000) and *The Future of Citizenship* (Blackwell, forthcoming).

PER GUSTAFSON holds a Ph.D. in Sociology from Göteborg University, where he works as Researcher and Lecturer at the Department of Sociology.

He is interested in individual and social understandings of place, place attachment and mobility, especially in relation to migration.

His publications dealing with these questions include the book *Place, Place Attachment and Mobility: Three Sociological Studies* (Göteborg Studies in Sociology No. 6, Dept. of Sociology, Göteborg University 2002), and the articles "Retirement migration and transnational lifestyles", *Ageing and Society* 21(4), 2001, "Globalisation, multiculturalism and individualism: The Swedish debate on dual citizenship", *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies* 28(3), 2002.

NAUJA KLEIST obtained a MA in International Development Studies and History at Roskilde University Centre. She is a Ph.D. candidate at the Department of Sociology, University of Copenhagen.

Her research interests include migration, transnational practices, diaspora, belonging, gender, racialisation processes, and repatriation. Her dissertation will offer an analysis of mobility, diasporic identification and transnationalism among Somalis in Denmark.

Some of these topics have been explored in "Repatriering - afsluttet eller fortsat mobilitet?" (M. Fink-Nielsen and P. Hansen and N. Kleist), *Den Ny Verden* 35 (3), 2002, "Indledning. Migration og medborgerskab i en globaliserende verden" (N. Kleist and R. Kledal), *Kvinder, Køn &*

*Forskning* 11(2), 2002, and in "Når hjemme er mere end et sted. Møder med Danmark blandt somaliere i diaspora", *Kvinder, Køn & Forskning* 11(2), 2002.

ERIK OLSSON holds a Ph.D. in Communication from the Department of Communication, Linköping University. He is a Senior Lecturer and Associate Professor in Ethnic Studies at the Department of Thematic Studies, Linköping University.

He is interested in transnationality among migrants, identity and diaspora-related issues. He has done research among Latin Americans living in Sweden (particularly Chileans) and among those who have "returned" to their homeland.

Some of the results of his work are available in "Att leva nära en flygp-lats: chilenska migranter mellan hemland och värdland", *Socialvetenskaplig tidskrift* 1997:1; "Migratory spaces: the formation of identity among Chileans in Sweden", in *Space and Place* (K.-O. Arnstberg, ed., Södertörns högskola Working Papers, 2000); *Händelse eller process? Om återmigration som återvandring* (Merge 2001), "Bofasthetens operativsystem" (with I. Grandin), *Kulturella perspektiv* 2, 1999, "Med väskorna packade: Diasporan och identitetsrum mellan Chile och Sverige", in *Moderna människor* (C. Garsten and K. Sundman, eds., Liber 2003).

MAJA POVZRANOVIĆ FRYKMAN received her Ph.D. in Ethnology from the University of Zagreb. She is a Research Fellow at IMER, Malmö University, and External Associate of the Institute of Ethnology and Folklore Research in Zagreb.

She is currently engaged in ethnological research in the relations between place and identity and the concepts and practices within the semantic domains of diaspora and transnationalism.

She edited and contributed to the book *Beyond integration: Challenges of belonging in diaspora and exile* (Nordic Academic Press, 2001). Her other publications dealing with diaspora and transnationalism include "Homeland lost and gained: Croatian diaspora and refugees in Sweden", in *New Approaches to Migration? Transnational communities and the transformation of home* (N. Al-Ali and K. Kosher, eds., Routledge 2002), "Establishing and Dissolving Cultural Boundaries: Croatian Culture in Diasporic Contexts", in *The Balkans in Focus: Cultural Boundaries in Europe* (S. Resic and B. Törnquist-Plewa, eds., Nordic Academic Press 2002), "Connecting Places. Enduring the Distance. Transnationalism as Bodily Experience", *Ethnologia Scandinavica* 30, 2001.

ÖSTEN WAHLBECK holds a Ph.D. in Ethnic Relations from the University

#### NOTS ON CONTRIBUTORS

of Warwick. He is Senior Researcher and Lecturer in Sociology at the Department of Sociology, Åbo Akademi University.

His research interests include refugee resettlement and integration, and the role of diaspora and transnational communities, especially among the Kurds in Europe. This interest has recently been expanded into an interest in self-employment as a form of social inclusion (or marginalisation) and the role of transnational social spaces in the establishment of businesses, focusing on Turkish businesses in Finland as an example.

Östen Wahlbeck is the author of *Kurdish Diasporas: A Comparative Study of Kurdish Refugee Communities* (Macmillan 1999), and "The Concept of Diaspora as an Analytical Tool in the Study of Refugee Communities", *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies* 28(2), 2002.

# THE TRANSNATIONAL TURN IN MIGRATION RESEARCH: PERSPECTIVES FOR THE STUDY OF POLITICS AND POLITY

THOMAS FAIST

## Introduction

The transnational turn in international migration research since the early 1990s has sparked vigorous debates among migration scholars. Analysts have been concerned with a variety of issues crossing the borders of national states, depending on the time period and the regional intellectual contexts. The first wave – beginning in the late 1980s and early 1990s – was preoccupied with the phenomenon of transnationalism as such, juxtaposing it to concepts such as assimilation and, sometimes, making daring and stimulating claims as to the newness of the empirical phenomena observed.<sup>1</sup> In fact, needless to say, the study of return migration (e.g. Gmelch 1980), the insight that each migration stream results in counter-streams (Ravenstein's famous laws of migration from the 1880s), the continued importance of transnational ties among the so-called first generation (e.g. Thomas and Znaniecki 1927), the failure of assimilation even among the 'old immigration' (e.g. Glazer and Moynihan 1963), and the importance of migrant & migration networks and migration as endogenous, cumulative processes (cf. Massey et al. 1987; Portes 1995) – to mention just a few examples – are all rather old hats and quite familiar in migration research. The transnational turn contributed no significant new insights into the relevance of these phenomena as such. Nonetheless, the transnational turn has been more important as introducing a complementary perspective on immigrant incorporation and connecting international migration on the

one hand and immigrant insertion on the other hand. In the second wave – in the mid- to late 1990s – scholarship has been more concerned with conceptualizing and measuring transnationalism. This has been done mostly in case studies of migrant categories, such as Mexicans and Dominicans in the US (Levitt 2001), or Kurds in Europe (Wahlbeck 1999). In the United States, the more contentious claims about transnationalism have gradually yielded to more nuanced assessments about international migrants but also the role of national states as constitutive elements of transnational linkages. For example, the claim that transnationalism has replaced or would replace assimilation has turned into a more sophisticated debate about transnationalization and segmented assimilation. In the meantime, some scholarship has begun to ask how migrant ‘transnationalism’ can be interpreted as part of broader developments in religious, economic and cultural border-crossing linkages and emerging global structures (e.g. Vertovec and Cohen 2002). All along, there have also been disciplinary divides. While anthropologists and ethnologists have continued to study transnational kinship systems, ethnicity-based affiliations and identity constructions (e.g. cf. Nyberg Sørensen and Olwig 2001; Povrzanović Frykman 2001), sociologists have mainly studied translocal communities and interstitial immigrant entrepreneurship (e.g. Portes et al. 1999), and political scientists have started to study the activities of emigration country governments, migrants who engage in political parties and nationalist movements (e.g. Smith 1999; Østergaard-Nielsen 2001), and issues of membership in multiple states (Bauböck 2002). Of course, there is also a good deal of work which is cutting across the disciplines and domains just sketched.

We seem to be approaching the end of the second period of the transnational turn. So it is time to take stock. It concerns the broader question of the dominant trends or even paradigms of research in the field of migration. In the European context, the concept ‘class’ guided and even dominated research on colonial and ‘guestworker’ migration in the 1970s. It came to be replaced by concepts such as ‘multiculturalism’, ‘minorities’ and ‘cultural pluralism’ in the 1980s when issues of immigrant incorporation gained center stage. During the 1990s the concepts around migrant transnationalization have come to offer one of the innovative ways to discuss international migration and incorporation in the age of ‘time-space compression’ (Anthony Giddens). Overall, efforts to more systematically capture the phenomenon of what has been called transnationalism, transnational communities, transnational social fields, transnational social formations and transnational social spaces.<sup>2</sup> have proliferated. Nonetheless, some questions and problems seem to be quite stubborn. For example, it is still questioned whether the transnational turn refers to a “new” pheno-

menon which did not exist a hundred years ago.<sup>3</sup>

It is against this backdrop that we need to explore the study of *political* transnationalization. The political aspects of transnational migration have been under-studied when compared to social, cultural and economic processes. This is particularly astonishing because the very term transnational suggests the importance of national borders and nationally-bound polities as opportunities and restrictions of exchange, reciprocity, solidarity and hierarchical control for processes involving non-state actors to varying but rather high degrees. My goal is to take stock of some developments in the general study of transnationalization and treat the aspects of politics, policy and polity as a specific case of this broader conceptual and empirical effort. I also identify questions for further research and offer some methodological venues for the study of transnationalism arising out of international migration. In particular, I strive to overcome the less than fruitful discussion of whether transnationalization is a "new" process associated with the waves of international South-North and East-West migration that have been on their way after the 1960s, or whether it is an "old" process that could be observed already during and after the "old" migration which took place, for example, in the transatlantic migration system of the late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> century. We are in the midst of such a debate. The opposing views could be stylized in this way (although no real-world scholar could or should be pigeon-holed squarely in either of these camps): On the one side, some theorists claim that transnationalization is a specific variant of ethnic community formation; probably arising out of failed attempts at full incorporation in the immigration countries. According to this view the fact that this occurs across borders is neither new nor should it raise special concerns – especially given the fact that we are living in an age of globalization in which national borders become increasingly permeable. A more sophisticated variant historians could favor, would say that international migrants a hundred years ago also entertained border-crossing relations, which – over time – became less and less important; apart from some instances of long-distance nationalism. On the other side, there are those who point to the overall patterns of increasing border-crossing exchanges, whose intensity, extensity and velocity have been increasing rapidly since the 1970s, when measured in quantitative ways (cf. Held et al. 1999). Although the movement of people across borders differs from those of goods, information and capital, the ties of migrants are no exception to this development.

In contrast to these two views, I propose that it is neither fruitful to point out that transnationalization is an 'old' phenomenon, nor that we should now go ahead and construct a sociology of global civil society (Urry 2000; Basch et al. 1994 with their notion of 'deterritorialization', and

tout the transnational approach as a new theory, which resurrects space (back) to its central place in the social sciences (Pries 1999). The first set of claims are less than surprising and inconsequential for the study of transnationalization (unless they are directed against those who only insist on ‘newness’ and little else), the second set constitutes an example of claims hard to fulfill. A global *civil* society is nowhere on the horizon. It may be useful, however, to place transnational phenomena in the overall context of what is called ‘globalization’ and transnationalizing civil societies.

Instead, I put forward three claims. First, the various typologies and systematic descriptions of transnational social spaces are mainly a heuristic tool to study border-crossing ties and linkages. We do not have a theory of transnationalization. Empirically measurable phenomena should then be studied by available methodological tools. These methods are especially suited to overcome the ‘old’ vs. ‘new’ debate and study transnationalization as a historically and contingent phenomenon. In other words, it is necessary to uncover the mechanisms through which transnationalization works (cf. Hedström and Swedberg 1998). Two general types of social mechanisms need to be distinguished, intermediate mechanisms on the meso-level and master mechanisms on the macro-level (leaving aside mechanisms on the micro-level). First, there are those which help explain the integration of various kinds or types of transnational social formations, such as forms of exchange, reciprocity, solidarity and control. Second, there are mechanisms which are necessary to study the development and the overall consequences of transnational spaces for transnational systems, migrant incorporation, politics and polity, such as cumulative causation and path dependency. Only then can we hope to place transnational ties and linkages in broader theories of space, time and society – such as those concerned with globalization.

Second, while it is an understandable reaction to insist that migrants are social actors in their own right – mainly against functional migration systems theory (cf. Kritz et al. 1992), it would be shortsighted to stop here. Aspects of ‘social integration’ are only one side of the coin. They concern the incorporation of immigrants into social systems. The neglected aspect of ‘system integration’ needs to be brought in to complement the picture. System integration concerns the interlinkage of parts into the social system as a whole (cf. Lockwood 1964). Applied to the study of political transnationalization this means that we need to distinguish between and integrate into the analysis both *politics* as part of social integration and *polity* as an aspect of system integration. Politics concerns decision-making processes and all the behavior and activities surrounding authoritatively binding decisions. Polity refers to the order of political systems. Policies as outputs of decision-making processes are the ever-contested

tools and objects of politics and, at the same time, part of the political order, i.e. polity. When it comes to transnational ties and the polity, the issues of membership and in particular citizenship then gain prime importance (e.g. absentee voting and dual viz. multiple nationality and citizenship).

Third, I believe that we are slowly approaching a third stage of the transnational turn. This third stage will have to introduce systemic aspects of transnationalization. In the field of politics, the discussion should move beyond the fashionable terms ‘deterritorialization’ and ‘resistance’ of migrants to nationalist ideologies to include problems of statehood in the fields of territoriality, sovereignty and legitimacy.<sup>4</sup>

The remainder of this essay is divided into two sections. The first section deals with conceptual problems. It tries to place concepts of transnationalization in between postnational viz. global and national perspectives in order to analyze border-crossing relations. This enables us to develop a typology of transnational spaces, and the specific conceptual developments needed to study the political dimensions of transnational linkages. The second section explores venues for further research in the field of transnationalization and makes some suggestions to overcome the ‘old’ vs. ‘new’ debate. In particular, this section proposes methodological tools such as cumulative causation and path dependency (much talked about but rarely used) for the study of transnational ties.

### **Transnational Spaces in Between National Society and Global Society**

It is not surprising that the transnational turn has coincided with a surge in the concern of social scientists with space. Social space in particular has been neglected for several decades in sociology and political science. In global or cosmopolitan approaches space definitively trumps place. David Harvey’s “time-space compression” and the now often-used description of the world as a “space of flows” are insightful reformulations of Marx’s and Engels’ famous dictum on capitalism: “all that is solid melts into air”. The latter statement is still the clearest expression of the claim that there is an annihilation of space by time (Marx and Engels 1918).

Clearly, we need to overcome the notion of the national state as a container when it comes to both migration and immigrant incorporation. However, in terms of the institutional prerequisites needed to speak of ‘society’, it seems to be premature to squarely place the conceptualization of immigrant transnationalization as part of a global (civil) society characterized as a ‘space of flows’. Of course, concepts such as global society or world society (dating back to Kant) can be useful analytical tools to conceptualize border-crossing transactions. And modern systems theory indeed has posited world society as the adequate unit in a world of potenti-

ally boundless communication and ever-increasing functional differentiation of societal subsystems (cf. Luhmann 1997). However, the empirical reference point of migrant transnationalization, characterized by dense and continuous transactions of persons, networks, groups and organizations across borders, should be clearly distinguished from a global flow of information, goods and information (albeit most of these global flows are regionally bounded). The observation that interstitial social (political, economic, cultural) ties cannot be contained in nation-states as ‘containers’ and that national-states are criss-crossed by concatenation of ties in transnational social spaces does not necessitate a theory of world society. In other words, transnationalization requires a consideration of both space and place, an analysis of the ‘space of flows’ and the ‘space of places’ (cf. Faist 2004).<sup>5</sup>

Therefore, the move from ‘methodological nationalism’ – a term used by Herminius Martin in 1974 – to ‘methodological cosmopolitanism’ (Beck 2000) as an answer to develop a methodology for the study of transnationalization seems to be somewhat premature. Anthony Smith has claimed that methodological nationalism is “bound up with a nationalist framework which views ‘societies’ as ‘naturally’ determined by the boundaries and properties of nation-states. (...) The study of society today is, almost without question, equated with the analysis of nation-states, the principle of methodological nationalism operates at every level of sociology, politics, economics and history of mankind in the modern era.” (Smith 1979: 191). One may criticize scholars – among others political scientists engaged in the study of comparative politics – of uncritically using national states as units of analysis. But this is a far way from stating that they consider national borders as ‘naturally’ given. Instead, it has been the methodologically most backward branch of political science which introduced the transnational paradigm in the early 1970s against an overwhelming tendency among the ‘realist school’ in international relations to treat states as billiard balls, which are not permeable by non-state actors such as transnational companies. Keohane and Nye (1977), for example, argued that the power of national states was confined by non-state agents such as transnational companies. The more important underlying proposition was that the very power of national states could only be understood in the framework of interdependencies created by non-state actors across borders. The power of national states and (trade, etc.) interdependencies conditioned each other; at least in a relatively peaceful international system, defined as the absence of wars among the major states. This hypothesis turned the traditional realist approach on its head (cf. Waltz 1979 for a neo-realist approach). Such transnational interdependence among national states – e.g. high intensity, extensity and velocity of trade and financial

transactions – is a far cry from claiming the existence of a border-crossing viz. transnational or even global (civil) society. The conceptual move to replace non-state actors such as transnational companies by international migrants is a useful supplement and corrective for the one-sided emphasis of the earlier study on ‘transnationalization from above’. Yet ‘transnationalism from below’ (cf. Smith and Guarnizo 1998 for this useful term) in the realm of international migration does not seem to be the beginning of a global grassroots resistance to neo-liberal globalization.

However, it is certainly useful to link concepts of transnationalization to broader concepts of border-crossing trends, often labeled globalization. We need to bring out how “global transformations” (Held et al. 1999) have conditioned the emergence of transnational social spaces. My proposition is that migrant transnational practices do not themselves cause many of the important transformations (e.g. dual nationality, nation-states’ efforts to control emigrants, etc.). However, in each dimension migrant practices and identities draw upon and contribute significantly to ongoing processes of transformation, largely associated with facets of globalization, already underway. In order to do so, we need to start from a clear difference between the concepts of globalization on the one side and transnational social spaces viz. transnationalization on the other side: Whereas transnationalization is concerned with overlapping links, globalization focuses on nested processes. Transnationalization implies *overlapping* ties and linkages between various national states. By contrast, though global processes can be thought of being tied to national states (Sassen 1996), the focus is on processes transcending state territories. Various aspects of society and governance on the local, national, regional and global levels can be thought to be *nested* within each other – always connected by potentially global communication. The hunch is that political transnationalization is not a challenge to the nation-state and the world system of states as such but it has implications for the functions of states, supra- and international organizations.

### **Towards a Definition of Transnational Social Formations within Transnational Spaces**

Based on these presuppositions, it is now possible to more clearly define the term transnational social space.<sup>6</sup> Terms such as transnational social spaces, transnational social fields or transnationalism usually refer to sustained ties of persons, networks and organizations across the borders across multiple nation-states, ranging from low to highly institutionalized forms: Transnational social spaces are combinations of ties, positions in networks and organizations, and networks of organizations that reach across the borders of multiple states (e.g. Faist 2000a and 2000b). These

spaces denote dynamic social processes, not static notions of ties and positions. Cultural, political and economic processes in transnational social spaces involve the accumulation, use and effects of various sorts of capital, their volume and convertibility: economic capital, human capital, such as educational credentials, skills and know-how, and social capital, mainly resources inherent in or transmitted through social and symbolic ties. The reality of transnational social spaces indicates, first, that migration and re-migration may not be definite, irrevocable and irreversible decisions - transnational lives in themselves may become a strategy of survival and betterment. Also, transnational webs include relatively immobile persons and collectives. Second, even those migrants and refugees who have settled for a considerable time outside the original country of origin, frequently entertain strong transnational links. Third, these links can be of a more informal nature, such as intra-household or family ties, or they can be institutionalized, such as political parties entertaining branches in various countries of immigration and emigration.

The transnational social spaces inhabited by immigrants and refugees and immobile residents in both countries thus supplement the international space of sovereign nation-states. Transnational social spaces are constituted by the various forms of resources or capital of spatially mobile and immobile persons, on the one hand, and the regulations imposed by national states and various other opportunities and constraints, on the other; for example, state-controlled immigration and refugee policies, and institutions in ethnic communities. Transnational social spaces are delimited by pentatonic relationships between the government of the immigration state, civil society organizations in the country of immigration, the rulers of the country of emigration (sometimes viewed as an external homeland), civil society groups in the emigration state, and the respective transnational group or organization, constituted by migrants and/or refugee groups, or national, religious and ethnic minorities. Such transnational organizations may also be constituted by institutions such as transnational companies.

This definition has the virtue that it applies to transnationalism from above and to transnationalism from below. It is broad enough to include both border-crossing linkages of transnational corporations, business networks and the rise of a transnational capitalist class (Neo-Gramscians would talk about a hegemonic project) on the one hand, and migrant groups and transnational social movements and criminal groups, on the other hand. This list is not exhaustive. The future task will be to come up with an integrated approach, which comprehensively deals with border-crossing ties and linkages of all sorts of non-state actors – churches, migrant organizations, ‘advocacy networks’ etc. It could well be that the po-

litical-normative distinction between ‘above’ and ‘below’ in terms of power relations is too diffuse to capture the whole range. For example, where do the proliferating International Non-Governmental Organizations (INGOs; cf. Smith 2001) fit into this distinction? Some reflect grassroots resistance to neo-liberal globalization, while others serve to legitimize governance. And from a functional point of view both attributes may apply to one and the same INGO. An alternative is to differentiate levels of analysis – micro, meso and macro – and to then empirically determine the status of individual and collective actors in terms of hierarchies of status and power (cf. Faist 1997).

The foregoing definition allows us to distinguish four main types of transnational social formations, in which transnational spaces may unfold: kinship groups, circuits & issue networks, communities and organizations. These types have different kinds of integrative mechanisms which can be derived from exchange, reciprocity, solidarity and hierarchical control.

(1) *Kinship groups* are highly institutionalized cross-border relationships within households, families and kinship systems. They are typical for many first generation migrants. For example, a transnational family perceives itself as a cohesive unit and, in addition a main household in the emigration country, also runs a ‘shadow’ (subsidiary/auxiliary) household in at least one immigration country. Kinship groups are based on specific reciprocity and focused solidarity. Specific reciprocity and focused solidarity are exchanged relatively indiscriminately within each group and includes many types of social and cultural assets. In contrast to transnational communities and organizations, reciprocity and solidarity are related to a tight-knit collective, in which face-to-face relations are theoretically possible; hence the reference to specific reciprocity and focused solidarity. Specific reciprocity, for example, is expressed in money transfers from migrants to their families back home, the so-called remittances. Reciprocal money transfers, for instance, from migrants to their relatives or small household groups only continue until the group is reunited in one country or the migrants have died, i.e. not longer than one generation. Another example is an informal insurance collective. Focused solidarity is found within a perceived community of common descent or adoption.

(2) *Circuits* are identifiable wherever goods, ideas, information and people circulate cross the borders of national states. In commerce, for instance, there are circuits in which businesspeople co-operate across borders in fields such as garment (not textile) production or food imports. They benefit from their situation as insiders with the resultant advantages such as

social ties or command of the language, and thus gain a foothold abroad. In short, they profit from insider advantages. In the steadily growing field of non-state organizations there are also circuits in the form of networks of individuals and groups which operate and are connected across state borders. Commonly shared values, for example with regard to human rights or the protection of the environment, a shared language and the exchange of services and information connect cross-border networks of political activists. The participants in these networks usually use a common terminology. Issue networks include, for example, domestic human rights organizations which cooperate with transnational organizations such as Amnesty International. Most are what has been called ‘advocacy coalitions’ (Keck and Sikkink 1998). The main integrative mechanisms are exchange for circuits and reciprocity as exchange for issue networks. The latter form of reciprocity (to be distinguished analytically from reciprocity as a norm, see Gouldner 1960) takes place within cross-border networks of individuals and organizations, which exchange information and services in order to achieve common objectives against the background of shared values for an issue and a binding discourse. Such issue networks have a long tradition in the field of human rights and flourish in the field of environmental issues, but they have also begun to thrive among migrants from third states in the EU.

(3) *Communities* as transnational communities (Portes 1996) denote configurations in which close and stable bonds exist between international migrants and relatively immobile persons over time and space across two or a number of states. Examples include village communities, religious communities (parishes, congregations but also broader structures such as the Catholic Church<sup>7</sup> or the Islamic *umma*), frontier regions, ethnic communities abroad (e.g. overseas Chinese), exile and diaspora. The term community comprises all relationships characterized by a high level of personal or symbolic intimacy, emotional intensity, moral obligation and respective social cohesion together with temporal continuity (Nisbet 1966: 47). The community ‘production of space’ is thus integral to the politics of community. The existence of such communities over large distances does not, however, necessarily require individuals to live in two worlds at the same time, or between cultures in a ‘global village’. Yet to achieve a high level of social cohesion and a common repertoire of symbolic and collective representations typical for communities, it is essential that the social and symbolic ties include resources which generate propinquity.

Transnational communities can develop on different levels of aggregation. Transnational communities come into being when reciprocity and solidarity extend beyond close family relations or small transnational

groups, i.e. when generalized forms of reciprocity and diffuse forms of solidarity can be observed. Generalized reciprocity means that the equivalence of exchange between actors is not clearly determined. This also implies that the exchange partners are no longer seen as specific persons, but as members of a larger group such as a village, religious community or nation. An understanding of multiple reciprocity is helpful here. While specific reciprocity requires equilibrium between clearly defined actors, generalized reciprocity is based on the principle of ultimate balance within a group. Generalized reciprocity was practiced for example in 19<sup>th</sup>-century America among members of *Landsmannschaften*, which were associations of immigrants from Germany, and is practiced today when Turkish migrants help each other, without personally knowing each other, through *hemşeri* links. For example, one *hemşeri* provides another with information on job vacancies without expecting anything in return. The beneficiary may do a third *hemşeri* a favor in the future. Diffuse solidarity exists in larger ‘we groups’ – i.e. groups with a strong sense of common identity in which members can no longer attend to relations personally and directly. A relevant example are nationally bounded political communities which grant the status of full membership, citizenship. In democratically constituted political communities, the principles of collective self-determination and the status associated with a full set of civil, political and social rights entail an affiliation to a community (nation). In guaranteeing rights and thus upholding institutionalized state-citizen ties, states rely on resources which they cannot themselves create: trust among citizens as a diffuse form of solidarity. (Quasi-)Full membership in multiple political communities – dual viz. multiple nationality or citizenship – results in overlapping ties which can be interpreted as competing or complementary.

4) *Organizations* as transnational collective actors have a high level of formal control and coordination of social and symbolic relations. Characteristic of both state and non-state political organizations is a specific form of bureaucratic power, such as technically efficient instruments of administration and in-built dynamic tendencies to expand the area of control (cf. Weber 1988: 498). The observable types would include social movement organizations, religious organizations, and business organizations. It is obvious that migrants often do not set up such organizations but use the infrastructures of existing ones. The mechanisms of integration in organizations are characterized by hierarchical control in contrast to markets and networks as coordinating mechanisms.

The definition and the fourfold typology of transnational social spaces which includes the integrative mechanisms of exchange, reciprocity, solidarity and hierarchical control is not a full-fledged theory but a heuristic

tool, a concept at best. It is a useful tool when analyzing the various realms of transnationalization, including the political. Before doing so, it is necessary to define the dimensions of politics relevant in the study of transnationalization. At the very least, the analysis in the political realm needs to distinguish between political activities and processes as part of social integration, and the repercussions of transnationalization for membership in the political community as part of system integration.

The first dimension concerns the activities of migrants, civil societies and the respective national states (and multilevel governance systems such as the EU) involved. On the part of migrants this includes political participation in organizations dealing with the country of origin (e.g. human rights organizations, nationalist parties); mass protest and consciousness-raising (e.g., Kurds after Abdullah Öcalan was captured in 1999); support from abroad for insurgency – the participants are, depending on the view, called freedom fighters or terrorists; diasporic politics (e.g. Jews in the triangle Russia, Israel and USA); ‘long-distance nationalism’ (e.g. Poles, Jews, Armenians in the USA and other Western countries). On the part of the state this includes mostly responses to emigrant activities. Usually, national states, supra- and international organizations react rather than proactively structure this political field. Activities of states refer to consular and embassy services, campaigning abroad, support for expatriates, control and counter-insurgency vis-à-vis opposition forces abroad. State institutions on different levels can get involved, ranging from the national through the provincial to the local level. Moreover, transnational politics proliferates not only across multiple governance levels but also non-state but intermediary institutions such as political parties.

The second dimension refers to membership in polities. The question is how transnational ties change membership and thus citizenship in national states, and how this affects statehood. Empirical phenomena range from the right to vote from abroad and thus provisions for absentee voting to issues of multiple citizenship. For states border-crossing ties raise questions of sovereignty, i.e. granting nationality and rights (nationality as a human right), and questions of democratic legitimacy, such as ‘one person, one vote’ (Faist 2001a) and political identity. Multiple citizenship comes in two forms, overlapping and nested citizenship. *Overlapping* citizenship means that a citizen is a member of two sovereign (national) states; *nested* citizenship means that citizenship is vested on several governance levels, ranging from the local to the supranational (cf. Faist 2001b). An example for nested citizenship is membership in the EU. Nationals of member states can be European Union citizens.

Both dimensions suggest that the political aspects of transnationalization carry a very specific and treacherously simple characteristic: *the cross-*

*sing of national state borders and boundaries of political communities (polities) matters.* It affects not only political interests but the constitution of the polity itself because of its impact on political membership and the dimensions of statehood. Political transnationalization has explicit ramifications for the three main constituents of state-citizen relations in democratic polities: the element of collective self-determination, the whole range of citizens' rights and the affiliation to a political community. This is a distinctive difference to the cultural and economic realms. Transnationalization in these realms does not directly affect membership in a polity as such although cultural and economic resources are prerequisites for the exercise of meaningful and 'substantive' citizenship. As theorists from Aristotle to Judith Shklar have emphasized, these resources are among the enabling conditions.

### **The Utility of a Transnational Perspective**

The transnational turn has been useful in three respects. First, it helps to overcome the mode of incorporation (integration) perspective in the immigration countries because it also includes aspects of international migration and its aftermath in emigration countries. Transnational social spaces constitute sets of social and symbolic relations beyond and across national states and supranational institutions. One could argue that the older migration systems approach already brought together the migratory space encompassing emigration countries, immigration countries and migrant & migration networks, communities and organizations. However, the migration systems approach remained predominantly a macro-level approach which did not conceptualize the civil societies and the meso-level mechanisms in the respective countries.

This also relates to the second advantage of the transnational approach. It brings the migrants 'back in' as actors in their own right, not only in the migration process, but also in the settlement process. It also raises the intergenerational issue. Historically, some immigrant categories turned into diasporic groups; while others, while assimilating, engaged for generations in long-distance nationalism. Thus, there is the potential to link up with other emergent literatures which conceptualize transnational phenomena, such as transnational social movements (Tarrow 1996) and non-governmental advocacy coalitions (Keck and Sikkink 1998). Up to date, however, an integrated conceptual approach, which would unify these various literatures into a unified theoretical framework, has not been attempted.

Third, going beyond migration systems theory, which focuses mainly on the causes of migration and the migration process itself, the transnational approach explicitly considers the repercussions for politics, policy and

polity in emigration countries and immigration countries. Given the macro-structural contexts of both North-South and East-West migrations, political transnationalization is probably and arguably even more important for emigration than for the immigration countries. At the very least, we need to specify the types of collective action among migrants and relatively immobile persons. The foregoing typology already suggests some mechanisms, which could be helpful in mapping political mobilization, such as specific and generalized reciprocity, focused and diffuse solidarity, and hierarchical control (see Faist 2000c for a fuller exposition).

Emigration countries may take a variety of positions towards their citizens: Governments and other state authorities may prevent them from leaving, encourage them or even force them to exit, attempt to retain or even regain the loyalty of those who have settled abroad, try to give them incentives to return home, denounce them as traitors and bar them from returning, or regard them as a lost part of the demos. It remains to be seen whether it is true that while some emigration country regimes try to regulate emigration and even the terms upon which they are accepted by immigration countries (e.g. Yugoslavia and Algeria in the late 1960s), they are mostly reactive when it comes to the regulation of political activities of their population living abroad. Emigration country governments then respond to challenges arising out of the migration process and settlement of the migrants in the immigration countries or return to the homeland, often long after the emigration itself. In essence, governments then pursue investment policies in encouraging the return of emigrants back home in order to increase the stock of human capital stock; and supporting the flow of remittances among the first generation and capital investment, which could also encompass the second and plus generations. Governments may also engage in protective policies in attempting to protect 'their' emigrants, such as the Mexican government's introduction of dual nationality in the mid- to late 1990s. This gives Mexican migrants in the USA a chance to acquire US citizenship without renouncing their Mexican nationality (cf. Ramírez 2000). Also, governments engage in self-protective policies when politically controlling their emigrants abroad in order to exert influence on the immigration country that may, at times, advance the emigration states' interests. The latter strategy already implies that the emigration country accepts that permanent emigration has occurred. In all these respects the responses of national governments to emigrants abroad may be a specific case of how they reconstitute and restructure their policy tools in response to the growing complexity of processes of governance in a more interconnected world. Immigration countries, provided that they explicitly accept permanent settlement (1) seek to incorporate immigrants into the political process (e.g. through consultation and co-

optation); and (2) try to control the import of conflicts (e.g. ‘fundamentalist’ movements threatening the democratic constitution; freedom fighters viz. terrorists). Both emigration and immigration countries are faced with challenges which go much beyond these aspects when it comes to rules and practices of membership. If states decide to tolerate or even accept and advance multiple membership as overlapping citizenship – as nowadays almost half of all states in the world seem to do, in sharp contrast to zero-tolerance about a hundred years ago – then this goes to the heart of the definition of the national community. It is not only about the incorporation of newcomers as such.

### **Perspectives on Ongoing and Further Research**

This second section identifies four broad areas and questions which I think that research on political transnationalization needs to address: (1) the importance of technological advancements for the development of transnational linkages among migrants; (2) the development of transnational spaces and immigrant political activism, including state responses; (3) transnationalization as a mode of integration, especially vis-à-vis assimilation and segregation; and, finally, (4) the implications of transnationalization for membership in polities.

#### *Technology and Social Organization*

In many accounts of transnationalism among migrants analysts refer to new technological developments in transportation and communication which have facilitated interstitial social and symbolic ties among migrants and settled persons across the borders of national states. The availability of affordable long-distance transportation, the advent of fax, telephone, satellites and e-mail are said to have eased and speeded up border-crossing transactions. Contemporary international migrants allegedly differ from their predecessors insofar as modern technology has intensified the rate and extent of circulation between the countries of emigration and immigration. Also, it is sometimes claimed that long-distance connections maintained by migrants more than one hundred years ago were not truly ‘transnational’, in terms of ‘real time contacts’ (e.g. Portes et al. 1999). In essence, communities and organizations nowadays are claimed to be free from the constraints of place and are now able to truly live in spaces which allow the emergence of ‘communities without propinquity’.

To be sure, there is no doubt that the infrastructure of border-crossing exchange has become more intensive and extensive in the past decades. Nonetheless, its use by migrants for activities beyond transnational families rests on case study evidence and is not well documented. We know little about actual travel patterns and the use of virtual spaces, going

beyond anecdotal or case study evidence. There are at least two problems with such claims. First, the technologies mentioned may not constitute a decisive breakthrough but rather another step in the piecemeal fashion of ever faster and more available technologies. One may reasonably argue that the ‘real’ breakthrough already occurred in the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century, when the telegraph, the steamship and the railroad cut transportation costs more than in half (cf. Hobsbawm 1996). This raises the problem whether *quantitative* changes in transportation and communication technologies have really translated into *qualitative* changes. What is the qualitative difference between the beginning of the 21<sup>st</sup> century and the late 19<sup>th</sup> century? Second, even if we arrive at the conclusion that technological breakthroughs of a qualitative nature have occurred, we need to identify the mechanisms by which they have translated into societal (political, economic and cultural) change. Otherwise we would proceed deterministically. One fruitful venue may be to take another look at the emerging literature on small businesses in the age of globalization. It has often been noted that globalization – defined as an increase in the intensity, velocity and extensity of border-crossing exchange – has created opportunities for small businesses to an unprecedented extent (cf. Piore and Sabel 1984). The sociological literature then goes on to specify the meso-level mechanisms of social capital such as specific reciprocity and focused solidarity which ‘translates’ the macro-level changes in the world economy into micro-level behavior (e.g. Zhou 1992; although she does not use the terms reciprocity and solidarity). In a similar fashion, we need to show how the availability of technologies opens up new opportunities for non-state actors to fashion and maintain borders in the political realm, e.g. in social movements across borders. But it is decisive to specify the actual mechanisms which are at work, e.g. in the political realm most probably generalized reciprocity and diffuse solidarity because we are often dealing with networks and organizations in which persons do not know each other personally.

*The Development of Transnational Social Spaces and Migrant Political Activities*

This is one of the most vexing questions. Usually, the argument of the critics is that most transnational linkages cease after the first generation has died. The second generation is supposed to be even more concerned with incorporation into the countries of immigration, often at the expense of transnational ties. The contrasting claims concerning actual generations will be easy to resolve once the second generation among the ‘new’ wave of immigration that started in the 1960s in most western immigration countries has completed its life cycle.

But this dispute does not really address the much more interesting question of how durable transnational social spaces develop – even if they only last for one generation, i.e. about 20-60 years. A simple proposition would be the following one: Transnational social spaces develop in two stages. In a first phase they are a by-product of international migration and seem to be basically limited to the first generation of migrants. Researchers have long recognized that migration is not simply a transfer from one place to another with few social and material links. Rather, migration usually generates continual exchanges between geographically distant communities and migrants do not automatically sever their ties to the sending countries (cf. the locus classicus, Ravenstein 1885/1889). As a matter of fact, migration flows are characterized by migrant networks. First, only by the creation and reproduction of networks of migrants do migration flows turn into chain migration and thus become mass phenomena. Second, migrant networks, interacting with groups and institutions in the areas of destination and origin, form the raw material for the formation of new ethnic or religious communities. Migrant communities in the receiving country can best be described from a structural perspective as a network of networks and organizations. In turn, international migrations are often also characterized by ongoing processes of recurrent viz. cyclical or seasonal, where migrants regularly go home for varying periods each year, or return migration. After all, it has long been a truism that every migration stream breeds a counter-stream. In a second phase – and this is a useful proposition to be explored in more detail – transnational social spaces go beyond strictly migratory chains of the first generation of migrants and develop a life of their own.

Migrant political activism across borders and the responses of national states is a particularly interesting case because it brings in the idea of simultaneous political behavior. It could also be that it is part of larger developmental trends that signal the increase of transnational political activities. But this area is in dire need of more empirical research. Unlike those of the 19th and the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> centuries, it seems that the transnational activists of today do not comprise solely of professionals (Meyer et al. 1997). As already observed in the case of migrants who were politically active over a century ago, there is often a great potential for transboundary political mobilisation (Hanagan 1998). A major difference between today and the turn of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, however, may be that today, in addition to nationalist activists or diasporists and ethnic business people and their associates there is probably a greater proportion of groups concerned with human rights and fundamental rights issues. Is the effectiveness of political action enhanced through the national rootedness of activists in national contexts? It is possible that functional activists are not merely in-

ternationally oriented cosmopolitans. Similar questions arise when we look at the responses of national states to migrant transborder activism. Empirical research shows that in the early 1900s, for example, Italy's answer to the southern question was to actively recruit and promote both the emigration of Italians to other parts of the world and their return and repatriation to Italy (Schmitter Heisler 1984). Again, we face the question whether this is a quantitative increase or signals a qualitative change over time.

One such difference or change, which needs to be explored, is the connection of migrant activism to the so-called nation-building (i.e. national state building) process. It could matter whether immigrants come from stable and long-established national states (very few in current South-North migration, e.g. Costa Rica), or from newly formed and thus often non-consolidated national states. Among migrants from the latter type, it is likely that radical nationalist ideologies have a stronger presence. Often, emigrants are regarded as traitors who have abandoned their homeland, disloyal citizens. If national state formation turns out to be precarious on the long run, long-distance nationalism may reach across generations (see examples above), or former 'labor migrants' turn into activists (e.g. Kosovo Albanians from former Yugoslavia). Another major area for further research is the emergence and spread of 'translocal' public spheres. A major example is the interpretation of Islam as a "traveling theory" which has led to global debates on the meaning of Muslim identity and the *umma* (the world community of Muslim believers) (Mandaville 2001).<sup>8</sup>

We could extend the application of the concept of *cumulative causation* beyond the migration process itself in order to see whether and to what extent social formations within transnational spaces develop a life of their own. The concept of cumulative causation is similar to the notion of path-dependence that has been linked to stable equilibrium concepts in economics. Unlike this latter concept which searches for the causes and ensuing dynamics of processes, locked into a certain pattern (see below), cumulative causation focuses on the very context and mechanisms that makes spiraling effects possible. Thus the concept of cumulative causation is a specific form of analyzing presumed causalities. The presence of influences in both directions between two or more factors does not necessarily imply mutual or cumulative causation. There is no mutual causation if the size of influence in one direction is independent of the size of influence in the other direction, or if their apparent correlation is caused by a third factor (Maruyama 1963: 175). Basically, there are two main types of cumulative causation of interest for analyzing the dynamics of international migration and transnational spaces. The first type is positive feedback cu-

mulative causation: The cumulative effects propel a development to depart more and more from its origin. The second main type is negative feedback causation: The dynamics ensure that the system returns to the original point of departure (Maruyama 1982). Each factor has an influence on all other factors either directly or indirectly, and each factor is influenced through other factors. There is no hierarchical causal priority in any of the elements. I have applied this concept to economic transnationalization among immigrants from Turkey and Germany, and found that the first stage of transnationalization – import & export businesses – was followed by a second stage which could only be accounted for by new transnational linkages. An example is entrepreneurs of Turkish descent who live in Germany and invest in the textile and software industry in Turkey, while keeping a foot in Germany (and other countries; cf. Faist 1998).

One could ‘measure’ the departure of actual cases from an ideal and simple model such as the following: In the early processes of settlement in the countries of immigration, migrants continue to engage in ties to the country of origin. It is only later that they develop ties into the country of immigration, largely as a response to urgent problems of social integration. Once immigrant communities and organizations become established outside the country of origin transnational social spaces develop. A flow of economic, cultural and political resources starts. In the economic realm we see remittances, and later also investment in country of origin. In the cultural realm festivities, religious practices and elements of communities may be transplanted back and forth. In the political realm, sometimes émigré organizations, political parties, and groups who have little political space in the country of origin start to emerge in the countries of immigration. This expansion of the transnational (social) spaces catches the attention of the countries of origin. As a consequence, governments of emigration countries begin to use embassies, consulates and missions to capture or recapture the attention and loyalty of their expatriates; e.g. entice them to invest back ‘home’ etc. In turn, this further entices political entrepreneurs in the countries of origin to seek ties abroad. For example, political parties may even carry their campaigns abroad (e.g. Dominican Republic). But over time, immigrant transnationalism would tend to decline. However, if (a) immigrants come from countries in which the nation-building process is not yet consolidated, there is bound to be some form of long-run and long-distance nationalism as a particularly virulent form of diffuse solidarity; (b) if discrimination is stiff (diaspora groups), then orientation towards home country could be prolonged as a specific form of ethnic community formation; and (c) multicultural policies could be constitutive because they offer opportunities for political activism not allowed in the respective countries of origin. After all, there has been a slow

but perceptible sea-change in western immigration countries, contributing to a growing tolerance towards pluralist cultural practices, also concerning immigrants (cf. Brubaker 2001: 531). Again, such an analysis would need to specify the meso-level mechanisms which translate the mentioned macro-factors into collective and individual behavior.

*Transnational Social Spaces and Immigrant Incorporation*

It is now obvious that earlier claims about transnationalism replacing assimilation and other forms of nation-bound immigrant incorporations have been vastly overdrawn (cf. Basch 1994). Also, my earlier proposal to bring in transnationalization as an apocryphal gospel, which would complement the dominant gospels of assimilation and cultural pluralism, does not seem to be fruitful (cf. Faist 2003b). One could argue that transnationalization is ultimately a specific form of ethnic segregation. All those engage in it do not have the means or are not willing to ultimately ‘assimilate’ (acculturate, accommodate and then ‘melt’) into the ‘cores’ of the immigration societies and polities; a process seen to usually last several generations by assimilation theorists (Park and Burgess 1969). On the receiving side, one would be particularly concerned about immigrant incorporation into the immigration states. The argument could be that despite all the transnational and supranational developments, the respective national institutions in the immigration countries still constitute the central parameter for incorporation in most spheres of life. This is most obvious in regard to the respective educational systems on the local and national levels. In the educational sphere, for example, there is undeniably an institutional and even cultural core into which actors ‘should’ orient themselves. One would expect, therefore, that immigrants – at least on the long run – try to acquire *generalized* forms of capital, like a universally and contextually adequate language, social ties which are not confined strictly to the limits of an ethnic community and human capital in the form of knowledge. In this view, transnational communities are specific forms of ethnic communities. The respective forms of investing in *specific* forms of capital are useful as long as there are no other efficient means available for attaining the relevant goals. One would expect that the transnational use of specific, in this case ethnic capital is mostly confined to immigrants at an early stage in the settlement process, usually lasting for one generation. Indeed, empirical research on the ‘old’ immigration found that immigrant communities tend to offer varying degrees of “institutional completeness” (Breton 1964): some immigrant-ethnic groups in North America more than one hundred years ago succeeded in creating an institutional infrastructure that enabled them to create what nowadays are called enclaves, place-centered communities with high amounts of social and symbolic ca-

pital, specific to the respective ethnic group. Under propitious macro-conditions, this specific capital served as a stepping-stone towards fuller incorporation.

Instead of juxtaposing transnationalization as a new type of immigrant integration vis-à-vis assimilation and segregation, it seems to be useful to think of it as cross-cutting these two outcomes. Transnationalization may be a transitional stage towards assimilation, as suggested by the theory of "institutional completeness". Yet, transnationalization could also be a specific instance of eventual segregation of ethnic-immigrant groups. And a third possibility is that eventual assimilation (and there is a lot of evidence concerning the 'new' immigrants: cf. Esser 1980 on Germany; the studies by Richard Alba on the USA, cf. Alba 2003) is consistent with continued transnational links. For example, in the case of 'old' immigrants in the USA, the categories of Poles, Jews, Armenians – among others – are known for symbolic ties to their ancestral homelands. Elements of long-distance nationalism could be mobilized in case of need even in the fourth and fifth generations. It seems that especially the political realm offers many opportunities to combine orientations to both emigration and immigration contexts even beyond the first generation.

*The Implications of Transnational Transactions:  
Membership in and across National Polities*

Aspects concerning the polity dimension definitely need to be treated within the realm of system integration, the interconnectedness of parts to a whole. The social integration perspective is not sufficient. This necessitates a stronger consideration of macro-level developments. It then becomes obvious that the transnational lens complements other approaches such as postnational and national perspectives. When it comes to the 'old' vs. 'new' debate regarding polities, there is a clear answer in the case of political membership: There are new developments which signal seminal trends. We observe increasing opportunities to combine external and internal status and affiliations. The increasing tolerance towards dual citizenship is a prime case. In such an analysis the transnational perspective comes in as a helpful view in complementing global, supranational and national views. The following sketch first outlines the utility of the transnational approach in its own right. Second, it places the transnational perspective within the broader range of postnational and national approaches in order to gauge its utility in comparative conceptual perspective.

When it comes to citizenship, the term 'transnational' signifies moving through political space and across boundaries of national states, with the implication of changing state-citizen relationships. Over the past decades, the ties between states and citizens have become more plural. These pro-

cesses involve mutual processes of adjustment on the part of both citizens and states. The increasing, albeit uneven, tolerance or indifference of states towards dual nationality signals that states have increasingly come to see multiple nationalities less and less as an evil to be avoided. This development is most clearly visible in the removal of the renunciation agreement in many immigration and emigration countries. This speaks to the changing importance of this form of diffuse solidarity. Nonetheless, immigration and emigration states have not come to see dual nationality as an intrinsic value which is desirable in itself. Instead, instrumental arguments about dual nationality as one of the mechanisms for political and, in immigration countries, social integration and moral-legal arguments about gender equity have dominated public discussions.

On the part of (prospective) citizens, dual nationality may involve certain advantages, such as freedom of entry or as a means to move financial assets. The reasons for acquiring dual nationality on the part of migrants and immobiles are manifold. One cause may not be a matter of individual choice at all, as most cases arise from mixed marriages. The meaning individuals attach to dual nationality may vary widely. Dual citizenship could be an expression of the avoidance of fixation to one country and the desire to keep political options flexible. Or it may signal the congruence of national citizenship with continuing 'homeland' affiliation and increasing political participation in the immigration country. Or it may express an ambivalent political identity, the now almost proverbial 'neither here nor there'. This could involve the retention of ties to the emigration country and the opportunistic acquisition of immigration country citizenship. Yet another motive can be primarily related to instrumental economic activity, such as Russian businessmen purchasing the nationality of a Caribbean island to transfer financial assets.

This short and incomplete list of motivations for acquiring dual nationality on the part of migrants, their descendants and others interested in holding multiple statuses across borders already suggests that transnational political activism, on the one hand, and dual citizenship on the other hand, do not necessarily go hand in hand. Both can be quite separate phenomena. Nonetheless, the manifold uses and meanings attached to dual citizenship suggest that states and citizens have engaged in mutual processes of accommodation around the multiple ties reaching across the borders of national states. This claim can be exemplified by the responses of states to challenges arising out of dual nationality, such as 'one person, one vote' and multiple loyalties. States have come up with surprisingly pragmatic solutions to theoretical conundrums. Responses include dormant citizenship and bilateral treaties regulating military service, social security and commercial issues.

The usefulness of the transnational perspective as an actor-centered approach also hints at its limitations. The case of dual citizenship indicates that we need to go beyond a social integration perspective inherent in the transnational turn and bring in a system integration perspective. This will enable us to answer central questions concerning challenges for polities. One way to identify the central challenges to state-citizen relations is in focusing on the arguments put forward by the critics of dual nationality. First, dual nationality involves multiple loyalties and links of citizens across borders. This has a direct bearing on issues such as military service and double taxation and thus pertains to state sovereignty. Second, dual citizenship raises the fundamental question if political membership overlapping borders can be designed in a way to uphold the democratically legitimated feedback loops between the governed and the governing. Ideally, citizens are the basic law-givers in a democratic society. Overlapping membership, however, poses a challenge to the trinity of the people (*demos*), the state territory and state authority. Further problems of democratic legitimacy arise out of the principle 'one person, one vote'. This could lead to the incongruence between *demos* and state authority because citizens could exert *voice*, but *exit* (cf. Hirschman 1970) at will when the political outputs and outcomes do not suit them. One may also question whether loyalty and trust among citizens are divisible. Dual citizenship may also create problems of output legitimacy (cf. Easton 1967) if the inclusion of immigrants into the political realm under conditions of multiple loyalties is deemed to be damaging for the public spirit; as it is usually perceived during wars between immigration and emigration countries. Nonetheless, more and more states are tolerating various forms of dual nationality, and have thus successfully adapted to problems of sovereignty and democratic legitimacy.

In order to account for the global rise in tolerance toward dual citizenship, one needs to supplement the transnational approach by methods designed to capture both agency and structure. This can best be done in a diachronic way; for example, in using path dependency. Certainly, there is no reason to suppose that the development of dual citizenship has to unravel as if ushered along by some historical teleology, a charge often advanced against T.H. Marshall's triadic stages of the subsequent development of civil, political and social rights. Nonetheless, there is evidence to surmise that (dual) citizenship has been shaped by significant developmental pressures which point towards systemic relationships.

To describe the growth of tolerance towards dual nationality as a *path dependent process* means to specify the 'positive' feedback effects – of what economists would call 'increasing returns' (cf. Pierson 2000) – driving this development. It is a specific variant of cumulative causation: a

locked-in process. The basic idea is that once collective actors such as states and state organizations have started down a track, the costs of reversals are high. Decisions taken by national states and international organizations, over time, limit the range of available options at subsequent choice points. A path dependent effect occurs when a previous decision, norm or rule reinforces itself, when it determines in part the subsequent development of events. In so doing, they may encourage continuity in the form of retention of the original choice. There will be other choice points, however, at which decisions have to be taken. Path dependency then needs to specify the mechanisms which lead to a (partial) reversal. The transnational perspective is one of several lenses needed to capture the development of dual citizenship as a path dependent development, along with postnational and national vantage points. Overall, the development of citizenship needs to be placed within the more general trend of a 'rights revolution' in liberal-democratic national states, which has been underway since at least the 1960s. This revolution has altered state-citizen ties and raised questions for the sovereignty and legitimacy of states.

Viewed from a *postnational* perspective, nationality has emerged as a quasi-human right. This meant, for example, that dual nationality has become one of the means to combat statelessness for categories such as refugees. Also, the norm of gender equity in international law has ensured that dual citizenship has spread, especially when combined with the principle of *jus soli*. More specifically, the right of independent nationality for married women and the opportunity of either parent to pass on nationality to their children have been instrumental. More specifically, *supranational* developments show how the international and national levels are interlinked, such as the mutual recognition of nationalities within member states of the European Union. The principle of reciprocity ensures that even countries such as Germany who do not provide for dual nationality as a rule, do not ask citizens of other member countries to renounce their nationality before acquiring German citizenship. Such measures also make it increasingly harder to exclude immigrants from so-called third countries from dual nationality. Moreover, as debates in several countries suggest – for example, Sweden, the Netherlands, France, Italy and Switzerland – granting dual nationality to nationals abroad makes it much harder to exclude immigrants from the same benefits.

From a *national* perspective, the extension of denizenship status and cultural pluralism in many immigration countries since the 1970s has brought the question of political rights to the fore. This has been helped by developments identified through the postnational perspective, for example the emergence of nationality as a human right and rights for settled migrants as a sort of denizenship status (e.g. local voting rights for foreign-

ners, or social rights attached to settlement and participation in the regular labor market). In this perspective dual citizenship has become one of the legitimate means to achieve the congruence between the resident population and the *demos*. Both citizenship rights and tolerance towards dual nationality have served as entry points for advocates of immigrant rights to advance the political incorporation of immigrants. ‘Multicultural’ policies, directed at immigrants, taken together with understandings of nationhood fostering political equality, have resulted in a similar outcome. They have, at least discursively, expanded the range of legitimate ties immigrants may hold. In sum, norms regarding gender equity and rules of attributing nationality going beyond *jus sanguinis* such as *jus soli* and socialization rules have created a platform upon which other factors such as denizenship rights and the policies of cultural pluralism have come to play a role – in general, propelling tolerance towards dual nationality.

Yet there has been a relative silence of political debates in most immigration countries when it comes to the *transnational* aspect of dual nationality (research is underway, see Gustafson 2001). This stands in stark contrast to emigration countries where border-crossing ties of (former) citizens play a central role in policies designed to advance human capital formation with the help of return migrants and economic investment of emigrants in the homeland. The relative absence of considering the potentially transnational life-worlds of immigrants and their children in continental European debates is not surprising because national discussions have been dominated by dual nationality as a means of political incorporation into the national polity. After all, the main proponents were advocates of immigrant rights, not the immigrants themselves. Nevertheless, the transnational realm is in dire need of further exploration in order to both consider immigrants as actors in their own rights and their views on the meaning and use of dual nationality.

We can identify two mechanisms engendering path dependent effects. In particular, lock-in and disincentive mechanisms and their consequences have resulted in the ‘stickiness’ of the policy path. First, the *lock-in mechanism* means that certain options are rendered almost wholly unattainable by the original choices made. An example for this is the norms of gender equity and *jus soli* & socialization rules for acquiring nationality (e.g. when reaching maturity). Taken together, these two principles have resulted in a pervasive growth of dual nationality in the attribution of political membership by marriage, birth and family formation. It is hard to imagine that such principles will be reversed because they are partly enshrined in both national constitutions and international conventions. Second, the *disincentive effect* means that original choices make future options not impossible but deeply unattractive to policy-makers. For ex-

ample, while efforts aiming at culturally pluralist policies towards immigrants or specific investment advantages for emigrants in their home country are prone to reversal, policy-makers often have not done so. For example, immigration country governments such as Sweden have relabelled ‘multicultural’ into ‘integration’ policies without a change in substance. And emigration country governments have come to redirect and control investment policies of their expatriates – thus increasing and not cutting the inflow of capital in countries such as Mexico, Brazil, India.

But, of course, path dependent developments are not immune to reversal. In general, this means that choice points and alternatives exist (cf. North 1990: 98-9). In principle, there are two mechanisms which could lead to a reversal, exogenous shocks and learning. These mechanisms could be expected to be of greater significance for immigration than for emigration countries because the latter would have a very high instrumental interest in continued legal bonds to citizens living abroad. First, it is easy to imagine that factors *exogenous* to the law and politics of nationality and citizenship impinge on their development. The most obvious are armed conflicts between national states which form international migration systems. Increasing degrees of tolerance toward dual nationality are based on the assumption of a peaceful state system. But this is a historically contingent phenomenon, applicable to certain regions of the world only, and continuously changing. The second mechanism – *learning* – can be easily observed. In the Netherlands, for example, the franchise for denizens and dual nationality were seen as instruments of overall immigrant integration during the 1980s, even beyond the political realm. Later, however, important political parties declared the focus on cultural minority policies a failure. Subsequently, the emphasis of public policies shifted away from cultural ‘minorities’ policies to socio-economic ‘integration’ policies. Dual nationality is not seen anymore as an instrument of overall integration.

## Outlook

Ultimately, political transnationalization arising out of international migration constitutes an opportunity to rethink the social organization of space, place and time in a system of national states and an emerging system of *transnationalizing* civil societies but not necessarily a *transnational* civil society. Whether or not transnationalization – in the *longue durée* (Braudel) – will also function as a stepping-stone towards a global political community or a global viz. world society remains to be seen. So far, no convincing mechanisms have been presented which could forment such a development. More down to earth, the transnational turn in migration research has given us an incentive to systematically map border-crossing developments on the meso-level. When appropriately used in conjun-

ction with macro- (and micro-)level approaches, it is a powerful heuristic tool to start explaining seminal processes attached to international migration and social integration. Yet such efforts should avoid two types of myopia characteristic for migration research more generally. The first myopia is to build theories and concepts exclusively useful for the field of migration. The transnational turn calls for a broader approach which is capable of dealing with international migration but also with cross-border business, crime and violence. So far, research on transnationalization – like most of migration research – has been admirably multi- and interdisciplinary but has failed largely to systematically include aspects of transnationalization outside the migratory realm. So far, for example, unconnected case studies compiled in one volume exist (but see Pries 2001). And there are only a few attempts to use the same framework for both migration and human rights (e.g., transstate spaces project at Bremen University). But the initial results are encouraging (cf. Liese 2000). Second, many migration scholars studying politics like myself, have concentrated exceedingly on what could be seen from a moralistic view as beneficial aspects of transnationalization, such as the pluralization of citizenship. Much less attention has been paid to the study of broader security issues (for exceptions, see Weiner 1995 and Graham and Poku 1998 on general aspects, as well as Faist 2002 and Faist 2003a for an exposition of transnational issues after 9/11).

## NOTES

- 1 This is an interesting aspect of the sociology of knowledge. Exaggerated and factually false claims to the newness of the phenomena studied and the concepts used have delayed the acceptance of the transnational turn in countries such as Germany. This has been somewhat different in the USA, where the majority of scholars has been more careful in arguing for the utility of the concepts associated with transnationalism.
- 2 By using 'social' as a term encompassing cultural, political and economic aspects, I follow the dominant trend among sociologists. Representatives from other social science disciplines may resent this imperial gesture. I decided to use the term 'social space' instead of 'social field' or 'social formation' because it has been a fundamental concept in sociology for decades. Nonetheless, this does not preclude the usage of other terms. Most important is a clear definition which is usually missing.
- 3 It is obvious that not all migrant categories engage in continuous and dense transnational practices between countries of emigration and immigration, or are involved in transnational politics. There are migrant groups, for instance such as the German re-migrants from the Soviet Union (*Spätaussiedler*), the majority of who break off relations with their countries of origin as soon as they arrive in the host country. There are also groups which maintain minimal contact to their countries of origin, but establish or cultivate contacts in countries to which they plan to move on some time in the future. Jewish immigrants from Russia are an example here. After their arrival in Germany they predominantly maintain contacts with Israel or the USA. And quite a few actually move onwards to these countries (cf. Wegelein 2000).
- 4 Also, it is high time to consider transnational spaces as systems in their own right although they do not form societies in the strict sense of the term. However, this sociological question should be the focus of another paper.
- 5 Here and in the remainder of the paper I heavily draw on my own work over the past decade. I feel free to do so because one of the central goals of the workshop papers is to connect disciplinary approaches to ongoing research.
- 6 I do not go into other and related typologies and categorizations (see, inter alia, Smith/ Guarnizo 1998, Itzigsohn/ Saucedo 2002, Portes et al. 1999, Pries 1999). I do not see these definitions as mutually exclusive. My most important point is that we need to specify

the mechanisms for collective action operative in various types of transnational spaces. For example, one needs to break down the term 'social capital' and name clearly the mechanisms involved, such as exchange, reciprocity and solidarity (cf. Polanyi 1957).

- 7 Of course, the Catholic Church could also be analyzed as an organization and would then constitute an example for type (4). It depends on the integrative mechanism of interest, solidarity or hierarchical control.
- 8 The latter study is a good example of the 'old' vs. 'new' debate. In discussing the diffusion of debates, Mandaville (2001: 184) mentions the example of a scholar like Mohammed Arkoun who was born in North Africa and now lives and works in Europe. We could compare his example to that of another famous scholar born in North Africa – Ibn Khaldun. He was born in North Africa in the 14<sup>th</sup> century, lived in what is nowadays called Spain. He eventually settled and died in Cairo. Ibn Khaldoun lived in an age of what one could call Muslim transnationalization (cf. Abu-Lughod 1989). The difference to our times is that it is not the OECD countries but the then Muslim world which stood at the center. Also, the ubiquity of electronic communication was not available.

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# THE TRANSNATIONAL IMAGINARY: CULTURAL SPACE AND THE PLACE OF THEORY

BERNDT CLAVIER

If migration is the popular form of multiculturalism, cosmopolitanism is its elitist version. Both are products of the same global economic system. But since transnational capitalism also breeds isolation and anxiety, uprooting men and women from their traditional attachments and pitching their identity into chronic crisis, it fosters, by way of reaction, cultures of defensive solidarity at the very time that it is busy proliferating this brave new cosmopolitanism (Eagleton 2000: 63).

## Introduction

My discipline is English, a discipline viewed as the study of a specific language and its literature, or perhaps even more reductively, as a means of obtaining certain language skills. But while language skills certainly are obtained on the courses taught, English at a university level has surprisingly little to do with proficiency training as such. Instead, the discipline focuses on how cultural values are produced and maintained in and by cultural systems, such as "language" and "literature," and how these systems are connected to other fields of discourse within a society. Naturally, this is done with varying degrees of theoretical awareness and ability. However, it has always been a major component of English Studies, even if the discipline engaged these issues quite uncritically in the beginning. As Terry Eagleton points out, English as a discipline began as a project of comparative cultural politics where the "quality of a society's language was [thought to be] the most telling index of the quality of its personal and social life: a society which had ceased to value literature was

one lethally closed to the impulses which had created and sustained the best of human civilization" (Eagleton 1983: 56). That this "human civilization" just happened to be English was overlooked by the originators of the discipline; it was simply considered a lucky coincidence that England had a world-spanning empire and therefore could carry the torch of civilization supposedly handed over by the ancient Greeks and Romans. Since these ideas were hegemonic in a real sense, other nations followed suit. Humanism became a way of organizing consent. Literature became *the* vessel of national values, a discursive formation which had the simultaneous ability to express a local and national identity that would prove valuable to school authorities and agencies of public education (it gentrified the middle classes and taught the working classes reverence for a literacy that was "theirs" if only by proxy), at the same time as it managed to hypostatize that national identity (English, French, German, etc.) into something abstract and universal. This construction of the human would teach the colonials that truth and humanity were virtues that "civilized" nations shared, while simultaneously justifying what now is understood as "the expansion of Europe".

Today some sense of self-consciousness or self-reflexivity is called for when we speculate in historical destinies, our own and those of other people. The way in which humanism became part of the same cultural revolution as the rise of modern imperialism ought to humble scholars of culture everywhere. But whereas the positivism with which culture was theorized from the 1870s up until the Cold War is increasingly difficult to maintain, some of the ideas that were brought on by imperialism are extraordinarily hard to shake off. Whereas we may quite categorically claim that Shakespeare did *not* "invent the human", as Harold Bloom has suggested in his international bestseller with that title (Bloom 1998: 13-4), Shakespeare certainly provided a matrix for the way in which English constructed the human on university courses all over the world. But it does not help to say that literature has an ambiguous relationship to truth and value. There is a sense in which the very idea of humanity has become a European construction, an ethnocentrism of such grand proportions that its ethnic origins seem lost in an ocean of universality. English certainly had a role to play in this historical development. But it has also provided a space of criticism against precisely that development. One result of this critique are the recent and ongoing "culture wars", a series of ideological "wars" which themselves are signposts of far more wide-ranging set of disenchantments. For English, the evacuation of a hypostatized universalism has meant an expansion of the notion of literature as well as the values that literature was thought to contain. As Andrew Delbanco put it in *The New York Review of Books* a couple of years ago, "the English Departments

have become places where mass culture-movies, television, music videos, along with advertising, cartoons, pornography, and performance art – [are] being studied side by side with literary classics” (Delbanco 1999: 32). For Delbanco, this spells the decline of traditions that were the very seams, if not fabric, of local, national cultures, and which functioned strategically as a reinforcement of civilized ideals. Hence Delbanco’s title, “The Decline and Fall of Literature”, and its unfortunate allusion to empire, which is inherent in the very notion of culture that emerged with the founding of the English Department at the end of the nineteenth century. Globally, of course, the expansion of the word literature (and civilization) is a welcomed corrosion of the West-ism that habitually underlies the discipline’s thinking in these matters. When notions expand they become more inclusive (until their usefulness runs out, which is another matter altogether). But the ideological reproduction of certain values and beliefs continues also after an adjustment to new conditions.

Just as English had an important role to play in the production of English national culture and its constructed, universal version (the human), so does the English Department paradoxically play an important role in what Khachig Tölölyan has called the “transnational moment” (Tölölyan 1991: 4). In Eagleton’s exposé over the rise of English as a cultural force, he comments extensively on the “refreshingly unhypocritical” attitude of late Victorian public educators, who never shied away from expressing the need to control the public through education (Eagleton 1983: 50). They worked towards replacing the old religious ideologies that were impotent in the new, industrial era. In doing so, they held an eighteenth-century, civilized ideal of “organic community” as the “touchstone” of their ideological reproduction. “Literature” was thought to contain this ideal and provided society with a safety valve against the harsh and contradictory social reality of the times. The Victorian ideologues for whom public education aimed at reinforcing national sentiment through identification with a cultural cannon – people like Matthew Arnold, H. G. Robbins, and J. C. Collins – obviously did not think of their own cultural production in terms of ideology, but they were quite frank with the function and anticipated outcome of their cultural enterprise.

In our “transnational moment”, things are quite different. This moment allegedly marks itself off from the hegemonic era of English which it now understands critically. Where the disciplinary fathers of English worked towards unifying a culture through national sentiment, the transnational imaginary works, as Khachig Tölölyan notes, within a “semantic domain that includes words like immigrant, expatriate, refugees, guest workers, exile community, overseas community, ethnic community” (Tölölyan 1991: 4).<sup>1</sup> In a language that celebrates homelessness, hybridity and plu-

rality, diasporic communities are the conceptual "other" of nation-states and thus "the exemplary communities of the transnational moment" (ibid.). We must note Tölölyan's use of the word *exemplary* here, for it highlights a normative move that is just as ideological as the Victorian guide books of disciplinary development ever were: transnational social spaces are exemplary because they make no pretense to territory, they make no claim to power. They are simply the deterritorialized "other" of whatever else it views in terms of a territorialized "same". This argument is a development of the universal humanism that once produced English. However, it remains engaged in the theoretical enterprise of expanding the *space* of culture at the cost of denying its *place*.

Part of the appeal of the transnational for English lies in its recognition of cultural impurities, where texts such as those enumerated by Delbanco may be studied together not so much for their value in the formation of cultural canons, but more for what they have to say about the cultural processes that involve and shape the deep-structure of identity and belonging. That these cultural roots have less to do with blood and soil than once was thought does not come as a surprise to anyone. As James Clifford argues, the "old localizing strategies – by bounded *community*, by *organic culture*, by *region*, by *center* and *periphery* may obscure as much as they reveal" (Clifford 1997: 245, emphasis in original). The transnational is consequently often seen as something that transgresses the limitations of the binary thinking of borders and boundaries that seem to impinge more conventional and traditional ideas of culture. But we must also be sensitive to what remains the same. Clifford typically stresses "culture", "center", "periphery" and "community" as important ideological markers. He does not put the accent on the words *bounded* and *organic*, which of course are the words that do the ideological work in the sequence. It is as an *organic* and *bounded* community that a culture becomes authentic. It was this authenticity that was sought for by the founders of English, because, as Eagleton argues, it was the ideological prerequisite of that "'dramatic enactment' rather than rebarbative abstraction" which ensured the connection between representation and "felt experience" (Eagleton 1983: 52). For the transnational imaginary, that authenticity is sought not so much in Shakespeare as in postcolonial dramatizations of Shakespeare; not so much in postcolonial experiences as in the conceptual models that allow the making of academic sense out of something called the predicament of culture. Although the intention of such work is benevolent and democratic enough, even radical at times, there remains something aggressively imperial and historically ironic in the attitude that the peripheries of the Western educational and academic centers are best understood through applications of Shakespeare or Derrida. Also here, a

certain whiff of ethnocentrism lingers in the air, as the "dramatic enactment" of literature is fixated to one's own "felt experience".

The research agendas and perspectives of this growing body of work on the transnational within English have been multi-faceted and heterogeneous, obviously. Nevertheless, what I will gather here under the rubric of the transnational are conceptualizations and articulations of culture that deploy a sense of the global in the local. This is arguably not how the term is defined in the authoritative literature. Indeed, as Ulf Hannerz suggests, the term *transnational* may even be thought of as a mild reproach of "the rather prodigious use of the term globalization to describe just about any process or relation that somehow crosses state boundaries" (Hannerz 1996: 6). With my approach, I will consequently not do justice to the increasing research on transnationality that has appeared in Migration Studies and related disciplines. Thomas Faist, for instance, argues that there is a "marked difference between the concepts of globalization and transnational social spaces" in that the global overlaps the transnational "but typically has a more limited purview" (Faist 2000: 192). I am not trying to contradict Faist by suggesting that the concepts are the same. What I am after here is one of the spaces in which the overlap occurs, namely the academy (which is the place of theory), and the consequences that this overlapping has for the production of a transnational imaginary. Akin to the hypostasized "human" of late Victorian humanism, the *exemplary diasporas* of the transnational moment have their own very specific place and identity. And despite the invocations of hybridity that usually are part and parcel of this celebratory stance, the transnational imaginary idealizes its own subjectivity in a cultural arena that like the British Empire now spans the entire globe.

Notwithstanding these prefatory caveats, the conflation of the global and the transnational is arguably one of the implications of Hannerz's own theorization. Hannerz's approach to the transnational in terms of a "global ecumene", whereby transnational connections affect what he calls "the organization of culture", is a case in point.<sup>2</sup> Steven Vertovec, another important scholar of transnationalism, similarly argues that the term "describes a condition in which, despite great distances and notwithstanding the presence of international borders (and all the laws, regulations and national narratives they represent), certain kinds of relationships have been globally intensified and now take place paradoxically in a planet-spanning yet common – however virtual – arena of activity" (Vertovec 1999: 447-8). The transnational is in both these senses a place and a space in the world; it seems to be able to simultaneously organize culture (it has agency, it instigates activity) and provide an arena in which this culture takes place. Both these uses of the term only make sense in relation to a global

perspective from which the generation and course of transnational spaces are viewed and grasped. Yet there is a marked reluctance to account for the place of this vantage point. This reluctance is precisely my topic here.

### **Transnationalism as the Ecumene of Modernity**

As Hannerz indicates, the word *ecumene* is derived from the ancient Greek where it signified the known and inhabited world. But it also means the Greeks regarded in the context of an overall development in human society. In this sense the word is related to that of civilization, which we all know requires a collective subject with whom identification can be made. This meaning is evident in the transferred sense of the word, where *ecumene* denotes the inhabited world (or a part of it) as known to or embraced by a later civilization or culture. The word *ecumene* thus implies one culture looking at another, usually temporally and spatially distant, in order to understand itself. Implied is therefore also the meaning of raising such a genealogy. Typically, this is done in the context of empire and religion, where a past is produced to secure an identity in the present. Interestingly, this could be said of all the examples of quotations given by the *Oxford English Dictionary* in its gloss on the word. The transnational would in this sense be the *ecumene* only in relation to someone or something else; a culture for which it makes sense to talk about global cultural flows, about creolization at the center, the withering away of the nation-state, and the virtuality of the arena in which all this takes place.

Here, of course, is where the invocation of the transnational superficially differs from past announcements of new *ecumenes*; the global *ecumene* embraces cultural difference and hybridity to such an extent that it becomes integral to its own self-understanding. Indeed, Hannerz suggests that this hybridity has become the very "landscape of modernity" (Hannerz 1996: 44). But for this to be true, modernity needs to be constructed in ways that are reminiscent of the way English discovered that the content of literature was "human life" and "felt experience". In a sense, modernity becomes a Spenglerian *Kulturgarten*, a culture garden where cultures spring mysteriously into being without any relationship to one another. Rather than a set of economic, social, aesthetic, judicial and psychological processes, and despite Hannerz' territorializing metaphor of a "landscape", modernity becomes by definition a space, an ever-widening gyre, where the "trust in abstract systems" produces automatic membership (*ibid.*: 46).

Similarly, Vertovec's assumption that these processes take place on a planet spanning, universal, yet virtual arena ought to make us cautious of what exactly we are talking about. Can we really presuppose that *modernity is at large*; that villages in rural Indonesia or Nepal participate in a global

flow of culture to the extent that it makes sense to talk about them as being *in* modernity? If an occasional video night in Katmandu is what we mean by being in modernity one may wonder what it would take to get out of it.

When we review the process described by Hannerz, historically and in the context of English Studies, we sometimes talk about modernity in terms of a self-conscious construction or "self-fashioning". The latter term is derived from Stephen Greenblatt's now classic study *Renaissance Self-Fashioning: From Moore to Shakespeare*. In this book, Greenblatt gives an account of how the rising English middle class defines itself in the available contexts of the middle ages. He points out that, because "the early modern period produced a change in the intellectual, social, psychological, and aesthetic structures that govern the generation of identities", there came to be a recognition both of "selves and a sense that they could be fashioned" (Greenblatt 1980: 1). Although this recognition was done in a spirit of autonomy and optimism, it involved subjecting oneself to available identities determined by the intertwined forces of institutional networks – family, religion, state – none of which produced any unfettered subjectivity. Through Marx, Freud, Lacan, Foucault, and above all Clifford Geertz, Greenblatt produces powerful readings of More, Tyndale, Wyatt, Spenser, Marlow, and Shakespeare that place their texts in conjunction with relevant contexts. In other words, acts of self-fashioning *within* literary works are related to strategies of self-fashioning available in the extra-literary milieu.

In Greenblatt's readings, then, the Renaissance subject comes into view through the various discourses that allow for its articulation. These discourses rely on a difference that can be thought of in terms of an imagined distance to earlier identities and the social practices related to them, which when viewed from what is defined as new, the humanist position, seem to negate individuality and inwardness. Literature, which in medieval times was a cultural sub-system of religion and as such expressed a collective subject identifiable with the Church, suddenly becomes a vehicle for self-expression. But the paradox at the heart of the matter is this: just as the possibility for self-fashioning is articulated in the writings of Spenser and Shakespeare, so do the institutional forces and constraints on the individuals increase. It is as if the cultural systems suddenly recognize the existence of individuals and reinvent themselves to meet the challenge. The self-fashioning alluded to in Greenblatt's title becomes inseparable from being fashioned by existing social institutions. The function of literature must therefore be disengaged from its perceived content; Shakespeare may not have invented the human as we know that entity today, but the disciplinary discourse that made social use of Shakespeare certainly was part of that invention.

The following diagram is taken from Peter Bürger's *Theory of the Avant-Garde* (Bürger 1984: 48). It is designed to explain how the notion of autonomy becomes associated and eventually synonymous with art. The table is "non-synchronous" in the sense that each phase may be said to coexist with the other phases so that exchanges can occur both inside and outside each stage. The tabulation takes into consideration that the individual who emerges as the absolute horizon of art in the bourgeois era has its origin as far back as in the princely courts.

	Sacral Art	Courtly Art	Bourgeois Art
<b>Purpose or function</b>	cult object	representational object	portrayal of bourgeois self-understanding
<b>Production</b>	collective craft	individual	individual
<b>Reception</b>	collective (sacral)	collective (sociable)	individual

Fig 1. *Non-synchronic development of the function, production and reception of art in Western societies (Bürger 1984: 48)*

In Bürger's typology, art begins its journey towards autonomy as "sacral art" during the "High Middle Ages", where both production and reception is "institutionalized as collective". In this period, art serves as a "cult object [...] wholly integrated into the social institution 'religion'" (ibid.). The concept of art has not reached any sense of self-definition yet, but is viewed as part of a totality by which it also is defined, namely religion.

During the early modern period, however, "courtly art [...] constitutes itself as a distinct social subsystem", in which production is individualized but reception remains collective, where its function is defined as the glorification "of the prince and the self-portrayal of courtly society" (ibid.: 47). It is in and through the inception of national literature that the burgeoning nation-states are able to reproduce their cultural and linguistic self-identity.

Finally, when both the production and reception of art is individualized, art enters its "bourgeois" phase, according to Bürger, the hallmark of which is "the objectification of the self-understanding of the bourgeois class" (ibid.: 47-8). In this framework, "[t]he novel is that literary genre in which the new mode of reception finds the form appropriate to it", namely an artistic production by individuals, for individuals, and whose final signified is the discovery of individuality in the context of civil society (ibid: 48).

That society is the modern, capitalist, democratic, and *civil* entity we associate with certain European nations and the United States, and whose chief characteristic we could claim (following Hannerz) is the conviction of its own abstract existence. The founders of English already sensed just how abstract this entity is, which is why they were so averse to the "rebarbative abstractions" of certain theorists and longed for the organic assurance that their readings of texts seemed to produce. It is also that society which Tölölyan finds challenged by the transnational moment of diasporic homelessness. How we understand this challenge (if at all it is a challenge) is largely dependant upon how we understand the social imaginaries that allow us to construct modernity in a very specific way.<sup>3</sup> Also here, literature plays a much larger role than is generally understood. According to Benedict Anderson's famous argument on the spread of nationalism, the novel as a cultural form is a pre-condition of the modern nation. Together with that other form of "print capitalism", the newspaper, the novel is a distinct cultural form in which a certain narrativity enables us to constitute something like a "society". This imagined world, "conjured up by the author in his readers' minds [...] a sociological organism moving calendrically through homogeneous, empty time, is a precise analogue of the idea of a nation" (Anderson 1991: 26). This omniscience creates the reassurance "that the imagined world [of civil society] is visibly rooted in everyday life. [...] [And so] fiction seeps quietly and continuously into reality, creating that remarkable confidence of community in anonymity which is the hallmark of modern nations" (ibid.).

It is of course one of the great ironies of Anderson's theory that this process developed not in the metropolitan centers of Europe but in its imperial periphery. In a footnote to his discussion of this, Anderson complains that it is "an astonishing sign of the depth of Eurocentrism that so many European scholars persist, in the face of all the evidence, in regarding nationalism as a European invention" (ibid.: 191n9). However, it is in Europe that the link between the imagined, anonymous collectivity of the nation is developed genealogically, as a sign of civilization and humanity. It is first when nationalism is made into an *ecumenical* affair that literature is able express the "felt experience" and "organic" reality of the citizen. The paradox is that it expresses this social and collective content in terms of a social imaginary, where the "felt experience" of the individual necessarily needs to be supplemented by the abstractions of literary and theoretical conventions. The dialectic involved forces the citizens to forget their own individual experiences and remember instead the supplementary representations of those experiences. In other words, from the moment we become modern (and only in modernity is such an anonymous collective "we" possible), we are launched in to the empty homogenous time that is

the same everywhere, that deterritorializes our experience into something abstract, homogeneous and globally available, and which, as Anderson points out, "engenders the need for a narrative of identity" (ibid.: 205). Literature is in this sense the answer to how the individual accepts being forced into a social order, a sociality. The important point is not the content of the imaginary but the function and form that it takes. Here is where the transnational moment might not be all that different from the national moment that preceded it; both are based on the celebratory self-fashioning of the individual.

When literature turns out the kind of narrative "by which society", as Hayden White puts it, "produced a human subject peculiarly adapted to the conditions of life in the modern *Rechtsstaat*" (White 1987: 34-5), we must take into account the abstract and supplementary nature of this change in the social imaginary. The new and powerful development is that the form supplements the content, so that, in fact, the form *is* the content. From now on, our readings confirm "us" and the "imagined community" to which "we" belong independent of where "we" live or who "we" are. This "organization of culture", to refer back to Hannerz's phrase, is clearly marked by virtuality, by a movement through "homogeneous, empty time" that enables the construction of the modern subject as an individual in a deterritorialized, abstract space of culture. This is the very nature of the ideological processes set about and intensified by the institution of literature. But once we recognize that the immediacy with which we read a novel is illusory, then it follows that we need a little more than simply the feeling of authenticity to generalize our own experience into the experience of a global ecumene.

### **The Global Ecumene and the Transnational Bourgeoisie**

In our "transnational moment", we no longer seem to have the nation-state as our primary concern. Nor do we seem to be inclined to locate cultural origins in order to explain identities and cultures. And we seem even less bent on discovering the location of culture in any bordered territory. In fact, the focus on the modern *Rechtsstaat*, which at once was cultural and political, seems to have become a focus on culture only. But as Masao Miyoshi argues, "[t]he bourgeois capitals in the industrialized world are now as powerful, or even more powerful, than ever before. But the logic they employ, the clients they serve, the tools available to them, the sites they occupy, in short, their very identities, have all changed" (Miyoshi 1993: 732).

Whereas the "imagined community" of the nation was dependent on the nation-state for its political authority and protection, the transnational imaginary derives its power from different grounds. This place is the

transnational social space of a new bourgeoisie where a certain homogeneity is developing amongst its members who are not necessarily busy reading novels, but who participate in powerful patterns of consumption in which, as Miyoshi argues, "brand names command recognition and attraction [...] [and] where commodities are invented, transported, promoted, day-dreamed over, sold, purchased, consumed, and discarded" (ibid.: 747). Those commodities now include images (and possibly also the imaginary itself). This is, according to Miyoshi, the culture of the transnational class. The migrants and diasporas of the world become emblems of privileged and deterritorialized subjectivities, whose connections to marginality are tenured and enshrined through a public culture that includes television, film, newspapers, literature, and ... theory. Marginality itself becomes a reified entity, a kind of cultural capital, which, when not localized in specific histories and contexts that evolve what Marx called "the first premise of all human history", namely "the existence of living human individuals" (Marx and Engels 1988: 37), easily transforms into a fetish to be consumed by the privileged. These patterns of consumption feed effortlessly into an "imagined community" which like a perfume bottle produces powerful sequences of transnational "borderlands" (Tokyo, London, New York, Paris, but also Chiapas, the Maquiladoras, Honduras and Peru). The question, Miyoshi suggests, is whether "the intellectuals of the world are willing to participate in transnational corporatism and be its apologists" (Miyoshi 1993: 742).

The answer seems to be a self-evident "no"! But if one reads, for instance, *Modern Fiction Studies* Spring 2003 special on transnationalism, and particularly Paula Moya and Ramón Saldívar's introduction, "Fictions of the Trans-American Imaginary", the answer becomes rather complicated. Whether consciously or unconsciously, Moya and Saldívar offer the "transnational imaginary" as an operative concept for the construction identity. Literature is called upon once again to produce the social cement sought for by Matthew Arnold. Their maneuver is *ecumenical* in the very sense of trying to unify the canonized voices of Emerson, Melville, and Whitman with alternative canons (both past and contemporary) into a hybrid chorus of ethnic and minority alternatives. These alternatives, they suggest, would better underwrite the contemporary demographics of the United States. In doing so, they want to replace the parochial "New England, Protestant, northeastern regionalist paradigm" which so far has controlled the agenda of literary production with a "Pan-American hemispheric context" (Moya and Saldívar 2003: 3).

With the same zeal and almost with the same frankness as the Victorian public educators, Moya and Saldívar recognize a need to reshape the official culture of the United States. Starting out critically, then, they ask

about the conditions under which the category of the national produces that link between a basic political economy and culture that in the past has allowed for the co-articulation of modernity and the American nation. With an unintentional irony, however, that link is also defined in transnational terms as a link between England and New England. But far from being a hybrid, fluid, non-binary and emergent transnational social space, this space is described as monological, binary, white, male, and modern in the old nationalist kind of way. The necessity to counter this cultural product is understood in both Liberal and Marxist terms. Frederic Jameson's notion of "cognitive mapping" is evoked as a means of buttressing this new and developing subjectivity, a subjectivity, which Moya and Saldívar define as "what some are today denoting as the 'post-national' American subject – but that we are calling the 'transnational' subject – in the very midst of that subject's formation" (ibid.). In the same breath, however, liberal political ideology is invoked through Will Kymlicka's discussion of a "community of fate". But there are some real problems with this theoretical maneuver. Kymlicka's version of multiculturalism is easily equated with the American nationalism that Moya and Saldívar want to challenge. As Seyla Benhabib argues, Kymlicka's multiculturalism "force[s] him into an illegitimate reification of 'national' above 'ethnic' and other forms of identity" (Benhabib 1999: 407). This is so because Kymlicka theorizes multiculturalism in terms of "societal culture", a culture which shares a "fate" that is "territorially concentrated, and based on a shared language" (Kymlicka 1995: 76). However, such cultures do not exist in any other sense than as ideology. This is precisely what the English department once was created for: to set up a sense in which a "shared fate" could be imagined and represented that would appeal to colonials and the working classes alike, and which would manufacture the consent of the exploited in the name of a universal humanism. But it must be clear to everybody by now that a society does not have a culture.<sup>4</sup>

From the point of view of political legitimacy, Kymlicka's multicultural liberalism promotes itself as everybody's culture, something that seems to be a constant preoccupation of bourgeois culture. To explode this belief has been one of the preoccupations of critical theory for more than a century. This is partly the reason why theory has been resisted in English departments all over the world, and why the "fall into theory" sometimes is experienced as a loss of culture. In the "transnational moment", however, theory stands the danger of being co-opted in the ideological mission of creating a "trans-national imaginary", a space in which difference is experienced as social capital only.

The Victorian handbooks for English teachers talked about how Eng-

lish would "promote sympathy and fellow feeling among all classes", and how the teaching of literature would open up a "serene and luminous region of truth where all may meet and expatiate in common" (Eagleton 1983: 51). If anything, this is the "community of fate" treasured by Kymlicka. But as Eagleton argues, such a shared fate is created to legitimize a certain authority:

Literature would rehearse the masses in the habits of pluralistic thought and feeling, persuading them to acknowledge that more than one viewpoint than theirs existed – namely, that of their masters. It would communicate to them the moral riches of bourgeois civilization, impress upon them a reverence for middle-class achievements, and, since reading is an essentially solitary, contemplative activity, curb in them any disruptive tendency to collective political action (ibid.).

This is how literature becomes cornerstone of the modern social imaginary. Here is why Hannerz can proclaim a "global ecumene" which includes beggars in Calcutta, a Swedish teacher in cross-cultural communication, as well as Salman Rushdie, even if the only perceivable meeting point of these people would be one of Rushdie's novels.

But again, we need to understand that the content and form of literature is not the same as its *function*. Once literature functions as a reinforcement of subjectivity, we may properly speak about a subject in modernity. What is problematic with Moya and Saldívar's venture is their insistence to make literature transcend the opposition at the heart of a now global modernity. To produce a "community of fate" that somehow would be all-inclusive would in actuality imply not a post-national but a post-ideological society. And literature is not beyond ideology. When they argue that the transnational imaginary provides "a more accurate understanding of who we are and a more truthful account of how we got here" and that this will involve a "change [of] our sense of national identity and the canon of American literature" (Moya and Saldívar 2003: 6), we need to ask the now classical postcolonial question "for whom"? Who identifies with the canon of American literature? Can we easily distinguish this "transnational ecumene" from the "transnational corporatism" Miyoshi is talking about?

### **Academic Transnationalism and the Politics of Culture**

The transnational imaginary is in this sense a theoretical stance and an identity in one and the same package, which, as Homi Bhabha argues in *The Location of Culture* tries to "think beyond narratives of originary and initial subjectivities and to focus on those moments or processes that are produced in the articulation of cultural differences" (Bhabha 1994: 1).

It is of course not difficult to sympathize with the ideological underpinnings of this project. But that the focus on difference has to center on the "in-between" spaces of the subaltern in order to provide the new bourgeoisie with "innovative sites of collaboration, and contestation, in the act of defining the idea of society itself" seems rather like a re-routing of an old Victorian strategy. The "cross-border spatialities" that develop in the wake of this "transnational corporatism" are, as Saskia Sassen suggests, "partly deterritorialized and partly deeply territorialized; they span the globe, yet they are strategically concentrated in specific places" (Sassen 2000: 24-5). There is therefore no reason to leave the issue of territory behind in these exchanges. The center, as always, pays the fiddler and calls the tune (which explains the existence of so-called "world music"). Such a strategic concentration is not only a question of the space economy of leading information industries; we definitively have to include the various culture industries and, perhaps more importantly, academia in what Sassen calls "the spatialities and temporalities of the global". It is therefore important that the celebratory rhetoric with which the transnational is engaged in English Studies is supplemented by a more critically committed reading practice.

Indeed, what the transnational imaginary seems to do is to push the field of focus away from places and into a landscape of metaphorical relations, where the location of culture becomes a spatially ungrounded trope, a floating signifier set against enlightenment values (including the nation-state), and where one avoids complicity with the superstructures of society only through acts of self-deconstruction. In this work, the marginal and non-Western is obviously center-stage. But only for those who produce their subjectivity with the aid of the canon of American literature. As Timothy Brennan argues in an article on cosmopolitanism:

[t]he telos of the imperial project is reached when the third-world subject is able to deconstruct the epistemic violence of colonialism only by way of Continental theory. What cosmopolitanism unconsciously strives for is a stasis in which the unique expression of the non-Western is Western reflexivity – and automatically – the local self exported as the world (Brennan 2001: 675).

Brennan links transnationalism with cosmopolitanism through globalization, an interpretive move for which he finds justification in the powerful historical connections between global centers and local peripheries since the inception of capitalism. By proclaiming a public diasporic space, the deterritorialized nation "is for the first time plebeian, nonwhite, working-class, and globally dispersed" (ibid.: 674). But only superficially so. For while it remains open to "the disjunct options enjoyed by the individuals in local settings", these groups are rarely political constituencies.

Instead they are co-opted by the center's powerful need for creolization and its continued production of the "new". Real politics obviously never enters the picture when the Mexican-American performance artist, El Vez, negotiates his cross-ethnic translation of geopolitical displacement. And to rediscover the territorializations of culture seems to be the greatest challenge for the emerging paradigm of transnational English Studies.

## NOTES

- 1 I am using the term imaginary in the "loose but nevertheless technical sense" described by Moira Gatens in her book *Imaginary Bodies: Ethics, Power, and Corporeality*, "to refer to those images, symbols, metaphors and representations which help construct various forms of subjectivity" (Gatens 1996: vvi). As Gatens argues, these processes are often plural and unconscious. They are available in "ready-made images and symbols through which we make sense of social bodies and which determine, in part, their value, their status and what will be deemed their appropriate treatment" (ibid.). Unlike Gatens, I do not protest the equivalence of the concept of the imaginary to that of ideology. Gatens objection to this move is that the social imaginaries necessarily are plural, hybrid and contradictory and therefore not amenable to the Marxist or post-Marxist concept of ideology. This, however, is precisely my point; literature (in its expanded sense, the one derided by Delbanco) provides a society with such ready-made symbols and representations that we may properly speak of an "imaginary resolution to real social contradiction". Those contradictions are obviously hybrid and contradictory. But just like religion, literature has the power to concretize and make manifest the abstract and imagined (humanity, for example) in such a way that the contradictions of the social are supplemented by symbols, themes and plots whose truths are closed to rational argument.
- 2 Without irony, Hannerz exemplifies this global ecumene with "someone in a south Swedish village [who] turns out to be a teacher of intercultural communication" (Hannerz 1996: 7).
- 3 Charles Taylor defines modernity as a set of "social imaginaries" which construct practices and institutional forms that allow us to construct "society as an 'economy,' an interlocking set of activities of production, exchange, and consumption, which form a system with its own laws and dynamic"; but in whose midst the individual, as a secularized and rational consciousness, is as central as a sun in a solar system (Taylor 2002: 105). Interestingly, Taylor advances this view in a reading of Alexander Pope's epic poem *An Essay on Man*.
- 4 Benhabib puts it rather succinctly: "[t]here are British, French, Algerian nations and societies that are organized as states; but there are no British, French, Algerian 'societal cultures' in Kymlicka's sense" (Benhabib 1999: 407).

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# MORE OR LESS TRANSNATIONAL: TWO UNWRITTEN PAPERS

PER GUSTAFSON

## Introduction

As the title indicates, this is not a paper, but a few pages about two different papers that I have not yet found the time to write. It is a fairly personal account of what I, with my own research experience as a starting point, consider to be some characteristics and possible benefits of the transnational perspective – or rather of different transnational perspectives – within migration research. After an initial digression on globalization, I make a distinction between two different transnational perspectives. I then outline my two unwritten papers, which provide examples of these two perspectives, and conclude with a brief discussion about their benefits and possible drawbacks.

In my research and writings so far, I have not used the specific term ”transnational spaces”, so I will not go into any detailed discussion about different transnational concepts (transnational, transnationalism, transnational spaces, transnationality, etc.), but will consider transnational research perspectives more generally. As regards disciplinary perspectives, I am a sociologist, but as migration studies constitute a strongly multidisciplinary research field, I gladly read and find inspiration in research from other disciplines than my own. Thus, what is specifically sociological about the following pages I do not know – but perhaps a cross-disciplinary context is a good way of finding out.

## A Global Parallel

When I started PhD studies, the new buzzword in sociology was ”globalization”. My own research interests, although somewhat unfocused, con-

cerned the importance of place and territorial identities in contemporary society. Consequently, I read a lot about theoretical and empirical debates on globalization in general, and on socio-spatial implications of globalization in particular. Early on, I got stuck with the "What's new?" question, which was intensely debated by several social scientists. Some writers claimed that globalization, during the past few decades, had brought about fundamental changes in social, political, economic and cultural structures and relationships. Because of globalization, they argued, we were living in (or at least were on our way towards) a new world, and the understanding of this new world, of course, required new social theories and concepts (e.g. Albrow 1996; Albrow et al. 1994). Others, on the contrary, were more sceptical about the newness of globalization, claiming either that (what was described as) globalization was nothing really new, or that globalization was a continuing process stretching back several centuries in time (cf. Hirst and Thompson 1996; Beck 2000: Ch. 3).

Gradually, I realized that the notion of globalization did two different (although interrelated) things, both of which were useful, but which might at the same time seem contradictory and indeed caused considerable and not always very fruitful debate. On the one hand, the notion of globalization pointed out things that were new, demonstrated what was new about them, and explained how and why they had come about at this moment in time. Manuel Castells's trilogy (Castells 1996, 1997, 1998) on the network society was, of course, a good sociological example (cf. the footnote argument in the final chapter of Castells 1998, where he vigorously defends his claims about newness against more sceptical readers!). On the other hand, the notion of globalization made us see things that had been there all the time (or at least for a long time) but that had been obscured or even made invisible by previous social theories and understandings of the world. One apparent example, highly relevant for this publication, is what Beck (2000: 64ff) discusses as the refutation of "methodological nationalism". The social sciences, and not least sociology, have very often treated the nation-state as an unproblematic research setting or unit of study, implicitly assuming that nation-states are bounded, stable and homogeneous units. Scientific debates about globalization, on the contrary, have demonstrated the importance of actors, structures, relationships and dependencies that transgress national borders.

Thus, the notion of globalization represents both a new world (with a focus on the description and analysis of empirical phenomena) and a new way of regarding the world (with a focus on theoretical perspectives). My idea here is that the same goes for notions of transnational spaces or transnationalism (cf. Gustafson 2002a: 32ff). I will develop this idea, about two complementary transnational perspectives, in the following sections.

### **Transnational Migrants and Migration Movements**

First, the "transnational" represents attempts to identify something new. During the past decade or so, researchers have observed that international migrants often, and seemingly to an increasing extent, retain bonds of various kinds with their countries of origin (Basch et al. 1994; Pries 1999a, 2001; Vertovec 1999). They produce and reproduce relationships and practices that connect sending and receiving countries. They also develop individual and collective identities that refer to more than one place or nation-state. In the conceptualization suggested by Basch and her colleagues (1994: 22), transnationalism represents "a process by which migrants, through their daily life activities and social, economic, and political relations, create social fields that cross national boundaries". A number of reasons have been suggested for the emergence and/or increasing significance of such transnational phenomena.

Several researchers point out that new information and communication technologies have greatly facilitated the development and maintenance of transnational relationships and practices (Glick Schiller et al. 1999: 81; Portes et al. 1999: 223f). Whereas the economic and social success of immigrants previously depended very much on their assimilation into the receiving society, the cultivation and utilization of transnational networks of various kinds have thus come to constitute an alternative path to success (Goldring 1999; Portes et al. 1999: 229).

Also, the maintenance of cultural ties with the country of origin may give those who are less successful a sense of self-esteem and identity, and ethnic communities and organizations may provide support and protection against social exclusion in the new home country. These tendencies have been reinforced by current political developments in receiving as well as sending countries. Many receiving countries in the Western world have recently experienced economic recession, rising unemployment and a simultaneous rise of xenophobic sentiments (e.g. Castles and Miller 1998: 263ff; Pred 2000), all of which render the integration of immigrants more difficult than before. At the same time, governments in sending countries have increasingly come to regard their expatriate populations as sources of economic benefits and political influence, and therefore introduced policies to maintain good relations with nationals abroad (Goldring 1999: 166f; Portes 1999: 467). Thus, migrant populations as well as sending countries participate in the construction of "deterritorialized nation-states" (Basch et al. 1994: 269ff) that include not only the sending countries' resident populations, but also their dispersed expatriate populations. All these developments, it is argued, contribute to the emergence of transnational spaces.

In this first sense, "transnational" concepts are used to point out things

that are new, demonstrate what is new about them, describe (or explain) how they have come about, and analyze their consequences. With this perspective, the transnational becomes a matter of empirical investigation and description: what transnational phenomena are present, to what extent and in what form(s), in this particular group of migrants or in this particular kind of migration, and what are their causes and effects? One important implication of this perspective is that some migration movements can be described as transnational whereas others cannot, or, more pragmatically, that some migration movements stand out as more transnational than others. Several writers have suggested criteria and typologies along these lines (e.g. Portes et al. 1999; Vertovec 1999; Faist 2000).

### **Transnational Understandings of Migration**

Second, transnationalism represents a new understanding of migration that enables us to see things that were there all the time, but that were obscured by previous social and scientific understandings of migration. As several researchers have pointed out, previous scientific understandings often regarded rootedness and national belonging as something natural and desirable. Migration, on the other hand, was regarded as exceptional and abnormal – a temporary deviation from this normality (cf. Malkki 1992; Olsson and Grandin 1999; Gustafson 2002a).

This understanding was, and still is, associated with a strong focus in migration research on immigration and its consequences (mainly the problematic ones) in the receiving countries, whereas relations and exchanges between sending and receiving countries get little attention. Such relations and exchanges are, of course, nothing new (e.g. Thomas and Znaniecki 1958; see also Kivisto 2001: 554ff). They are, to various degrees and in various forms, present in most, if not all, kinds of migration, but have to a large extent been marginalized in earlier understandings of migration. From a transnational perspective, on the other hand, these relations and exchanges are central to the understanding of migration. Table 1 (adapted from Gustafson 2002a: 34) indicates some broad distinctions between such "traditional" and "transnational" understandings of migration. The table draws heavily on the writings of Pries (1996: 464ff, 1999b: 20ff).

Two points should be made about this table. First, some readers may regard it as a gross simplification of previous migration research, and they are, of course, right. The purpose of the table, and of the writings that it draws upon, is not to do full justice to earlier perspectives – but to demonstrate the characteristics and possible benefits of a transnational understanding of migration. Second, a transnational perspective, with its focus on mobility and exchanges, is not always and necessarily "better" or more useful than perspectives that focus on rootedness and national integra-

*Table 1. Traditional and transnational approaches to migration*

Traditional migration research	Transnational migration research
Migration is regarded as a unidirectional movement, a one-time permanent change of home place.	Migration is regarded as an ongoing process. Special attention is given to continuing transnational mobility.
Migration is explained by an interplay of "pull" factors in the receiving country and "push" factors in the sending country.	Migration is explained by more complex "cumulative causal dynamics" (Pries 1999b: 24). Special attention is given to the role of "migration networks", based on transnational interpersonal relationships.
Receiving countries and sending countries are examined separately. Most often, migration research focuses on receiving countries, on the integration of immigrants, and on social problems related to immigration.	Sending countries, receiving countries, and the relationships and exchanges between them may all be included in the investigation. Special attention is given to interaction across national borders, and to the social practices and institutions that arise from such interaction.
Research tends strongly towards "methodological nationalism", as migration is understood as a move from one national "container space" to another.	Research often links up with theories about globalization. Special attention is given to the interconnectedness of places and/or nation-states.

tion. Both perspectives can, in my view, make important contributions to our understanding of migration. They help us see different things, different aspects of migration, and the usefulness of the different perspectives will depend on the object of study as well as on the purpose of the investigation.

Thus, in this second case, the transnational does not represent a set of (more or less new) empirical phenomena, but a (more or less new) theoretical perspective, a specific understanding of migration. It allows us to see and understand things that we would not recognize if we used another theoretical perspective. The question, in this case, is not whether or to what extent a migration movement is transnational, but how a transnational perspective can contribute to our understanding of migration in ge-

neral as well as of specific migration movements (indeed *any* migration movement).

I will now turn to my two unwritten papers. They are both based on my dissertation research, and I hope that I will sooner or later find the time to write them. What hopefully makes them useful here, although they are not yet written, is that they illustrate (to some extent at least) the two different views or uses of transnational perspectives that I have tried to sketch out above.

### **Retirement Migration and Transnational Spaces**

My first unwritten paper draws on my study of seasonal retirement migration between Sweden and Spain. For my dissertation, I made interviews with Swedish retirees who spent their summers in Sweden and their winters in Spain. The purpose of that study was to examine their experiences of living their everyday life in two different countries, with a focus on their accounts of mobility and place attachment, and the analysis produced a typology of different ways of managing this form of life (Gustafson 2001). A detailed study of the retirees' accounts about tourists and tourism turned out to be an interesting side-track in the analysis (Gustafson 2002b).

The two papers printed in my dissertation mainly concerned lifestyles, conceptions and strategies of adaptation on an individual level. During the analysis, I sometimes reflected on possible ways of describing and analyzing the Swedish retirees in Spain, and perhaps retirement migration more generally, from a more macro-oriented perspective. However, from the perspective of traditional migration research, my "Swedes in Spain" were immigrants in Spain who failed to integrate – or perhaps no "real" migrants at all, as they still had residences in Sweden as well. An alternative might be to describe and analyze their seasonal journeys as a kind of tourism, but that would be strongly against their own definition of their way of life (cf. Gustafson 2002b).

I then read, and was greatly inspired by, Pries's 1996 article and his edited book from 1999 about transnational social spaces. This approach seemed to be better suited for the kind of migration that I was studying. Also, my initial focus on relationships between place attachment and mobility, which I had developed independently of the transnational perspective, fits very well into this way of thinking of migration. I continued exploring the "transnational" literature, and worked some of its thoughts into my PhD thesis.

Thus, my unwritten paper uses a transnational approach in order to broaden the perspective on retirement migration, from a focus on individual experiences and conceptions to a more general interest in the charac-

teristics and consequences of this specific form of migration. As a starting point, I suggest a model with a number of analytical dimensions – mobility, place attachment, politics and legislation, economy, social life, and culture – and a distinction between a macro and a micro level (Table 2).

*Table 2. Dimensions of transnationality*

	<b>Macro</b>	<b>Micro</b>
<b>Mobility</b>	1. Patterns of mobility Infrastructures for mobility	2. Practices of mobility Ideals of mobility
<b>Place attachment</b>	3. Collective place-related identities (Re)construction of place	4. Individual place-related identities Emotional bonds
<b>Politics and legislation</b>	5. Political-legal frames Transnational political activities	6. Adaptation to legal frames Political participation and activism
<b>Economy</b>	7. Trade, investments and capital transfers Fiscal issues	8. Sources of income, capital transfers, consumption patterns, fiscal issues
<b>Social life</b>	9. Social structures and institutions	10. Social relations and interaction
<b>Culture</b>	11. Cultural structures and institutions Norms (and policies) of integration	12. Cultural practices Strategies of cultural adaptation

The choice of dimensions may be subject to discussion. It is inspired by my own research (especially with regard to mobility and place attachment) and by previous theories of transnational social spaces or transnationalism. For example, Pries (1996) suggests four analytical dimensions for the examination of transnational social spaces: political-legal frames, material infrastructure, social structures and institutions, and identities and life projects. Portes and his colleagues (1999) suggest a typology of economic, political and socio-cultural transnationalism, complemented by a distinction between transnationalism "from above" and "from below". Vertovec (1999) discusses transnationalism as a social morphology, as a type of consciousness, as a mode of cultural reproduction, as an avenue of capital, as a site of political engagement, and as the (re)construction of "place" or locality.

Whether these specific dimensions will be used, or some dimensions will be excluded, reformulated or replaced by others, the model will hopefully be useful for two things. First, it provides a systematic framework for describing and analyzing a specific migration movement – in this case retirement migration from Sweden to Spain – with regard to its transnational characteristics and consequences. An initial purpose of my unwritten paper will thus be to consider, using this model, in what respects and to what extent international retirement migration gives rise to transnational spaces. The analysis will be based upon my own interviews with seasonal migrants, but will probably also use other research on retirement migration.

Second, the model may also be used for comparisons between different forms of migration. The empirical basis of the existing transnational literature is mainly studies of labour migration from Third World countries to the US and Western Europe. It would therefore be interesting, as a second purpose of the unwritten paper, to compare such labour migration with retirement migration, with regard to its more or less transnational characteristics.

Thus, the first unwritten paper uses a transnational perspective that focuses on empirical description and analysis of specific forms of migration with regard to the presence or absence of transnational characteristics. Transnational spaces are mapped out, and migration movements can thus be categorized as more or less transnational.

### **Dual Citizenship in Sweden: Towards a Transnational Understanding of Migration?**

My second unwritten paper is based upon another study from my dissertation work – a documentary study of the debates preceding the decision by the Swedish parliament in 2001 to accept dual citizenship. The persons who, once the new citizenship law was passed, could obtain dual citizenship were mainly migrants, and the initial purpose of my study was to examine how attachment and mobility were discussed in the context of dual citizenship. However, the paper printed in my dissertation was a more general review of the different arguments that were used by the proponents and opponents of dual citizenship, and of the "framings" of these arguments in the debate (Gustafson 2002c). The analysis showed that the national frame that had previously been predominant in discussions about dual citizenship was now challenged by two other frames – one individual, the other global or international. Theories about citizenship, migration, globalization and individualization were useful in that analysis.

The purpose of my unwritten paper is to return to the question about how the relationship between (national) attachment and (international) mobility was understood in the different arguments about dual citizen-

ship. My idea is that the discussion above about different understandings of migration may be useful for that purpose. The analytical task will then be to identify arguments in the debate that reflect transnational versus more traditional understandings of migration, and to examine the consequences of these different understandings.

Following Table 1, we can presume that a traditional understanding of migration illuminates some aspects of migration, and obscures other aspects. A transnational understanding may throw new light on those latter aspects whilst, on the other hand, obscuring things that were clearly visible from a traditional perspective. Important questions for the analysis will be what aspects of migration are made visible – and invisible – by the different perspectives, and what the consequences are with regard to opinions about dual citizenship.

An underlying question is whether the acceptance of dual citizenship reflects a change in public understandings of migration – from traditional to transnational understandings. Some findings in my initial analysis suggest such a hypothesis. Opponents of dual citizenship often seemed to regard migration as exceptional, as a temporary deviation from a norm of national homogeneity, undivided national belonging and integration. From that (traditional) perspective, dual citizenship was abnormal and potentially harmful, as it might discourage immigrants from full integration into Swedish society. On the other hand, the proponents of dual citizenship (at least some of them) described migration, ongoing international mobility, and dual or multiple national bonds as something normal, and considered the legal acceptance of dual citizenship as an adaptation to such an understanding of migration.

Yet I think the question will need one or two qualifications in order to avoid unnecessary simplification and dichotomous thinking. First, I will consider the possibility of traditional and transnational understandings combining (or getting mixed up?) in some arguments in the debate. Second, it may also be useful to make an analytical distinction between descriptive and normative claims in the arguments, in order to capture the implications of the different understandings of migration. Debaters who recognized that migration brings about dual (or multiple) national bonds and continuing mobility back and forth did not necessarily regard this as something good. An important part of the analysis will be to bring out such variation and complexity, rather than to reduce it by means of a traditional/transnational dichotomy.

Admittedly, this example (and especially the latter qualifications) to some extent blurs my initial distinction between the investigation of more or less transnational empirical phenomena, and the use of transnational (versus traditional) theoretical perspectives on migration. My second unwrit-

ten paper does not use a transnational perspective to analyze a migration movement. Instead, it uses a comparison between transnational and traditional perspectives as a tool for analyzing the understandings of migration held by the different participants in the debate on dual citizenship. By doing so, the paper hopefully makes possible an investigation of some possible consequences of these different perspectives. However, it remains to be seen (as the text remains to be written) how much "added value" this transnational turn in the analysis may bring to the paper.

### **Transnational Perspectives: Benefits and Risks**

The focus of my PhD research, which is the frame of reference for these pages, was not primarily migration but place, place attachment and mobility – and in particular the relationship between mobility and attachment. As my research proceeded, and to a considerable extent came to involve international migration, I started to look for migration research that could help me understand the attachment/mobility problematic.

However, my impression was that migration research, at least in Sweden, most often investigated problems related to immigration in the receiving country. Issues of attachment and mobility were then reduced to "integration problems" which, although not completely irrelevant for me (cf. Gustafson 2002b, 2002c), did not capture the variety of experiences and opinions that I found in my empirical data. Another field of research was the critical analysis of current discourses on immigrants and immigration in Sweden (mainly discourses produced by politicians, public authorities, social scientists and the mass media). Although important in terms of self-reflection and critical debate, studies along these lines provided little knowledge about migrants' experiences and conceptions of mobility and attachment. There was also some research on multiple identities, cultural hybridity etc. among immigrants and their children. Studies in that field often had interesting things to say about attachment and mobility, even though they, too, often examined migration from a receiving-country perspective.

At this stage, I found and started to read texts about transnational social spaces and transnationalism. From my perspective, the most important benefit of these texts was that they transcended (or at least made it possible to transcend) the national/immigration perspective on migration inherent in most Swedish research. True, most research on transnationalism and transnational social spaces also focuses on "transnational immigration" (Kivisto 2001), but transnational perspectives explicitly frame migration as a process which encompasses both sending and receiving countries, and which involves continuing mobility and often the development and maintenance of emotional and other bonds with both countries.

It was precisely this kind of phenomena that I examined and tried to understand in my empirical studies. Thus, when the purpose is to investigate the relationship(s) between mobility and attachment, I feel that transnational perspectives have important advantages over approaches that only consider migration from a receiving-country perspective (Gustafson 2002a).

These advantages are present in both the two transnational perspectives that I have discussed here. Both perspectives enable us to transcend the strong focus on immigration and immigration-related problems that has so far dominated Swedish migration research. But there are also differences between the two perspectives – both have their merits and their possible drawbacks.

The first perspective, with its focus on the examination, description and analysis of specific migration movements that display transnational characteristics, may provide rich empirical material (ethnographies as well as more structured data), that both has a value of its own and can give useful grounding for further theoretical development. However, as discussed previously, claims about (empirical) newness are often important in this line of research, and such claims may also involve a risk that too far-reaching conclusions are drawn on the basis of quite extreme or marginal empirical phenomena (cf. Kivisto 2001: 559). If some forms of migration are indeed more transnational than others, generalizations must be made with caution.

The second perspective, where the transnational represents a way of conceiving migration, may improve our understanding of migration in general. Especially, as I have argued above, it provides tools for transcending the methodological nationalism that has so far been predominant in migration research. Yet this perspective involves risks as well. One risk (clearly demonstrated by Table 1 above!) concerns the construction of simplified dichotomous oppositions between traditional and transnational understandings of migration. Another risk that may also merit some discussion concerns the increasing popularity of transnational concepts and perspectives within social science today. Concepts that rapidly become popular in academic discourse tend to become so widely used, and used for such divergent purposes (or with no clear purpose at all), that they lose much of their original meaning and substance. Such tendencies, I think, are visible today with regard to concepts like "transnational", "transnationalism", "transnational spaces" and "transnationality".

Thus, transnational research perspectives involve risks as well as benefits, whether they imply the identification and examination of specific transnational forms of migration, or they imply a specific understanding of migration and regard all kinds of migration as more or less transnational.

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# TRANSNATIONAL PERSPECTIVE IN ETHNOLOGY: FROM 'ETHNIC' TO 'DIASPORIC' COMMUNITIES

MAJA POVRZANOVIC FRYKMAN

## Positioning

The purpose of this paper is to promote transnational perspective in ethnological research on labour migrants and refugees, and to discuss the potential theoretical benefits of the notion of diaspora. To position my own work, I will briefly present the previous related research in Swedish ethnology and anthropology.

Transnational connections have been an important research interest of Swedish anthropologists, with regard to both cosmopolitanism and local socio-cultural effects of globalisation, and research concerning ethnic minority groups. The questions about 'culture', 'the local', 'community', 'nation', as well as the question 'who are the globalizers' posed by Ulf Hannerz (1996) in his book on transnational connections, are of great relevance to the topics dealt with in this volume. He does not specifically focus on the positions and experiences of labour migrants and refugees, but provides insights into a wider context of global cultural flows and local reactions to an emergent world system.

Two contributions to his edited volume on translocal fieldwork (Hannerz 2001) offer ethnographic insights into the transnational connections of refugees from Kosovo (Norman 2001) and of different Armenian diasporic groups (Björklund 2001). However, they discuss the predicaments and potentials of anthropological fieldwork practices and do not engage either in theoretical efforts towards defining transnational spaces or the notion of diaspora.

Ulf Björklund's 1989 presentation of theoretical considerations of the notion of diaspora (with regard to history, economy and political science) remains as an early recognition of the cultural implications of what today would be called 'transnationalism from below'. Although proclaiming anthropological preferences for macro-aspects of "translocal cultural processes" (Björklund 1989: 35), he saw the potentials of research carried out at the overlap of the local and the translocal and between ethnic groups and diaspora (ibid.: 31), which at that time had seldom, if ever, been employed in research dealing with immigrants in Sweden. A decade later, Erik Olsson remained one of the rare Swedish scholars providing ethnographic insights into transnational practices of immigrants (Chileans) living in Sweden (Olsson 1997) as well as dealing with the related theoretical issues (Olsson 1999).

Swedish ethnologists have also employed transnational perspective, predominantly in relation to 'globalisation' and 'transnational flows' (e.g. O'Dell 1997 and 1999, Nilsson 1999, Berg et al. 2000). Tom O'Dell (2000) comes closest to what is the main concern of this paper, namely the transnational perspective related to migration and immigrant research. In looking at the invocations of the Öresund region as "something transnational", he investigates "ways in which everyday life in the region is entwined with larger global processes". He argues for "the development of a keener ethnographic awareness of the region as a transnational site of everyday life" (ibid.: 223) and for "a movement from macro-theoretical analysis to ethnographic exemplification and discussion" (ibid.: 243).<sup>1</sup>

My work, related to the notion of *transnational spaces* (i.e. of *transnationalism* as a set of practices sustaining them), came about in the context of the project entitled "Seeds of War: Narrative Construction of Identities in Diaspora and Exile".<sup>2</sup> Here, I focus on intra-ethnic differences in a diasporic context, between Croats who came to Sweden as labour migrants in the 1960s and their co-ethnics who arrived as refugees in the early 1990s (for details see Povrzanović Frykman 2001b).

As a continuation of my work in Croatia in the 1990s, which was devoted to war-related themes (see the bibliography in Povrzanović 2000), my intention has been to discern the supposedly different identification strategies for which the perceptions and the experiences of the wars in Croatia and Bosnia-Herzegovina in the 1990s were crucial. One of the questions concerned the differences in prioritising both the content and meaning of *ethnic belonging* for those people analytically grouped into 'new' and 'old' migrants, 'refugees' and 'diaspora people'.

Far from being just a legal term, for many people I met in the course of my research in Sweden the notion of *refugee* implied disempowerment, together with subtle connotations of shame and accusation for having

escaped. In contrast to that, the notion of *diaspora* surfaced in political discourse as an empowering substitute of *Gastarbeiter* and *émigré* in Croatia in the early 1990s; since then it has been widely adopted in everyday use in the country as well as in "Croatian diaspora". Multiple links with diasporic actors in the 1990s, and the subsequent conflicts in the 2000s (after the change of regime in 2000), have been important aspects of Croatian politics.<sup>3</sup>

I have commented on the singular nature of the term as well as on the gentrifying connotations of the notion "Croatian diaspora" elsewhere (Povrzanović Frykman 2001b: 169-172). What is of central importance to this paper is the fact that, as an emic concept and as a cluster of transnational actors and activities, diaspora was "out there", regardless of any attempt to theorise it. However, the centrality of that notion in my research is influenced by the theoretical benefits implied. It does not define immigrants as detached from their origins – as being integrated into the receiving society or as experiencing problems with regard to their striving towards integration (cf. Björklund 1989: 27, and Björklund 2001: 95).<sup>4</sup> It puts their attitudes, practices, and cultural and political concerns into a transnational perspective, and also looks for causes and consequences in people's connections beyond national borders.

Transnational perspective and the concept of diaspora provide an analytical framework that is suitable for reconsidering the meaning of locality and making visible the relational nature of some contemporary economic, social and cultural processes that connect some people in certain localities. It is important to stress *some* and *certain*, since not all immigrants are fully rooted in their new country while maintaining multiple links to their country of origin (cf. Glick Schiller et al. 1995). Neither is everyone in the countries of origin affected by the labour migrants' or refugees' transnational activities. The creation of transnational social spaces can, however, be conceptualised as a distinct phenomenon that is different from other patterns of immigrant adaptation (cf. Portes et al. 1999).

I will leave out the overviews of the literature on transnationalism (the titles that I found useful in my research are referred to in Povrzanović Frykman 2001 a, b, and c). Instead, I will discuss some ways in which ethnological research – and especially the research on (im)migration – can benefit from a transnational perspective as well as from employing the notion of diaspora as an analytical tool.

### **Transnationalism in Ethnology: Perspectives and Methods**

Discussing attachments to places, ethnic belonging and intra-ethnic differences among today's immigrants in Sweden, would hardly make sense if their practices and identification processes were seen as only being embed-

ded in current and past events, encounters, places and institutions in Sweden. Notwithstanding the need to take previous research and theories of international migration and ethnic relations into consideration, transnational perspective and the concept of diaspora as a heuristic device are useful in research concerning various aspects of (im)migration-related processes, as well as in reconsidering the notion of integration. Many immigrants take actions, make decisions, and negotiate identities embedded in networks of relationships that connect them *simultaneously* to two or more nation-states (cf. Glick Schiller et al. 1992). Immigrants (as a research category) can thus be conceptualised as living simultaneously in a number of transnational contexts, which encompass economic, political and socio-cultural aspects of life, both at low and high levels of institutionalisation (cf. Portes et al. 1999, and the critical review of such conceptualisation in Kivisto 2001).

In the context of my work, transnational perspective is equated with recognition, description and an understanding of the multiple reasons for and the effects of the existence of *transnational social spaces* as defined by Thomas Faist (2000: 200).<sup>5</sup> Social spaces resulting from international migration refer to social and symbolic ties between places. They are established and sustained by *sets of practices* (i.e. *transnationalism*) connected to cultural politics and representation, political attitudes and engagements, economic, social and emotional links and exchanges. From an ethnological point of view, *transnationalism from below* (cf. Smith and Guarnizo 1998) is of primary interest, as it often refers to grassroots activities and low levels of institutionalization as a part of people's everyday life. Ethnological research focuses on their lived experiences, motivations and concerns related to their engagement or inclusion in transnational social spaces.

Descriptive in-depth insights into how people live and why they think the way they are also 'value added' to research into transnationalism in general. Ethnology is a discipline that is well equipped to inform about experiences and identity-formations at the micro-level. In research on transnationalism, ethnological phenomenological tradition ought to be taken into serious consideration, especially for the purpose of calming down the celebratory approaches to the empowering effects of diasporic practices and de-essentialising potentials of diasporic identities (cf. Povrzanović Frykman 2003).

Yet, notwithstanding the ethnographic gains, the research into diasporic experiences is important because it may challenge some basic *ethnological* assumptions. The recognition and description of transnational practices and diasporic experiences is not my final research aim; it is a means to an ethnological end, which is the understanding of identification pro-

cesses with regard to place and ethnic belonging. A ‘transnational deconstruction’ of analytical categories, such as *community* and *ethnic group*, seems to be necessary when (im)migrants are in focus.

Many researchers have shown that differences regarding people’s original national belonging, class, education, gender, generation and age, as well as the important factor of the timing of the arrival in the new country of residence, point to the vast complexity of experiences that hide behind the label ‘immigrant’. But if research is only interested in particular modes of integration within the immediate legal and social surroundings, the fact that both the immigrants’ lived experiences and their political and cultural concerns are often defined by different aspects of transnationalism, may remain underestimated, or even invisible. Ethnographic insights into the choices and potentials, as well as into the limits and burdens entailed, could improve the understanding of the economic, political, social and cultural implications of (im)migration. Ethnographic insights are crucial for assessing the relations between these implications and the politically defined goals of integration.

In the research that focuses on diasporic (re)construction of place and locality, understandings of the place-boundedness of cultural and social units have been reconsidered, as have the notions of centre and periphery (cf. Clifford 1997). A transnational perspective and diaspora, used as an analytical device, can also help to adequately theorise some of the contemporary cultural processes conceptualised in terms of ethnic identity, hybridity and multicultural politics (cf. Povrzanović Frykman 2004a). They challenge assumptions and explanatory frameworks concerning the integration of immigrants as well as fieldwork practices defined or encircled by state borders.

For the very salience of in-the-place/out-of-place-related diasporic identifications, it is hard to imagine any ethnographic research in diasporic experiences that would not benefit from, or rather necessarily rely upon a multi-sited ethnography such as that proposed by George Marcus (1995).<sup>6</sup> Furthermore, if a description of the practices that create transnational social spaces as well as an analysis of their cultural and political implications is intended through ethnological research, *original and actual homelands, local diasporic settings and cyberspace* are all equally valid research locations (see, e.g., Povrzanović Frykman 2002).<sup>7</sup>

## What is Diaspora?

### *Different Uses*

In the ancient Greek context, the notion of diaspora denoted migration and colonization, but did not imply traumatic losses. In contrast, examples from African, Palestinian and Armenian – but first and foremost from

Jewish history – have been used to evoke collective traumas that are characteristic of communities in exile. Ever since the 1990s, the old concept has been used for a number of new purposes (cf. Vertovec and Cohen 1999). Intellectuals from diasporic populations have been engaged in constituting ‘hybrid’ identities in order to promote their cultural particularity and political rights, while labour migrants have embraced the designation of diaspora as gentrifying and politically empowering. Diaspora is a salient metaphor in today’s social scientific discourse and analysis, closely connected to representations of postmodern circumstances in which displacement is seen as a common experience and communities are no longer perceived as being ‘rooted’. It has been used to describe or evoke many types of displacement and many modes of ‘hybridity’.

The extensive use and the conceptual enlargement of this, by now, trendy notion (“a new mantra”; Anthias 1998: 557) has resulted in analytical confusion.<sup>8</sup> In the humanities and social sciences, it is mostly used to describe attempts to reconstitute ethnicity-based communities outside the natal or imagined natal territory. It is also used to analyse a range of racial and religious groups that are considered to be ‘deterritorialised’, as well as for minorities that are no longer related to any external point of origin. Cultural studies oriented to diasporic authors emphasise the diasporic creativity in cultural production. An anthropology that is interested in grass-roots globalisation processes sees diasporic networks as sites of resistance to capital and hegemony, and diasporic identities as evidence against essentialising categories.

### *Towards a Definition*

Kim Butler (2001: 192) lists three basic features of diaspora on which most diaspora scholars seem to agree: there must be *a minimum of two destinations* (since the term implies scattering rather than a transfer from the homeland to a single destination), there must be some *relationship to an actual or imagined homeland*, and there must be a *self-awareness of the group’s identity*. A fourth distinguishing feature of diaspora involves the temporal-historical dimension: its *existence over at least two generations*.

William Safran’s (1991) much quoted definition of diaspora points out *dispersion* from an original centre, the maintenance of *memory or myth about the original homeland*, *the belief of not being fully accepted in the host country*, the idea of *return*, commitment to *maintenance or restoration of the homeland*, and the *group consciousness and solidarity*.

Rather than regarding diaspora as a concept that competes with that of transnational space, I would claim that they are overlapping. While diaspora implies a *group* identity, transnational practices and experiences

do not necessarily depend on belonging to a group, nor do they necessarily contribute to the creation of a group consciousness and solidarity within a transnational social space. Furthermore, transnational groups (and especially "transnational communities beyond migrants and diasporas"; cf. Kennedy and Roudmetof 2002: 1) may not share the salience of political attitudes and political activities related to maintenance or restoration of the homeland.

However, a 'transnational correction' based on contemporary research can be introduced to Safran's understanding of diaspora. Most importantly, for individuals and groups presenting themselves as diasporic the idea of return may not be relevant. They may be fully rooted – and feel fully accepted – in the country of residence while maintaining multiple links to their country of origin. The memories and myths of a lost or distant homeland are also not relevant for individuals and groups who link their country of settlement and country of origin into a single social field.

My definition of diaspora is informed by the research into ethnicity-related self-perceptions and transnational practices of labour migrants, refugees and their offspring in contemporary Western societies. I maintain that the concept of diaspora remains useful inasmuch it denotes and connects the following:

- group identity based on a shared ethnicity and the experience of migration while related to political attitudes, class/education, gender, migrant generation etc.
- intergenerational group consciousness,
- organised cultural or political expressions publicly visible in the country of residence and in the country of origin,
- enduring institutionalised transnational concerns – social, cultural or political links to the original/ancestral homeland as well as between co-ethnic groups in different countries.

This set of elements forms complex socio-cultural phenomena with a variety of local histories and traditions. It is important that it denotes not only ideas about group identity, but also people's engagement in certain social formations, events and projects.

#### *Diaspora as a Heuristic Device*

In reflecting on how the concept is used in the articles gathered in the volume *Migration, Diasporas and Transnationalism*, the editors Steven Vertovec and Robin Cohen (1999) (relying on Vertovec 1997) conceptualise diaspora as *social form*, as a *type of consciousness*, and as a *mode of cultural production*.

When referring to *social forms*, the notion of diaspora encompasses so-

cial relationships, political orientations and economic strategies embedded in a transnational context, although expressed in local, historically particular ways.

Diaspora as a *type of consciousness* refers to a sense of identity that can be linked to a variety of experiences, again in local and transnational diasporic contexts. It is also considered to be the source of resistance through engagement with and visibility in the public space – both in the original/ancestral and actual homelands. (Diasporic consciousness can have traumatic undertones, but it may also imply the very opposite and include positive perceptions of new experiences and possibilities; see, e.g., Björklund 2001: 103).

Finally, diaspora understood as a *mode of cultural production* involves the creation and reproduction of phenomena as described in terms of ‘syncretism’, ‘creolization’, ‘bricolage’, ‘cultural translation’ and ‘hybridity’.

Pnina Werbner (2000) criticises such an overview of the literature that lists approaches to diaspora according to whether their emphasis is on the empirical realities of ethno-transnational connections or on questions of diasporic consciousness and subjectivity. Such typology

separates analytically what needs to be read as mutually constitutive. (...)

Exclusive attention either to diasporic organization and transnational connections or to the aesthetic products of diaspora leads to the false assumption that one is in some sense predictive or epiphenomenal of the other (Werbner 2000: 7).

Discerning the local, sub-national and transnational networks and patterns of power, communication and conflict, is an efficient way of delineating particular diasporic social formations. Yet, reductive definitions of approaches to diaspora research miss the constitutive relations among *intellectual creativity, diasporic quotidian culture, subjective consciousness, and political action*.

Werbner’s question of “how does representation translate into realities of political, sentimental, and moral gestures and agendas for action?” (ibid.), is more relevant for ethnologists interested in people living in diasporic conditions, than the search for diasporas with the aim of defining their social perimeters.

Namely, the clarity of social delineation of ‘a diaspora’ in a certain place or country or in a certain historical moment is highly problematic, even if we just look at the ‘second generation’ (cf. Vasta 1992). How should one judge the sentiments of second generation individuals who take neither an active nor passive role in the organized diasporic public spheres, but are nevertheless related to them through family ties and are easily mo-

bilised in the event of a political crisis in the ancestral homeland? Is regular contact with institutionalised diasporic activities crucial for valid membership and for the meaningful inclusion in ‘a diaspora’ analysed by the researcher? Do people *belong* to ‘a diaspora’ in the same way that they are counted in official statistics as the members of an ethnic minority group (cf. Björklund 1989: 21-22)? What about the co-ethnic newcomers such as refugees in relation to the ‘native’ – in the sense of already resident – diasporic individuals (cf. Povrzanović Frykman 2001b)?

In line with my former remark about the usefulness of transnational perspective in ethnological research, I would claim that ethnologists should not investigate diasporas for diasporas’ sake – aiming only at their local-cum-transnational histories, or the histories of their relations to different nation-states. Getting to know these histories and gaining rich ethnographic insights may be interesting *per se*, and important in the context of, for example, the analysis of transnational aspects of nation-building. However – and most importantly – these histories and ethnographies should first and foremost be seen as a means of testing and formulating *theoretical premises* about *identity, place, locality* and *belonging*. In that regard, *diasporic conditions* can be seen as providers of “experimental” situations and processes that ethnologists can use to think with (cf. Povrzanović Frykman 2004b).

#### *Diasporic Identification Processes*

Using the adjective *diasporic* instead of the noun *diaspora* (referring to social formation) hints at processes of *identity formation*. It keeps the research interest open towards a wide range of experiences of what is often presented as “living away from home”; or, from a transnational perspective, as having yet another home(land) – whether actual, remembered, or imagined – as a potential or actual frame of emotional, social or political reference.

These experiences might be the result of recent exile, of regular transnational practices, or of a ‘mythical’ relation towards the ancestral country. They can significantly influence the lives of some long-settled labour migrants as well as of some recent refugees, while for others they may remain totally marginal. They can depend on active participation in the group activities as well as exclusively rely on subjective understandings and individual actions.

Thinking in terms of *diasporic* instead of *diaspora* helps to connect these varied experiences in the analysis by always relating them to:

- the institutionalised rhetorics and practices promoted by *local, trans-local* and *transnational diasporic groups* (*local* referring to social formations in particular towns or regions; *trans-local* to ethnici-

- ty-based institutions in particular countries, and *transnational*, to transnational diasporic organisations such as "world congresses"),
- the diaspora-related rhetorics, expectations and practices in *the original/ancestral homeland* (those promoted by state institutions and political parties, but also those marking informal social contexts that the diasporic individuals are in contact with),
  - the institutionalised immigration- and ethnicity-related rhetorics and policies as well as the everyday ethnicity-related identity negotiations in *the country of residence*.

If contextualised in such a way, the cluster of recent refugees' experiences and attitudes can, indeed, be better understood in comparison to the clusters of experiences and attitudes of different generations of their co-ethnics who have been living abroad for a long time. They are all *diasporic*: somehow related to, framed by, concurring with, or juxtaposed to the contexts mentioned above.

Therefore, formulations such as "who is the real diaspora?" or "is one individual/group more diasporic than the other?" become superfluous. The relevant questions, from an ethnological point of view, are those which address people's own perception of and participation in – historically defined, but locally negotiated – understandings, evaluations and uses of ethnicities, national belongings, homes and homelands.

People living in diasporic conditions may incorporate many (and very different) versions of modern, transnational intercultural experience, but it is important to resist the tendency to equate "diasporic identities" with disaggregated, positional and performed identities in general (cf. Clifford 1997: 272). Diasporic discourses and practices cannot be understood if they are not related to their specific histories. Limits and constrictions in the processes of diasporic identity formations – from visa regimes and financial possibilities, to those concerning physical distances and bodily experiences (cf. Povrzanović Frykman 2001c) should not be underestimated either.<sup>9</sup> There are no taken for granted notions and experiences of community, family and friendship, of otherness, foreignness, distance and neighbourhood, of national culture, subcultures, minority, marginality, rights and prestige, nor of cosmopolitanism, political inclusion, civil society, nationalism and European belonging. Assessing experiences, attitudes and representations of different diasporic individuals and groups in one country and those of ethnically similar diasporic groups in different countries, and comparing them to the respective non-diasporic individuals and groups, could significantly enlarge, refine and theoretically sharpen ethnological interpretations.

In terms of the discipline itself, transnational spaces seem to be the spa-

ces of exciting theoretical challenges, entailing potential *progress* towards less reductive models of belonging. The notion of diaspora, or, rather, of diasporic community, presents one such challenge. As outlined in the following chapter, it helps to question the tendency of inventing groups and communities for the purpose/in the course of research.

### From 'Ethnic' to 'Diasporic' Communities

#### *Ethnic Groups and Minorities*

Ethnologists classify people into *groups* according to their theoretical premises and analytical foci (as well as according to manifold pragmatic choices in research). The notion of group can be seen as *terminus technicus*, thus establishing realms of observation and analysis constructed by the researcher. Still, talking about, for example, "Kurds in exile" or "Croats in Sweden", i.e. of "ethnic groups" or "ethnic minorities", may also imply the existence of relationships that should not be presupposed, but rather observed in the process of research.

It does not really make sense to presume that people perceive themselves as part of a community, or even of a group. Instead, as suggested by Aaron Turner (2000: 59),

it makes more sense to ask how it is that groups and communities are constituted as significant at different times and what the significance and participation of different people and practices in these processes implies.

Hence, the ethnologically relevant interest is in the *social processes* – inherently transnational – *from which diasporic groups are created* (cf. Butler 2001: 193) and social relationships and cultural identities constituted.<sup>10</sup>

Ethnicity paradigms, as heuristic devices, enable a concern with boundary formation, social identity, the cultural contents of group identities, and with processes of disadvantage and exclusion. However, the tendency has been strong, to homogenise ethnic groups and rely on essentialist notions of cultural identity and ethnicity (cf. Anthias 1998: 558-559).

Östen Wahlbeck (2002) argues that the traditional way of looking at ethnic relations, in terms of relationships between strictly localised minorities and majorities, is inadequate in describing specific refugees' experiences. His argument can also be applied to the broad category of immigration research, which encompasses both refugee- and labour-immigration. The concept of diaspora – regarded as an ideal type – can be a constructive analytical tool, since it addresses the transnational aspects of the immigrants' social reality. These are neglected in the classical Barthian ethnicity theory, where an ethnic group is defined by its relation to and interaction with other groups. An ethnic minority is thus defined in relation to the ethnic majority in the frames of one country/society. Ethnic "boun-

dary maintenance” theories are not suited to the analysis of interactions between ethnic groups which cannot be understood within a local setting. The concept of diaspora is useful inasmuch as it points beyond the strict localisation of ethnic relations.

### *The Notion of Community*

In many variations, community – an ”ubiquitous notion”, but ”an elusive concept” in sociology (Vasta 2000: 109, 108) – has been defined as a ”geographical expression” with a ”fixed and bounded” *locality*. It has also been defined as a *local social system*, which refers to a set of social relationships that take place within a given locality. Finally, it has been defined as *a type of relationship* or as *a sense of identity*; the latter corresponding with the colloquial use of the word (cf. *ibid.*: 109 and the literature referred to). If a sense of identity is based on a simple sense of commonality, communal identification may rely not only on personal contacts, but also on a shared language, the migration experience, ethnicity and class – all of which pave the way for hypotheses about the specificities of *imagined communities* in diasporic conditions.<sup>11</sup>

The notion of community is something ”highly resistant to satisfactory definition”, not only in anthropology and sociology, as suggested by Anthony P. Cohen (1985: 11), but also in ethnology. According to Cohen, the word ‘community’ establishes a symbolic boundary around a loose group or category of people, providing them with a referent for their personal identities. What people have in common distinguishes them in a significant way from other groups or categories. The symbolic nature of the opposition means that people can ”think themselves into difference” (*ibid.*: 117). Community is

largely a mental construct, whose ‘objective’ manifestations in locality or ethnicity give it credibility. It is highly symbolized, with the consequence that its members can invest it with their selves (*ibid.*: 108).

People can share the symbols that demarcate communities’ boundaries – and thus the sense of belonging – regardless of the different meanings they invest in them according to their personal experience. They construct community symbolically, which makes it a resource and a repository of meaning, as well as a point of reference for their social identity. Community becomes ”an eloquent and collective emblem of their social selves” (*ibid.* 1985: 114).

It is the arena in which people acquire their most fundamental and most substantial experience of social life outside the confines of the home. (...) Community, therefore, is where one learns and continues to practice how to be ‘social’. (...) it is where one acquires ‘culture’ (*ibid.*: 15).

In paraphrasing Cohen's definition with regard to diasporic conditions, diasporic communities can be seen as providing contexts for *ethnic socialisation* and of acquiring *culture in ethnic realms* defined by symbolic boundaries. It is clear, however, that he does not approach community "as morphology, as a structure of institutions capable of objective definition and description" (ibid.: 19), but rather aims to capture the members' experience of it.

Another theoretical standpoint relevant for ethnological research operating with the concept of diaspora is Pnina Werbner's (1996: 90) illuminating suggestion that "in ethnic groups three dimensions of community are publicly imagined and incorporated". She discerns the *moral* community, the *aesthetic* community (or the *interpretive* community) and the community of *suffering*, and points to conscious engagement and active participation in these analytically separable dimensions.

Each 'community' is a cultural world which is constructed through performative imaginings by networks of social actors whose membership in such imagined communities is continuously renewed by these performances (ibid.).

In diasporic conditions, this is related to Anthony P. Cohen's (1985: 117) general claim that the diminution of the geographical bases of community boundaries leads to their renewed assertion in symbolic terms. But a shared perception of the primary importance of some of these dimensions can also become a basis of a particular diasporic social formation. Each one of these 'communities' has symbolic and performative boundaries that may be stirred by the presence of diasporic newcomers such as co-ethnic refugees. Still, the moral, aesthetic and political aspects of ethnic identities in diasporic conditions often make a coherent whole. Although they can be demarcated as distinct and separate in ethnographic description and ethnological analysis, a high consensus within institutionalised diasporic communities (that define the modes of ethnic representation) usually makes them appear together (cf. Povrzanović Frykman 2002).

In her sociological explorations of the politics of community, Ellie Vasta (2000) points to the confusion between the descriptive aspect of community (what it is) and its prescriptive domain (what it should be or what it should do). While Cohen discusses community as a source of social identity, and Werbner points out the shared meanings, Vasta analyses community in terms of mutual cooperation. After establishing that a sense of community exists, she differentiates between a sense of belonging and the *existence of networks* that can extend from being loose to well-structured and organized. Ethnological research in diasporic contexts can hardly be imagined without a reference to diasporic communities in terms

of *social formations*, based on multiple local, national and transnational networks.<sup>12</sup>

### *Community Formations*

An important factor in the discussion of diasporic communities is Anthony P. Cohen's (1985: 13) observation that

As one goes 'down' the scale so the 'objective' referents of the boundary become less and less clear, until they may be quite invisible to those outside. But also as you go 'down' this scale, they become more important to their members for they relate to increasingly intimate areas of their lives or refer to more substantial areas of their identities. Moreover, it is as one descends the scale that one approaches 'community' as something more than rhetorical fragment.

This is where the symbolically constructed diasporic community is materialised in personal networks, physical meeting places and concrete diasporic cultural and political projects – often concurrent or opposed to some other diasporic projects in the same local diasporic context.

Zlatko Skrbiš (1999: 80) explains the strategic prominence of tension, conflict and division in diasporic contexts and claims that even if "overarching values and interests are definitely observable, the communitarian implications of the term ethnic community seem rather inadequate". When comparing Slovene and Croatian diasporic organisations in Australia in the early 1990s, Skrbiš found that ethnicity could neither be seen as the sole nor as the sufficient proof of (or reason for) the existence of the respective *ethnic communities*.

According to the definition proposed above, the concept of diaspora implies group consciousness and engagement. It directs research towards the processes of *community formation*. It therefore makes sense to talk about *diasporic communities* instead of ethnic communities – but only if they can be described and assessed in terms of communal activities, politics of representation, social control, shared political attitudes and engagement etc.

As formulated by Kim Butler (2001: 194):

Rather than being viewed as an ethnicity, diaspora may be alternatively considered as a framework for the study of a specific process of community formation.

The benefit, then, lies in a clear distinction between the symbolic, ethnic identity of "being" and a more active, diasporic identity requiring involvement (cf. *ibid.*: 191). Even if different types of political, economic and intergenerational coercion and control are characteristic for diasporic groups, they are voluntary formations. The fact that membership in 'a di-

aspora' requires involvement also explains the existence of diasporic groups with different cultural and political agenda within a single ethnic group of immigrants and/or refugees. Parallel and often competing diasporic groups within a single ethnic group can be found at local, national (referring to the country of residence) and transnational levels.

It is also generally true that communities are one out of many possible modalities of behaviour or ways of expressing one's sense of self (cf. Cohen 1985: 117). Many statistical members of an 'ethnic (minority) group' decide to stay out of institutionalised and informal diasporic contacts and activities altogether. People who do *not* take part in any ethnicity-related collective activities in a certain town or country, may form the majority when compared to those shaping and engaging in those activities (see the examples in Björklund 2001: 105). Yet, they may remain invisible in research concerned with ethnicity.

Ethnicity, then, may be a precondition of diasporic social formations, discourses, self-perceptions and actions, but other contexts – regional, educational, gender, generational, and, importantly, political (especially in the homeland) – decisively form the basis of community making.<sup>13</sup> Ethnological research into various aspects of (im)migration-related processes could therefore benefit from using the concept of diasporic, rather than ethnic, community. It may help to avoid the danger of imposing inaccurate ethnological interpretations of 'ethnic communities', as if they existed before and beyond the theoretical assumptions about them.

At the same time,

Ethnicity, couched in the rhetoric of kinship, implies a degree of commonality sufficiently high to override intervening sectional interests in given situations. This commonality becomes increasingly persuasive since the 'higher level' claims of its obsolescence are manifestly unwarranted. It is a convincing level of sociality to contrast the national and supra-national entities which are recognized increasingly as having failed to deliver the economic and political goods. This failure itself breeds another: the bankruptcy of the higher level entities as socio-psychological repositories of identity (Cohen 1985: 107).

That helps to explain the spontaneous and wide-reaching ethnic mobilisation in the event of a crisis – in the case of war or a humanitarian catastrophe in the homeland, but also as a reaction to certain anti-immigrant political trends in the country of residence.

Furthermore, it also explains why the claim to the existence of an 'ethnic community' might not come from the researcher alone, but can very often come from the leaders of diasporic institutions who perceive or want to present themselves as representatives of the entire population of their co-ethnics in the country they live in.

A common related feature is the tendency to hide internal conflicts, antagonisms and divides from outsiders and especially from the public in the country of residence, although they can rather be seen as a rule, than as an exception. Yet, even if parochial conflicts are sometimes fierce and long-lived, the overarching values and interests are real: in the first place, the interest in presenting and promoting a positive image of one's own ethnicity and original/ancestral homeland.

### Conclusion

In conclusion, Floya Anthias's (1998) evaluation of the notion of 'diaspora' as an alternative way of thinking about transnational migration and ethnic relations to those relying on 'race' and ethnicity' must be mentioned. She analyses the new notions of diaspora identities and experiences that have emerged within the wider trend of promoting

a less essentialised and more historically and analytically informed vocabulary into the traditional concerns of 'race and ethnic relations' which have dominated the field (ibid.: 557).

Anthias examines the heuristic potential of the concept as a descriptive typological tool and as denoting a social condition and societal process. In the first instance she focuses on the work of Robin Cohen (cf. Cohen 1997 as well as Safran 1999 for elaborate critique), and secondly, she analyses James Clifford's (1997) ideas on diaspora, which have been influenced by the writings of diasporic scholars like Stuart Hall and Paul Gilroy. The articles in the journal *Diaspora* (published by University of Toronto Press since 1991) are not taken into consideration.

Since it is a rapidly expanding field – in terms of the refinement of approaches and the number of titles based on research – there is reason to believe that, if it had been written later, Anthias's text would not present the idea of diaspora as homogenising the population referred to at the transnational level. "The lack of attention to issues of gender, class and generation, and to other inter-group and intra-group divisions" (Anthias 1998: 577), cannot be seen as a general shortcoming of diaspora research today.

Anthias agrees to the benefits of exploring contingency, indeterminacy and conflict in order to recognise difference and diversity within the supposed ethnic commonalities. However, her main critique is that

the concept of diaspora, whilst focusing on transnational processes and commonalities, does so by deploying a notion of ethnicity which privileges the point of 'origin' in constructing identity and solidarity. In the process it also fails to examine trans-ethnic commonalities and relations (...) (ibid.: 558).

Anthias criticises the lack of emancipatory potential of the diaspora concept in terms of a potential divorce of social and political goals on the one hand, and the ethnicity of diasporic groups on the other. She sees the lack of attention given to transethnic solidarities, such as those against racism, of class, of gender, of social movements, as "deeply worrying from the perspective of the development of multiculturalism, and more inclusive notions of belonging" (ibid.: 557). However, the heuristic potential of a concept cannot only be estimated from its use in a limited number of published titles. It should rather be seen as a potential for formulating research hypotheses.

One hypothesis could search for comparative answers to the question whether diasporic communities – based on identity formations and identity politics – can enhance their levels of civic virtue and collective action, or whether their identity formation contributes to a form of separation and ethnic closure (cf. Vasta 2000: 108-109).

Another hypothesis could address the historical and actual political contexts in which diasporic groups appear as more or less essentialist and nationalist than other groups in their homelands as well as in the countries of residence.

Finally, even if a notion of primordial bonding lies at the heart of the diaspora notion, this paper explains that it does not denote any "organic and self-evident communities" (cf. Anthias 1998: 569). On the contrary, variations in diasporic evaluations, interpretations and uses of that primordial bonding – and in active choices of reinforcing or reformulating it – call for more systematic and comparative ethnographic insights.

## NOTES

- 1 Since ethnological discussions of transnational spaces are, so far, rare in a Scandinavian ethnology, let me mention the theoretical article by the Danish ethnologist Søren Christensen (2001).
- 2 The project "Seeds of War: Narrative Construction of Identities in Diaspora and Exile" was financed by the Swedish Council for Research in the Humanities and Social Sciences (HSFR) in 2000 and 2001. This paper is one of its outcomes.
- 3 A transnational perspective has therefore been a "natural" starting point of my research. It is not only built into the very research topic, but is also implied in my positioning as researcher (cf. Povrzanović Frykman 2004b). This – in an attempt to delineate a history of the "discovery" of transnationalism and to theorise it in European contexts – could be compared to the significant presence of "hyphenated" scholars (of diasporic or immigrant background) in Anglo-Saxon academic contexts, who may relate their personal insights concerning transnational connections and concerns to those of the people they study.
- 4 Per Gustafson's (2004, in this volume) general claim on immigration research in Sweden is valid, that from all disciplinary perspectives involved, "integration problems" have been the main focus. Another field of scholarly engagement is the analysis of discourses on immigration and immigrants produced by politicians and public authorities, the media as well as different professionals – scholars included. In line with the main trends described by Gustafson, ethnologists were also interested in so-called hybridity and multiple identities, but again, predominantly from the perspective of their effects on life in Sweden. For brief overviews of the history of theorising immigrants' ethnicity see Björklund 1989: 25-28 and Anthias 1998: 558-559.
- 5 "Transnational social spaces consist of combinations of sustained social and symbolic ties, their contents, positions in networks and organizations, and networks and organizations that can be found in multiple states. These spaces denote dynamic processes, not static notions of ties and position. Cultural, political, and economic processes in transnational social spaces involve the accumulation, use, and effects of various sorts of capital, their volume and convertibility: economic capital, human capital, such as educational credentials, skills and know-how, and social capital, mainly resources inherent in or transmitted through social and symbolic ties" (Faist 2000: 200).

- 6 Marcus (1995) suggests that researchers "follow the...": *people* (migrants/exiles), *thing* (commodities, gifts, money, works of art, and intellectual property), *metaphor* (signs, symbols and images), *plot, story or allegory* (narratives of everyday experience or memory), *life or biography* (of exemplary individuals), or *conflict* (issues contested in public space). By suggesting the tracing of a cultural formation across and within multiple sites of activity around chains, paths, threads, conjunctions, or juxtapositions of locations, he stresses the need to locate the discussions within a transnational framework where changes involve many locations at the same time.
- 7 For some methodological questions concerning cyberspace as the site and the object of research, see Stubbs 2001.
- 8 Kim Butler (2001: 215) quotes a survey of the Dissertation Abstracts International database that identified 487 dissertations published between 1990 and 2000 with the word diaspora in either the title or the abstract, but says that this large number also reflects the fact that many "specialists in other fields rushed to capitalize on opportunities by recasting their work as diasporan study" (ibid.: 190).
- 9 Although somewhat "untidy" in a conceptual sense (e.g. neither the relation between the notions of transnational 'fields' and 'practices', nor 'diaspora' are defined), the article by Nadjé Al-Ali, Richard Black and Khalid Koser (2001) points to different aspects of "forced transnationalism" (ibid.: 591) in the context of social expectations concerning diasporic individuals' relations with those who stayed behind. According to my research insights, they are important not only with regard to the refugees they write about, but also with regard to the second generation of immigrants.
- 10 See Povrzanović Frykman 2004b for a discussion of epistemological and methodological aspects of "experimental" ethnicity realised through the meetings in the diasporic conditions.
- 11 As pointed out by Kim Butler (2001: 192), "while all diasporas may be 'imagined communities', only communities imagined in certain ways are diasporas". However, at the level of *local* diasporic meetings and activities, communities are based on personal engagement with long-term social ties, and imply active participation in networks of reciprocity and collectives of solidarity.
- 12 Those networks either overlap with or are included in wider contexts of transnational relationships that are not confined to the experience of immigrants. Paul Kennedy and Victor Roudometof (2002), propose a single theoretical frame for all types of "globalised" or "transnational" communities, irrespective of their migrant or non-

migrant origins: they are all consciously constructed, continuously reinvented, often temporary and relying on despatialised social relations and culture that is detached from locality.

However, they do stress the difference between "communities cohering around lifestyle orientations and practices"; "communities based on political, moral or ethical perception of local or global injustices and problems" and "groups bounded by a shared professional or occupational ethos" on the one hand, and "transnational national communities" with membership defined in terms of common ethnic or national origins, and "more widely dispersed and probably older national and ethnic migrants groups constituting a diaspora"; on the other (cf. *ibid.*: 20-21).

Adopting Anthony Cohen's approach, Kennedy and Roudometof define communities as "units of belonging whose members perceive that they share moral, aesthetic/expressive or cognitive meanings, thereby gaining a sense of personal as well as group identity" (*ibid.*: 6), and understand those units as purely symbolic. They also claim that, for both migrant and non-migrant groups, "locality does not evaporate", but that it is rather "a purely symbolic notion of locality that becomes the focus of community formation" (*ibid.*: 24). When talking about the "continuing salience of territory" that is "especially evident in the case of migrant, ethnic/diasporic, transnational communities", they think exclusively of the homeland (or homeland-related) territory: "locality is normally experienced symbolically; it consists of an imagined homeland or place understood through nostalgia, memory, history or constructed cultural sites" (*ibid.*).

It is my belief that ethnographic research needs to address such understanding as it seems to contradict the transmigrants' lived experiences of organizing their lives in different places, and dismisses actual localities of diasporic communities as *social formations*.

- 13 Out of many examples that could be listed to illustrate this point, see, for example, the article by Mehmet Ümit Necef (2001), presenting the fierce Turkish debate on the national allegiance of the Turks living in Germany. Jonathan Schwartz (2001) analyses the relations among diasporic groups of different ethnicity, sharing both the original and the actual homeland.

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# TURKISH IMMIGRANT ENTREPRENEURS IN FINLAND: LOCAL EMBEDDEDNESS AND TRANSNATIONAL TIES

ÖSTEN WAHLBECK

## **Preface: Sociology and Transnational Spaces**

Is there a specific sociological contribution to the study of transnational spaces? As any introductory book in the discipline argues, sociology is about the relation between individuals and society, agency and structure. Sociology studies the social context of our lives, but at the same time sociology emphasises that individuals live in a socially constructed reality. In other words, individuals and their actions can be seen as *embedded* in a social structure. A sociological perspective suggests that transnational social spaces, as a form of social reality, are not situated in "outer space"; transnational social spaces are always shaped by - and themselves contribute to - specific social structures.

This would suggest that sociology would have a significant theoretical contribution to make to the study of transnational spaces. However, Sociology, as an academic discipline, is presently in a state of disintegration, with multiple subgroups engaged in their own academic discussions.<sup>1</sup> Nevertheless, a sociological perspective is of fundamental importance for any study of social reality, including a study of transnational social spaces. Yet, "transnationalism" and "transnational social spaces" are definitely not major concepts within Sociology. This probably relates to the fact that "space", until recently, has been neglected in sociology, as pointed out in the overviews by Peter Kivisto (2003) and Thomas Faist (2004). A discussion about transnational issues occurs in the small subgroup of migration

researchers within the discipline. Most sociologists have probably never heard about this discussion. It seems to me that "transnationalism" is more discussed among anthropologists than among sociologists. Among sociologists, the related concept of "globalization" has attracted far more general interest, and the most famous sociological theorists (e.g. Bauman, Beck and Giddens) all seem to write their own book about globalization.

However, it is crucial to understand that sociology would have much to gain from the discussion about transnational social spaces. Sociologists often take for granted that "society", which is the focus of our attention, is a geographically bounded society, usually a nation or a state. Sociology has thus been a nationally oriented discipline; the phenomenon under study has usually been studied in one specific nation, or compared in different nations (i.e. "comparative research"). Consequently, the discussion about transnational social spaces is a useful reminder to sociologist that social reality is never *in itself* geographically bounded. Space, as a part of social reality, is always socially constructed. Although political borders might be important in the construction and "imagination" of space, we cannot take national borders for granted. For example, the Swedish sociologist Håkan Thörn (1999) has pointed out that globalization constitutes a challenge to sociology, because the nation-state no longer can be seen as the focus or the context of our research. As John Urry (2000) has outlined, there is a need for a "sociology of mobilities". Likewise, in Migration Studies, Thomas Faist has pointed out that "participation of international migrants in transnational spaces that span two or several nation-states raises serious challenges to the conceptualization of immigrant membership in nationally bounded societies" (Faist 2000b: 11). Thus, there seems to be much to gain from combining an explicit sociological perspective with the discussion about transnational issues.

This paper is based on research carried out in a Finnish research project related to transnationalism, funded by the Academy of Finland (project 51099). The multi-disciplinary research consortium, entitled "Beyond Marginalization and Exclusion", is part of a larger programme about marginalization in Finnish society. The research consortium has gathered several researchers from Helsinki, Tampere and Åbo Akademi University who share an interest in the study of transnational migration. The researchers in the consortium largely rely on the international theoretical discussion within this field of study, rather than introducing new definitions of key concepts. In addition to the fact that we wish to introduce topical international theoretical discussions in Finland, one common starting point of the consortium was to study and highlight constructive solutions to the problems of marginalization and social exclusion by highlighting the resources of immigrant communities. This paper is based on results

from a case study of Turkish immigrant entrepreneurs in Finland, which is my on-going project within the framework of the above-mentioned consortium.

## Introduction

Among Turks in Finland, a large share of the economically active population is self-employed in the fast food and restaurant sector. The Turks are especially active in so-called kebab<sup>2</sup> businesses. Why are there so many Turkish entrepreneurs and why have they established themselves within this particular economic sector? What first comes to one's mind is some form of cultural explanation. One might think that immigrants bring with them their own "Turkish culture", which explains the "choice" of this particular business niche. This paper argues that the picture is more complex than what a simple "cultural" explanation would suggest.

Previous studies about ethnic businesses have demonstrated the importance of resources and social ties within ethnic groups for the establishment of businesses. The economic action of immigrants is embedded in a social context, which might facilitate the establishment of businesses. Furthermore, recent discussions about transnationalism have pointed out that the social capital of immigrant groups is not necessarily locally situated. Immigrant businesses can utilise resources in both the country of origin and in the country of settlement. Transnational ethnic ties can supply useful economic, social and human capital for immigrant entrepreneurs.

However, a focus on ethnicity might obscure a full understanding of the dynamics behind immigrant businesses. The social capital employed by Turkish immigrant entrepreneurs is not necessarily related to ethnicity. The social and economic ties of the Turkish entrepreneurs in Finland intersect traditional ethnic boundaries, for example within the framework of marriages between Turkish men and Finnish women. The social capital utilised by the entrepreneurs is based on mutual trust and reciprocity, which can be sustained both within and over traditional ethnic boundaries. The paper suggests that a simplistic emphasis on the role of "culture" or "ethnicity" in immigrant businesses might even conceal more than it explains. Although ethnic ties, which might be transnational, are of importance, one also needs to take into account that these ties are always rooted in local contexts and embedded in social structures.

The results are based on interviews with Turkish entrepreneurs and their Turkish employees in Finland. Turkish immigrants were chosen for this case study because this group displays a very high rate of self-employed entrepreneurs. In a study of immigrants of working age who arrived in Finland in the years 1989–1993, in total, 22 per cent of the Turkish citizens were entrepreneurs in the year 1997 (Forsander 2001: 257).

Furthermore, 92 per cent of these entrepreneurs worked in the restaurant business (Forsander 2002b: 170).

### **Immigrant and Ethnic Businesses**

Turks moved to Europe in large numbers as labour migrants in the 1960s and 1970s. Today, there are about 3.5 million Turks living in Western Europe, about 2 million in Germany alone (cf. Abadan-Unat 1995). In Sweden and Germany during the 1960s and 1970s, the Turkish migrants were employed in factories and by the public sector. It was only after the increase in the unemployment rate in these sectors that Turks moved into self-employment. An enabling factor for Turkish businesses in Sweden and Germany was the existence of a large Turkish "enclave economy", and many Turkish businesses were originally established mainly in order to serve the Turkish community (Hjarnø 1988; Abadan-Unat 1997; Pripp 2001). As will be explained in this article, the situation in Finland has in many ways been fundamentally different from the major labour immigrant countries in Western Europe.

"Ethnic businesses" is a phenomenon that has attracted huge interest among social scientists and there is a vast body of literature about immigrant and ethnic businesses (e.g. Light and Gold 2000; Rath and Kloosterman 2000). It is clear that it is not possible to relate much of the international debate to the very specific situation in Finland. However, the more general theoretical literature (e.g. Portes 1995) about the utilisation of social capital and social networks are clearly of relevance in the Finnish case. This was also pointed out by Tuula Joronen and her colleagues (Joronen et al. 2000; Joronen 2002), whose study of immigrant businesses in Helsinki (Helsingfors) was the first extensive research about immigrant businesses in Finland.

Thus, previous research suggests that ethnic ties within immigrant communities constitute resources which immigrant entrepreneurs can utilise in establishing businesses. Furthermore, these ethnic ties are not necessarily locally bounded within the framework of the receiving society. Ethnic businesses can often rely heavily on resources available in transnational ties, which might develop into transnational spaces.

Cultural, political and economic processes in transnational social spaces involve the accumulation, use and effects of various sorts of capital, their volume and convertibility: economic capital (for example, financial capital), human capital (for example, skills and know-how) and social capital (resources inherent in social and symbolic ties) (Faist 2000a: 13).

As Faist (2000a; 2000b) points out, social capital is primarily a local asset. However, if transnational networks and chain-migration emerge in

the migration process, the transferability of social capital increases. Thus, recent discussions about transnational migration and transnational ties seem to have a lot to contribute to our understanding of immigrant businesses.

However, many contributions to the discussion about transnationalism have emphasised the fact that transnational networks are not deterritorialized; they are always connected to and firmly rooted in specific localities and nations (e.g. Guarnizo and Smith 1998; Portes et al. 1999; Labelle and Midy 1999; Faist 2000b). Some authors even argue that transnationalism can be seen as only one variation of assimilation; migrants are simultaneously assimilating and transnationalizing (Kivisto 2001; 2003; Joppke and Morawska 2003). Regardless of the transnational ties and networks that immigrants utilise in their businesses, there is reason to consider the local contexts in which the entrepreneurs operate. As this article strives to argue, a full understanding of immigrant businesses in Finland requires an understanding of both the transnational social space and the ways in which it is rooted in the local Finnish context. In Finland, immigrants display a high rate of unemployment and experience marginalization and exclusion in the labour market (Forsander 2002a, 2002b; Valtonen 2001). In the light of this structural context, it becomes pertinent to study the reasons that can explain the high rate of self-employment among Turkish immigrants.

Likewise, in economic sociology, the realisation that economy is embedded in a social context has been a fundamental starting point (cf. Granovetter 1985). In the study of immigrant businesses, the structural embeddedness of firms and entrepreneurs has been a key research issue (cf. Portes 1995; Rath 2000).

With skills learned in the home country devalued in the receiving labor market and with a generally poor command of the receiving country's language, immigrants' economic destinies depend heavily on the structures in which they become incorporated and, in particular, on the character of their own communities. Few instances of economic action can be found that are more embedded (Portes and Sensenbrenner 1993: 1322).

Still, "social embeddedness" is more a programmatic statement than an analytical term, and within contemporary economic sociology, the concept of social capital and its different manifestations, such as "trust" and "reciprocity", are often used as analytical concepts. The point of social capital, trust and related notions, is to examine the underlying social relations that make a business tick. However, as Jan Nederveen Pieterse (2003) argues, to assume that social capital is based on "ethnicity" might be misleading. He presents a convincing critique of the notion of "ethnic

economy” and argues that immigrant business always also relies on cross-cultural relations. ”Cultural social capital functions, and over time can only function, as part of cross-cultural social capital” (Nederveen Pieterse 2003: 40).

A more complicated issue, which cannot be sufficiently discussed in this article, is the fact that ”ethnicity”, understood as a socially defined category, might be largely a product of economic structures. Thus, it is not only a question of how economic action is influenced by ”ethnicity”, but also a question of how ”ethnicity” in itself is constructed by economic action. For example, in immigrant small businesses, ethnic identities and boundaries might be largely constructed and negotiated in face-to-face encounters over the counter between workers and customers (cf. Parker 2000; Pripp 2001).

To conclude, it is commonly assumed that the existence of ethnic ties and specific cultural traits of the ethnic group in question can explain how and why members of certain ethnic groups become self-employed. However, explanations focused on ethnicity and culture can also hide other important factors and give a simplified and essentialised picture of the group in question. Cultural explanations can, for example, hide structural factors, such as unemployment and discrimination, which force immigrants into self-employment. This paper argues that a full understanding of the reasons why and how Turkish immigrants have become self-employed in Finland requires an analysis of the social embeddedness in a simultaneously transnational and local context, and that it is useful to study how trust and reciprocity, as forms of social capital, operate in this context.

### **Methods and Material**

The study of Turkish immigrant entrepreneurs is based on semi-structured interviews with 30 Turkish entrepreneurs and eight Turkish employees in firms run by Turkish entrepreneurs. All the interviewees were either Turkish citizens *or* born in Turkey. In the context of this study, for purely practical reasons, the interviewees and their businesses are described as ”Turkish”, although the interviewees also included Kurds and other Turkish minorities.<sup>3</sup> The interviews have been complemented with a complete study of the information available in the Finnish Trade Register concerning all businesses run by Turkish entrepreneurs in Finland.

The focus of the study was in Southwest Finland (Varsinais-Suomi), where 25 Turkish entrepreneurs and six Turkish employees in Turkish companies were interviewed in the autumn of 2001. These entrepreneurs constitute about 90 per cent of the Turkish entrepreneurs in the region. In addition, seven interviews were conducted in Helsinki in the spring of 2002.<sup>4</sup> Thus, both the capital region, with a large concentration of Tur-

kish immigrants, as well as the regional dispersal of Turkish businesses were under study. An overwhelming majority of the Turkish entrepreneurs in Finland are men. Consequently, the interviewees included only three women, of which only one can be regarded as self-employed. Thus, in this study "Turkish entrepreneurs" predominantly refers to male entrepreneurs.

The interviews were based on semi-structured interviews, which were later transcribed in order to facilitate the analysis. A majority of the interviews were carried out in Turkish by a Turkish-speaking researcher who later translated the tape-recorded interviews into Finnish. The analysis of the transcribed interviews was facilitated by the use of the computer program N-VIVO. Semi-structured interviews are particularly suitable for studies of ethnic minorities and immigrants, in which various problems related to access, language and validity often constitute obstacles for the gathering of information.

### **The Turkish Population in Finland**

Any discussion of Turkish businesses in Finland must take into consideration the fact that the Turkish history of migration is fundamentally different in Finland compared to other countries in Europe. Finland has never experienced a labour migration from Turkey of the same scale and magnitude as has been experienced in other Western European countries. The number of Turkish immigrants is very small in Finland compared to the number of Turkish immigrants in most other European countries and, because of Finnish immigration rules and practices, chain migration has been difficult.<sup>5</sup> In addition, not many asylum seekers from Turkey have arrived in Finland, and those who have arrived have found it almost impossible to find political asylum in Finland (cf. Wahlbeck 1999). As is the case with all immigrant groups in Finland, immigration has mainly occurred in the late 1980s and the 1990s.

According to Statistics Finland, there were in total 1,981 *Turkish citizens* living permanently in Finland on 31 December 2001. A striking feature of the group is that there are far more men than women (1,474 men and 507 women). The official statistics also show that the number of people *born in Turkey* living permanently in Finland was 2,382, of which 1,838 were men and 544 women. Presumably, there are several Turkish-born people who have acquired Finnish citizenship. However, the size of the *Turkish-speaking* group in Finland is even larger than the number of those born in Turkey. In total, 2,651 persons (1,894 men and 757 women) indicated Turkish as their native language (despite the fact that among those born in Turkey, about 500 are Kurdish-speaking). These figures indicate that there is already today a "second generation" of Turkish-spea-

kers who were born in Finland and have Finnish citizenship.<sup>6</sup>

The figures presented above reflect the fact that Turkish migration to Finland occurs mainly in conjunction with marriages between Turkish men and Finnish women. The number of intermarriages between Turkish men and Finnish women is undoubtedly relatively high. At the end of the year 1997, in total, 60 per cent of the married Turkish men in Finland were married to Finnish women. In contrast, marriages between Finnish men and Turkish women are uncommon, only 8 per cent of the married Turkish women in Finland were married to Finnish men (Ylänkö 2000: 189). A large proportion of these intermarriages seem to involve couples who met each other at holiday resorts in Turkey. As will be explained below, the relatively large number of intermarriages has had profound importance for the Turkish businesses in Finland.

### **Turkish Businesses in Finland**

The Finnish Trade Register provides detailed information about the Turkish businesses in Finland. For the purpose of this study, a survey was conducted of the information available in the autumn of 2001. This survey indicated that there were between 250 and 300 firms established by entrepreneurs with Turkish names. This is a very high proportion considering the small number of Turks in Finland. The information in the Trade Register indicates that a clear majority of the Turkish businesses are active in the service sector, mainly in restaurants and fast food outlets. Both my fieldwork and my survey of the Register indicate that selling kebabs and pizza is the major business activity among Turks in Finland. Most of the Turkish business owners and entrepreneurs are men, but there are also female Turkish entrepreneurs in the Register. Although most of the Turkish businesses are small businesses in the service sector, there are also companies active in trade with import and export. However, regardless of the business sector, the Turkish firms are usually small-scale enterprises without regular employees. The geographic dispersal of the companies is surprisingly large; it is even possible to find Turkish businesses in small and remote municipalities in eastern and northern Finland.

#### *Transnational Ties*

The Turkish immigrants that were interviewed for this study displayed a variety of transnational ties. Most of the Turkish immigrants have fairly recently arrived in Finland and they continue to keep in touch with relatives and friends in Turkey and in other countries in the Turkish diaspora. Some interviewees said they visit Turkey several times a year, and all said they try to do it at least once a year, despite the fact that this often involves great difficulties for the businesses they run in Finland. Some of the inter-

viewees had previously lived in Germany for shorter periods of time. As Turks in other countries, the interviewees can often be seen as being part of "transnational families" (cf. Faist 2000b: 202–3; Bryceson and Vuorela 2003), with members of the extended family scattered around the globe. Thus, not surprisingly, the transnational social ties of Turkish entrepreneurs in Finland are often extensive and far-reaching.

Turkish immigrants in Finland can also be regarded as being bound by "transnational symbolic ties" (Faist 2000b: 102). The interviewees often felt that they were part of larger imagined communities bound together by a common ethnic identity or political belief. These transnational symbolic ties carry with them obligations, reciprocity and solidarity, and the benefits derived therefrom (cf. Faist 2000b: 121–3). Symbolic ties seem to be particularly vibrant among refugees, who often retain a strong political orientation towards their country of origin, or the "homeland" (cf. Wahlbeck 1999; Povrzanović Frykman 2001; Al-Ali and Koser 2002). However, one must remember that strong transnational symbolic ties do not necessarily unite an ethnic group as such; political disagreements are more a rule than an exception within refugee groups (Wahlbeck 2002). In the case of the Turkish community in Finland, different ethnic identities and political opinions divide the community.

Faist (2000b: 202–10) identifies three forms of transnational social spaces: transnational kinship groups, transnational circuits and transnational communities. Turkish immigrants in Finland mainly seem to form transnational kinship groups, which are held together by transnational reciprocity in small groups. Faist mentions remittances as an example of reciprocity in transnational kinship groups. To some extent, Turkish immigrants in Finland do send remittances back home. However, it seems to me that the businesses in Finland have not been successful enough for this to happen to any large extent. Unfortunately, this study has only provided rather sketchy information about financial issues and more research is needed about the actual volume of remittances.

Surprisingly, my research findings indicate that the transnational business ties of the Turkish businesses in Finland are quite limited. Although the entrepreneurs do have many contacts and keep in touch with Turkish entrepreneurs in Turkey and Europe, successful business contacts with Turkish firms in other countries seem to be rare. Many entrepreneurs have tried to import or export goods, but these experiments have seldom proved to be very successful. Thus, only a minority of the interviewees were involved in international business transactions. The typical Turkish kebab restaurant buys all the goods and foodstuffs it needs from Finnish wholesale markets.

Clearly, Turkish entrepreneurs in Europe have a pool of cheap and do-

cile labour in Turkey (cf. Faist 2000b: 216). In the late 1980s, when the kebab business expanded, some entrepreneurs did invite relatives to work in their restaurants. However, in Finland's case, with extensive unemployment among immigrants, cheap and docile labour is available in large numbers also in Finland. Furthermore, most Turkish entrepreneurs in Finland run small businesses without a great need for employees.

Transnational connections are clearly visible when we look at the history of Turkish businesses in Finland. The whole kebab business concept was imported to Finland from Germany and Sweden. The business pioneers interviewed in this study explained that the idea to start businesses came from Germany and Sweden, where numerous kebab shops were established in the early 1980s.<sup>7</sup> One of the pioneers had lived in Germany in the 1970s. In the interview, he and his Finnish wife recalled how they established one of the first kebab shops in Finland in the mid-1980s:

ÖW: Where did you get the idea to sell kebabs?

*Husband:* Well, actually nobody believed that kebabs could be sold here...

*Wife:* We heard from friends who, for example, had been in Sweden. That is where we heard about kebabs. There were still none in Finland, but in Europe there were kebabs.

ÖW: Did you get this idea in Germany?

*Wife:* We thought that if kebabs could be sold in Germany and in Sweden, they could for sure be sold in Finland as well. At that time there were a lot of pizzerias opening in Finland, various ethnic restaurants and dishes came to Finland.

This entrepreneur also visited Germany in the mid-1980s to get acquainted with the trade and buy the proper kitchen equipment from Turks in Germany. In general, western Finland was the area in Finland where kebabs first were introduced, which supports the statement that there was also a cultural influence from Sweden.<sup>8</sup>

These findings indicate that transnational social, economic and cultural ties enabled the establishment of Turkish kebab businesses. However, the results also suggest that the local setting and its structural constraints must always be taken into account when studying the role of transnational social and economic networks. This clearly relates to the argument that transnational networks are not deterritorialised, they are always connected to and firmly rooted in specific localities and nations.

#### *The Establishment of Kebab Businesses in Finland*

My interviews with Turkish entrepreneurs indicate that the first kebab businesses were established in the mid-1980s (one of the first places owned by a Turk was a fast food outlet opened in Karis in 1985). The first busi-

ness pioneers were Turkish men who had lived in Finland for some time, usually married to a Finn and fluent in Finnish. In contrast to other European countries, a Turkish "enclave economy" does not exist in Finland, and immigrant entrepreneurs immediately have to compete with Finnish businesses for Finnish customers.

The establishment of kebab restaurants in Finland must be seen in relation to some more general changes in Finnish food culture; various "ethnic" dishes and restaurants were introduced in Finland in the 1980s. The introduction of pizza restaurants was followed by kebab shops and a large variety of "ethnic" restaurants (Villanen 1999). Kebabs were often introduced as an alternative to Finnish fast food in traditional Finnish fast food outlets. In addition to Turkish entrepreneurs, many Finnish entrepreneurs established small kebab shops. Recently, also many other non-Turkish immigrant groups have started to establish pizza and kebab shops. Consequently, selling kebabs is not in any way specific to the Turks in Finland, and only a small minority of the kebab shops in Finland are owned by Turkish entrepreneurs. Furthermore, the fast food outlets of today sell pizza, kebabs and various other fast foods in a multicultural and hybrid fashion, regardless of the actual ethnic origin of the shop owner. Fast food outlets have clearly adapted their products to the Finnish market and Finnish customers. The kebab is originally a Turkish dish, but the kebabs you buy in Finland only remotely resemble the *kebab* you find in Turkey (a case in point is the spelling of the term).<sup>9</sup> Thus, it is highly doubtful that kebab shops in general can rightly be called "ethnic" or "Turkish" in any sense of the terms. The "culture" of these Turkish businesses cannot be regarded as something that is "imported" from Turkey. On the contrary, this particular business niche and its commercial products largely seem to be the outcome of a Finnish context.

The type of economic activity practised in kebab fast food outlets proved to be very popular among Turkish immigrants. The work was easy to learn and a shop required minimal financial investment. The equipment is not expensive and the restaurant can be established in very small premises where the rent is affordable. The investment needed is time, a commodity which immigrants in Finland had an abundance of in the 1990s due to the unemployment situation. This was also one of the few business sectors where it was possible to compete with Finnish entrepreneurs by working longer hours than the Finns.

My interviews clearly indicate that the major reason why the interviewees have started their own business was unemployment. None of the interviewees had arrived in Finland with the intention of starting a business. The reason for moving to Finland was always connected to personal reasons, or attributed to complete coincidences. The idea of establishing a

business usually came after some time had been spent in Finland, often associated with a period of unemployment. None of the interviewees had worked in a kebab shop in Turkey before arriving in Finland.

In recent years, the example set by immigrants who had arrived in Finland earlier has been crucial for those Turkish immigrants arriving in Finland later on. The knowledge and resources possessed by earlier immigrants have been transferred to succeeding immigrants in the daily work in the kebab shops. Usually, a Turkish kebab owner starts by working as an employee in a kebab shop owned by another immigrant (usually Turkish). After some time, he establishes his own shop, or, in some cases, buys the shop where he has formerly been employed. Employees often accept to work for a very small salary, since they are able to learn the trade and establish useful connections which can be used in future business. One interviewee even talked about the "Pizza Academy" in order to describe how new Turkish immigrants are drawn into the fast food business and learn the trade from fellow Turks. Another interviewee gave me the following description of how he ended up in the kebab business:

[Starting a business] was not at all my intention when I came to Finland. My original intention was to study. My brother lived here and suggested a school for me, but it did not turn out very good and I left the school. But when I came to Finland, the restaurant sector, the whole kebab business, was going very well. That is where I got the idea. But, actually, I did not have any alternative; I became unemployed and there were no other jobs available [...] I became somewhat familiar with kebab restaurants in Finland after I moved here. I was helping a few times in kebab shops and that is where I got the idea. In the beginning, this was a new and interesting product and there were not many kebab places around and business was going relatively well in Finland, or, in other words, it was better than unemployment. I had been working in other Turkish places helping out before I opened my own place. Hence, I became familiar with the business sector before I decided to try it myself.

Fast food kebab and pizza restaurants form a suitable economic niche for immigrants, since the initial economic capital needed is not substantial. Nevertheless, there is usually a need to borrow some money when a business is established. A common problem for many Turkish immigrants has been the difficulties of getting a bank loan. A number of Swedish studies have emphasised that Turkish immigrants often have good opportunity to borrow money from one another, thanks to their extensive ethnic and social networks (Berg 1994; Pripp 2001). This happens in Finland as well. However, since the kebab business has not always been very profitable, the financial resources among immigrants are limited. In Finland's case,

there is also reason to emphasise the importance of the role played by Finnish spouses in the establishment of businesses. A large proportion of the male Turkish entrepreneurs have Finnish wives who have helped their husbands financially, or who have been able to act as guarantor for bank loans. Finnish wives have also helped with various translations, while professional Finnish bookkeepers have helped with the more specific bureaucratic matters. Occasionally, the Finnish wife might also be the public face of the firm, hence avoiding ethnic discrimination against the firm.

### **Ethnicity and Culture**

The "culture" of the immigrant group (often reified as "ethnicity"), is, at least in public discourse, often regarded as significant for the establishment of "ethnic businesses". However, this study of Turkish entrepreneurs indicates that the immigrants in question usually do not have any other option than to become self-employed in Finland. Since there are no other jobs available for immigrants, the structure of the Finnish labour market forces many into self-employment. Thus, the primary reason that Turkish immigrants work in kebab shops can be found in the way the Finnish labour market operates. Thus, the establishment of a kebab business in Finland is not primarily a question of "culture" or "ethnicity"; it is rather a way of making the best of a bad situation. Of course, Turkish immigrants use their transnational ties and culture as a resource in establishing businesses, but this process has to be seen within the context of the Finnish labour market, which is largely closed to immigrants.

If culture cannot be regarded as the reason that immigrants start businesses, what is the role of ethnicity in so-called ethnic businesses? In order to answer this question, it has to be mentioned that "culture" and "ethnicity" are ambiguous concepts and there is no clear agreement among researchers concerning their relationship. As most anthropologists today agree, it can be argued that ethnicity is a socially defined category which is not dependent on the actual cultural content of the category. Instead, ethnicity is defined by the socially constructed boundaries of the group (cf. Barth 1969). In this sense of the term, ethnicity does play a role among Turkish entrepreneurs. For example, there seems to be some pattern in the ethnic origin of the employees in the kebab businesses; Turkish entrepreneurs often employ Turkish employees. It was also common for immigrants from other Middle Eastern countries to work in Turkish owned shops (and vice versa). However, it is interesting to note that Finns are very seldom employed in the Turkish firms. However, I would argue that the ethnic boundaries existing in kebab shops cannot be accounted for merely by explaining that they are a consequence of ethnic origin. Instead, the role of ethnicity must be interpreted within the current social and economic

context in Finland where the entrepreneurs live and operate. In order to get a more complete picture of the role of ethnicity, we need to consider the role played by *reciprocity* and *trust*, which can be regarded as two forms of social capital.

### *Reciprocity*

One interesting interpretation of ethnic boundaries can be found with the help of the theories about "reciprocity", presented by the anthropologist Jenny B. White (1997). According to White, Turkish identity in Germany is difficult to describe in conventional ethnic or cultural terms. It is not possible to define today's Turkish community in Germany merely using a few descriptive cultural traits, and at closer range the coherence of the community is clearly imagined. "The Turkish 'community' refracts into numerous subcategories with sometimes substantially different interests and lifestyles: worker, student, Islamist, leftist, Kurd, Alevi, second and third generation, artistic elite, and so on" (White 1997: 755). Furthermore, as Yalçın-Heckmann (1997) has described, this diversity is reflected in the fact that the "Turkish community" is "imagined" differently in different contexts. White (1997) suggests that the community instead can be distinguished with the help of the "processual identity" of the Turkish community, which "is based on participation in generalized reciprocity: someone who shares time, attention, information, and assistance, a person whose 'door is always open' and from whom one can borrow money upon trust is 'one of us,' either a Turk or 'like a Turk'" (White 1997: 756). The fieldwork by White in Berlin suggested that being able to borrow money was an important marker of a close relationship and of community. Thus, "money has become the primary vehicle of reciprocity. It also, therefore, becomes the salient metaphor of differentiation from Germans" (White 1997: 758).

It also seems possible to use this theory of ethnic boundary-making to describe the ethnic boundaries of the Turks in Finland. Turkish entrepreneurs in Finland are in close reciprocal relationships with people they trust in economic and business transactions. The person whom you can trust is a fellow Turk or a person who is "like a Turk". Ethnicity and economy become intertwined into one another and each can be a result of the other.

### *Trust*

The importance of trust for the success of ethnic businesses is documented in plenty of research. Trust is important, since it is a type of social capital which minority and immigrant communities can use to be able to compete with the majority. Social capital is often the only type of capital that the

minority can generate to a larger extent than a resourceful majority. In an overview of the factors influencing the successes of ethnic businesses, Mark Granovetter (1999: 155) argues that the advantage of ethnic businesses seems most robust where the most problematic commodity required is trust.

In my study, the interviewees had a clear opinion as to why Finns were not suitable as employees. The entrepreneurs needed employees whom they could rely on, also in the event that the business did not succeed. There was also a need for flexibility regarding working hours and salary on the part of the employee. A Finnish employee was usually not regarded as providing the necessary flexibility and would probably not be ready to work under the working conditions that exist in kebab shops. In the event that Turkish employees were not available, the second best alternative would be an immigrant from the Middle East, where at least some form of trust and reciprocity could be established.

However, Finns could be trusted as business partners in some circumstances. In the case of a marriage to a Finn, the necessary reciprocity would probably exist and a Finnish spouse or relative could be trusted just "like a Turk" (to use White's expression). In fact, some Turkish entrepreneurs had taken private loans from their Finnish wives and relatives in order to establish their businesses, which automatically would create a common social bond. Furthermore, the solidarity among Turkish immigrants should not be exaggerated. In a local setting, Turkish entrepreneurs regard one another as competitors in an increasingly competitive business niche and they can, therefore, not necessarily trust one another. Furthermore, there are many political disagreements and divisions in the Turkish community that can have a detrimental effect on the generation of social capital within the Turkish group at large. Hence, trust and reciprocity are not necessarily established along traditional and simple ethnic or cultural lines.

## Discussion

According to Faist, reciprocity is of importance in the creation of transnational social spaces: "Reciprocity in transnational kinship groups is typical for many first generation labour migrants and refugees" (Faist 2000b: 202). This particular form of transnational space seems to be the case also among Turks in Finland. However, as argued in this paper, this does not rule out the possibility of reciprocal ties crossing ethnic boundaries within the society of settlement.

This study indicates that the establishment of businesses has been significantly helped by the Turkish entrepreneurs' social ties in Finnish society. Among the business pioneers, those who were fluent in Finnish, married

to a Finn and had Finnish business contacts were the ones who were the most likely to find success in business.<sup>10</sup> In more recent years, Turkish immigrants have also been able to learn the trade from fellow Turks established within the kebab business sector. Turkish entrepreneurs do utilise the social capital that exists within their own ethnic group in Finland and within transnational social spaces. However, the resources in these ties are often limited, and occasionally it is easier to utilise social capital in local Finnish ties, for example, the resources available thanks to Finnish spouses. In this sense, Turkish entrepreneurs use any available social capital to enable their businesses to survive. As many theories suggest, the most beneficial position in terms of social capital is where a person is part of several *different* networks at the same time.<sup>11</sup> The key to understanding the relative successes of Turkish entrepreneurs in Finland probably lies in their ability to combine the resources available in both Finnish and Turkish ties, as well as local and transnational ties. In this sense, these entrepreneurs are locally embedded and, at the same time, also part of transnational ties.

Consequently, what often is referred to as the role of "ethnicity" in immigrant businesses, at closer range, seems to be a question of mutual *trust* and *reciprocity*. The reason that ethnicity comes into focus is that the necessary trust and reciprocity is easy to establish among relatives and friends speaking the same language and sharing similar experiences. However, this does not rule out the possibility of trust and reciprocity between individuals of different cultural, linguistic or ethnic origin. Thus, it is important to question simplistic explanations as to why and how ethnic businesses are established. Often businesses are largely seen as a function of the "culture" of the entrepreneurs. This type of conventional explanation conceals other important factors and gives a simplistic and essentialised picture of the group in question; the structural problems encountered by Turks within the Finnish labour market can become obscured and the problems experienced by the immigrant group are instead explained in cultural terms.

Thus, the focus on "ethnicity" or "culture" may conceal more than it explains. Obviously, this is not to suggest that ethnicity does not exist. However, "ethnicity", or "culture", in and of itself is not enough to explain why and how certain ethnic groups become entrepreneurs. Having "an ethnicity" and "a culture" (as we all do) is obviously not enough; it must be turned into a resource that successfully can be utilised in business. This is where a transnational perspective comes into focus. Transnational social spaces function as a bridge across which ideas and resources (in short, "social capital") can move from one country to another. However, as many authors have previously argued (e.g. Guarnizo and Smith 1998; Portes

et al. 1999; Labelle and Midy 1999; Faist 2000b), transnational spaces are not deterritorialised; they are always rooted in specific places and specific local contexts. Thus, we need to study both the local and transnational context of immigrant businesses in order to understand how and why they were established. The structure of the labour market and the unemployment among immigrants in Finland are obviously important factors in the local context. Thus, a transnational perspective is useful, since it helps us to see immigrant entrepreneurs as both embedded in a local context and simultaneously part of ethnic ties stretching back to the country of origin.

## NOTES

- 1 A case in point is the International Sociological Association, where the scientific work is divided into 53 Research Committees, 3 Working Groups and 3 Thematic Groups, each dealing with "a well recognized speciality in sociology" (<http://www.ucm.es/info/isa/rc.htm>). Discussions about transnational migration have taken place on the Research Committee No. 31, Sociology of Migration, and even here the discussion has only been a minor topic.
- 2 In this article, I deliberately use the spelling "kebab", instead of "kebab", in order to emphasise that this product and the Turkish businesses are deeply embedded in a Finnish context.
- 3 Obviously, there might be a few persons in Finland who define themselves as "Turkish", although they are neither Turkish citizens nor born in Turkey. Furthermore, a large proportion of Turkish citizens or people born in Turkey might also define themselves as Kurdish (for a closer discussion about these occasionally overlapping ethnic identities and proper terminology, see Wahlbeck 1999). However, for practical reasons, I need to have a concise and easily recognizable term that describes the way my study is delimited. In this study, I have chosen to use the term "Turkish", since this is a term that all my interviewees, to a greater or lesser extent, can identify with.
- 4 The interviews in Helsinki have been conducted to examine whether the situation for Turkish entrepreneurs is significantly different in the capital region from the situation in the Varsinais-Suomi region. The seven interviews indicated that this was not the case, and therefore there was not sufficient reason to conduct a larger number of interviews in the capital region.
- 5 It is also unclear whether the generalized reciprocity and diffuse solidarity in the Turkish community has extended beyond kinship groups in Finland's case, which, according to Faist (2000b: 144), is necessary for large-scale chain-migration and migrant networks. However, since the Finnish State has prevented any labour migration from Turkey, this is a purely theoretical question.
- 6 According to separate data ordered from the Population Register, the number of officially Kurdish-speaking born in Turkey and living permanently in Finland was 489 on 31 December 2002. Furthermore, concerning the officially Turkish-speaking group, it is possible that a small number of Finnish citizens belonging to the old Tatar minority speaking a northern Turkish dialect indicate "Turkish" as their native language. A Tatar minority of Russian origin has existed

in Finland since the early 19<sup>th</sup> century. Today, the Tatars constitute a well-integrated Muslim minority of about 1,000 people with few contacts to the more recently arrived Turks.

- 7 The first Turkish kebab restaurant in Sweden is claimed to have opened in Uppsala in 1979 (Magnusson 1992: 21).
- 8 In Vaasa (Vasa) and Jakobstad (Pietarsaari), some traditional fast food outlets introduced the kebab as an alternative in the early and mid-1980s, according to my own personal memory. In Turku (Åbo), the first kebab shop was established in 1985 by a Finnish entrepreneur, while Villanen (1999: 239) claims that the first kebab shop in central Helsinki was established in 1987 by a Finnish entrepreneur.
- 9 In Turkish, the spelling is "kebab". However, the term is almost without exception spelled "kebab" in Finland, even by the Turkish entrepreneurs themselves. Finnish kebabs are döner kebabs made of ordinary (non-halal) beef and seldom contain lamb, since lamb is relatively expensive in Finland. The Turkish entrepreneurs usually buy deep-fried ready-made kebab meat from the Finnish wholesale market. The meat is usually produced in Finland. The largest producer is a company owned by a Turkish immigrant, who, in 1990, was invited by a major Finnish wholesale firm to start large-scale production of ready-made kebab products.
- 10 A high rate of intermarriage with Finns is not only characteristic of Turkish entrepreneurs; the fact that many immigrant entrepreneurs are married to Finns is also described by Joronen (2002: 152). It is possible that the proportion of immigrants married to Finns is higher among entrepreneurs than among other immigrants in Finland, although no exact data is available. This is a question which would be worthy of comparative studies in the future.
- 11 The benefits of being part of many different networks is emphasised in many contemporary books in business and economics, often written for a wide audience. Among sociologists, similar thoughts have already been thoroughly discussed in the classical works of Georg Simmel (1955) and within so-called Structural Sociology (Blau 1977).

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# TRANSNATIONAL CONSUMPTION IN DENMARK AND TURKEY: AN ANTHROPOLOGICAL RESEARCH PROJECT

CONNIE CARØE CHRISTIANSEN

## **Migration and Transnational Social Spaces**

During the 1990's, migration has increasingly been discussed and analyzed as a phenomenon that generates a lifestyle infused with mobility and a criss-crossing of national contexts. In one of the seminal articles (Glick-Schiller et al., 1992), transnationalism is sketched as an analytic frame for migration. The authors account for the fact that repeated migration, circle-migration and continuous journeys back and forth between both the new and former homeland seem to be an increasingly frequent phenomenon, pinpointing the development of global capitalism. They argue that as migration has become a much more complex phenomenon, the notion of *transmigration* is better suited to its analysis than formerly used concepts.

Rather than a *neither-nor* or, alternatively, an *in-between-and-between* perspective, in which transmigrants are not seen as either belonging to any of the national frameworks or as living in between them, the analytical frame of transnationalism instead relies on a *both-and* perspective (Guarnizo and Smith 1998: 11). Continuous movements back and forth characterise the transmigrant's life in the country of emigration as well as in the country of immigration. The *both-and* kind of lifestyle is sometimes crucial for maintaining an income – pointing to one of the aspects of "transnationalism from below" (see *ibid.*).

A transnational analytical frame attempts to capture the social spaces that exist across national lines of division – transnational social spaces.

These have been analysed as "bridges" (Nyberg Sørensen 2000), routes (Gilroy 1993) or networks (Glick-Schiller et al. 1992). Such metaphors indicate a lack of steadfast borders, and conversely reveal 'culture', 'nationality' and 'ethnicity' as container concepts, thus forcing attention away from ethnic pluralism and assimilation (Faist 1999: 3; Glick-Schiller et al. 1992: 12). In the planned research project presented in this paper, such concepts are regarded as social constructions: what or who is termed 'ethnic' or 'immigrant' depends on the socio-political formations of particular historical contexts.

Thomas Faist (1999: 3) draws our attention to the need for a more systematic definition of the transnational social spaces that arise due to North-South migration, as well as to the existence of several different types of transnational social spaces created by transnational small groups, transnational circuits and transnational communities. Transnational connections are thus not limited to transmigration. Faist's typology mirrors a number of transformations of transnational social spaces, rather than simply the logic of 'an integration process'.

### **Researching Consumption in Transnational Social Spaces between Denmark and Turkey**

To the extent that immigrant families engage in transnational connections, their everyday social environment can be conceptualized as a transnational social space. But is it possible to determine the volume, character and significance of transnational connections through patterns of consumption? How relevant are the patterns of purchase and what do the acquired goods symbolise for the immigrant families and their ways of life?

This paper discusses the prospects of an anthropological research project guided by these questions. The project involves participant observation, lengthy semi-structured interviews and informal conversations with a number of families of Turkish origin who have settled in the Copenhagen area. It is assumed that consumption is a social practice, which may serve as a lens through which social networks among these families can be revealed. In other words, learning about their consumption patterns may constitute the first step in a systematic mapping of social networks relevant to the selected families of Turkish origin.

Generally speaking, transnational connections have not been regarded as relevant to integration processes, although they are implied in the strategies that ethnic minority families develop in order to live on their own terms. For some families, these strategies involve the maintenance of transnational connections and social capital in the original homeland. The question that needs further elucidation is why and how this maintenance is upheld. Further, consumption invariably presents an instance of

social differentiation, with ethnicity as an unpredictable variable. In transnational social spaces, consumption – and the specific signals it extrapolates – may have both the calculated and unintended effects of setting oneself apart from other ethnic minorities as well as from the cultural majority.

### *Transnationalism and Integration*

Such anthropological research into consumption also addresses some broader questions regarding transnationalism and integration. Transnational social spaces are not unambiguous, especially if they assume a political character and constitute structures of meaning (Guarnizo and Smith 1998: 19) and arenas of political action. Here lies a potential for *either* creating conformity and adjustment *or* opposition in the country of immigration.

In this connection, Thomas Faist (1999) and Luis E. Guarnizo and Michael P. Smith (1998) have raised the relevant issue of the extent to which transnational social spaces are to be exclusively found among the first generation of immigrants. One might assume that the children of immigrants would have significantly less contact with the original homeland of their parents. Yet Guarnizo and Smith (*ibid.*: 16-17) point out that migrants of different generations – even those who became Americanized several generations ago – can be mobilized with regard to political relations in a distant homeland.

The relevant question in this paper is therefore whether consumption practices give another type of insight into the ways that those transnational social spaces and integration processes are conjugated.

### **A Transnational Frame of Inquiry**

Migration should not be apprehended as a single and terminated act, contained by leaving one country and settling down in another (Glick-Schiller et al. 1992, Faist 2000). Rather, in most cases, migration is tantamount to different forms of connections between localities in the ‘sending’ and ‘receiving’ countries (Glick-Schiller et al. 1992, Hannerz 1996, Guarnizo and Smith 1998, Pries 1999, Vertovec and Cohen 1999). The extent of the social networks and *transnational connections* – as well as their significance – that span the Danish national borders are largely unknown. The degree to which connections to Turkey interpenetrate the consumption strategies of those families in Denmark with a Turkish background is equally an open question.

Within a transnational frame of inquiry, every immigrant is also an emigrant. Even if someone settled in Denmark many years ago or was born in Denmark to parents who migrated from e.g. Turkey, contact and interest for events in the original homeland is often maintained (Carøe Christian-

sen 2001a). This maintenance is upheld by repeated journeys back and forth, transactions of goods and money and exchanges between forms of practices and ideas from one context to the other. These connections are probably significant in the processes of consolidation that migrants experience in their new surroundings (Carøe Christiansen 2001b) and they may amount to an improvement of social security for immigrants (Diken 1998). Simultaneously, it is often assumed that they produce a distance to the society of residence – in this case Denmark – and lead to isolation from the majority population. However, so far this is an unexamined assumption. While Danish researchers have been preoccupied with transnational connections in international migration research (Nyberg Sørensen and Fog Olwig 2002), the effect of work migration in the shape of transnational connections between Denmark and those countries sending workers has not yet been examined (see Carøe Christiansen 2001a and 2001b, as well as Kleist 2004, in this volume). A clarification of their significance is, however, relevant for the current popular, administrative and governmental approaches to ethnic minorities in Denmark.

#### *Consumption and Transnational Connections*

So far, no satisfactory answers have been found with regard to the issue of personal opportunities and the way they deteriorate or improve in dense, ethnic homogenic networks, although, according to Danish studies, consumption seems to reflect an ambiguous integration strategy for ethnic minority families (Carøe Christiansen et al. 2000, Schmidt 2002, Diken 1998).<sup>1</sup> In the studies conducted so far, the consumption of goods and services appears on the one hand as a means to obtain social contacts and on the other as a precondition of belonging to certain social circles. At the same time, consumption seems to be an activity in which a large proportion of ethnic minorities actually have limited possibilities to match the levels evident among the rest of the population (Carøe Christiansen and Schmidt 2002). Consumption studies of ethnic minorities seem, however, to represent a specific field of study extending the perspective of relative deprivation, i.e. a mere socio-economic angle. Pnina Werbner's (1996) analysis of the hierarchical Christmas gift economy in Britain thus points out that the study of 'ethnic consumption' involves much more than finding a way out of economic constraints. The consumption of immigrants stands out and reproduces both the ethnic community and the nation, particularly during those seasonal holidays that tend to highlight the English nation as a moral community. According to Werbner's study, gift economies are culturally distinct and "consumption patterns of migrants, immigrants and strangers are interpellated into the moral economy of the nation" (ibid.: 154). Consequently, any inquiry into the consumption patterns among et-

ethnic minorities should be considered as a distinct socio-cultural phenomenon. 'Ethnic consumption' may contribute to the reproduction of collective ethnic identities, particularly discernible during holidays and festivals and the subsequent festive, luxurious consumption they give rise to.

Connections to the homeland often penetrate the consumption strategies of economically and socially vulnerable families with ethnic minority backgrounds. In some families, the spending, buying and investment activities during a vacation in the original homeland are synchronised with those of saving up for the next one. These vacations are often prioritised to the extent that the financial means to cover the expenses are either borrowed from other family members or from people in the personal network. This is often the case if there is no other way of raising the money required to pay for the journey as well as the presents that family and friends in the original homeland expect to receive (Carøe Christiansen et al. 2000). According to a survey conducted among immigrants and refugees in Denmark, immigrants – and particularly immigrants of Turkish origin – are more likely to go to the homeland for vacations up to several weeks each year (Catinét 2003). Others, on the other hand, feel obliged to send remittances to family members in the homeland, even if their income in the immigration country is low in comparison to the average income of the total population. For refugees, this might be the only way to support family members "back home" (Carøe Christiansen et al. 2000, Schmidt 2003, Williams 2001). The relationship to the homeland and to family members or friends who have remained there can be very significant indeed and also extend to the field of politics.<sup>2</sup> Relationships with other branches of the family who have migrated to Denmark, as well as to those originating in the same country or locality, may also affect the consumption strategies practised by ethnic minority families. Some of them involve a time-consuming and informal economy (Diken 1998, Carøe Christiansen et al. 2000, Schmidt 2002), although this is largely dependent on the social network of a particular family as it differs according to age and gender, and possibly to the length of stay in Denmark as well as other characteristics. It is equally important to be aware that neither ethnicity nor original homeland are determining factors for consumption patterns. Thus particular social networks and particular consumption patterns, together with the extent to which they involve transnational connections, is a nexus that needs closer scrutiny.

Temporary stays or contacts in the original homeland may be utilized for buying a number of commodities: certain stylish goods such as exclusive curtain fabrics, gold and silver ware etc., which are less costly there, pirate copies of otherwise expensive brand goods, and – particularly among Islamic activists – for buying religious literature and clothes that

signify their religious persuasion (Carøe Christiansen et al. 2000). Conversely, it is important for many emigrants to be able to provide friends and family in the original homeland with goods from the immigration country, possibly because this signifies their association with a wealthier consumer-goods society. The goods that form part of transnational flows seem to be those that extrapolate certain signals about position and belonging rather than those that secure the family's day-to-day subsistence. The parallel of the extraordinary demand for goods from "the West" before the demise of the Berlin Iron wall (Urry 2000: 41-42) illustrates that such goods enter transnational flows due to their *symbolic* value. An analysis of the specific symbolic value of the goods that are transferred between the original and new homeland would reveal the stakes of those who live transnational lives.

### *Exclusion and Global Processes*

Zygmunt Bauman (1998) accuses current, post-industrial society for excluding those who – due to economic restraints – are prevented from constituting their identities as consumers. These constraints represent a 'new poverty' (ibid.), while Loïc J. D. Wacquant (1996) refers to 'advanced marginalization' as a recent development in Western societies. These qualitatively new – advanced – forms of marginalization are based on cultural and symbolic forms of exclusion rather than on material scarcity or need. An expression of this kind of marginalization is the difficulties that immigrants – often unskilled and categorized as unwelcome foreigners in their new country – experience in gaining access to the labour market (Wacquant 1993). However, both these scholars indicate that forms of marginalization are at stake, which are in turn connected to global processes of economic restructuring, a globalized labour market and the increasing migration that has followed in its wake (see Sassen 1998). Demands for qualified labour have increased on a global scale, while large numbers of work migrants remain unskilled. This has resulted in the development of an ethnic segmented labour market, with migrants often being referred to jobs in the service sector (Sassen 1999). In several other studies, immigrants or ethnic minorities are pinpointed as particularly vulnerable sectors of the population – something that is confirmed in studies of specific countries where immigrant families are particularly exposed to poverty and social exclusion (Diken 1998, Carøe Christiansen et al. 2000, Schmidt 2002, Salonen and Hjort 2000). This globalized, ethnic segmentation of the labour force – creating a new poverty – together with advanced marginalization, constitutes the backdrop for analyzing current consumption strategies and consumption priorities among ethnic minority families.

To recap, utilizing consumption patterns as a lens through which trans-

national connections between Turkey and Denmark are revealed opens up a discussion of their significance in stratification and integration processes. A number of questions may steer this discussion: Firstly, to what extent and in what way is it meaningful to conceptualize consumption practices among migrants from Turkey and their descendants as occurring in a transnational social space? Transnational connections cannot be taken for granted among immigrants and their offspring; their volume and character must be accounted for. Secondly, which consumption goods enter transnational flows between Turkey and Denmark, and why? Finally, how do consumption practices correspond with specific social networks and how do they feed into processes of stratification? Consumption appears as a factor of differentiation; where, on the one hand, specific goods and styles of consumption connect social actors and, on the other hand, differentiate one social group from another so that subtle hierarchies emerge. Furthermore, specific patterns of consumption seem to be shaped by such things as generation and gender within each family.

A relevant theoretical perspective for this discussion involves a fusion of the existing theories of consumption, migration and integration with a transnational perspective.

#### *Consumption as Fences and Bridges*

Arjun Appadurai points out that consumption should be understood in its social context; that is to say in the light of social actors and the choice of possible actions in the social space they inhabit, rather than according to any absolute goals. Consumption is "eminently social, relational and active, rather than private, atomic or passive" (Appadurai 1986: 31). As it is a social activity, consumption among ethnic minorities should be analyzed in the particular context in which it occurs. The extent to which it occurs in transnational social spaces needs further investigation. It can only be assumed that specific meanings are attached to goods that are consumed in transnational spaces.

Consumption may be regarded as an indicator of where one wants to belong. It can symbolise "fences and bridges" – in terms of signals of approachment and distance – and therefore be a means of communication (Douglas and Isherwood 1996). Goods of every shape and form mediate between people; they are "mediating materials" and "goods in their assemblage present a set of meanings more or less coherent, more or less intentional" (ibid: vii). The consumption of material goods is a way of connecting or establishing a symbolic relationship to others, although the messages they represent are not necessarily immediately decoded by a consumer nor decoded in a differentiated manner. Consumption patterns create a complicated system of communication that can be decoded by so-

me people, while creating a distance to those who are unable to decode it. As a result, consumption patterns either form fences or bridges. Certain goods signal approachment and the desire for contact with some social actors (i.e. they function as bridges) while others may not perceive any message at all, or if they do, perceive the signal as one of keeping a distance (i.e. as fences). To put it crudely, consumption of specific goods signals the kind of social relations that the consumer wishes to engage in, as well as the kind of contact that is not welcomed by the consumer. This represents the dilemma of the transnational consumer – which context to approach and which to reject, as revealed through specific consumption practices.<sup>3</sup> An analysis of the symbolic values of the specific consumer goods – such as those that are transferred from one point of the transnational circuit to the other – could produce some insight into this dilemma.

### **Research Strategy**

Immigrants of Turkish origin constitute one of the largest immigrant group in Denmark. Moreover, immigrants of Turkish origin have been settled in the country for a relatively long period of time, originally as work migrants who came to the country from the late 1960's onwards and until work immigration was outlawed in 1973. Due to marriages, child-birth and family reunifications, the number of ethnic minorities of Turkish origin has continued to increase during the 1970's and 1980's and today, they amount to approximately 52,000 individuals. Many Turkish-origin families (or parts of them) have now resided in Denmark for more than 30 years. This time lapse means that it is possible to investigate how transnational connections between Denmark and Turkey have developed beyond the initial years of settlement. This in turn makes those ethnic minorities with a Turkish background a particularly relevant group for the study of migration and transnational connections as the connections between the sending country and the young generation can be included in the study.

#### *Analytical Level*

The meso-level of social analysis illuminates patterns of consumption as well as the social network that this pattern both generates and maintains. The strong social component in consumption practices is the reason for approaching this activity as an indication of social relations and belongings (Carøe Christiansen 2003). The meso level is particularly well suited to investigating what releases social actions such as the consumption of specific goods or migration. Thus, the meso level of analysis is required to provide answers to the question of why many people migrate from one place – e.g. a particular village in Anatolia – while very few migrate from other places, including the neighbouring village (Faist 2000).

In other words, it is necessary to pay close attention to the social networks in which the consumers in transnational social spaces participate.

John Urry is one of the sociologists who point out that, in the social sciences, 'society' is a metaphor that is about to lose its analytical power, since mobility and transformations – rather than firm borders and stable forms – are becoming the norm. In an extension of analyses of the post-industrial era as a network society, a sociology that no longer accepts society as a coherent and delimited unit is in need (Urry 2000; also Castells 1996, Rifkin 2000, Bauman 2000). Contrary to the concept of 'society', those of *social space* (Diken 1998, Soja 1996, Bourdieu 1999) and *social networks* (Vertovec 2001, Wellman 1999) present us with the task of studying communities and social relations as criss-crossing the dividing lines. That may turn out to be apparent rather than effective, although nation states still represent coercive and effective means of power that constrains transnational social spaces and migrants. Rather than treating 'Denmark' and 'Turkey' as discreet and delimited societies, it is more relevant to uncover the social networks, flows of goods, money and investments that connect people and places in Denmark with people and places in Turkey. We can define the social space of these relations and flows as a transnational social space.

#### *Analytical Perspective*

Bülent Diken (1998) has studied families of Turkish origin living on the outskirts of Århus, one of Denmark's major cities. He points out that these families usually have more symbolic capital (or status) in the Turkish context rather than in the Danish one. Social marginalization in one field does not automatically lead to marginalization in all the social contexts that social actors inhabit. However, it may lead to a painful realization that the degree of social recognition is limited in significant or larger social settings. The authors contributing to Bourdieu et al. (1999) have uncovered the kind of social suffering that they term *la petite misère* – social suffering on a relatively minor scale. They define it as the condition in which one has got to concur that conditions are good in comparison to those who really suffer in terms of material need: *la grande misère*. Pierre Bourdieu explains that those who assume a subordinate, invisible position in prestigious and privileged surroundings may have a painful experience of their social world:

The experience is no doubt all the more painful when the universe in which they participate just enough to feel their relative low standing is higher in social space overall. This positional suffering, experienced from inside the microcosm, will appear, as the saying goes, "entirely relative", meaning completely unreal, if we take the point of view of the macrocosm and compare it

to the "real" suffering of material poverty (*la grande misère*) (Bourdieu, 1999: 4).

*La petite misère* – social suffering – is a situation in a micro-cosmos where the relativizing gaze tends to dissolve needs altogether, even though they may be strongly felt and imply a heightened risk for social exclusion in a number of contexts.

Consumer goods that seem to have priority among ethnic minority families, such as shoes, clothing and goods for personal hygiene as well as the importance of fulfilling obligations towards members of the family in the homeland (Carøe Christiansen et al. 2000, Schmidt 2002), constitute consumption patterns that allude to a classical *conspicuous consumption* analysis. More importantly, they indicate that "la petite misère" is a useful frame for analysing consumption strategies among families of Turkish origin in Denmark. They find themselves in a situation which, while not of catastrophic dimensions, is 'relatively bad', i.e. bad (or poor) in comparison with the average income and consumption possibilities among the population of Denmark as a whole. This perspective, where symbolic capital is foregrounded, rather than where the economic emphasis is embedded in the concept of relative deprivation, seems to facilitate the analysis.

The following questions will be central for an outline of consumption patterns among these families: How are goods provided? Which consumer goods have priority according to generation and gender? How does the family spend its vacations? How are the financial means for larger celebrations provided?

The answers should indicate the ways in which transnational social networks and consumption patterns are related. However, they should be seen as being connected to more comprehensive social networks based on the following dimensions: density (the extent to which a social relation tends to serve several purposes), frequency (of contact), extent (the number of relations in the network), content (the activities that connect members in the network), and positions (reciprocity versus hierarchical relations) (Mitchell 1979).

### *Methods*

Multi-sited fieldwork is required in order to cover several points of the transnational circuit, including those in the original homeland, although specific, partly localized social practices of individuals may constitute a base for understanding the significance of transnational connections. Allan Ward (1996) rightfully calls for "more case studies of specific social practices" as a fruitful way of understanding consumption practices and their key role in establishing, maintaining, transforming and displacing

social relationships. Whatever their extent, social networks should define the locations of research (Wellman 1999), so that fieldwork sites should not be restricted to e.g. a specific housing area, but determined by the movements of individual family members. Ideally, this is how a study of consumption in transnational social spaces should be guided. Patterns of consumption constitute a focus of research through which social networks – local as well as transnational – may be revealed.

Contact can be established via local institutions, associations and activities, as well as via the families of Turkish origin who live in a housing area with a considerable population of Turkish background. These families will be selected so as to ensure the representation of different generations, gender and socio-economic standing.

Possible venues and activities for research include: participant observation at work, shopping areas, educational centres, visiting friends and family, religious activities, children's day-care institutions, schools and leisure activity centres. The flows of transnational social spaces may obscure the fact that social practices are always localised. In order to include the 'homeland-perspective' and supplement the perspective of transnational social space provided from Denmark, some families will be accompanied on their vacations to Turkey.

### **Concluding Remarks**

As a social activity, consumption reveals the kind of social contacts, belongings and connections of particular consumers. This theoretical insight is exploited in a project designed to uncover the transnational social spaces between Denmark and Turkey. That task is both apt and overdue, since Turkish immigrants have constituted a significant ethnic minority in this country for decades and seem to be among those who maintain a strong connection to the former homeland. To date, the significance of these connections and the way they may or may not interfere with processes of integration and stratification lack documentation. As a result, a lot has been left to qualified guesswork and assumptions. The concept of transnational social spaces offers a more realistic perspective on migration and migrant life, thus illuminating the way in which strategies of survival and improved life conditions are forged and reworked – not exclusively in one national setting but in a specific social space that requires its own label: transnational. A focus on consumption strategies may reveal just how significant this space is and thus bring forth a clearer understanding of the ways in which integration policies instigated by governments in receiving countries can either support or impede processes of integration – in the national context for which they are intended or in the transnational social spaces that, so far, have largely been kept in obscurity.

## NOTES

- 1 Shahamak Rezaei has analyzed the social networks of immigrant business entrepreneurs in Denmark and, by and large, has found that the homogenic ethnic network is important for the initial starting up phase of a business whereas multi-ethnic relations are more important for the business to keep going (Rezaei 2002).
- 2 In the survey conducted by Catinét, it is reported that Turks in Denmark also have a high score compared to other ethnic-national groups regarding participation in national elections in Turkey (11%) and in membership of political parties in Turkey (8%) (Catinét 2003: 74, table 20).
- 3 This is quite rightly the dilemma of all consumers and not only of consumers in transnational social spaces. In this space the dilemma is merely more exposed and couched in terms of ethnicity and 'us' versus 'them'.

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# SITUATED TRANSNATIONALISM: FIELDWORK AND LOCATION-WORK IN TRANSNATIONAL RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

NAUJA KLEIST

In this paper I present some reflections on the issue of transnational social spaces and methodology in relation to my study of transnational practices and fields of belonging among Somalis in Denmark.<sup>1</sup> I especially focus on the matter of location in fieldwork as well as the question of transnational research, which mainly concentrates on one ‘end’ of the transnational social space, Denmark.

## **Transnational Perspectives**

Following the increased interest in globalisation and the mobility of ideas, images, capital, goods, and people, the transnational perspective has travelled both far and fast during the last decade. It has spread from research in political science and development studies on transnational companies (e.g. Martinussen 1994: 156 ff.), to human rights and citizenship (Christensen 2001), integration and homeland politics (Østergaard-Nielsen 2002), and mobile livelihoods (Sørensen and Olwig 2002) to mention just a few examples. Within the disciplines of anthropology and sociology, research on social, cultural, political, economic and religious transnational practices is proliferating. In the following part of the paper I will focus on transnational migration, which is the primary theme of my own research.

Theory on transnational studies has mainly developed in American contexts, first and foremost based on empirical evidence of work-related migration to the US (e.g. Basch et al. 1994, Smith 1994, Sørensen 1995, Smith and Guarnizo 1998, Levitt 2001). In the later years, the transnatio-

nal perspective has been more systematically applied to European countries of destination as well as other regional contexts, including studies on refugees (e.g. Faist 2000, Povrzanović Frykman 2001, Al-Ali, Black and Koser 2001, Al-Ali and Koser 2002). As pointed out by Al-Ali and her colleagues, studying the transnational practices of refugees and taking the point of departure in a European context raises new theoretical challenges and questions (cf. Al-Ali and Koser 2002). One question is how the transnational practices of (mainly) refugees are shaped by the limitations of their mobility, as they – unlike many US-based migrant workers – cannot move back and forth between their countries of origin and residence. Another question is how anxiety toward a multicultural society and the tightening of immigration legislation – as is the case in Denmark – circumscribe the transnational practices and senses of belonging of migrants.

Such questions relate to the overall methodological question of location within transnational research methodology. This is also expressed by Smith and Guarnizo (1998), who emphasise the need to *locate* transnational studies both within the network that people live in as well as within a structural framework, such as receiving and sending states (ibid.: 10-11). The importance of location is not an argument for a return to locally bounded community studies, but for an inclusion of the local and shifting contexts, which at least partly circumscribe the practices within the transnational social field. Not everything is fluid or flowing. Or rather: some things and persons travel more easy than others, while the mobility of other persons are intensively circumscribed – even if migrants often find ways to overcome migration barriers. The relations between mobility and immobility, global flows and locality are of major importance in transnational studies as are the study of mechanisms seeking to regulate mobility and immobility. As Bauman has pointed out, mobility is a major asset in the globalising world of today, or rather *voluntary* mobility in contrast to forced mobility – or, even worse, forced immobility (Bauman 1998). Furthermore, including both questions of locality and globality, mobility and immobility is also a way to assess the relative significance and extent of transnational practices. In other words, the *evidence* of transnational practices should not be conflated with their *significance* (cf. Portes et al. 1999, Heistler 2000, Portes 2001).

In a Danish context the transnational perspective is flourishing in some disciplines. In Danish sociological research, however, the transnational perspective is still a fairly new approach, in contrast for instance to anthropological research. Research on immigration and integration on the other hand has flourished for some time now, especially since it was realised that the vast majority of refugees, ‘guest workers’, and their families had become permanent inhabitants (Rasmussen 1996: 83). In much Da-

nish mainstream research and discourse, questions of belonging and culture are often discussed with a sedentary bias (Malkki 1992), where migrants are expected to belong either 'here or there'. In this sedentary perspective, the ideal immigration scenario is perceived as a question of assimilation (often termed integration) or repatriation. Transnational studies, on the other hand, illuminate other social relations, than the sedentary perspective does, and thus offer the possibility to *refocus* research on migrant life (cf. Al-Ali and Koser 2002). This however does not mean that transnational lives, practices, or indeed transnational research, are of a special emancipatory or positive nature.

Roughly speaking, the situation can be summed up like this: While non-essentialist and transnational approaches to daily life, culture and identities of migrants have been growing in the social sciences for some time now, much political and 'everyday' discourse seems to point in other directions. There is in other words quite a substantial gap between political and academic discourses on the nature of migrant lives.

### **Transnational Social Space**

Since the field of transnational studies is such a broad and inclusive one, it is difficult to present just one definition. In my current work I focus on migration and what has been termed 'transnationalism from below' (Smith and Guarnizo 1998). I am inspired by the early definition of transnationalism offered by Linda Basch and her colleagues, where transnationalism is defined as "the processes by which immigrants forge and sustain multi-stranded social relations that link together their societies of origin and settlement" (Basch et al. 1994: 7). This definition however needs to be extended: First of all, not only migrants take part in transnational practices. Also the people who have 'stayed behind' are part of transnational networks and practices. Likewise it is necessary to underline that transnational networks can include more than two destinations (even if this possibility is not excluded by the above definition).

The concept of transnational social spaces on the other hand is more extensive than the above definition of transnationalism. Faist defines transnational social spaces as "combinations of ties and their contents, positions in networks and organizations, and networks of organizations that can be found in at least two geographically and internationally distinct places" (Faist 2000: 197). This definition, with its emphasis on the *social*, focuses on the transfer of social capital (among other kinds of capital) in relation to obligations, reciprocity and solidarity (ibid.: 15). Such notions are obviously important in studying the dynamics of how migrants and their counterparts relate to each other across borders as well as in relation to the development of a diasporic consciousness.

To analyse transnational social spaces one however also needs to include the factors which shape, further, or hamper transnational social spaces, such as long-distance communication and travel, the politics and policies of integration, asylum and im-/emigration, the situation in the country of origin and destination etc. (ibid.: 198). This means that the concept is contextually sensitive; it both includes the transnational practices and what shapes them.

The concept of transnational social spaces thus is a device to start the analysis and then distinguish between different kinds of transnational engagement. For example, it can be worth distinguishing between transnationalism as migrant engagement in, and influence on, nation states and transnational practices as practices undertaken across borders and in spite of borders (Sørensen 2002: 13). Likewise Faist distinguishes between different types of transnational social spaces, such as transnational kinship groups, transnational circuits and transnational communities (Faist 2000: 203). Such distinctions are useful, but one should be aware of the fluidity and ambiguity of categories. Actors in transnational communities might simultaneously be part of kinship groups, trading networks and political formations spanning borders. In short, categories and typologies are analytical devices and one should also analyse positions and relations across categories. As I will argue in the following, questions of locality and location are crucial issues within transnational research methodology.

### **Location-work and Fieldwork I**

Ideally, studies of transnational practices require multi-sited fieldwork, whether the aim of the research project is to follow the people or the things (Marcus 1995). No matter which definition of transnationalism, the perspective always relates to practices or relations between at least two national localities; this is the very core of the concept. Therefore the ideal method should include fieldwork in both (or more) ‘ends’ of the transnational social space.

However, multi-sited fieldwork is not the answer of all methodological problems. First of all, what and where is the site or the field? Just one family network might include a myriad of localities and an important question is which localities to include and which to leave out. Secondly, there is the question of contexts and localities. Transnational practices are not free-floating or deterritorialized, even if they are mobile. I distinguish here between transnational practices and global scapes such as the Internet and other global media (Urry 2000), which might play an important role in transnational practices, but which have a fundamental global character. Rather, transnational actors are situated in different settings, even if the settings are temporary. Thus the location of transnational practices not

only relates to the structural conditions, but also to the localities where transnational actors actually live or move between. Needless to say fieldwork will always be partial; there is no such thing as capturing it all. Still, multi-sited fieldwork is preferable, but if it is not an option, *multi-sited contextualisations* might solve the worst dilemmas of single-sited fieldwork in transnational practices. In both cases, location-work is important.

The term ‘location-work’ is suggested by Akhil Gupta and James Ferguson in a discussion of the concepts of ‘the field’ and ‘fieldwork’ in anthropological research (Gupta and Ferguson 1997). They propose to work “with an attentiveness to social, cultural, and political *location* and a willingness to work self-consciously at shifting or realigning our own location while building epistemological and political links with other locations” (ibid.: 5, emphasis in original). As already pointed out, location is not to be conflated with a methodological return to studying discrete local or national communities. Rather, one might say that location-work is the analysis of how different actors (including the researcher) are located and positioned within the field – including the contradictions and ambivalence of changing positions in different contexts. Gupta and Ferguson suggest to focus on “*shifting locations* rather than *bounded fields*” (ibid.: 38, emphasis in original). The point is exactly the multi-dimensionality of location within different contexts.

Such location-work is connected to the concept of the politics of location. This concept has been developed within feminist science of knowledge (e.g. Haraway 1991, Braidotti 1994), where it refers to the production of knowledge within gendered and racialised space. In the words of Braidotti: “one’s place of enunciation, that is, where one is actually speaking from” (Braidotti 1994: 237). This ‘place’ not only relates to theoretical positioning, though this is obviously crucial, but also to “the simultaneous situatedness within gendered spaces of class, racism, ethnicity, sexuality, age” (Brah 1994: 204) of both the researcher and the researched. The politics of location then also relates to the question of the position and location of the researcher *in the field* – whether one travels out in the ‘wilderness’ as the ‘heroic explorer or do ‘fieldwork at home’ or ‘homework’ (Lavie and Swedenburg 1996: 20). In either way, the researcher is situated in relation to hierarchies of racialisation, ethnicity, gender etc. and enters a game of already existing power relations.

The politics of location is not only about constructions of identity, but also about the structural framework (such as integration and asylum politics) within which identity work and transnational practices take places. In order to contextualise these questions, I will now briefly present my research project.

### **Studying Somali Transnational Practices in Denmark**

My research project concerns the dynamics between Somali transnational engagement and the status and standing of Somalis in Denmark. More exactly, I focus on Somali engagement in ‘homeland and integration politics’ (cf. Østergaard-Nielsen 2002), such as within associations supporting development and reconstruction projects in Somalia and associations dealing with integration issues in Denmark. I examine how organisational activities feed into other kinds of transnational activities, for instance transfer of remittances within families. I analyse how such engagement relates to social and physical mobility in different contexts and for different positions. Likewise I look into the fields of belonging that the Somalis articulate and live, especially in relation to the development of a diasporic consciousness. This means that I pay special attention to gender, generation, socio-economic position, and other axes of division such as regional origin in Somalia.

The about 18.000 Somalis in Denmark (Udlændingestyrelsen 2003) have mainly arrived as refugees from the civil war in Somalia or through family re-unification. There are no accurate numbers on the global amount of Somali refugees or migrants, but the majority of refugees are to be found in the neighbouring countries or as internally displaced people. There is also a substantial number of Somalis in the West, first and foremost in the UK, but also in Canada, the US, Australia, Scandinavia, and other parts of Europe. While the southern and central parts of Somalia still suffer from fighting clan militias, insecurity, and lack of infrastructure, the North Western part - the self-declared Republic of Somaliland - has been relatively peaceful since 1996.

On the one hand, Somalis in Denmark are perceived, portrayed and treated by Danish politicians, public officials and in the media as ‘very difficult to integrate’ (Skak 1998). Somalis have been targets of several ‘special efforts’, including repatriation efforts (Fink-Nielsen and Kleist 2000), the use of DNA tests in relation to family reunification, and lately in relation to female genital mutilation and the so-called re-education trips of Somali children to Somalia and Somaliland. Somalis are a very visible group in Denmark, both in terms of their media exposure and in public space. Furthermore, the Somali average employment rate of 21% is the lowest among ethnic minorities in Denmark (<http://www.inm.dk>), adding to the marginalisation of the group.

On the other hand, many Somalis seem to be engaged in transnational practices linking various countries of residence with the countries of origin (Farah 2000, UNDP 2001, Griffiths 2002). There are a lot of Somali associations, ranging from local social clubs where Somali men hang out to talk, drink tea and maybe chew qhat (euphoriant leaves), to more poli-

tical associations, including a Danish branch of the biggest political opposition party in Somaliland, Kulmiye. Likewise there are associations engaged in reconstruction and repatriation projects in Somalia or Somaliland, while other associations again are directly focusing on ‘integration’ issues in Denmark. On just one Danish-Somali homepage alone, more than 30 associations are listed (<http://www.somalinet.dk>), and this list certainly is not exhaustive.

I will not go into the specificity of methods here, but just mention that the main data production consists of qualitative open-ended interviews with Somali key persons and ‘ordinary’ association members, as well as participant observation at meetings and associations. I do the bulk of my fieldwork in Copenhagen, but have done short supplementary fieldwork in Somaliland in order to contextualise my Danish fieldwork. Likewise I will do some supplementary fieldwork in London, which is another important site of Somali transnational practices. In the last part of this paper I raise some questions concerning the location-work and the delimitation of (mainly) single-sited fieldwork.

### **Location-work and Fieldwork II**

As already discussed, important methodological questions in transnational studies concern site and location: From what perspective is the research carried out? What are the sites – the actual localities from where the research is being conducted?

Doing the bulk of my fieldwork in Denmark, I can say something about how Somali transnational networks are practised and articulated from positions in Denmark. In this sense my research project is *somewhat local*. Obviously, I do not obtain insight into the meanings of transnational practices as seen from Mogadishu, London, Dubai, Minnesota, Kenyan refugee camps, the suburbs of Stockholm or some of the many other localities, which often are included in Somali transnational networks. Even if my fieldwork is not completely single-sited, I cannot claim to study the transnational processes in their transnationality or multi-locality so to speak (cf. Hannerz 2001: 18). I am not researching all corners of transnational social spaces. Still, as my focus both includes transnational engagement, mobility and immobility, it is not really local either; I do not study assimilation or localisation processes; but how the transnational makes sense and is practised in Somali-Danish contexts. In this way we need a concept parallel to ‘glocalisation’: how the global flows are anchored locally (Urry 2000, Faist 2004). Situated transnationalism perhaps?

In proposing the term ‘situated transnationalism’ I am indebted to the concept of ‘situated knowledges’ (Haraway 1991), which bring back the emphasis on location. In relation to my project, one question is how So-

malis are constituted and constitute themselves as a *special group in Denmark* – and how this relates to the formation of transnational social spaces. This question both relates to the specificity of Somalis in Denmark in relation to media and political discourses as well as in relation to constructions of collective identities within the diaspora.

In relation to the constructions of collective identities, it is interesting to try to map the various axes of unity and divisions, which the Somalis refer to in different contexts according to their location. These include clan, political parties, North vs. South, nomads vs. townspeople, Somalis vs. Danes, education, gender, age etc. They are contextual and relational, depending on the composition of the involved positions in a given situation. One example is to explain the troubles of Somalia as caused by aggressive and uneducated nomads, thereby distancing one self from the troublemakers; at other times, the same people would explain the outspoken Somali mobility with proud reference to the nomadic mentality of the Somalis. In the first case, the internal differences of the Somali group are underlined; in the second case, collectivity and sameness. Such articulations matter in relation to the extension (and explanations) of solidarity: whom reciprocal obligations are expected to include at the various localities in the transnational social spaces.

Another example relates to the question of national identities. While Somalis in Denmark tend to identify themselves as Somali and *not* Somali-Danes, the tendency in Somaliland was to articulate a Somali-Danish identity or a Danish identity. This phenomenon has both been explained to me by Somalis in Copenhagen who had visited Somaliland – and thereby experienced this (new) sense of belonging, as well as by Somalis interviewed in Somaliland, who sometimes even expressed their identity as simply Danish. This ‘new’ sense of belonging also seems to change the positioning in the transnational social spaces. One example is the growth of transnational projects, which define themselves in hyphenated terms, such as Somali-Canadian or Somali-Scandinavian.

A third question concerns the positioning of the researcher. Being a white Danish woman researching one of the most exposed migrant groups in Denmark in many ways structures the way I am positioned in my fieldwork encounters. I have often had the impression of being positioned as a Danish listener to pass on experiences of racism and othering. Often – and to my great relief – I have been told, that I am not ‘one of them’, that is among the racist or ignorant people that some Somalis have difficult encounters with. On the other hand, this does not mean that I am treated as an insider either. There are certain kinds of information, which have proved as closed areas for me, because ‘it is too complicated for Danes to understand’. One example is individual clan positions – the patrili-

near lineage system, which is an important social structure among Somalis and which seem to structure big parts of transnational practices (for discussion on clan in the diaspora see Griffiths 1997, Farah 2000, Fink-Nielsen and Kleist 2000, Hansen 2001). Interestingly, such knowledge was readily discussed during my short trip to Somaliland. In other words, doing fieldwork 'at home' does not mean that the fieldwork is familiar, it can be necessary to change location and locality to get more familiarised.

### **Conclusion**

In conclusion, I have argued that the transnational perspective is a useful lens through which migrants' practices, relations and fields of belonging can be studied. In studying the dynamics between migrant incorporation and migrants' transnational practices, transnational social space is a useful point of departure. Doing mainly single-sited fieldwork I have suggested the term 'situated transnationalism' to emphasise the located, contextual and situated transnational practices, which can be studied in research such as mine.

I have furthermore shown that location-work is important in transnational research methodology and can be studied in different ways. Location-work both relates to the implications of doing fieldwork in specific localities and how the transnational actors are situated in the concrete structural and contextual frameworks. It also relates to the politics of location and the changing gendered and racialised spaces that both the researcher and the researched are positioned in.

## NOTE

- 1 The working title of my PhD project is "Transnational practices and belonging. An analysis of mobility, diasporic identification and transnationalism among Somalis in Denmark". The project is located at the Department of Sociology, University of Copenhagen, 2003-2005. It is also related to the research programme 'Diaspora, Development and Conflict', anchored at the Danish Institute of International Studies, running from 2002-2006. More information can be found at <http://www.diis.dk/global/default.htm#Diaspora>. At this point in time (November 2003), I have carried out four months of fieldwork among Somalis in Copenhagen, supplemented by two weeks of fieldwork in Somaliland. The fieldwork mainly consists of qualitative interviews with Somalis active in various associations as well as some participant observation.

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### Homepages

<http://www.somalinet.dk> (downloaded on 25 June 2003)

<http://www.inm.dk> (homepage of the Danish Ministry of Refugee, Immigration and Integration Affairs; press release of 22 October 2003)

# EVENT OR PROCESS? REPATRIATION PRACTICE AND OPEN-ENDED MIGRATION

ERIK OLSSON

## Departure

What is migration? People perhaps migrate to avoid trouble or poverty. In such situations migration might function as a livelihood-strategy. Migration is of course also a moving between two destinations, but differs from travel in general as it is of a more permanent order. What is then permanent? The travel or the end of the travel (i.e. end of migrating)? James Clifford (1997) would surely have answered "travel" to this question, but how is migration perceived in modern society?

*Transnational migration* is a livelihood strategy for many refugees and other migrants. They maintain connections between different countries in order to survive, and often feel they belong to a communities of another kind than the national community (cf. Glick Schiller et al. 1992). How could their migration patterns be represented in the discourse of a nation-state?

This paper singles out some important dimensions in a repatriation-practice promoted by the Swedish Migration Board (SMB) as well as some empirical findings of how migrants themselves experience return-issues. It intends to contribute to the understanding of how migration is conceived and represented in modern society in general and in a governmental practice in particular. The model of *migration as event* discernable from the SMB repatriation practice is juxtaposed to the model of *migration as process*, discernable from the migrants' experiences.

## Material

The study discussed here is an evaluation of SMB-practice of repatriation.<sup>1</sup> It was conducted mainly in 2001, with the purpose of understanding how SMB formed a practice within the field of return migration: what was the main purpose and point of departure, how these issues were approached in SMB-practice, how well this practice matched the "needs" of migrants, what could be done to better accomplish such a matching (if it existed), etc.

The study was divided in two parts: one focused on SMB-practice and another studied the "reality" of the migrants. In the SMB-part we interviewed almost entire SMB-staff working with repatriation. We also interviewed several what one could call key informants, i.e. people linked to this practice in the capacity of participating in, for instance, a committee (see below), people who were considered to be experienced in the field (mostly employed at SMB), or those who were involved in a project supported by SMB. In addition to those, people in responsible positions at the Swedish Ministry of Foreign Affairs supervising migrant issues were interviewed. Moreover, we participated in several meetings in the SMB-organised committees where staff from SMB and different constellations of representatives from migrant communities, large repatriation projects and NGOs met to discuss different topics in the field of repatriation (for instance the situation in Bosnia or Somalia).

We also could get hold of, as far as we know, most of the documents from SMB meetings and discussions as well as texts (e.g. policy directives by the Swedish government – *regleringsbrev*) concerning the question of implementing repatriation-practice during 1995–2001.<sup>2</sup> In addition to this, as a way of initiating knowledge development, we had our own seminars and "telephone-reports" (i.e. "multi-call") with SMB-staff. All this with the purpose of understanding the practice of SMB and the discourse utilised when it comes to migrants and the possibilities of encouraging and supporting their own wishes to return to their country of origin.

The matching of this practice with its potential customers (the migrants), and their needs, wishes, and priorities, were studied by employing some new empirical studies asking about the "reality" for Bosnians and Somalis, the main target-groups for SMB-practice. In doing this, we interviewed more than 40 Bosnian people in Sweden as well as Bosnia<sup>3</sup>, and more than 20 people of Somali origin living in Sweden<sup>4</sup>. The Bosnians interviewed were all living or had been living in Sweden (most of them refugees since the war in the 1990s), with plans or realised plans to return to Bosnia. Some of these migrants had participated in projects financed by SMB, but others were going to return or had returned to Bosnia individually, with or without SMB-support. It meant that some 20 people were in-

terviewed on site in Bosnia. All Somalis were interviewed in Sweden and none of them was an immediate returnee. In addition to this, we were able to bring in our experiences from previous and on-going research, above all from the empirical research regarding the migration between Sweden and Chile.<sup>5</sup>

### Theoretical Take-Off

The study of SMB itself was originally not intended to come up with deep insights into return-migration. It was expected to produce some practically oriented reflections on patterns in SMB-practice, and how it could be improved with consideration to how the migrants themselves perceived it. However, as researchers we could not avoid having at least some preliminary thoughts on how an institution like SMB might arrange its practice as well as what problems and issues might affect migration in general and return-migration in particular. These points may deserve some elaboration here.

In order to understand what is constructed by SMB as an institution, I here depart from two overlapping concepts: *practice* and *discourse*.

When using *practice* I choose to be very operational and I simply refer to such arrangements were institutional staff does (or at least is supposed to do) something in order to carry out the institutional tasks (in this case, to support repatriation). *Discourse* is used when I refer to all kind of texts, talk and expressed "imagination" that actually form some kind of object (in this case, the migrant and the migrant's situation).

A good starting-point for understanding institutional practice might be, in the word of Mary Douglas (1987), to study how "institutions think". Institutions are basically gatherings of people trying to solve some sort of identified common problem, thereby relying on some kind of discursive understanding of the nature of this problem. In this case the problem might be on how to arrange a social practice concerned by people's will or wish to return to their homeland. Institutional discourses are in general terms decisive in how an object should be perceived and described, thereby overriding individual ideas on the same topic. The institutional staff simply, as a rule, takes daily decisions relying on institutional discourses (Agar 1985) manifest in different procedures in the institutions such as meetings, education and training, a common language and terminology, staff schedules, etc. (cf. Olsson 1995 and 2000).

In short, the institutional discourse is in its basic stage guided by an idea or model of what the problem is all about and by an idea of how it should be solved (cf. Geertz 1973). It does not imply a causal model of human behaviour; instead, the institutional discourse and practice establish themselves simultaneously as a self-monitoring model. The motive and the rea-

son are sometimes implicit (and maybe forgotten). It is (even) possible that although the object of the institution changes in nature, the institution maintains its direction with a slight correction of its "purpose".

The concept of migration employed here is more or less detached from the push- and pull-biased conceptions that were once popular in social science. Tollefsen Altamirano (2000) discusses some of the problems inherited in such research that tries to list the "motivating factors" of return migration, saying for instance that a major problem is "the common isolation of the decision-making process from the societal context" (*ibid.*: 39). Instead of offering a deeper understanding of migration and the migrants' choices, decision taking, identifications and other complex relations, such studies might just mirror the dominant discourses favouring people's moral duty to return to their homeland.

In this text I will instead favour a concept informed by globalisation-theory and transnationalism (cf. Castles and Miller 1993, Glick Schiller et al. 1992, Vertovec and Cohen 1999). This change in conceptualising migration and migrants' affiliations, has certain implications. For instance, it is by now widely understood that when people are (for whatever reason) leaving their country of residence, they do so well informed by other migrants' experiences, helped by contacts/networks of friends and kin, and guided by the imagined opportunities in the new country. This is however, on the individual level, not a one-way act but rather an open-ended process where the decision to stay, return or leave for another place, might never find its solution.

While engaging in wide-spread networks of kin, friends and others, the migrants also contribute to and reproduce links between different countries. The result might be that a society-like structure emerges and reproduces itself in "transnational activities" (Al-Ali et al. 2001) and arrangements. This tendency of emergent migrant communities crossing borders of national states has been well documented by researchers even previous to the "global turn" in social theory (cf. Cohen 1969, Watson 1977).

It is by now common in, for instance, research of diasporas to make transnational claims on people's belongings and migration patterns (cf. Cohen 1997, Werbner and Modood 1997, Vertovec and Cohen 1999). However, such conceptualisation of migration should not be misinterpreted as a belief in 'free movement' of people, culture, goods and capital, that neglects the role of power structures, economy, or states. In fact, as Thomas Faist underlines in this volume (Faist 2004), national states (as well as the other factors mentioned) are constitutive elements of migration and transnationality.

These conceptual insights were applied in the study presented in this

paper. The central question was how the migrants' reality was accounted for in SMB-practice as well as how it affected the migrants' plans and realisation of plans when it comes to return. Aina Tollefsen Altamirano's (2000: 39) claim was tested, that "both immigration country governments and exile communities may produce discourses about the 'moral duty' to return to the 'home country', disregarding both individual circumstances and structural possibilities for return". The study found this quotation applicable to the SMB-practice.

### **The Turn in Swedish Migration-Policy**

The return dimension in Swedish migration policy has been played down and neglected since the days of WWII and the following years when many thousands of refugees from Germany and the Baltic states were repatriated to their homelands. For a long-time, however, (non-Swedish) migrants who wanted to return to their country of origin could apply for a small grant (1 500 SEK, equal to 165 Euros, per person), a contribution to the costs of tickets and relocation of goods. This grant was legitimised in a humanitarian discourse it being a human right for a person to live in his/her country of origin.

With this exception, SMB6 had practically no activities of its own within the field of return-migration, but supported other organisations in such activities. Above all, support was given to a Christian NGO which since mid 1980s was involved in assisting Latin American migrants in Sweden (later extending it to other groups), who planned to return to their country of origin.

It seems that the exclusive immigration-oriented policy was badly criticised by the turn of the last decade of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. This was at a time when the political map of the world was radically changed, the debate of the globalisation and 'free movement' expanded and influenced migration policy in pace with global trends (see, e.g., Arbetsmarknadsdepartementet 1988). This went hand in hand with a more general discourse depicting the refugee as a "problem" (cf. Malkki 1995). During the early 1990s the official Swedish migration policy turned from dealing exclusively with immigration to migration as a whole, thus incorporating the question of return migration.

The new government policy in this field became visible in actual practice in 1994, when the Ministry of foreign affairs directed SMB to take action for a repatriation of Bosnians and simultaneously inquire for the possibilities to allow return migration for Somalis. That was quite a surprising mission as the countries those groups came from were still in warlike situations. Anyway, that inquiry seems to have been an embryo of a more permanent policy and practice that was manifested in a government proposition 1994 (*regeringsproposition*), singling out Bosnians as

the main target group, and the following formal directions in the yearly letters of regulation (*regleringsbrev*).

As we found out, the hierarchy between the ministry and SMB is not a one-way avenue; when it comes to the mission concerning Somalis and Bosnians, SMB was deeply involved in the preparation of the mission it then received. Finally the directions which govern today's migration policy – the one which more profoundly integrates return-issues into migration policy – is formulated in the government proposition of 1996/97 (Prop. 1996/97:25), saying for instance that:

Contributions internationally and in Sweden may have the long-term goal that refugees voluntarily should be able to return within safe conditions to their country of origin. This view will as a rule characterise the reception of refugees in Sweden from the beginning.

The view saying that a good integration in the Swedish society is the best pre-condition for return, is still valid.

Those refugees who wish to return but are lacking resources, may have extended support.

Return-migration programs may be adapted to the different situations of the groups.<sup>7</sup>

The reasons for this new mission are fuzzy. The motivation to why migrants suddenly should be supported in leaving Sweden, even though it is frequently said that the return should be voluntarily, is not formulated. Also, there is no motivation to why Bosnians and Somalis were singled out as two target groups (though it did not exclude other groups) as the fighting still was massive in both Somalia and Bosnia. In fact, in 1994 Somalia collapsed as a state due to the intense war between different groups and fractions. The Dayton agreement was far from being signed, and Bosnia was still in fire. The universal humanistic discourse previously used to legitimise a (modest) return-policy, seemed to get a slightly other meaning than just a voluntary dimension. Bosnians were at the same time obliged to apply for a visa when visiting Sweden, and most Somalis were after that as a rule given temporary protection for a year instead of a permanent resident visa as the normal procedure used to be (if the refugees qualified for the refugee status).

As some of our informants were high officials of the Swedish government, we were given an 'emic' explanation to why Somalis and Bosnians would be the "natural" groups to repatriate. According to them, there was an international consensus on bringing Bosnia back to normality and it was underlined that the refugees were badly needed in this reconstruction. That brought Bosnians to the front when the new policy was discussed. The Somalis just happened to provide for comparison, while the re-

patriation-practice was modelled on the former group. I have to direct the attention to our finding that this is not chronologically true as, in fact, the authorities were discussing the return of Somalis simultaneously or even months before discussing the return of Bosnians.

### **Swedish Migration Board and Repatriation Practice**

Leaving the reasons for this drastic turn in the Swedish migration policy aside, we could note that the new government mission in the mid 1990s authorised SMB to develop a practice enabling return for migrants who had a permanent visa but were not yet Swedish citizens. Those migrants who became Swedish citizens were disqualified.

In the later part of the 1990s SMB established its own operative activities leading to a practice which in our study was summarised in five categories: travels (in visiting and recognising purposes), grants allowed for migrant applicants with a serious return-purpose, funds for projects intended to support repatriation migration, information and networking, and co-operation with other organisations/institutions. I will give a brief description of these operational categories below, but first I turn to the mission given to SMB and what premise guides the practice.

SMB was directed to extend the grants given to each migrant or family (up to 10 000 SEK, with a maximum on 40 000 SEK per family)<sup>8</sup> and to provide information about a certain country as well as supporting particular projects. Of these three types of support, the projects became the largest in economic terms.

The emerging repatriation-practice at SMB after a few years became a separate practice with its own budget and meetings. Since 1999 the repatriation-practice at SMB was organised via its regional districts.<sup>9</sup> This meant that officials in the regional districts were assigned the responsibility for return issues. These officials from different part of the country then belonged to a common group which were co-ordinated from SMB head-quarter. Several times a year the "return-officials" met at internal conferences as well committees to discuss common problems in the administration of repatriation. At rare occasions the officials could inform themselves on-site by participating in a "visiting travel" to for instance Bosnia or Kosovo. Most of the officials had other tasks in their work and administrated applications for repatriation-oriented projects, or gave some information to a group or organisation when time allowed them to do so. It means that the return-dimension in migration in general was considered to be a separate issue and not incorporated in issues that belonged to other practices of migration, for instance refugee reception.

In practice, most of the resources are/were directed towards (but not exclusively) Bosnians and Somalis, mainly in terms of contributions to

projects assumed to be beneficial to their plans to return. The individual applications for return-grants were administrated by a section at SMB head-office. SMB received most applications during 1997, the first year after the raising of the grant, when the number exceeded 1 000 applications, which should be compared to the year 2000, when SMB received less than 200 applications (158 applications granted) and in 2003 even less (89 granted during the first 10 months).

### **Repatriation Practice and the Migrants' Dilemma: Migration as Event**

In the proposition quoted above, the migrants' "country of origin" is frequently referred to. It is, in various ways, repeated as some self-evident fact that people sooner or later will return to their country of origin. It is only a matter of time and circumstances, of safe conditions, or the situation in the family that would allow return.

I do not claim that our studies have disclosed that officials in SMB practice give voice to an aggressive demand that refugees should "go home". On the contrary, in the texts as well as in individual utterances, it is underlined that people should return on voluntary basis and that it is understandable that it sometimes is difficult to take the step and move again. The discourse on repatriation has, as I see it, humanistic undertones, implying that migration often is involuntary and circumstantial (even though we heard rare, but blunt statements that refugees were cheating with their reasons and possibilities). But what strikes me in this discourse is the total certainty among officials (as well as in texts as the proposition, letters of regulations and internal memos), that refugees are supposed to be deeply attached to *one* country only and that this country in normal circumstances would be their country of origin. The discourse implicitly refers to a "normality" seen as stability of being in one place only, which migrants would benefit from if they could achieve it. Let us turn to some examples.

In the governmental proposition of a new migration policy (Prop. 1996/97:25), stable and integrated life as normality, is underlined, implying that people need to be integrated in some national structure: "The view that a good integration in the Swedish society is the best pre-condition for a return, is still valid". The text frequently refers to the importance of combining the integration achievements within the migration policy with a strategy that seriously considers the return aspect.

Other examples could be given out of memos and documents issued by SMB. In a memo from 1998, the idea of stability as a kind of pre-condition for a return was emphasised: "... refugees should get relevant information enabling them to take a profound decision about their future. SMB should provide the means for those people who have decided to re-

turn". In similar phrases it is clearly stated that integration and stability in the host-country are the best pre-conditions for the decision.

By this SMB does not mean that people are supposed to take the decision to stay in Sweden for good, continuing an integrated life. They are supposed to ponder about the return, perhaps visit the old country, and then take a (final) decision on what country to spend the rest of their life in. This idea is well supported by the possibilities for the migrant to be paid a "visitor-journey" (*besöksresa*) by SMB, in order to inspect the conditions in the country of origin.

Official declarations, for instance the governmental proposition 1996/97, as well as SMB officials, were clear on this point. For example, in one of our seminar-discussions with officials, the idea of the necessity of taking a decision was underlined. Even when we tried to question this presupposition by saying that migrants sometimes need an open-ended strategy to meet the future, the SMB-participants were convinced that the practice should by no means contribute to the dilemma about staying or returning. People should be helped to know what they really wanted. Neither the adults nor the children should be supported in indulging in the dilemma by, for instance, being encouraged to come back to Sweden after a failure-period in their homeland.

This last convenience might explain some special dimensions of the practice. One controversial issue was that SMB did not show all cards when informing migrants about rules and regulations regarding the visa for permanent residence in Sweden. Migrants with a permanent visa lose it after having registered a move to another country. A common procedure is that those who have been permanently resident in Sweden for more than five years could without problem register for a new permanent visa, but this information was not included in the standard information on repatriation. The importance of keeping this humanitarian backdoor open was even emphasised in the proposition of 1996/97.

The same is valid if people decide to return to Sweden within a year after the registered departure. People who returned to their homeland, even those who received the grant or those who participated in repatriation-projects (or both), could benefit for this procedure. In my interviews with Chilean returnees in 1994 and 1999, I found out that this procedure was almost unknown among those who regretted their decision to leave Sweden. Both the government and the NGO-representatives have criticised the information procedures of SMB on this point. SMB is suspected to deny complete information. The motive for this, some officials declared, was that SMB should not give returnees a false expectation of receiving a visa, since it can never be guaranteed before it is applied for. In personal communication some officials also confessed that they did not want to give

that kind of information as it might obscure the migrants' decisions. After renewed critique from the government, the information was completed in this matter.

This principle of a clear base for decision also guides officials in their assessments of the applications for repatriation-projects that various NGOs submit to SMB. NGO-projects that SMB expects to contribute to many persons' welfare and successful return, usually get highly ranked in these assessments. In quite many cases however, a project could be supported even if it was not intended to encourage migrants to return, but had an informational approach provided the migrants with information needed for making their own decisions.

To summarize: In 1995 SMB introduced a repatriation practice, which for a long time was controversial and even taboo in Swedish migration policy. A new practice which is not known among its potential "customers" (i.e. migrants and other societal institutions), has of course to "show some results" to gain support and acceptance. This is in fact how this practice was legitimised. The picture of a happy end in the migrants dilemma, is important and explains why SMB invested that much effort and prestige in "successful return" (in the eyes of SMB) or "closed cases". In accomplishing this picture the selected information about the visa procedures as well as the denying of projects that could obscure a straight line of deciding on where to live, fitted in.

Through the documents regulating repatriation practice and through a kind of professional culture, SMB discursively constructed a model of migration as an *event*. The discursive fundament to this refers to an assumed normality relying on the stability of a permanent and original home, and people's inherent belonging to a country. This pertinence could however very well be altered in stable conditions for example when a migrant has been well integrated in the new country. It is quite obvious that this practice was directed towards a national agenda, defining migration as something related to a closed room. It implicitly signalled who belongs to the Swedish society (which might explain the repatriation profile put on Somalis), and pointed to people's belonging to their country of origin. This occurred either as a result of the way the practice was legitimised, and/or as a result of how the problem was formulated in the first place, seeing refugees as a "problematic" and displaced category that should be helped in returning to their country of origin. The model that emerges here depicts migration as an event leading to a final choice and thus a re-gained stability.

### **Migration as Process**

As mentioned in the section on the theoretical assumptions, it is well

known from contemporary literature on migration that migration is an open-ended process, rather than a decision related to push and pull conditions. This pattern was clearly demonstrated in our findings.

We found out that relatively few migrants utilised the SMB-grants for return-migration. Out of the total emigration from Sweden of thirty four thousand people who registered as emigrants from Sweden during 2002, 13 746 of them were foreign citizens but less than 200 applied for a grant to return. That does not mean that people were not aware of the possibilities, but different circumstances made it more favourable not to apply for a grant or to participate in a repatriation-project.

The disqualification on Swedish citizenship-holders in the repatriation programmes made the programmes less popular among the migrants. The risk of losing the permanent visa without a guarantee for receiving a new, did not contribute either. Many families utilised a strategy of keeping different options open, letting one or two of the family members apply for citizenship in Sweden, and others keeping the original citizenship.<sup>10</sup> Particularly the Somali interviewees also found the repatriation-programmes insulting, and an act of discrimination. "Why is the government so eager to repatriate us to our homeland, instead of helping us to find a decent living in this country?" It did however not prevent some among the intellectual Somalis to apply and receive money from these programmes.

Many interviewed persons were eager to return to Bosnia, or thought that they might give it a try some day. For some of them it was a self-evident dream soon to be realised, while others were more sceptical and said that they would rather wait and see. It is however true that the discourse among the Bosnians in Sweden has to a great extent been permeated by the return-issue and quite many did give the return a chance.<sup>11</sup>

The return to Bosnia was in many cases hazardous as the returnees' chance to succeed, in this respect, depended on "luck" as well as good connections and "right" ethnic or family affiliations. "Newcomers" are often regarded as people who took the opportunity to escape and forgot their responsibility. This means that a returnee has to be careful about finding the residence and well-informed of what group is in power. For some of our informants it was difficult to predict the post-war exercise of power. Many faced difficulties since their estate was occupied by people who stayed behind or moved in as internal refugees, or even by the local authorities – leading to chaotic situations in which the returnees had to make legal claims on their property.

We met some people in Bosnia who stayed and tried to overcome the hardships of everyday life, but most of our informants were either on their way back to Sweden or to another country, or waiting for an opportunity to do so. The reality of an open-ended migration pattern referred to in

scholarly literature on migration, has been verified in our empirical findings.<sup>12</sup> Here follows an example.

Selma and Mirsad came to Sweden as Bosniak refugees during the war in the 1990s. The couple were former residents of a small town in Eastern Bosnia, today inhabited almost only by the ruling Serbs. In 1996 they decided in to return to Bosnia and Selma first travelled alone to inquire about the opportunities. After having been promised a job she returned to Sweden. A year later, Selma came back to Bosnia to take up the promised job. After two months of waiting for the promise to be fulfilled, she returned to Sweden. Then it was Mirsad who travelled to Bosnia and succeeded in finding employment as a teacher in a provincial town not far from his home-village. Yet, he soon faced some social problems as his background as a refugee made him a suspect person – a *pobjegulja* – in the eyes of some of his colleagues. He gradually lost the quite advantageous prospects he had when he first returned to Bosnia, ending up with no apartment and no job. In December 1997 he gave it all up and returned to Sweden, where he by now had to start everything all over again. In the meantime (October 1997) Selma went to Bosnia for another attempt to re-establish herself. This time she was decisive: she moved out of their apartment in Sweden and quit the social allowance which granted at least a minimum income. After some months Selma succeeded in finding a job for her and also for Mirsad, who (in March 1998) came from Sweden to take up a position as an engineer. Despite practical problems in for instance finding a decent living and a strong feeling of not being fully socially accepted, Mirsad this time managed to stay for 18 months, with a few breaks for short visits to Sweden. However, between August 1998 and September 1999 he stayed in Bosnia alone, since Selma, after losing her job, returned to Sweden again. In her third attempt Selma stayed for a year, working as a teacher, but not having a permanent position. But as the disappointments about finding a decent housing and a greater share of their income being used for paying the rent, as well as for not having the promises from local authorities and employers fulfilled, the couple (for this time) gave up their attempts to return to Bosnia. Instead they went back to Sweden and after a few months managed to get a decent apartment and some income from low-status employment.

The odyssey of Selma and Mirsad illuminates a case of migration that many Bosnians as well as Chileans might recognise. From my empirical stock of Swedish Chilean migrants (see Olsson 2003), similarities to Selma's and Mirsad's experiences can be found. When coming back to Chile many of the returnees experienced a situation of becoming a kind of immigrant in their own homeland. The returnees in many cases faced a lack of income due to unemployment and also therefore had accommodation

problems. In addition to this, they experienced a quite stressful disapproval by the local Chileans due to their background as political refugees and expatriates. In many cases, their staying in Chile is a struggle for survival. The Chilean government did not do much to help but only provided a small and very basic service of support. In many families conflicts appeared due to different expectations and wishes. Some families split (again!) due to re-migration, others remained in permanent psychological stress.

The migrants are in many cases seemingly trapped somewhere "between" Sweden and Bosnia, or between Chile and Sweden. But, in our empirical material we found that the majority of Bosnian returnees kept the door to Sweden open. Many of them could circulate between the two countries, living in Bosnia while trying to find out about the possibilities of settling there, but returning to Sweden for a period of employment and "normal" life. The trick is not to burn any bridge. The ones who accepted the material support provided by SMB are in great risk to get stuck at one of the sides, unable to get back if the situation demands so, as an official registration also mean a lost permanent visa. Also, the quite extensive pendulum-migration was an obvious feature in the Sweden-Chile case. These migrants live a season or more in Sweden, return to Chile for a year or so, and then return to Sweden again. The purpose of this transmigration might be to afford the surplus in Sweden and to spend it on a good life in Chile. It could also be an effort to make good investments in business by utilising the double connections. There are some men, but also women, who adopted this pendulum-pattern by working in Sweden for several months and returning to Chile for the rest of the year.

The social situation of the refugee-returnees also tends to be quite ambiguous. On the one hand they try to cope with an outsider position by assimilating into the local context, not mentioning or actualising their exile experiences, but often being "seen through" for certain exile-shaped linguistic markers as well as for certain behaviour and orientation. On the other hand, many of the returnees conceive that the exile experiences cannot, and maybe should not, be forgotten. In many situations they feel like strangers in their "own" society.

The Somalis in Sweden do not have the same opportunity of "choice" about return.<sup>13</sup> Many of them are disappointed by the reluctance of the Swedish authorities to grant them visas for permanent residence and the willingness to engage them in repatriation programmes. Only one of the Somalis we interviewed did foresee an immediate return, although many planned it. What is striking, however, is that all of them visited Somalia (including Somaliland and Puntland) once or twice after having been exiled. It also appeared that many were planning to visit or even move to other countries (UK and Canada were mentioned), where kin or friends live.

The official statistics support this information: 406 Somalis registered emigration from Sweden in 2002, but only 122 of them returned to Somalia.

This tendency among Somalis as well as Bosnians and Chileans to travel to or communicate with people connected to their social networks, and to "leave the door open" when deciding to return, is illustrative for what migrancy is all about. All permanent or temporal housing in Sweden and in homeland, time and money invested as well as the social bonds created and reproduced in both (or several) locations, are signs of "multi-local attachments" (Clifford 1994) that the migrants embody in their daily life.

This does not mean that people are "rooted" in many places instead of one, but that these multiple attachments are results of a migratory way of life. When people interact and make different kinds of investments in social spaces related to some sort of migrant communities, they also support and maintain the development of migratory infrastructures, as are central in for instance diasporas (*ibid.*; cf. Cohen 1997, Vertovec and Cohen 1999). These migrant communities develop a social life and communicative fields that have a transnational ground, i.e. span the borders of national states, according to their own dynamics (Olsson 2003).

In this respect, the migrants and their often cited "roots" could be said to be anchored not in particular places, but in social spaces constituted by the communities in terms of networks, organisations, enterprises etc. They may embrace Chile and Sweden or Bosnia and Sweden as well as other parts of the world. Within the transnational social spaces, movement itself might be considered as "normal" and safe, and the permanent settlement could very well be perceived as something abnormal. The sedentary condition has its own unpredictability in terms of material standard (employment, income etc.) and social life (inclusion/exclusion; marginalisation/integration). Permanent settlement could therefore be connected with severe anxiety when it comes to future. This is a space where the normality of life is rooted in the migratory order of things.

### **Arrival**

Most of the people leaving Sweden for a permanent return to their country of origin do so with a Swedish passport in their pocket, or without risking their permanent visa in Sweden. The low numbers of returnees attracted by the SMB-repatriation practice, which in fact demanded a "final choice" on where to live, could then be interpreted as an evidence that migrants are more oriented to integration than to return (which was notified by SMB-officials with some satisfaction). Moreover, the "failures" – in terms of unsuccessful return, i.e. the re-return of migrants – were

discursively legitimated by a reference to the final decision over the future: "at least we helped the migrants to decide".

However, our studies of returnees to Chile and Bosnia showed that many returnees, instead of taking a final decision on leaving or staying, tried to survive by an open-ended strategy. They were often involved in a community life that embraced both countries and they utilised multiple connections in their livelihood strategies. This confirms Rouse's (1992: 45) observation that individual choices and preferences might be non-decisive: "Instead of leaving one community and re-orienting to another, then, many settlers developed transnational involvement that encompasses both".

This open-ended migration strategy was not supported by the sedentary SMB-practice. Instead SMB seems to be blind on all other links, connections and affiliations between people and places than those within the national territory. Deep in the migration discourse disclosed in SMB repatriation-practice, we can trace the sedentary point of view nurtured from a national discourse. It nourishes a belief that people have and need to have a place where they come from, using the image of roots underlining this naturalness of coming *from* somewhere. This corresponds to what Liisa Malkki (1992: 31) discusses in terms of a sedentarism that is "deeply metaphysical and deeply moral, sinking 'peoples' and 'cultures' into 'national soils'".

The transnational migration is not represented in the discourse that informs SMB-practice, which perhaps is understandable as the practice has its institutional foundation in the national state. Yet, the recognition of dual citizenship in 2002 as well as the humane undertone in SMB-practice when it comes to the "migrants' dilemma", shows that there is some understanding of the migrants' difficulties in making either-or choices. The continuing insistence that the migrants should make final choices, is just a confirmation of Malkki's (1992) observation that the discourse of the "national order of things" also has a strong moral dimension, relying on the idea of authentic belonging.

## NOTES

- 1 The study was financed by a grant from the Swedish Migration Board. Participating researchers were Christina Johansson (PhD student at Ethnic Studies, Linköping University), Zoran Slavnić (PhD in Sociology, Niwl in Norrköping), Sadia Hassanen (Ceifo, Stockholm University) and the author. Published in Olsson 2001.
- 2 Christina Johansson conducted the SMB-part of the study.
- 3 The Bosnian part of the study was conducted by Zoran Slavnić.
- 4 The interviews with the Somalis were conducted by Sadia Hassanen and the author.
- 5 Research by the author; see, e.g., Olsson 1997 and 2003.
- 6 The Swedish Migration Board (Migrationsverket) received its current name in 2000, the previous name (The Swedish State Board for Immigration) was associated with immigration affairs only (Statens Invandrarverk).
- 7 All translations of official texts from Swedish to English, are made by the author.
- 8 Equal to Euro 1 100 and 4 400 respectively.
- 9 To my knowledge, this organisation (with a slightly different content) is still valid in 2003.
- 10 The study was conducted before July 2002 when the possibilities to obtain dual citizenship were very limited. After that date dual citizenship is permitted.
- 11 The exact number of returnees is not available since many do not officially register their return. The total number of returnees since 1995 probably exceeds two thousand (of a total Bosnian population of more than 52 000 in Sweden). According to the official statistics (SCB) the number of emigrants to Bosnia was 848 in 1997 and 183 in 2002.
- 12 Field documentation by Zoran Slavnić.
- 13 Very few emigrants from Sweden to Somalia are registered. According to official statistics the number in 2002 was 122.

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## CONCLUDING REMARKS

THOMAS FAIST

The purpose of the workshop was to bring together disciplinary perspectives on what could be broadly called a potentially multidisciplinary concept. This concept has been exchangeably called by different names such as transnational spaces, transnational fields, transnational formations – to name only a few more prominent ones. During the workshop discussions three main sets of issues have developed. They all deserve closer scrutiny. The three red threads are: first, the transnational turn as a *process* and thus a focus on dynamic aspects of transnational linkages; second, the transnational turn as part of a *paradigmatic shift* in migration and immigrant incorporation research but also in the sphere of the humanities and cultural studies; and, third, the *utility of a multidisciplinary concept* for both disciplinary and multidisciplinary research and teaching. This involves a number of similarities and differences in how various disciplines in the social sciences and humanities have employed the concept in dealing with transnational phenomena.

These concluding remarks do not strictly follow the questions we had posed at the outset: What is the state of art concerning transnational spaces and transnationalization in your discipline? What is the value added? What are competing terms and concepts? How does your own research fit in? My comments partly reflect not only the willingness of the paper givers and commentators to engage in the questions guiding the workshop. They also, at least in part, reflect the state of the art in the disciplines themselves. More often than not, there is no coherent or even emerging discussion on these questions. Sometimes, the concept is rather marginal. Also, the papers delivered during our workshop too diverse in kind to allow a systematic comparison. There have been research proposals on the one hand and papers speaking to the questions directly on the other hand.

I have disregarded the research proposals because they mostly do not speak to the questions raised. Nonetheless, there are some trends which can be discerned from the papers and oral remarks. Needless to say, my preliminary reflections therefore do not aim to do justice to the rich repertoire of reflections gathered in the individual papers and oral comments.

### **Transnational Spaces: Transnationalization as Process**

No matter what term the individual contributions have used to denote border-crossing processes, they all display a focus on process and move from a focus on static descriptions to an analysis of transnational phenomena as dynamic processes. And, as Didem Danis said, trans-approaches would need to look at the processes of internal differentiation within migrant categories. This trend can perhaps best be captured by the trend to "verbize" transnational spaces and speak of *transnationalization*. The paper by Eric Olson on return migration patterns among categories such as Chileans, Bosnians and Somalis has even taken the distinction between 'event' and 'process' as a way to organize the discussion. Of course, as Per Gustafson and Philip Muus have reminded us, this process-orientation should not be confused with the claim towards an understanding of transnationalization as a unidirectional and non-reversible process. Also, instead of claiming the disputed newness of border-crossing phenomena, it is more useful to use the transnational paradigm as a lense. There is no such thing as a manifest destiny towards ever increasing transnationalization of migration and immigrant incorporation even in a globalizing world. Associated with a greater emphasis on transnational spaces as referring to sets and positions of actors and social structures in a dynamic way is a redirection of thinking about migration and immigrant integration: It is not so much the end-product or the outcome that is to be explained, for example, assimilation or segregation of immigrants. Rather, our gaze turns towards the very *social mechanisms* which allow for the development, maintenance and reproduction of border-crossing life-worlds and social and cultural systems of meaning and practices. Such mechanisms include exchange, reciprocity and solidarity but also master mechanism such as path dependency. Again, a caveat has to be added. Kristina Grünenberg warned of the danger of reification when remarking that the metaphor of the sedentary migrant should not be replaced with the equally questionable assumption of the nomadic migrant.

The papers point towards decisive conceptual progress in the transnational research field when it comes to the characteristics of ties. They bring in a fruitful symbolic dimension and an emphasis on meaning. Many of the contributions in the early 1990s have emphasized the importance of *interpersonal* relations and thus social ties for transnational linkages

to develop and spread. This was a direct outflow of the insights which developed out of the migrant network concept in international migration research. The sociological network concept which was applied in migration research has been so powerful because it is parsimonious compared to the earlier anthropological literature of the Manchester School from the 1950s and 1960s. This earlier tradition on networks was still attentive to the *meaning(s)* persons attached to ties. It is now, again, time to ask whether it is fruitful to bring back in not only migrants into migration research but also the meaning they attach to relations. This is all the more necessary because concepts close to transnational spaces, such as diaspora and exile, cannot be thought without a close analysis of the content of ties. Clearly, the anthropological and ethnological contributions to this workshop have directed our attention to symbolic ties across borders and the manifold *ways of belonging* to which migrants attach meaning.

On a methodological level the sociological, anthropological and ethnological contributions have discussed the importance of ‘multi-sited fieldwork’ and – if that is not possible due to restraints of time and funding – what Nauja Kleist calls ‘multi-sited contextualization’. As Pia Steen argued, it makes a difference, however, whether a researcher from the ‘North’ conducts fieldwork in a familiar environment, or as the almost proverbial stranger à la Georg Simmel in a different part of the world.

Overall, there is an even more vexing question involved in what is researched in terms of description and explanation. When describing transnational practices, meanings and structures we often go into the field looking for the very phenomena we seek to account for. This is a deeply problematic procedure which is called ‘sampling on the dependent variable’ in statistical analysis but equally relevant for our concerns. First, by sampling in a biased manner, we omit all those migrant practices, actions and meanings which are not transnational but ‘purely’ local (whatever that may be). We already know that not all migrant categories are involved in transnational practices and that there are significant inter-group differences within one and the same migrant category. Second, it raises the question: transnational in relation to what other categories? Why is it important – in contrast to what other allegedly non-transnational phenomena?

Most paper givers and commentators have refrained from using the term ‘transnational *space*’. Sometimes, alternative terms have been used, such as diaspora (see below). Certainly, there are fundamental conceptual problems involved with the term ‘space’ which goes beyond a purely physical viewpoint which would look at the placement and relationship of persons, ties and positions in places. A relativist understanding of space encompasses ‘action’, a sphere conventionally attributed to ‘time’. As

such, 'space' is a term on a very high level of abstraction. Also, Dimos Chatzoglakis prompted that the use of 'space' in the social sciences should not to be confused with space as an a priori meta-concept, as defined by Immanuel Kant. In a nutshell, the concept of 'space' is not easily amenable to empirical operationalization, whether used sociologically or philosophically. Also, the term space is often used as a metaphor to include social formations with a translocal and transnational potential, such as families & kinship groups, circuits and communities. As such, it does not contribute any additional insight. It is then simply a metaphorical umbrella term.

There are also challenges involved with the use of the first part of the term '*transnational space*'. While most papers live and thrive on the implicit assumption that there is something special about crossing borders of national states, the significance of this fact is rarely explicitly stated. Often, the term 'translocal' would be sufficient to refer to the place-connecting ties and linkages we talk about. The challenge ahead is to fit translocal ties into a border-crossing framework. The fundamental and simple insight that transnational refers to the borders of national states mean to make a difference as to material, political, legal and discursive opportunity structures for migrants and relatively immobile persons. In short, national states may offer different opportunities for transnational activities and may manage transnational issues in different ways. This comes out very visibly in dealing with issues such as dual citizenship where the responses of countries range from toleration to restriction. Yet even descriptions of the life worlds of migrants on a micro- and meso-scale need to be attentive to this massive fact.

In the end, transnational approaches resemble skeletal structures which have to be connected to and by varying theoretical elements and social mechanisms. As of yet, there is no consistent outline of a theory of transnationality or transnationalization. This state of the art, however, also offers opportunities for scholars in each field or discipline to ingeniously employ the concept and connect it to broader theories on the micro-, meso- and macro-levels.

### **The Transnational Turn as a Paradigmatic Shift**

In migration research in particular but also in various social science disciplines and the humanities in general, terms such as transnationalization, transnationality, and all terms which can be associated with transnational – such as social formations and social fields – have been part of a conceptual shift away from the national state or/and national societies as the sole and unquestioned frame of reference for an appropriate research unit on a conceptual level. We are certainly in a healthy disagreement over whether

a shift from ‘methodological nationalism’ (Herminius Martin; Anthony Smith) to ‘methodological cosmopolitanism’ (Ulrich Beck) will be significant in redirecting our research epistemologically and methodologically. Also, it is a hotly debated question to what extent notions such as *globalization* and transnationalization are competing concepts. Perhaps they are overlapping –not exclusive. Conventional efforts to distinguish the term in arguing that both are about border-crossing processes but ‘transnational’ having a more limited purview in terms of scope (density, intensity of transactions) and less radical consequences (not calling the autonomy of national states into question) should be viewed critically. Phenomena classified as global – for example, increasing and quicker financial transactions across borders – are usually limited to certain regions of the world only. Nevertheless, all these discussions raise the question of a paradigmatic shift away from certain terms and towards certain notions that guide our thinking.

In migration research the transnational turn has signalled a move *away* from assimilation and immigrant integration as a guiding premise. Perhaps the lowest common denominator is that the transnational paradigm offers a conceptual escape from a narrowly conceived understanding of integration as being bounded by immigration countries only. Consequently, all contributions to the workshop explicitly included the emigration side in terms of return migrations, ways of belonging, agency and structures. Transnationally-inspired analyses always include some cross-section of immigration and emigration country linkages. In contrast to the older literature on migration systems from the 1980s, migrants do play an active role beyond those of occupying positions in networks, groups and organizations. The current ‘trans’-approaches heavily lean towards an emphasis on agency.

In this respect even subtle shifts in existing research agendas matter. Nina Nyberg Sørensen, for example, argued that the well-established concern with migration and development has received a new impetus by bringing migrant agency back into the field of economic cooperation. This implies, among other things, that studies should not narrowly focus on macro-level impacts of factors such as remittances but also at the household and small community levels.

Whether the transnational turn – conceived as a step towards cosmopolitanism or not – represents a significant departure from nationally-bounded paradigms connected to ‘Western civilisation’, is questioned by new research in Cultural Studies, as evidenced in Bernd Clavier’s contribution. True enough, the post-colonialist wave has celebrated authors from the so-called periphery and pointed towards their hybridity. It has also revived the term diaspora and connected the return of the now post-colonial

periphery to the post-modern condition. Migrants, for example, have become the quintessential expression of the modern, fragmented self (cf. Arjun Appadurai). Creolization and syncretism are also much-mentioned terms which point towards a challenge to the supposedly narrow and nationalist understanding of culture. The powerful criticism directed at this trend is that the hybrid authors are squarely part of efforts by Western intellectuals to continue dominating what used to be called the periphery (perhaps *g/II* will lead to a new term), not the least indicated by the fact that only the authors assimilable to the postmodern paradigm are published and read in the ‘West’ and reside there. According to this view, the postcolonial paradigm may be interpreted as yet another effort of recreating modes of asymmetrical cultural interchange between immigration and emigration countries in particular and the ‘center’ and the ‘periphery’ in general.

### **Multidisciplinarity: Common Concept(s) in Different Disciplines**

The central enterprise of our workshop has been to ask whether and to what extent concepts such as ‘transnational spaces’ can serve as a common denominator for scholars mostly engaged in disciplinary discourses. After all, truly multidisciplinary epistemic communities are still rare although there have been attempts to do so; for example, in the field of migration research. IMER at Malmö University is an example. As of yet, the career patterns of scholars in the social sciences and humanities are largely set within patterns of academic recognition and advancement in rather traditional disciplines. Concepts such as transnational spaces may contribute to both strengthen diffusion between and dialogue across disciplines and to integrate multidisciplinary projects such as IMER. Seen in this way, common concepts play a role beyond research and could become one of the approaches suitable to multidisciplinary IMER teaching. This is one way to take Björn Frylund’s introductory remarks about the ‘mission’ of IMER seriously. Therefore, as our discussions indicate, it makes sense to use a roughly common concept – interchangeably called transnationalism, transnational spaces, transnational fields, etc. – and use it from various disciplinary perspectives to deal with both themes specific to disciplines and common to several disciplines. One of the results of the workshop has been that different disciplines shed light on common concerns and thus complement each other. For example, at least four papers dealt with transnational politics and polity from diverging vantage points.

When taking a disciplinary perspective, it is striking to observe the differences in terms of the timing of the transnational turn. Viewed from an international vantage point, various disciplines have taken the transnatio-

nal turn at different times and therefore the concept is at various stages of development. *Anthropologists* have been at the forefront of rediscovering and introducing the transnational concept, originally deployed by international relations scholars in the late 1960s and early 1970s. The marked difference to the older political science literature is the shift from macrostructures such as the world economy and multinational corporations to an agency-oriented usage. It thus comes at no surprise that international migrants – now often called transmigrants – have figured prominently. Around the same time the rather new field of *Cultural Studies* took a turn inspired by Marxist thinking. Conceptual extensions of the terms diaspora and exile also indicated a shift from the analysis of nationally-bound patterns of production and consumption to transnational and global processes. While the international working class as a class by and for itself was clearly absent, the notion of resistance was creatively widened and applied not only to capitalism but also to nationalist discourses. In turn, when pondering phenomena such as ‘long-distance nationalism’ (Benedict Anderson) this sparks the question on how useful an emphasis on terms such as ‘transnationalism from below’ actually is. In short, anthropology and cultural studies have served as trendsetters and catalysts of debates which spread into other disciplines. Yet, transnational concepts have been probably taken up in disciplinary specific forms. In *Sociology*, which Östen Wahlbeck considers a discipline fractured by a high extent into an endless number subfields, the transnational turn has been highly influential in selected fields, such as immigrant entrepreneurship and the discussion of integration. It seems that there is now a search for linking up research on migrant transnationality and transnationalization to broader concepts of a ‘mobile sociology’ (John Urry) and concepts such as world society and global civil society – but also to more conventional research on modes and patterns of immigrant incorporation. After all, it is plausible to assume that national states as the ‘masters of space’ (Henri Lefèbvre) exert an influence on the forms transnational linkages take. In *Political Science*, emerging research has tended to deal with migrant political activities and the manifold imports and exports of conflicts. This has been especially visible in relation to Islamic and political organizations perceived as extremist by the respective governments involved. More fundamental to the constitution of politics are questions pertaining to polities, such as membership and thus state-citizen relations. Research on dual citizenship paradigmatically stands at the core. Membership relates to the core of political communities and the expressive side of politics. In *Ethnology*, we see the beginnings of the discussion. As Maja Povrzanović Frykman suggests, moving from an emphasis on concepts such as ethnicity to terms such as diaspora imply efforts to discard essentialist notions

without falling into the trap of excessive constructivism. This may be a way to avoid the childhood diseases other disciplines encountered when making the transnational turn.

In the long run, it seems to be important to be modest about the claims made when using the transnational perspective. It should not easily be forgotten that 'trans'-approaches, as all concepts preceding it in the various research sites, imply a sometimes heroic oversimplification and ideologization in looking at geographical mobility, economic activities, cultural change, and political claims. Nevertheless, being aware of this danger, exciting challenges lie ahead. The contributions to the workshop suggest that the transnational turn among scholars and disciplines in the Scandinavian countries is not as widespread as in North America, the UK or some continental European countries. This observation calls for a particularly careful evaluations of the generalizations just made. It also offers a unique opportunity to introduce the transnational turn in scholarly debates in this region of the world. The latter constitutes a transnational project in itself. To disseminate and further develop the transnational perspective is a challenge for both research and teaching.

**MALMÖ UNIVERSITY**

SE-205 06 Malmö

Sweden

tel: +46 40-665 70 00

[www.mah.se](http://www.mah.se)

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