

**TRANSNATIONAL MIGRATION STUDIES:  
PAST DEVELOPMENTS AND FUTURE TRENDS**

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**TABLE OF CONTENTS:**

Introduction: The Emergence of a Transnational Optic

Theoretical Developments & Debates

Arenas, Forms, Novelty, and Durability

A Review of Empirical Research by Domain

-Economics

-Politics

-The Social

-The Cultural

-The Religious

Future Directions

-Methodological Implications of a Transnational Optic

-The Nature of Embeddedness and the Spatial Arenas in Which It Takes 'Place'

-The Good, the Bad and the Global: Variable Consequences of Transnationalism

Conclusion: Transnational Migration Scholarship and the *Longue Duree*

**ABSTRACT** - The last two decades have witnessed a sea change in migration scholarship. Most scholars now recognize that many contemporary migrants and their predecessors maintain various kinds of ties to their homelands at the same time that they are incorporated into the countries that receive them. Increasingly, social life takes place across borders, even as the political and cultural salience of nation-state boundaries remains strong. Transnational Migration Studies has emerged as an inherently interdisciplinary field, made up of scholars around the world, seeking to describe and analyze these dynamics and invent new methodological tools with which to do so. In this article, we offer a short history of theoretical developments, outlining the different ways in which scholars have defined and approached transnational migration. We then summarize what is known about migrant transnationalism in different arenas – economics, politics, the social, the cultural and the religious. Finally, we discuss methodological implications for the study of international migration, present promising new scholarship, and highlight future research directions.

## **INTRODUCTION: THE EMERGENCE OF A TRANSNATIONAL OPTIC**

Migration scholarship has undergone a sea change in the last two decades. Most scholars now recognize that many contemporary migrants and their predecessors maintained a variety of ties to their home countries while they became incorporated into the countries where they settled. Migration has never been a one-way process of assimilation into a melting pot or a multi-cultural salad bowl but one in which migrants, to varying degrees, are simultaneously embedded in the multiple-sites and layers of the transnational social fields they live in. More and more aspects of social life take place across borders, even as the political and cultural salience of nation-state boundaries remains clear.

These developments in migration scholarship parallel debates in other fields. History has moved away from simplistic national comparisons to reconceptualizing itself as the study of regional interactions in places such as the Black Atlantic (Gilroy 1993) or the Indian Ocean Rim (Bose 2006). Keohane and Nye (1971) argued decades ago that international relations had to rethink its basic conceptual categories to capture cross-border relations between non-state actors and between different sub-national actors.

In this article, we review the evolution of scholarly efforts using a transnational optic to understand migration. We begin by offering a short history of theoretical and conceptual developments in the field. In the second section, we focus on the ways in which economic, political, social, cultural and religious life are transformed when they are enacted transnationally. We conclude by discussing the methodological implications of these scholarly developments and highlight three directions for further study, united by the common theme of simultaneity – embeddedness and spatial arenas, variations in the

consequences of transnationalism, and comparing internal and international migration. We locate migration scholarship within the general field of Transnational Studies and argue for an approach that highlights the *longue durée*.

### **THEORETICAL DEVELOPMENTS AND DEBATES**

Sociology has been in the service of the nation-state since its inception. In the United States, some of the earliest debates concerned how to make Americans out of newcomers. These conversations continue. On the one hand, new assimilation theory argues that over time, most migrants achieve socioeconomic parity with the native-born but that ethnicity and race matter, and that both the native-born as well as the immigrants change along the way (Alba & Nee 2003, Jacoby 2004, Kivisto 2005). “Segmented assimilationism” suggests several possible trajectories for migrants on their route to incorporation, including becoming part of the (white) mainstream; remaining “ethnic,” or becoming part of the underclass and experiencing downward mobility (Portes & Rumbaut 2001, Portes & Zhou 1993). Both perspectives acknowledge that patterns of assimilation, acculturation and integration vary depending on the country and context of departure, immigrant characteristics, immigrant enclave capacities, and the political, social and economic context of the sending and receiving communities.<sup>1</sup>

During the 1990’s, transnational migration scholars added a third perspective to these conversations. They argued that some migrants continued to be active in their homelands at the same time that they became part of the countries that received them. They described how migrants and their descendants participate in familial, social, economic,

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<sup>1</sup> For a summary of the latest developments and theoretical debates concerning immigrant assimilation, see the Waters and Jimenez’s (2005) article in ARS volume no. 31.

religious, political, and cultural processes that extend across borders while they become part of the places where they settle (Basch et al 1994, Faist 2000a, b, Glick Schiller et al 1992, Grasmuck & Pessar 1991, Guarnizo 1997, Itzigsohn et al 1999, Jacoby 2004, Kivisto 2001, Kyle 2000, Levitt 2001, Mahler 1998, Portes et al 1999, Smith & Guarnizo 1998). While the first iterations of this perspective broke new ground, they also suffered from weaknesses common among innovative approaches. They tended to see transnational migration everywhere when in fact, the range and scope of migrants' transnational practices vary considerably. They were celebratory, predicting that by living transnationally, migrants could overcome the poverty and powerlessness to which capitalism relegated them.

These weaknesses generated critiques. Some took issue with the terminology (Lucassen 2004), arguing that the distinction between global, international, and transnational was not clear. Alternative terms, such as "translocalism" (Barkan 2006), "bi-localism," "bi-nationalism" (Lucassen 2004), and "trans-state activity" (Waldinger & Fitzgerald 2004) were proposed in response. Others claimed that migrants had always maintained ties to their countries of origin and that, therefore, there was little new (Waldinger & Fitzgerald 2004). Still others, while acknowledging the salience of transnational ties for the first generation, predicted they would rapidly decline among their children (Lucassen 2004, Portes et al 1999). A number of scholars questioned the scope and importance of the phenomena, arguing that too many claims were based on case studies, particularly of Latin American and Caribbean migrants, who have a particular social and historical relationship to the United States (Dahinden 2005, Waldinger & Fitzgerald 2004). When surveys conducted by Portes and his colleagues

(Guarnizo et al 2003, Portes et al 2002) found that regular transnational activism was fairly low, and that only 10 to 15 percent of the Dominicans, Salvadorans, and Mexicans they studied participated in “regular and sustained” transnational political and economic activities, this only added fuel to the fire. Finally, many believed that dismissing national borders was premature, and that, contrary to what some had alleged, the nation-state system was unlikely to disappear in the near future (Waldinger 2006).

Subsequent scholarship took important steps to rectify these weaknesses. As Brenda Yeoh and her colleagues write, such work has begun to “sketch the lineaments of transnationality, clarifying its shape, contours, and structure, and at the same time pointing to the processes and agencies that sustain transnational trajectories and edifices” (Yeoh et al 2003b, p. 208). It has clarified the social spaces in which transnational migration occurs and the social structures it generates, the variations in its dimensions and forms, the relationship between processes of incorporation and enduring transnational involvements, the ways in which contemporary iterations of cross-border memberships compare to earlier incarnations, and their durability. We discuss each in turn.

### **ARENAS, FORMS, NOVELTY, AND DURABILITY**

Basch, Glick Schiller, and Blanc-Szanton initially defined transnationalism 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, p. 6). More recent scholarship understands transnational migration as taking place within fluid social spaces that are constantly reworked through migrants’ simultaneous embeddedness in more than one society (Levitt & Glick Schiller 2004, Pries 2005, Smith 2005). These arenas are

multi-layered and multi-sited, including not just the home and the host-country but other sites around the world that connect migrants to their co-nationals and co-religionists. Both migrants and non-migrants occupy them because the flow of people, money, and “social remittances” (ideas, norms, practices, and identities) within these spaces is so dense, thick and widespread that nonmigrants’ lives are also transformed, even though they do not move (Levitt 2001). While the numbers who engage in regular transnational practices may be fairly small, those who engage in occasional, informal transnational activities, including social, cultural, and religious practices, in response to elections, economic downturns, lifecycle events, and climactic disasters are much greater. Taken together and over time, their combined efforts add up, and can alter the economies, values, and practices of entire regions (Kyle 2000, Levitt et al 2003).

Several scholars have attempted to delineate the types of social spaces that produce and are produced by transnational migration and examine the social structures embedded within them. Morawska (2003) proposes conceptualizing migration as “structuration” to capture the continuing dynamic between structure and agency that extends into transnational domains. Besserer (1999) and Kearney (1995) refer to “migration circuits.” Guarnizo (1997) and Landolt (2001) speak of “transnational social formations.” Sørensen and Fog Olwig (2002) prefer “transnational livelihoods.” R. Smith’s (2006) term “transnational life,” includes those practices and relationships linking migrants and their children with the home country, where such practices have significant meaning and are regularly observed.

Faist (2000a, 2000b) argues that variations in spatial extension and temporal stability produce different transnational topographies: (1) dispersion and assimilation (weak

simultaneous embeddedness in sending and receiving countries and short-lived transnational ties); (2) transnational exchange and reciprocity (strong simultaneous embeddedness but rather short-lived social ties); (3) transnational networks (weakly embedded and long-lived); and (4) transnational communities (strongly embedded in at least two countries and enduring). Levitt and Glick Schiller (2004) describe “social fields,” which they define as sets of multiple interlocking networks of social relationships through which ideas, practices, and resources are unequally exchanged, organized, and transformed. Vertovec characterizes transnational migration as involving three “modes of transformation” within major domains: perceptual, or migrants’ “orientational ‘bi-focality’ in the socio-cultural domain”; conceptual, affecting the “meaning of the analytical triad, ‘identities-orders-borders’ in the political domain”; and institutional, affecting forms of financial transfer, public-private relationships and development in the economic domain” (Vertovec 2004b, p. 971).

Forms of activity within these cross-border social spaces vary along several dimensions. There are debates concerning the appropriate parameters and levels of analysis. One early distinction, proposed by Smith and Guarnizo (1998) differentiated between transnationalism “from above” (global capital, media, and political institutions) and “from below” (local, grassroots activity). Portes (2001, 2003) argued for confining the analysis to those individuals who are formally and regularly engaged in “strict” transnational economic, political, or socio-cultural activities. Itzigsohn et al (1999) distinguish between “narrow” (highly institutionalized and continuous activities involving regular travel) and “broad” (occasional or loosely-coupled with sporadic or no movement). Guarnizo (1997, 2000) defines “core transnationalism” as those activities

that: a) form an integral part of the individual's habitual life; b) are undertaken on a regular basis; and c) are patterned and therefore, somewhat predictable. "Expanded transnationalism," in contrast, includes migrants who engage occasionally, for example, in response to political crises or natural disasters.

Other scholars argue for a broader approach that includes both informal and formal social, cultural, and religious practices, connecting all levels of social experience (Kim 2006, Levitt & Glick Schiller 2004, Mahler & Pessar 2006, Smith 2006). Morawska (2007) suggests that present-day transnationalism encompasses a diversity of form and content, "carried out by individuals, immigrant families or ethnic groups...informal or institutional channels...confined to private lives...or involving the public sphere." Glick Schiller (2003) differentiates between "ways of being," or the actual social relations and practices that individuals engage in, and "ways of belonging," those practices that signal or enact an identity demonstrating a conscious connection to a particular group (cf. Morawska 2007).

Many argue that transnational migration is not a new phenomenon, and re-tell the U.S. immigrant story through a transnational lens. Chan (2006), Foner (2000), Morawska (2004), and Gabaccia (2000), to name a few, have highlighted the cross-border engagements of "old" immigrants coming to the United States in the Industrial and Progressive eras. Many immigrants intended their sojourns to be temporary and stayed tightly connected to the homeland. What's more, a significant proportion, between 30-40 percent, actually went back (Hatton & Williamson 1994). Further, migrants have always "sent a little something home" to their families. Between 1900 and 1906, the total amount of money orders sent from the immigrant colonies in America to Italy, Russia, and

Austria-Hungary was a staggering \$90,000,000 (Wyman 1993). Migrants also actively engaged in transnational processes of nation-state building and identity politics that influenced countries as diverse as Greece, Korea, China, Italy and Hungary (Gabaccia & Ottanelli 2001, Laliotou 2004, McKeown 2001, Smith 1998). Key national leaders from Chang-Kai-Shek to Garibaldi lived transnationally themselves and drew on globally circulating ideas about nation and race in their efforts to build strong nation-states (Blanc et al 1995, Glick Schiller & Fouron 2001).

While early transnational migration scholars may have overstated their claims of “newness,” it is also clear that there are real historical differences between earlier and more recent incarnations. For one thing, many non-industrialized countries have become economically dependent on the remittances migrants send and have put into play a range of policies and incentives to ensure they continue. Second, while the U.S. labor market warmly welcomes highly skilled, fluent English speakers, it is much less hospitable to poorly educated migrants with poor language skills. These individuals are "pushed" into transnational lifestyles because they cannot gain a secure economic foothold in their home country or in the United States, while professional migrants, who have the human and cultural capital to take advantage of opportunities in two settings, voluntarily adapt transnational livelihood strategies (Guarnizo 2003, Itzigsohn & Saucedo 2002, Levitt 2007). Finally, the intensification of international economic and labor markets, the globalization of the media, and time-space compression, resulting from the transportation and communication revolution have made transnational back-and forth travels and communication much quicker, easier, and more readily available (Foner 2000, Vertovec 2004a).

While many scholars now accept that transnational practices and attachments have been and continue to be widespread among the first generation, far fewer think these ties persist among the future generations. They cite both declining language fluency and survey findings indicating that the children of immigrants have no intention of returning to live in their ancestral homes (Alba & Nee 2003, Kasinitz et al 2002, Portes & Rumbaut 2001). Conceptualizing generation as a lineal process, involving clear boundaries between one experience and the other, does not accurately capture the experience of living in a transnational field because it implies a separation in migrants' and nonmigrants' socialization and social networks that may not exist (Eckstein 2004, Eckstein & Barberia 2002, Portes & Rumbaut 2001). As Waters and Jimenez point out, in contrast to prior eras of migration, there is now an ongoing replenishment of new immigrants, forcing us to rethink the concept of "generation" altogether, "[A]t any point in time each generation is a mix of cohorts and each cohort has a mix of generations" (Waters & Jimenez 2005, pp. 107 & 121).

Instead, socialization and social reproduction often occurs across borders, in response to at least two social and cultural contexts (Espiritu 2003, Leichtman 2005, Levitt & Glick Schiller 2004, Mazzucato et al 2004, Purkayastha 2005, Smith 2006). Clearly, transnational activities will not be central to the lives of most of the second or third generation and they will not participate with the same frequency and intensity as their parents. But the same children who never go back to their ancestral homes are frequently raised in households where people, values, goods and claims from somewhere else are present on a daily basis (Levitt & Glick Schiller 2004, Pries 2004). They have the skills and social connections to become transnational activists if and when they chose to do so

during a particular life-cycle stage. What's more, the children of nonmigrants are also raised in social networks and settings permeated by social remittances (Fouron & Glick Schiller 2002, Levitt 1998).

Finally, scholars of transnationalism do not deny the significance or durability of national or state borders; the variations in state economic, military, or political power; and the continuing rhetorics of national loyalty (Smith 2001, Yeoh et al 2003a). Instead, they see the links between citizen and state as multiple, rather than disappearing. States reconfigure themselves, dropping some functions and assuming new ones (Goldring 2002, cf. Martinelli & LeFluer forthcoming intro. to spec. iss. *Ethnic & Racial Stud.*). That migrants' ability to make political claims is enabled or constrained by the state in various ways points to the state's continuing importance in shaping transnational practices (Koopmans & Statham 2003).

In the following section, we selectively summarize the literature on specific domains of transnational practice: a) the economic realm, including different kinds of remittances, their impact on development, class differences in migration, and ethnic entrepreneurship; b) political transnationalism, the changing role of the state and the boundaries of political belonging; c) transformations in social life, especially in structures of family and kin, and class, race and gender relations; d) what happens when culture travels; and e) the importance of religion as it relates to migration.

## **TRANSNATIONAL MIGRATION BY DOMAIN**

### **Economics**

Some scholars see transnational migration as a by-product of late capitalism, which renders large industrialized countries dependent on cheap labor, and small, non-

industrialized countries dependent on the remittances workers send home (Itzigsohn 2000, Portes 2003). Others relate the durability of transnational social fields to moments of intense economic interconnection or “high points of globalization” (Basch et al 1994). The amount of money migrants send home is quite striking. According to the World Bank (2006), the money migrants send home has doubled in the past decade, (\$232 billion in 2005 alone, with \$167 billion to developing countries). Official figures however, may represent only half the funds people actually send, making the global remittances market as large as \$300-400 billion annually (Hussain 2005, World Bank 2006). In at least thirty-six countries, including Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, El Salvador, Haiti, Samoa, Yemen, and Jordan, remittances exceed private and official capital inflows and are the primary source of foreign currency, rendering these countries so dependent on remittances that their economies might collapse if they declined (Hussain 2005, World Bank 2006).

These monies are used individually and collectively. They support family members who stay behind. They fund small and large businesses (Landolt 2001, Sana & Massey 2005). They support public works and social service projects in sending communities. Nearly 10 percent of those who send remittances to Latin America, for example, belong to a “hometown associations” (HTAs) that work cooperatively with NGOs in the homeland (Orozco 2006). There are an estimated 2,000 Mexican HTAs throughout the United States that contribute up to \$60 million a year (Orozco & Lapointe 2004). Sending-country governments are quick to respond. The Mexican government instituted a “3 x 1” program whereby migrant-generated funds are matched by funds contributed at the local, state, and federal government level; El Salvador and Guatemala have similar

matching funds programs (Fox & Rivera-Salgado 2004, Goldring 2002, Orozco 2006, Popkin 2003). States also actively encourage emigrant investment. Since the 1970s, for example, the Indian government has offered Non-Resident Indians (NRIs) the opportunity to open special high-interest bank accounts in U.S. dollars or British pounds that are subject to very low taxes. It recently floated specialized bonds that attracted nearly \$10 billion from the diaspora (Baruah 2005).

Economic activism clearly varies by class. Hi-tech professionals living in Silicon Valley also live “transnational livelihoods,” (Morgan 2001, Saxenian 2006, 2002, Varma 2006). Transnational entrepreneurs range from the Nigerian “suitcase entrepreneur,” selling traditional African items on the street, to the CEO of a multi-million dollar software company with franchises in metro-Boston, London, and Karachi (Levitt 2007). In between, is the owner of a small Brazilian bakery in a Boston suburb, who may be part of the lower class in the United States because of the racial hierarchy, but is considered as important as the Mayor in a rural hometown outside of Governador Valadares (Beserra 2003, Martes et al 2002).

Because 40% of the world’s labor migrants move from one developing country to another (particularly in Asia), it is important to look at sub-regional contexts. Hewison and Young link state policies, local institutional and cultural contexts, and human rights outcomes in their examination of Asian transnational migration (2006, p. 3). Yeoh and Chang (2001) look instead at multiple phenomena within a single space – the global city of Singapore. They identify four categories of transnational labor and capital flows and the ways in which they are interdependent: 1) a transnational business class of highly mobile, skilled professional, managerial and entrepreneurial elites; 2) a large number of

immigrants filling unskilled and semi-skilled low-wage jobs in the urban service economy; 3) “expressive specialists” in cultural and artistic venues; and 4) world tourists attracted by the city’s cosmopolitan ambience.

The implications of simultaneous economic incorporation are many. The small, storefront enterprises in what appears to be an ethnic niche or “enclave,” may actually be situated in transnational social fields (Light & Isralowitz 1997, Zhou 2004). Viewing ethnic entrepreneurship transnationally, Zhou (2004) argues, brings to light several ways that individuals and communities can advance. Using social networks beyond national borders and utilizing bi-cultural or bi-lingual skills migrants may allow migrants to circumvent structural disadvantages in the host society. Cross-border ties imbue ethnic communities with valuable social capital that can foster their horizontal and vertical integration. These effects extend far beyond the economic – the right type of social capital can help ethnic communities cut across class and spatial boundaries and barriers and help facilitate mobility for the second generation (Ruble 2005, Zhou 2004).

Moreover, micro-level actions have macro-level consequences. For instance, some countries use the promise of future remittances to demonstrate credit worthiness and secure loans (Guarnizo 2003). Not just states, but bilateral, regional, and global entities (e.g. The World Bank or the IOM) as well as NGOs have gotten on the “remittances as development panacea” bandwagon (Kapur 2005, Nyberg-Sorensen et al 2002). Moreover, ethnic entrepreneurship also changes the receiving context. McEwen et al (2005) argue that minority ethnic economic activity in Birmingham, England, such as Chinese business networks, ethnic food manufacturing, and the Bhangra music industry, have positively affected the city’s future economic development.

## Politics

Political transnational practices include a variety of activities such as electoral participation (either as voters or as candidates), membership in political associations, parties or campaigns in two different countries; lobbying the authorities of one country to influence its policies toward another, and nation building itself. Østergaard-Nielsen (2003a) specifies three different domains of action. The first is homeland politics, comprised of migrant political activism in the host country around home country issues, and may include expatriate voting, electoral campaigns, and running for political office (cf. Guarnizo et al 2003). Many researchers examine the pernicious results of long distance nationalism and its relationship to fundamentalist religious movements (Blom Hansen 1991, Kurien 2001), as well as the ways in which migrants use receiving states to pursue foreign policy goals in their homeland (Layton-Henry 2002, Mahler 2000, Skrbiš 1999). In Europe, the ways in which Turks and Kurds in various settings are transforming the functions of sending states, from politics to corporate marketing, has been the subject of considerable research and theory (Caglar 1995, Østergaard-Nielsen 2003b, 2001).

Immigrant politics refers to the political activities undertaken by a community to improve its social status in the host country, including attempts to improve access to services, fight discrimination, or to heighten the groups' recognition and rights; it sometimes involves homeland resources (Besserer 2003, Fox & Rivera-Salgado 2004). For example, the Turkish government has intervened actively on behalf of its nationals in Germany (Østergaard-Nielsen 2003b). Not all immigrant politics is transnational, although aspects of it may become so over time. Some groups organize across borders by building alliances with supporters in other receiving states who help lobby regional or

international institutions (e.g. Kurdish migrants pressuring the Council of Europe or Eritrean rebels who organized a referendum for independence (Al-Ali et al 2001, Al-Ali & Koser 2002, Kastoryano 2000).

Translocal politics differs from the other two types of political activism in that it does not always involve host or home-country governments. It includes the activities migrants undertake to support specific localities in the home country. The many Caribbean and Latin American hometown associations that finance development projects in their homelands fit under this rubric. These primarily economic actions are transnational but they become political when the state intervenes to support or control them (M. Martinelli & J-M. LeFluer, introduction to a special issue of *Ethnic & Racial Stud.*, forthcoming). States generally support such efforts because they promote development.

Simultaneity characterizes the political realm, not only through these domains of action but also through political membership and its attendant rights and responsibilities. While political borders are increasingly permeable, they do not challenge territorial jurisdiction; at the same time, there is a growing overlap in political identities and legal statuses (Bauböck 2003). Bloomraed (2004) found increasing reports of dual citizenship in Canada alongside the persistence of single, national citizenship. Fox (2005) suggests three forms of transnational citizenship: (1) parallel, where individuals are active in more than one political community, but those communities do not themselves come together; (2) simultaneous, referring to collective actions that in themselves cross borders; and (3) integrated, which involves multiple levels and arenas, which can be parallel and/or simultaneous, or both horizontal and vertical, because activity crosses levels as well as borders. Glick Schiller and Fouron (2001) call “trans-border citizens” those who

participate formally in the daily life and political practices and debates of two or more nation-states, claiming rights from and responsibilities to more than one government (see also Ong 1999, Soysal 1994, Yuval-Davis 1999). Sassen describes “Unauthorized yet Recognized” migrants, who have no formal status or rights, but practice the duties associated with citizenship, such as raising a family, schooling children, holding a job. In contrast, “Authorized yet Unrecognized” *citizens* may have full legal status, but are not recognized as political subjects because of factors such as discrimination and cultural stereotyping (Sassen 1999, pp 85-7). Migrants or their descendants can also act as “social citizens,” enjoying a range of rights, including access to state services, without formal citizenship. Many even participate in some local elections in Europe, New Zealand and a few U.S. localities (Bauböck 2003, Waldrauch 2003). They become a social force, definitely constrained by legal status, but not completely limited by it.

Recent scholarship suggests multiple memberships can enhance rather than compete with or contradict each other. Migrants from countries that recognize dual nationality are more likely to become naturalized U.S. citizens than those from other countries (Escobar 2004, Fox 2005, Jones-Correa 2001, Smith 2003). Navigating in transnational space has strengthened, rather than negated, the continuing significance of the national. Frequently, the same actors engage in homeland, new land, and international politics (Escobar 2004, Levitt 2007). For example, Snel et al (2006), found that transnational involvement in general does not impede “immigrant integration.” Migrant groups that are known as poorly integrated into Dutch society are not any more involved in transnational activities and have no stronger identifications with countries of origin than others who are well integrated.

## **The Social**

Transnational Migration scholarship has also identified striking changes in social life, documenting transformations in kinship and family structure and how these inform constructions of class, gender, and race. Studies of transnational kinship document how family networks that cross borders are characterized by gendered differences in power and status. Because migrants need to maintain ties so they will have social contacts and support should they need to return to their homelands, kin networks can be used exploitatively, a process of transnational class differentiation in which the more prosperous extract labor from persons defined as kin (Ballard 2001, Bryceson & Vuorela 2002, Chamberlain 2002). A transnational moral economy of kin involves putting family first, such as strategies for collective mobility or marrying into the right kinship network and accumulating social capital in the host society (Ballard 2001, Fog Olwig 2002, Gardner 2006, Schmalzbauer 2004).

The boundaries of family and kinship also change over the life course (Espiritu 2003, Levitt & Waters 2002, Smith 2006). In many households, living transnationally across generations becomes the norm. But whether individuals ultimately forge or maintain some kind of transnational connection at some point in their lives depends on the extent to which they are reared in a transnational space (Abelman 2002). Pries (2004) found that transnational strategies were adopted over several generations, depending on individuals' changing needs and desires through the life cycle. At the point of marriage or child-rearing, the same individuals who showed little regard for a parental homeland and culture may activate their connections within a transnational field in search of a spouse or values to teach to their children (Espiritu & Tran 2002).

Much research has focused on living arrangements, finances, and generational reproduction in the everyday lives of transnational families. Recently, however, scholars have begun looking more closely at the experiences of parents, children, and the elderly, and how they are gendered. This work finds that, on the one hand, transnational motherhood takes a toll because care-giving at a distance is emotionally stressful for parents and children and also challenges prevailing Western norms of motherhood (Hondagneu-Sotelo & Avila 1997, Parreñas 2005). On the other hand, increasingly affordable communication and travel allows parents to be actively involved in the everyday lives of their children even via long distance (Mahler 2001, Parreñas 2005). Mazzucato(2007a) shows how migration changes inter-generational relations between parents in Ghana and their migrant children by affecting the ways in which elderly care is provided, and in some cases not provided, by migrant children.

Further, researchers have documented the increase in circulating children and the elderly between places of origin and settlement to reduce the costs of social reproduction, promote learning of the mother culture and tongue, and, as often cited by parents, to remove children from what is perceived as the negative and undisciplined social environment in the United States (Menjívar 2002a, Parreñas 2001). The growing number of transnational adoptions adds to this circulation as adoptive parents with different ethnic backgrounds than their children strive to provide them with cultural and social “background information” they themselves cannot provide; in turn, adopted children transform the cultural make-up of their educational milieu (Dorow 2006, Volkman 2005).

Micro-level family and kin connections and practices scale up to affect broader social processes, especially with respect to gender relations (Itzigsohn & Giorguli-Saucedo

2005). Carling (2005) argues that three intrinsic asymmetries characterize relations between migrants and nonmigrants. First, migrants and non-migrants are differently positioned in relation to translational moralities. Second, migrants and non-migrants do not enjoy equal access to information in the transnational social field. Third, there is asymmetry in the distribution of different forms of resources between migrants and non-migrants. As a result, we see many contradictions. It can be liberating when migrant women become breadwinners and find themselves on more egalitarian footing with men (Hondagneu-Sotelo 2001). The flip side, however, reveals that gender distinctions are sometimes reinforced and reinvented to create hierarchies that are more rigid and “traditional” than in the homeland and protect women from what is perceived as hostile and immoral receiving-country culture (Alumkal 1999, Caglar 1995, Espiritu 1992). This complex web reaches outside of family – as women go to their jobs (which they may never have had at home), join community associations or become active church. Women receive multiple, conflicting messages in the public and the private spheres of both the homeland and the receiving context, which they must somehow reconcile (DeBiaggi 2002, Pessar & Mahler 2003, Salih 2003) Moreover, state policies around welfare, child care, maternity benefits or voter registration, which affect men and women and their ability to exercise multiple memberships differently, also reflect the gendered nature of migration (Caglar 2002). Finally, the sheer number of women who migrate has grown tremendously over the past two decade – a special volume of *International Migration Review* focuses on the “the feminization of migration,” emphasizing the need for theoretical and analytical tools that go beyond the study of sex roles (Donato et al 2006)

Along with gender, class and race are also constituted in transnational social fields (Gardner & Grillo 2002, Mahler & Pessar 2006, Willis 2000). The impetus to participate across borders and the ability to do so varies by both class and race. The differentiated nature of labor migration discussed above, affects more than just economic outcomes; it translates into differences in migrants' access to informal, but crucial knowledge and networks for success in the mainstream. In contrast, middle class and professional migrants have sufficient social and cultural capital that they can selectively assimilate elements of where they come from and where they settle (Levitt 2007, Pluss 2005, Raj 2003).

Further, migrants often confront an entirely different racial hierarchy than the one in place in their homelands, which limits their socioeconomic status and how American or British or Dutch they can become. Their home and host-country mobility trajectories are not always in sync. They may move up with respect to the home and host-country, move up with respect to one and downward with respect to the other, or experience downward mobility in both contexts. Migrants have to make sense of two, often conflicting socioeconomic and status ladders, and to locate themselves somewhere within them using measurements that reflect the multiple places where they live (Levitt & Glick Schiller 2004, Raj 2003, Roth 2006, Smith 2006). Some recent work has shown how first and second generation migrants reinvent religion to help counter their marginalization and blocked mobility in host countries. Kamat and Mathew (2003) describe U.S. Hindus who join fundamentalist groups, and how the multiculturalist discourse in place in the United States, which reifies "neglected" minorities, actually encourages a Hindu-Americanness of this kind. Dhooleka Raj (2000) documents a similar process for young Hindus in Great

Britain who, in this case, use religion to differentiate themselves from Muslims and other “Asians.”

### **The Cultural**

A growing number of researchers are developing conceptual frameworks for thinking about migration, the nation, and culture. One debate concerns the extent to which globalization creates a juggernaut of Westernized culture that reaches even the most remote corners of the world. A parallel debate involves the age-old structure vs. agency question, which at its extremes, sees a massive “culture industry” influencing powerless consumers, versus a view of post-colonial subjects liberated by the expressive potential of culture. Here, we focus on the different cultural mixes created when people from different places come into real or imagined contact with each other.

Decades ahead of postmodernists, folklorist Américo Paredes (1958) proposed studying the borderlands as a “transnational unit,” analyzing the early twentieth century *corridos* (guitar ballads) of the turbulent Rio Grande area. In 1940, Cuban anthropologist Fernando Ortiz (1995[1940]) described the transformation that occurs when foreign material enters a new social context as “transculturation.” Since then, scholars have continued to trace the literary and artistic expression of borderland identities within Latin-American frontier zones (see among others Anzaldúa 1987, Aparicio 2004, 2006, Córdoba 2005). When multiple cultures meet, new categories are created and old ones break down, such that identifying a single resulting “culture” is difficult (Nurse 1999, p. 477).

The “migration mélange,” or the mixing of cultural traits from the homeland and the culture of residence, forms a hybridity continuum; “At one end, an assimilationist

hybridity that...adopts the canon and mimics hegemony and, at the other...a destabilizing hybridity that burs the canon, reverses the current, subverts the centers” (Nederveen Pieterse 2004, p. 73, cf. Aparicio 2004). García Canclini (1995) stresses the spatial dimensions of these processes. Even as traditions become appropriated by global culture industries or move back and forth with transnational migrants, they are “deterritorialized” from their localities of origin and “reterritorialized” – that is, relocalized, mixed, and brought into juxtaposition with modern and post-modern discourse and practices. The result, he argues, is *tiempos y espacios mixtos y híbridos*, (literally, mixed and hybrid spaces and times). The dining culture that emerges at McDonald’s in Beijing is not fast food, but rather a leisurely, middle and upper class experience of freedom in the public sphere (Watson 1997) . Barbie dolls in the Yucatan are not the liberated career woman of the North; instead, they are recreated in the image of a traditionally Mayan woman enmeshed in a solid network of family and friends,(MacDougall 2003). Caribbean carnivals, where the social world is (literally) turned upside down and social norms are temporarily relaxed, are now held in at least twenty countries where there are Caribbean diasporas, each one slightly different from the homeland or the others (Nurse 1999). Fiestas and celebrations associated with saints’ days are changed similarly as they travel to new homes (Burrell 2005, Levitt 2004). And in turn, homelands are re-infused with cultural material returned by migrants (Flores 2005, Levitt 2001, Rodríguez 2005).

Inevitably, such transformations are tied to the politics of belonging and citizenship. The power of art and culture allows migrants to express, create, remember, and re-create identity, whether individually or collectively, whether national or hybrid. Music is one of the primary arenas where this occurs (see McCann 2004on Brazil, Simonett 2001 on

Mexico, and Wong 2004 on Asian Americans). Migrants use music to imagine their family home and assert their place in it as well as in the host society (Flores 2005, Pacini Hernandez et al 2004). For example, *bandas* are an integral part of everyday life in many indigenous Mexican communities, accompanying rites of passage and reinforcing alliances and networks of reciprocity and obligation between villages. Migration changes this cultural form in fundamental ways - some now include female musicians or players from other communities, and smaller *bandas* that still play traditional music experiment with new types of music and instruments in the United States (Simonett 2001). The flip side of art and culture as social and political empowerment, some assert, is the potential for “cultural suicide,” or complicity with a dominant/colonial hegemon that erases the poor and working classes (Aparicio 2004, 2006). Classic examples would be the commodification of rap and the creation of “World Music” (see Aparicio & Jáquez 2003, Barrett 1996, Born & Hesmondhalgh 2000 for some of these debates).

### **The Religious**

Often, religion is subsumed under the broad rubric of “culture,” in part because theorists predicted that it would become less important in “modern” Western nations. Despite these predictions, however, religion is alive and well in the public and private spheres. While social scientists in general and migration scholars in particular, have long overlooked the importance of religion in social life, much recent work aims to fill this lacuna. Like culture, religion supports and is itself transformed by all aspects of the migration experience – the journey, the process of settlement, and the emergence of ethnic and transnational ties (Hagan & Ebaugh 2003, Hirschman 2004, McAlister 2002, Richman 2005). Religious belonging doesn’t only link migrants to co-religionists in the

home and host-country; global religious movements unite members, wherever they live, with fellow believers around the globe (Bowen 2004, Marquardt 2005). At the same time, the distinction between culture and religion is not seamless. Religion and culture often go hand in hand, carrying and reinforcing one another. It is quite difficult for some people to sort out Mexicanness from Catholicism, Indianness from being Hindu, or what it means to be Pakistani from what it means to be a Muslim, and all of these hybrid or creolized identities are influenced by flows across transnational social fields (Levitt 2007).

Religion also links people through time by allowing them to feel part of a chain of memory connecting the past, present, and future (Hervieu-Léger 2000, Tweed 1997). Migrant and non-migrants who follow particular saints, deities, or religious teachers also form imagined global communities of connection. In addition, religious leaders and teachers meet, in actual and virtual public spheres to work out how to translate universal faith and values to local contexts (Bowen 2004).

New religious architectures create and are created by these transnational religious communities. Ebaugh and Chafetz (2002) examined the relationship between network ties among individuals, local-level corporate bodies, and international religious bodies and found that ties frequently crossed between nodes. Yang (2002) discovered three-layered transpacific networks formed by contacts between individuals, single churches, and para Chinese Christian Churches that connected migrants in Taiwan, Hong Kong, and Mainland China to their counterparts in the U.S. and Canada. Levitt (2007) identified four types of architectural forms including transnational religious corporations, national religious groups operating across borders, flexibly specialized religious networks, and transnational supply chains. Transnational religious institutions may complement or

compete with political entities on the world stage (Rudolph & Piscatori 1997). Witness Pope John Paul II, who positioned himself as a spokesperson for all humanity, issuing encyclicals and taking positions on events not just concerning Catholics and, by so doing, becoming, according to Jose Casanova, “the high priest of a new universal civil religion of humanity and the first citizen of a global civil society” (1994, p. 130).

Scholars of civil society agree that religious networks, celebrations, rituals, and organizations serve as an important way for individuals to build social capital. They are working to unpack how this takes place in transnational contexts, by helping migrants incorporate into the new society and stay connected to their homelands at the same time (Martes et al 2002).<sup>2</sup> Religious institutions certainly play an important role in socializing the first and second generation into American politics. They are also sites where communities access government assistance and gain public recognition (Ebaugh & Chafetz 2000, Menjívar 2002b, Yang 2002). Children of immigrants are increasingly turning to “inherited religion” as their primary source of identity (Bouzar 2004, Geisser & Finan 2002, Laurence & Vaïsse 2006). In general, these individuals hear their faith not as a call to violence but as a path toward greater social integration.

Religion also enables migrants continued participation in homeland affairs (Carnes & Yang 2004, Freston 2004, Guest 2003, Menjívar 2003, Wellmeier 1998).<sup>3</sup> Transnational

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<sup>2</sup> See ongoing scholarship sponsored by the Metanexus Institute Spiritual Capital Research Program, [http://www.metanexus.net/spiritual\\_capital/](http://www.metanexus.net/spiritual_capital/)

<sup>3</sup> See also the January 2005 special issue of Latin American Perspectives (Vol. 32, Issue No. 1) about transnational religion in the American hemisphere (cf. Vásquez & Williams 2005).

migrants transform religious practice in their homelands, exporting both more moderate and more conservative versions of a faith, often with political and social consequences. Many, for example, hold Non-Resident Indians (NRIs) at least partially responsible for the recent rise in Hindu Fundamentalism in India, although, according to Kapur (2003), there is little empirical evidence to support such claims.

On the other hand, others argue that transnational religion can act as a counterpoint to extremist voices (An-Na'im 2005, Levitt 2007, Lewis 2003). There is strong evidence, for example, that religion encourages generous philanthropic giving, whether or not giving is directed at religious causes. Further, migrants do not funnel all their charitable giving toward the homeland. Najam (2006), for example, found that Pakistani-Americans' charitable contributions were directed about equally to religious and issue-based causes, which were only somewhat more likely to be based in the homeland (60% vs. 40%).

### **FUTURE DIRECTIONS**

While transnational dynamics do not matter to all immigrants all the time, there is an emerging consensus among scholars that we can no longer study migration solely from a host-country perspective. There is also general agreement that the field must move beyond thick description, single case studies, and quantification, to address a set of more-focused themes and questions. In the preceding paragraphs, we outlined several ways in which transnational migration scholars have addressed their critics. We now need to move toward articulating a more coherent set of predictive arguments about the causes and consequences of migration, the codification of transnational practices by different types of individual and institutional actors, and a consideration of the relationship between transnational practices and immigrant incorporation in the host society (Haller &

Landolt 2005). At their core, these questions concern simultaneity – its various forms, the factors that produce them, and their consequences for economic, political, and social life. In this next section, we outline some fruitful developments in methodology, and three promising areas of research: 1) space, place and the nature of embeddedness; 2) the variable consequences of transnationalism, (i.e. both negative and positive outcomes); and 3) comparative studies of international migration and internal migration. A continued emphasis on transformations in the social construction of gender, class and race across borders unites all three.

### **Methodological Implications of a Transnational Optic**

The new insights gleaned from studying migration through a transnational lens – namely, the need to include non-migrants as well as migrants, consider the multiple sites and levels of transnational social fields beyond just the sending and receiving country, rethink assumptions about belonging, and trace the historical continuity of these processes – demand methodological shifts. Transnational Migration Studies requires not just asking a different set of questions about different social spaces but developing new methods for doing so.

This is what Wimmer and Glick Schiller (2003) meant when they urged scholars to move beyond “methodological nationalism,” or the assumption that the nation-state is the natural, logical category for organizing social life. To do so, they argue, requires moving beyond simplistic comparisons between discrete nation-state “containers” and being willing to conceptualize spaces as bounded in the ways that the people living within them actually perceive them. Gloria Anzaldúa (1987) described the space between the United States and Mexico as a “borderland,” arguing that the political border artificially

bifurcated what was really a unitary social and emotional space. Sassen (1996) refers to such spaces as “analytical borderlands,” where the overlap and interaction of the local and global creates a “frontier zone” that requires careful analysis of its “social thickness and empirical specificity.” M.P. Smith (2005) and Mahler & Hansing (2005) talk about a “transnationalism of the middle,” to overcome what has become a persistence to simply categorize phenomena as simply “from below” or “from above.”

But most existing data sets, historiographies, and ethnographies make these types of analyses difficult if not impossible. Surveys based on nation-state units are not designed to capture flows, linkages, or identities that cross other spatial units or the phenomena and dynamics within them (Khagram & Levitt 2007). In his study of 648 Mexican migrants, Pries’ (2004) found he could not identify common trajectories or patterns across the life course because he did not have the data that allowed him to capture adequately lives lived across the sending and receiving context. “Without enlarging the conceptual framework to include recognition of pluri-local social spaces, we will probably lose touch with a growing part of the reality of migration, and thus, be unable to sufficiently understand and explain it,” he argues (Pries 2004, pp. 29 & 31).

Social scientists have embraced such challenges and have begun to conceptualize ways to study transnational migration more effectively. Many argue for “multi-sited” (Burawoy 2003, Fitzgerald 2006, Marcus 1995, Mazzucato 2007b), or “cosmopolitan” (Appadurai 1996) ethnographies, which move beyond simply studying immigrants in the receiving context and instead conduct empirical research at all sites of the transnational social field. Even many studies that do look at the homeland continue to focus predominantly on the new context and incorporate the second country only as a source of

background information; such methodologies do not successfully integrate both contexts into one social field (Mazzucato 2007b). Instead, the goal is a thick and empirically rich mapping of how global, macro-level processes interact with local lived experiences (Vásquez & Marquardt 2003, p. 227) that are representative of broader trends (Fitzgerald 2006, p. 19). Mazzucato (2007b) studied transnational networks in which people tied to migrants are followed along with the migrants themselves to capture the simultaneity of transnational flows and their effects on those who stay behind as well as those who move.

Others propose “revisits” to the sites of prior ethnographies, usually done by someone else, to capture temporal and historical elements (Burawoy 2003, Fitzgerald 2006). The “extended case method” and “reflexive ethnography” utilize: 1) the observer as participant; 2) reconstruction of theory; 3) internal processes; and 4) external forces, but the extended case concentrates on changes in social processes, whereas the latter examines the dialogue between constructivism and realism (Burawoy 2003, p. 649). Sidney Tarrow and his colleagues suggest examining the “scale shifts” that occur within social movements. Through the processes of “diffusion,” “brokerage,” “attribution of similarity,” and “emulation,” scales can shift upward – moving for example, from local to national to global – or downward, as in *Porto Alegre*, where mobilization and political contention was generated at a global level, with activists then going home and rooting themselves into the local (McAdam & Tarrow 2004, Tarrow 2005).

Glick Schiller et al write (2006), however, that much of this work continues to cling stubbornly to nationally-defined categories that obscure transnational and translocal processes. It does not address what gender, race and class actually mean when they are constructed transnationally. These authors propose focusing on incorporation, defined as

“the processes of building or maintaining networks of social relations through which an individual or organized group of individuals becomes linked to an institution recognized by one or more nation-states” (Glick Schiller et al 2006, p. 614). Migrants don’t simply become integrated into new settings through a single, exclusive path – any one (or more) modes of incorporation can each follow multiple pathways (cf. Werbner 2000). By not assuming a priori that migrants follow a particular pathway, the researcher focuses instead on how salient categories are actually constructed across time and space. Further, national migration and citizenship regimes, the management of racial, ethnic, and religious diversity, and the relationship between church and state all tip the balance between host-country incorporation and enduring transnational involvements (Levitt 2007).

#### The Nature of Embeddedness and the Spatial Arenas in Which It Takes Place

Much exciting recent work calls attention to the centrality of space in shaping the migration experience (Brettell 2006). Migration researchers in Europe, in particular, have noted the relationship between the size and significance of particular cities and patterns of incorporation and settlement (Bommes & Radtke 1996).<sup>4</sup> Building on initial formulations by Henri Lefebvre (1991), Brenner (1999), N. Smith (1993), Swyngedouw (1997), among others, have developed and theorized the term “scale” as a way to assess the differential positioning of cities within hierarchies of power. An attention to urban scale, coupled with a comparison of immigration policy in different national contexts, illuminates why the experience of constructing transnational social fields in global cities

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<sup>4</sup> Also, see the other articles in this special issue of Innovation (1996, Vol. 9), John Rex and entitled “Multiculturalism and Political Integration in European Cities.”

can be so similar (Eade 1997, Glick Schiller et al 2006, Sassen 2001). Pries (2005) broadly conceptualizes spaces as “absolutist” (exclusive geographies like the nation-state) or “relativist” (dense, durable and crossing borders), calling for care in specifying the societal and geographical configurations of such spaces and articulating two intersecting analytical dimensions – scale and domain.

In other words, place-specific contexts matter – “spaces” become actual places when particular global flows converge – be they material or ideational. The nature of embeddedness, as well as modes of migrant incorporation, therefore, depends on previous culture and history. Just as underlying geological strata affect the shape and form of subsequent layers, so existing social patterns and dynamics influence successive arrangements. Migrants’ place-making ability, and how they go about it, is shaped by prior cultural intersections in any given place, and how they are articulated over time. It’s important, then, not just to sort out how simultaneity is shaped by different configurations of “space”, but also to pay attention to how the historical precedents and overlays in a particular “place” shape migrants’ experiences and actions. In addition, the hierarchically ranked status of sending nations is often reflected in the status of its diaspora (Patterson 2006). A country’s rank within the world’s geopolitical order can strongly influence how it emigrants are received. At the same time, doing well in the host country can favorably affect the status of transnational communities both within the receiving society and the broader global system (cf. Glick Schiller & Levitt 2006, Patterson 2006).

Taken together, spatial scales, the cultural-historical particularity of places, and the global nature of what flows through them, produce different kinds of transnational social fields, or arenas with different clusters of transnational activities. The people,

organizations, and networks that constitute and are constituted by these fields are embedded in them in different ways, which, in turn, produces different iterations of transnational involvements. Roth (2006) for example, found that the Dominicans and Puerto Ricans she studied embraced different racial and ethnic identities because the social fields in which they were embedded varied with respect to the nature of transnational contact, the level of institutional and cultural support for the identity messages being transmitted, and how long such messages were communicated. Levitt (2003, 2007) found that different cultural practices, such as the ability to invent kinship ties or membership in a clan or caste groups, produced different patterns of transnational involvement. A major research task, then, is to specify the types and dimensions of different kinds of social fields and their effects on migrant trajectories. A second and related task is to delineate how various kinds of social fields intersect with class, race, nationality, and gender. Migrants vary considerably and broad, taken-for-granted categories like ethnicity, nationality, or religion mask the diversity within what can be extremely heterogeneous groups.

#### The Good, the Bad, and the Global: Variable Consequences of Transnationalism

A second set of questions explores the consequences of transnational migration. Though growing more nuanced in their approach, transnational migration studies still tend to be more positive than negative. Future work needs to take a hard look at what the determinants of positive and negative outcomes are and to explore the relationship between them. Some work already addresses these questions with respect to economics, citing transnational migration's benefits and costs. Eckstein and Barberia (2002) argue for example, that remittances have led to increased inequality in Cuba. Others worry that

sending states become dependent on migrants, devising development strategies based on migrants' future contributions and looking to them to solve the problems the state has been unable to solve (Levitt & Nyberg Sørensen 2004, Mahler 2000). Relations between migrant organizations and civil society in the home country are not always balanced, which can reinforce or exacerbate gender and power hierarchies (Goldring 2002). Such organizations are often undemocratic, reproducing clientistic practices within families and communities (Fox & Rivera-Salgado 2004). Receiving country migration policies can also negatively affect the ability of migrants to send remittances home and to invest in their home country (Martin 2001). Finally, some argue that remittance behavior impedes sending mobility in the host country and may make it more difficult for migrants to achieve sufficient capital to return home (Levitt & Nyberg Sørensen 2004, Martin 2001).

While this scholarship acknowledges that migration entails tradeoffs, not enough is known about what determines why the cards fall as they do. We do not seek simple “either/or” answers, but rather those that specify under what conditions and in what contexts transnational migration has positive and/or negative consequences, in what combinations, and for whom? The political, economic and cultural structures of power than span social fields must be taken seriously. State policies, philosophies of integration, citizenship regimes, and cultural context matter. Caglar (2006), for example, proposes a framework for exploring the differential growth and success of HTAs in the context of changing state-space relations under neoliberalism. Kurien (2002) conducted a comparative ethnography of three communities in Kerala, India, which sent large

numbers of temporary workers to the Middle East. She found differential outcomes in migration patterns and migration-induced social change.

The answer is not as simple as looking at discrete outcomes, however. Policies such as dual citizenship, expatriate voting, and investment incentives that attract emigrants' long-term, long-distance membership raise several questions about the migration-development nexus. On a macroeconomic level, Orozco (2005) characterizes the development impact of migration with "5 T's" – Transfers, Transport, Tourism, Telecommunication, and Trade. Some believe that migration affects these sectors in economically beneficial ways. They contribute financially to home country development not only through economic remittances but also by generating a demand for local goods and services and imbuing those at home with more purchasing power (Guarnizo 2003). But what is the effect on household-level dynamics and decision-making – are remittances spent productively or merely used for consumption? While much research suggests the former, focusing on appliance, home-improvement and clothing purchases, recent studies have found that remittances also finance education that benefit subsequent generations and that they often function as quasi-pensions (Nyberg-Sorensen et al 2002, Sørensen & Van Hear 2003). A higher percentage has also been allocated toward improvements in health care and agriculture (Andrade-Eekhoff & Silva-Avalos 2003). A long-term perspective is required as the first generation invests in the health and education of their children in the hopes of later returns.

Another set of questions concerns the role of collective resources. At the same time that HTAs are praised as powerful development engines, most groups have demonstrated limited capacity to oversee and manage such projects, underscoring the need for training

and technical assistance before more challenging and ambitious activities are undertaken (Orozco & Lapointe 2004). Governments may be able to play a positive role in building skills and capacities as well as attracting involvement from the private sector. Here again, the answers depend on taking into account the local, national, regional, and global factors at work within transnational fields (Levitt & Nyberg Sørensen 2004). One way to untangle the effects of these factors is to compare internal migration and transnational migration. What difference does it make for socioeconomic mobility, gender, or development outcomes, to name a few, when migrants cross a national border rather than moving from a rural to an urban context within their own country?

**CONCLUSION: Transnational Migration Scholarship and the *Longue Durée***

We argue here for an approach to transnational migration that highlights the *longue durée* and sees contemporary “globalization” as a stage in ongoing historical processes (cf. Nederveen Pieterse 2004). The frequency and intensity of migrant transnational practices ebb and flow in response to the intensification or slackening of globalization. Historical precedents, cultural resonance, and institutional models also strongly influence their impact and scope. Even at their minimum, however, multiple memberships and hybrid identities are increasingly the norm rather than the exception.

Transnational migration scholarship is one piece of the emerging field of Transnational Studies. In light of contemporary globalization, scholars acknowledge that the sanctity of borders and boundaries is a very recent development, both in human history and in social scientific theory. They also recognize that humans continually create and re-create boundaries, moving, trading, and communicating across them, thereby making fluidity and change a part of all human social formations and processes. Although

scholars from a number of different disciplines work on cross-border processes, they rarely see themselves as participants in the same conversation. Transnational Studies represents a concerted effort to take a systematic and synthetic look at how governance, social movements, income-earning, and religious life change when they are enacted across borders and how we must rethink identity, belonging, and democracy in response.<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> There have been some recent efforts to begin interdisciplinary conversations between those who study transnational phenomena (see for example, Khagram and Levitt 2007).

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