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This article argues that migrant domestic workers in Hanoi practise a form of fictitious kinship to carve out personal spaces away from their rural home. Biographical narratives of domestic workers who are unusually devoted to forging emotional ties with their employers indicate that they tend to have problematic private lives. Beyond emotional labour, the performance of fictitious kinship entails significant personal investment on the part of women, at times generating mutual feelings and relationships between them and certain members of the employers’ household. These relationships are crucial to their personal transformations, helping them construct new identities and opening up possibilities for challenging the power hierarchy in their home. Yet such constructed kinship is treacherous and uncertain, not just because of its foundation is their commodified labour, subject to the rules of the market, but also due to the dangers of intimate encounters in the private sphere.

Keywords: boundary, domestic service, intimacy, relatedness, Vietnam

Introduction

When I first visited Dương in a post-surgery ward of a major hospital in Hanoi, she was tending to a pale elderly man lying in bed, giving him spoons of porridge. She occasionally wiped drips from his chin, gently talking to him. She made sure that he finished the porridge, despite his grumbling. ‘To do this kind of work,’ Dương said, ‘one needs to have a heart. You must consider them your blood and flesh, as if they were your parents, your siblings.’ The elderly man was in the hospital for two or three months this time; he had been hospitalized several times before, and Dương had always been his chosen carer. She addressed him as ‘Father’ (he also called her ‘Child’), and referred to his children as sisters and brothers. While such strategic use of kin terms in social interactions between non-related people is common in Vietnam, we shall see that for Dương and other domestic workers, it is part of an effort to produce the relationships substantiating such terms.¹

In everyday language, Dương is called a hospital Ô sin, a popular term for domestic workers originating from a Japanese television series shown in the early 1990s about...
a girl-servant-turned-billionaire with the same name. Most Vietnamese public hospitals do not provide such non-technical services as feeding, washing or hygiene care, which family members of patients are supposed to handle, and it is common for urban families to hire private carers to carry out the services on their behalf. Vietnam introduced economic reforms (đổi mới) in the mid-1980s, marking its transition from state to market socialism. While the party-state retains its power, marketization has been embraced; there has been high economic growth, rapid urbanization and greater rural–urban migration. Domestic service is not new; it was common for the urban middle class and the rural land-holding elite in the colonial period (1856–1945) to have servants of all sorts. Following the socialist revolution, domestic service was condemned by the state as a remnant of the previous era, alongside the existence of the bourgeoisie and the land-holding elite, and went into decline. Since đổi mới, urban domestic service has been re-emerging, providing care and domestic labour for the emergent urban middle class in ways that were unimaginable during the state socialist time (K.H. Nguyễn 2007; ILO et al. 2011; T.N.M. Nguyen 2014).

Domestic workers are predominantly female migrants like Dương, working either in urban homes or institutional settings such as the hospital, catering to the growing care needs of urban households. Vietnamese women are known to be traditionally active as both carers and providers in the family. However, their changing participation in the labour market, with greater performance pressure and intensity and enduring gendered expectations on them to be caring wives and mothers, requires greater reliance on market solutions for care (K.H. Nguyễn 2007). Yet domestic service has become indispensable to urban home life not only because of higher demand for domestic labour but also due to changing aspirations and consumption patterns (Drummond and Thomas 2003, Nguyen-Marshall et al. 2012). Paid domestic labour is necessary for an emerging middle-class domesticity for which homemaking and consumption are constructed as fulfilling female occupations (T.N.M. Nguyen 2014: 114–9). Domestic service thus represents an epochal shift from the socialist ideology of a classless society, which the country still theoretically upholds.

This article is based on fifteen months of fieldwork (2008–9) in Hanoi, the capital city of Vietnam, which forms the basis of my book on Vietnamese domestic service (T.N.M. Nguyen 2014). Whereas the book links the power dynamics within domestic service to emergent processes of class formation and the post-đổi mới political economy, this article takes up a theme not yet fully developed elsewhere, namely the emotional life of the domestic workers. The cases presented in this article are derived from interviews using the Biographic Narrative Interpretive Method, which elicits life stories with minimal intervention from the researcher (Wengraf 2001; Roseneil 2012). Whereas Hanoian domestic workers commonly play an active role in the ‘part of the family’ discourse in order to make certain claims on their employers, a number of them have unusually strong emotional ties with people they care for, often children and the elderly. Like Dương, they go to great lengths to demonstrate this affective quality but are also personally invested in building such kin-like relationships, exceeding usual expectations. An analysis of their biographies helps to explain their motives and explore the implications of their practices, suggesting that these often result in emotional attachment and intimate friction that are both meaningful and dangerous for them.
In post-đổi mới Vietnam, the restructuring of the welfare state and rural livelihoods has taken place alongside the formation of an urban labour market attracting large flows of rural labour for urban services and industries. The ruptures in collective structures and values, the advances of the market, and the arrival of new institutions and social formations have generated new forms of uncertainty. Although socialist provision was of a low standard and family care remained important throughout, egalitarian principles ensured that households were entitled to these services as citizen rights during state socialism. Health care and education have since been commercialized and become overwhelmingly the responsibilities of individuals and households (Barbieri and Belanger 2009). For rural households, the higher costs of reproduction have been accommodated by means of greater labour mobility. Although their migration is essential for household reproduction, rural women’s migration for work is often accompanied by a major reshuffle regarding their gendered conceptions of self, as mothers and wives who do not personally care in their own home (Trương 2009). This is particularly the case when, as domestic workers, they undertake caring duties for the urban middle class, in the role of the lesser female Other for their female employers. The social hierarchy of domestic service, however, clashes with socialist ideologies that remain influential, despite growing wealth differentiation. These dynamics make Vietnamese domestic service a contested field where differing evaluations and discourses coexist to produce a great deal of gender and class anxiety for all those involved.

Rather than suggesting that uncertainty is a new condition in post-reform Vietnam, however, this article suggests that it already permeated the texture of the life that the migrant domestic workers led before their departures from the village, and sometimes underscores such departures. I delve here into the uncertainty of relatedness and belonging, showing that migrant domestic workers’ relationship-building practices in their employers’ home, which I term fictitious kinship, are strongly linked with their emotional and private life. Fictitious kinship, I shall argue, is simultaneously useful and problematic for these domestic workers’ personhood when navigating between their rural home and the world of their urban middle-class employers. In helping them create their personal space away from their own home, which is at times oppressive, at times devoid of intimacy and attachment, it breeds further uncertainty for their emotional and private life. As such, uncertainty is not necessarily an obstacle to be removed or warded off, but rather a condition of being and living in a world ever more mobile and in flux.

**On Fictitious Kinship**

In using the term fictitious kinship, I do not mean to invoke the dichotomy between fictive and real kinship in anthropology that has been shown to be untenable in capturing the multitude of cultural meanings of kinship and shifting forms of relatedness (Carsten 2000). Neither do I refer to the diverse ways in which kin terms as modes of address are used in Vietnam to facilitate social interactions and reinforce social belonging and hierarchy (Luong 1990; Malarney 2002; Rydstrøm 2003). Although my informants habitually use the kin terms relevant to the kind of
relationship they wish to cultivate, as Dương does, their practices go well beyond merely labelling such relationships. Fictitious kinship conveys these domestic workers’ personal investment in their employers’ home as a strategy not only to fulfil a work requirement, but also to deal with their own discontent with the patriarchal order of their own home. This form of relatedness is fictitious in the sense that it only exists in so far as the domestic workers are hired, and the social hierarchies of domestic service are maintained. It is also fictitious in that it is primarily based on a relationship to certain members of the employers’ household dependent on their care, often children and the elderly, whereas such mutual affection hardly exists with the more independent members. Further, no matter how invested domestic workers are, the relationship will end, beyond their power to redress, when their labour is no longer needed, or if they transgress the class boundaries between themselves and their employers. For the employers who hire and can fire them, fictitious kinship represents a desirable quality of the labour that they purchase and most are keen to foster it as long as it does not threaten their status. To have a devoted domestic worker allows them peace of mind in managing their household; it is not necessary for them to enforce control regimes, as is often the case – the workers take it upon themselves to act like responsible and caring family members. This signifies the employers’ capacity to command both the workers’ labour and their subservience. Unlike the term fictive kinship, which refers to forms of kinship other than blood or consanguine ties, fictitious kinship therefore involves an active positioning of the domestic workers as subjects of commodified care labour. The commodification of this labour, however, is governed by unequal power relations and social forces beyond their control.

Such an idea of fictitious kinship is traceable to Polanyi’s idea of ‘fictitious commodities’ (1985). According to Polanyi, the commodification of nature, human beings and a set of social relations, namely land, labour and money, have borne destructive consequences for society and environment. Since they represent the fundamentals of social life, turning them into commodities destroys the fabric of that life by undermining the social values inherent in them. In furthering this idea, a number of feminist scholars argue that the commodification of care, or reproductive labour, has reproduced diverse forms of social and gender inequalities, contributing to the intertwined environmental, financial and social crises of today (Williams 2010; Fraser 2011; Tronto 2013). Such commodification arises out of a combination of curtailed state provision and higher female participation in waged work, creating migrant care labour flows to wealthier regions and countries, displacing the care crisis from one place to the other. Departing from such a structural focus, I investigate the subjective experiences of the domestic workers as providers of care who partake in this global process. Rather than being submerged under global forces, I argue, the domestic workers are guided by personal motivations in which monetary calculations and personal relationships are entangled (cf. Cole and Thomas 2009; Boris and Parreñas 2010). In contrast to the crisis envisioned by the structural theorists, the commodification of their labour enables the domestic worker to take action aimed at building connections and crafting alternatives for their life, albeit from a certain subject position (Yan 2008) and with ensuing personal struggles.
As we shall see, in their practices of relatedness, some domestic workers willingly contribute to turning the notion of kinship into a kind of consumer good for the middle class. Their labour is offered alongside the affection and devotion of a family member. According to Hochschild's notion of emotional labour (2003), such domestic workers are acting out the affective requirements of their work as providers of personal services, so that they are overtaken by the feelings they wanted to effect in their customers. Hochschild argues that such a deep level of acting results in alienation from their authentic self. An authentic self, however, is not only ‘mobile, dynamic, hybrid, and relational’ (Easthope 2009: 67), but also evolving and contradictory, as people negotiate their life and work between places and spaces in a mobile world. Cultivating fictitious kinship in their employer’s home, the domestic workers in this article carve out an alternative space to their rural home and its patriarchal relations. In doing so, they transform their identity, while strengthening the power of the middle class to keep them in their relegated place. Their struggles are thus both gendered and shaped by emerging class dynamics in post-reform Vietnam, with varied outcomes that are uncertain for their sense of self and their social status.

Vietnamese Kinship and Relatedness

Until recently, Vietnam was a predominantly rural society; a large part of the population lived in rural villages and derived their livelihoods from agriculture. The Vietnamese rural village is characterized by a multitude of social groupings, associations and relations within the village, including age- and gender-specific groups, craft and trading associations and neighbourhoods (T.C. Nguyễn 2007). Amidst the intra-village competition for factional interests, patrilineal kinship provides a firm foundation for securing one's livelihood. ‘A drop of blood is thicker than a pond full of water’: thus goes a popular proverb emphasizing the symbolic importance of biological relatedness (c.f. Malarney 2002). Duties towards one's family extend to the larger kinship circle, reaching to generations past and future; one is expected to worship the ancestors and live in a morally acceptable way so that future generations are not affected (Phạm 1998). Yet everyday practices often betray ambiguity and scepticism of such moral ideas while created social ties are also considered important (Malarney 2002: 17). One should therefore ‘forget about the faraway kinfolks and maintain a close relationship with the neighbours nearby’, according to another proverb (cf. Malarney 2002: 17).

While reciprocity and mutual support are important, Vietnamese kinship displays a clear hierarchical order in which every member is supposed to know their place in accordance with their age, rank and gender (Luong 1990). The elaborate system of kin terms requires appropriate use to identify people’s kin status or their relative social position in the wider society (Luong 1990). Those in lower ranks are obliged to show respect for people of higher rank, and older generations should be treated with deference and obedience. Despite male dominance, the elderly, male or female, are generally accorded higher social status (Haines 2006).

Besides seniority, gender shapes kinship in significantly ways, although Vietnamese gender is fluid and complex. Whereas men are socialized to become authoritative heads of the family (chủ gia đình), the protectors of family order and morality, women’s lives
revolve around their ‘heavenly duties’ (thiên chức) as mothers and wives (Rydstrøm 2004). Yet alongside their domestic roles, women are also actively involved in petty trading, agriculture and non-agricultural production, usually having decision-making power over household finances and childrearing (O'Harrow 1995). Historically, famous Vietnamese women are known as saviours of the nation, political leaders, and agents of modernity (Marr 1981; Ho-Tai 1992). However, the Confucian teachings of the Four Female Virtues have influenced generations of Vietnamese women (Lê 1975, 2005; Ngo 2004), requiring them to observe virtues of hard work, beauty, moderate speech and chastity and to contribute to the patrilineal interests of their husbands’ family, especially through bearing sons (Bélanger 2002; Gammeltoft 2014). Despite women’s everyday negotiation and resistance, these moral ideals are perpetuated through the ways in which age and gender hierarchies intersect to exert power over the sexuality and moral conduct of women (Rydstrøm 2003, 2004, 2010; Ngo 2004; Gammeltoft 2014). Such perpetuation of patriarchal ideas has not abated with women’s enhanced role in the household economy since đổi mới (Drummond and Rydstrøm 2004; Barbieri and Bélanger 2009).

During state socialism, kinship-based power structures and property relations were reconfigured through agricultural collectivization (Luong 1989, 2003). Important patrilineal rituals of ancestor worship, weddings and funerals were subject to state reforms for the benefit of socialist construction and national defence (Malarney 2002; T.A. Nguyen 2010). Yet as Wiegersma (1991) contends, the peasant patriarch retained power over the household economy during this period, especially the labour of women and children, thus undermining the cooperative system. Since đổi mới, the rural village, although never as static and self-contained as commonly thought (Popkin 1979), has been transformed with increasing rural–urban migration. Migration has become part of village life (T.N.M. Nguyen in press; T.N.M. Nguyen and Locke in press), with rural networks stretching further away from the village. Mobility has enabled greater autonomy among younger people and women (Hoang 2011), which coincides with increased kin-based mutual support in household economic activities (T.A. Nguyen 2010). The kinship rituals and practices toned down during the state socialist time have thus been extensively revived. While some authors see a resurgence of old-time patriarchal relations, others point to their new character and the mixing of old and new practices, particularly regarding the more flexible boundaries and membership in kinship institutions (Werner 2009; T.A. Nguyen 2010). As we shall see, the domestic workers discussed in this article contribute to the continual refashioning of such relations through their practice of fictitious kinship.

**Out of the Village: Thwarted Desires and Failed Patriarchal Bargains**

Dương, the hospital carer above, is forty-five years old; her daughter has recently married, and her son is about to finish high school and still living with her husband in a rural village. Dương left the village in her late thirties, after her husband had an accident. With debts piling high, she followed a relative to Hanoi, first to work as a live-in domestic worker, then as a private hospital carer. While her migration might sound like a contingent choice, her narrative indicates that the accident was just an
extra drop of water into a full glass of accumulated issues in her private life. Dương was born into a family of five daughters; the lack of a son had been such a disappointment to her father and paternal grandmother that they refused to give any support to her mother after the births of her successive daughters. As the eldest daughter, she had to care for her mother and fulfil the latter’s usual duties, and thus only finished lower secondary school. Her first boyfriend died in action as an army soldier, leaving her heart-broken – she still regularly visits his grave. She later met a factory worker with whom she fell in love, but her father did not approve of him. She remains poignant about her missed chance of happiness in a life with him that could have been hers:

He was married afterwards and has been living happily with his family. He has now a position in the district government and they are pretty well off. We remain friends and sometimes I see them. Since I was small, I had always wanted to be in such a relationship, when the husband cares about his wife, husband and wife are emotionally close to each other, encourage and care for each other in difficult times.

Her husband has not been able to fulfil her desire for an intimate conjugal relationship. Dương had been working as a Women’ Union cadre for some years before quitting because the difficult birth of her second child was traumatic, and she received no support from her husband, who took to drinking heavily, sometimes beating and verbally abusing her. Until his accident that led to her departure for Hanoi, it had been a life full of marital conflicts, financial and familial burdens. Dương is deeply disappointed in his inability to give her either emotional or material security, and at the vacuity in their relationship:

My husband has never asked if I like a piece of clothing or crave some food so that he can buy these things for me; it is often the other way around, I am the one who buys things for him and our children […]. He is a good person, but he is boorish; he does not know how to be gentle […]. He works hard in the field, but does not know how to make plans; I am the only one thinking about long-term economic matters of the family. So after all these years, our relationship remains so dull and flat; there is still nothing between us, except for the children. Sometimes people ask me if I miss him. There are no feelings between us, so I forget about him easily. But without love, we still have the conjugal bond, that’s why I have to take care of him now that he is ill and earn money to cover our kinship obligations and household matters.

Note Dương’s reference to love and conjugal bond. Vietnamese often make the distinction between feelings and emotional attachment between husband and wife, or love (tình), and the bond that develops over time out of sharing a life, making a living and raising children together (nghĩa). A conventional belief is that love might bring a couple together in the first place, but it will fade over time; it is the conjugal bond that holds them together. In this view, love has a modest position in the conjugal relationship; the idea of the bond assures people that a marriage without love is acceptable and warns them that looking for love in dismissal of the bond is to be condemned. Dương’s strong desire for intimacy and her articulation of its absence in her conjugal life suggest an alternative view that places greater value on feelings and emotional attachment. This view also idealises the man capable of ensuring both material and emotional well-being.
for his spouse – an ideal that her husband does not live up to. Meanwhile, Dương also made clear that her children are what mattered for their life together. Indeed, Vietnamese women are supposed to demonstrate selfless love towards their children. The mother–child bond is considered holy, and a mother should continue her married life for the sake of her children, however problematic it might be (Pham 1998: 172). This further explains why Dương stayed bound by loyalty to her familial and conjugal duties although she was deeply unhappy about the intimacy deficit in her conjugal unit. These ideas and practices attest to the ways in which patriarchal relations are reproduced through morality, which ties women to their gendered obligations regardless of their economic role and their disenchantment with married life.

Dương’s life before urban domestic service, characterized by unfulfilled desires and aspirations, and relationship problems, is not unique among my informants. Migrant domestic workers commonly lament the emotional dislocations on account of conjugal separation (T.N.M. Nguyen 2014: 138-143). Yet similar stories of women consciously leaving behind relationships and homes emerge again and again. A middle-age woman left a violent husband who prevented her from practising her Buddhist worshipping activities. A divorced woman decided to leave her son in the village after years of being forced by her own parents to live with them to labour for their household. A younger woman escaped from her parents, who constantly pressured her to marry men she did not want to, so that her returns were often tearful occasions when she was heavily reprimanded for not fulfilling her duties as a daughter. In yet another case, a forty-one-year-old woman refused to come home for years, even during the traditional New Year, since her husband had had an affair with a much younger woman. As with Dương, while these women continue to view the performance of familial and conjugal duties as central to their gendered personhood, there are limits to their tolerance, and however strong the power of patrilineal kinship is, there comes a point when they start contesting it. Sometimes, their departure from the village itself constitutes an action that challenges the system, as the case of Thao, below, indicates.

Before she came to Hanoi, Thao, a woman in her mid forties, had long suffered from the domination of her mother-in-law. Thao was married at nineteen. Her husband, a migrant worker, with whom she had had a short loving relationship, died when her only son was eighteen months old. Even before, she had experienced her mother-in-law’s daily verbal abuses and tight control over her food consumption and rest time during his absence. Constantly finding the most minor reasons to put her down, the mother-in-law made her work to the point of exhaustion, even during the later months of her pregnancy. Never getting enough food and always working heavily, she had an early birth, starting to labour when she was transplanting rice in the field, and afterwards was reviled by her mother-in-law for not bearing a healthy child. Although she had to work hard again within days of the delivery, her mother-in-law went on denouncing her as a lazy person pretending to be unwell to avoid working.

After her husband’s death, Thao continued to live with his family, where her mother-in-law repeatedly prevented her from remarrying by turning away her suitors, saying that it was for the sake of her son. Whenever an opportunity arose, she was reminded of her mother-in-law’s statement at her husband’s funeral, when she was too traumatized to cry: “The kind of woman who does not cry like that will leave her son and run off
with a man soon after her husband’s death. She decided to stay single to prove this wrong. Several times she wanted to move back to her parents. Yet they always made her return, worrying that it would set a bad example for her younger sisters; once she was married, she belonged to her husband’s family and thus her return would be a shame for her family. Thao’s inconsolable life lasted for about a decade, until she could not stand any more. ‘Even an earthworm will wriggle if one keeps trampling on it,’ said Thao. One day, her son went swimming in the river against her prohibitions; she admonished him loudly and her mother-in-law came to his defence. Thao talked back, and the argument culminated in her mother-in-law verbally abusing her with the most humiliating words. After this incident, she was firmly determined to leave, despite the resistance of her mother-in-law and her husband’s other relatives, including her father-in-law:

‘If you go, there will be no return to your son.’ I told them, ‘If you could provide for him, I will leave him to you, but you will have to sign a paper stating that if something happens to him, you will take full responsibility. If you want, he is all yours to keep.’ Then they said, ‘OK, he is your son; you should provide for him, but you should think twice about leaving.’ And I said, ‘I have thought twice. I have lived in this house for more than ten years, going through countless miseries, never getting enough to eat and to wear. Now that my son is older, I can leave and I will do.’

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Note how Thao’s mother-in-law and her relatives had always appealed to her maternal obligations and feelings to exert their power over her and prevent her from leaving, albeit by threats and warnings about a possible termination of the mother–child bond. It is also on account of such obligations and feelings that Dương remained loyal to her husband and family. This suggests not only how gendered morality operates to sustain the subjugation of women to the patrilineal interests of their marital family, but also women’s role in perpetuating it. Kandiyoti (1988) argues that by playing their part in upholding the gender norms responsible for their domination, women make a bargain with patriarchal systems. Only by doing so are they able to obtain a certain degree of autonomy and power; in some circumstances it is the only way for them to secure livelihoods and protection. This is a compelling argument for Vietnamese gender relations, although the active roles of women as both carers and providers mean that what they bargain for, rather than material security, is often power in the domestic sphere (O’Harrow 1995) and recognition for their roles in maintaining patrilineal kinship (Rydström 2010). The cases of Dương and Thao, however, suggest that sometimes women fail to achieve their bargaining goals. This can be because their power position is significantly weakened on account of the competition for domestic power by other women, such as the mother-in-law, whose seniority accords significant leverage over the younger women married to their sons. It can also be because the women desire what the system does not offer, for instance conjugal intimacy and emotional attachment. Yet these ‘failed bargains’ are not necessarily steps backward for them. Given greater possibility for mobility, they lead to actions that set in motion a train of ideas and practices that transform them, destabilizing the system in some significant ways while reproducing it in others.
Into the Urban Home: Intimacy, Boundaries and Precarious Relatedness

In our conversations, Dương often mentioned that she had always wanted to go to the city. If she were younger she would marry someone in the city rather than a coarse peasant like her husband. Had she taken advantage of her youth and beauty, and had she had the nerve to destroy other people's families, she would have ended up with a certain important person in her district – and, she said: 'I would not be in the situation I am now in, being an Ô sin like this.' Nevertheless, she was pleased with the changes in her life since her departure, especially her greater consuming power and interaction with people she considered socially superior:

In the past, I always wished to have some gold to wear, as wealthy women do. Now that I have had a chance to live and work in the city, I have been able to buy some taels of gold [each tael being equal to 37.8g] for myself too. I have opportunities to meet high-ranking and important people, such as army generals, company directors or doctors who are put under my care. The doctors in the ward here all know me; they greet me when seeing me, even though I am just an Ô sin.

Above all, Dương had successfully built a reputation for being a good carer. Her reputation was based not only on her skills in caring for elderly patients – 'If I were better educated, I could well be a doctor, for I do a much better job of caring than the nurses here,' she said – but also through her close relationship with the patients. Families often ask her to follow the patients home for a certain period, or contact her whenever they have unexpected care needs, sometimes asking her to take care of the altar for the newly deceased during the first mourning phase. Seeing her care for an elderly man (her regular customers are male), one could easily assume that she was the latter's daughter; she cared for the patient and demonstrably cared about him, with her attentive gestures and soothing voice. She was personally attached to patients whom she cared for over a long time, often visiting the family of patients who passed away to light an incense stick for them, and pray for their protection. Sometimes they appeared in her dreams, talking to her as their daughter or sister, and in difficult moments she called upon their spirits for help:

Whenever I have patients whose families do not treat me well, or do not show appreciation of my devotion, I light an incense stick for a patient who has passed away. I pray to him: 'I have a dissatisfying job and the families treat me badly. You lived a good life and you died a saint (sống khôn chết thiêng), please could you help your younger sister, or your daughter, find a better job? And it works; I do find better jobs. The spirits are very responsive, as if they were alive.

Fictitious kinship with certain past patients clearly became an emotional and spiritual resource on which Dương drew daily to address her uncertainty in dealing with other customers. Yet while it was easy for her to exchange mutual affection with the patients, her relationship with their family members can be rather rocky, sometimes precisely because of her closeness with the patients. Once I drove her on my motorbike to a Buddhist pagoda to pray. Upon hearing my compliment on her fashionable clothes,
Dương said that people often mistook her for a family member of the patient, unable to imagine that she was ‘just an Ô sin.’ Then she told me about the family of a lieutenant general whose elderly father she had cared for. Some of his visitors apparently said to her that they could not tell whether she or the general’s wife was the Ô sin. The general’s wife, according to Dương, looked ugly with her bad teeth and rustic clothes. Dương imagined herself to be in his wife’s position and how she could be different:

The general’s elder sister once said to me that I would make a better match for him than his wife. You know, if I were the wife of a general, I would make myself worthy of him and make him proud of me. How could you carry yourself like that being the wife of a general?

The general’s wife was aware of this comparison and Dương’s attention towards him whenever he was present. She was unfriendly to Dương and often tried to put her down in front of other people, even when she committed the slightest mistakes. Similar problems with the wives of her other male patients kept emerging. In another case, Dương followed a patient home to take care of him for some months as requested by his children. The man was so appreciative of her devoted and skilful care for him that he talked about asking his children to invest in a patient care business for her. Yet his wife became jealous of their intimate and friendly exchanges, and after she hinted at ‘servants wanting to become madams,’ Dương realized the precariousness of her situation – it would not benefit her work to have such a reputation – and left. The urban imagination of an erotic encounter between the female domestic worker and the male employer is often exaggerated (T.N.M. Nguyen 2014: 89–94), while unsanctioned sexual liaison, including violence, is usually disproportionately harmful to women’s social status and honour (T.T.H. Nguyen 2012). The recognition of male strangers in higher class positions, however, was exhilarating for Dương, not only promising material rewards, but also possibilities for addressing her emotional needs. Despite being aware of the danger of sexual tension in caring for them, she was again and again drawn to it, until it threatened to unsettle the boundaries between her and her employers. Her devotion to the role of the affectionate carer for male patients is apparently linked to problems in her own private life of intimacy. In fostering the intimate aspects of her work, however, she walks a thin line between the hopes of transcending class boundaries and the realities of her life and work as a domestic worker.

Thao’s practice of fictitious kinship suggests other linkages to her private life, exercised through an engagement with other forms of attachment to her employers’ family. Since coming to Hanoi, Thao had worked as a live-in maid, nanny and elderly carer for different families. Like Dương, she had also sought to maintain truly affective ties to the people she cared for, often exceeding the expectations of her employers. In one family, she became very close to the elderly grandmother she was hired to look after. The grandmother called her ‘Child’, and Thao addressed her as ‘Mother.’ While it is not unusual, as I have indicated, for Vietnamese to use such terms in social interactions, the two women’s use of the terms in this context was part of the emotional closeness in their relationship. The elderly woman was sorry for her and often gave her gifts of money from her savings, sharing with her the special food she had, and they exchanged confidences. Thao said she felt more attached to this elderly woman than to her own
mother. She once showed me a photo of the elderly woman, which she kept in her bag, telling me about the latter's passing:

That time I came home for the New Year holidays, and Grandmother [Thao was referring to the elderly woman on behalf of her own son] passed away in my absence. It was the seventh day of the New Year and I suddenly felt anxious; I said to my son, ‘Let me go back to work,’ and he said, ‘You are funny, you like to be a helping hand for people more than to stay at home?’ I told him, ‘I don’t like it, but I feel sorry for Grandmother: she asked me to stay to accompany her through the New Year but I refused. I’ll have to go now. You are the funny one; I work to make money to feed you and keep you in school, I am not playing. Why do you say that?’ He said, ‘Because you are always so anxious to leave, as if you like it so much to be away.’ He wanted to annoy me so that I stayed home with him for some more days, you know, but I still left. When I arrived, the neighbour told me that grandmother had died, choking on the sweet buns her niece had bought for her. I was startled, and I broke out crying. I felt sorry that I left her; normally I was the one buying her favourite buns, and there had never been a problem.

Her relationship to the elderly woman had filled Thao’s emotional need for a caring motherly figure that she never had; even her own mother had not provided her with much consolation for her ordeals with her mother-in-law. Such a strong attachment to the elderly woman risked generating tensions between her and her son, who clearly felt slighted by his mother’s emotional devotion to her employers. Yet while it had significant meanings for her personally, it did not secure her employment; Thao had to look for another job after the family no longer needed her services. When I first met Thao, she was working for a Vietnamese-German couple with two children aged seven and nine in a gated residence. According to Thao, her Vietnamese female employer liked her very much, often entrusting the whole household to her, never hesitating to give her a loan or an advance payment and regularly presenting her with gifts of money. When people asked the employer why she was always out or travelling, she would respond, ‘Our Big Aunty is very good with my children, and I do not need to be around so much.’ Sometimes the employer went away for weeks on work or on vacation with her husband and counted on Thao to take care of her children. Because of such trust, Thao wanted to show that ‘I will never fail her; I’ll do all I can for her.’ She had been with them since the children were small, and her care for them was not different from that of an affectionate mother. She brought them to bed, singing bed-time songs for them, and immediately responded to any of their requests. She did the girl’s hair, cut the boy’s nails, talking to them lovingly. The children sometimes visited her in her bed for a hug; when they were distressed, they sought her consolation. Thao said she missed them greatly whenever they went on holidays with their parents, or when she returned home for New Year holidays.

Compared with her oppressive rural home, this urban home was for Thao a welcome respite. As a domestic worker, she had a marginal status, yet she felt rewarded by the employers’ appreciation and material compensation for her labour. She felt loved by the children and loved them. The respite, however, would be soon disrupted, since the family was moving to another country within one or two years. There was no future for Thao’s strong attachment to her employers’ children; once they left, she would find herself in another home, perhaps a similar one, perhaps not – it was largely beyond her
own choosing. Her migration had brought about economic independence and personal autonomy, giving her considerable power in relation to her husband's family, especially her mother-in-law, who, now aged and frail, was more dependent on her financial support. However, this turn of events was tainted by the stigma of domestic work – her son had been stating that he was working hard to earn money so that she no longer had to be an Ô sin, something that he had never been proud of.

When Thao and Dương discontinue urban domestic work, they will have changed, having experienced a life world different from the one they had known. Their actions and practices constitute challenges to the power hierarchy of their rural home, opening up possibilities for rural women in crafting alternative personal space and thus helping to destabilize patriarchal control of female sexuality and mobility. But, in keeping with moral norms governing how a woman should behave and live as mother and wife, these women will eventually return home. They will have to grapple with remaining issues in their family and intimate life that do not just disappear during their absence. In this way, the power hierarchy retains certain hold on them wherever they go and whatever they do; they are thus not likely to enjoy a smooth transition back to the life in the home they left for good reasons (cf. Easthope 2009).

Conclusions

Thus far, I have explored how a number of migrant domestic workers in Hanoi negotiate the intimate setting of the urban middle-class home and the boundaries between home and work, kin and strangers through their practice of fictitious kinship. Over time, such boundaries become difficult for the domestic workers to maintain. Care-giving is the basis of relationships and relationships develop out of the caring encounter (Himmelweit 1999); be it between men and women, children and adult, or younger and elderly people, emotions and affective ties are part of this encounter. In these particular cases, where the caring relations are much more intense than usually expected of the domestic employer–employee relationship, there is a clear connection to the domestic workers’ own experiences of a lack of intimacy and attachment, sometimes even of rejection and degradation. It is because of these experiences that they are so invested in constructing fictitious kinship in their employers’ home.

Notwithstanding such devotion, these domestic workers remain subjected to market rules dictating the middle-class consumption of their labour as a commodity. They can be easily dispensed with when their labour is no longer needed or when they are viewed as a danger, sexually and socially. Fictitious kinship is a convenient feature of this commodity consumed by the middle-class, strengthening their sense of entitlement to the service of the domestic worker. Such relatedness, arising out of domestic workers’ close relationships with particular persons in the middle-class home in need of their care, neither brings them closer to the urban middle class as a whole, nor secures their employment. Some may hope to transcend the class boundaries through fictitious kinship, yet it is more likely to lead to greater uncertainty and ambiguity in their social and gender status, especially because of the emotional dislocations arising out of its eventual disruptions. Rather than leading to alienation from their authentic self (Hochschild 2003), however, uncertainty and ambiguity could be said to be part of
what they are; identity is, after all, constantly evolving, open-ended and fluid (Giddens 1991; Bauman 2001). Rather than foregrounding looming crisis, fictitious kinship at once enables identity construction and creates further uncertainty in the private life of the migrant domestic workers in a rapidly changing society.

Notes
1. The author warmly thanks the anonymous reviewers for their insightful comments and suggestions on an earlier version of the article.
2. See proverbs like 'Đời cha ăn mặn, đời con khát nước' [When the father eats too much salty food in his life, the children will be thirsty in their life]; 'Phúc đức tại mẫu' [One’s fortune is rooted in the good deeds of one’s mother].
3. It is traditionally important for family members to cry, as loudly as possible, and make gestures of grief during a funeral to lament the loss of a beloved person. Failure to do so often results in criticisms of family members as unfilial children or disloyal spouses.
4. After a person passes away, a temporary altar is set up for daily offerings of food and drinks. The forty-ninth day of the period marks the end of the first mourning period, often with a ritual and a family meal.

References


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Interpretative Repertoire of Victimhood
Narrating Experiences of Discrimination and Ethnic Hatred among Polish Migrants in Belfast

MARTA KEMPNY

ABSTRACT
Based on one year of ethnographic fieldwork, this article discusses the narratives of perceived discrimination and ethnic hatred of Polish migrants in Belfast. Using narrative theory, it examines the construction of identity of Poles as an unprivileged stratum of the Northern Irish society. Migrants’ stories are followed by analysis of the contradictions and tensions between what they construct as their realities and ‘objective truth’. Subsequently, the article accounts for these tensions by exploring the links between ‘cultural repertoires’ of Polish migrants and the ways in which their narratives are presented.

KEYWORDS
discrimination, hate crime, identity, interpretative repertoire, narrative, victimhood

The accession of the eight new member states (A8) to the European Union on 1 May 2004 brought remarkable changes which are now evident in the socio-cultural map of Europe. It has been followed by rapid acceleration in migratory movements across the continent. As a result, Northern Ireland experienced a huge migration wave. Between 1 May 2004 and 31 March 2009, some 949,000 migrants registered in the UK. Of these, 36,500 people (about 4 per cent of the UK total) registered to work in Northern Ireland. The fact that the Northern Ireland population makes up around 3 per cent of the UK population shows the scale of A8 migration to Northern Ireland (NISRA 2009).

This article concentrates on Poles in Belfast. Poles are the largest immigrant ethnic group in Northern Ireland, having overtaken the Chinese com-
Community, the most numerous of the minorities during the 1990s (Svašek 2009). Currently, there are about 30,000 Polish nationals (McDermott 2008). The influx of Poles to Northern Ireland has largely an economic character and can be considered as labour migration. In 2008/9, more than 4,200 of the 12,600 applications for National Insurance numbers were from Polish nationals (NISRA 2009). Many migrants work in meat processing factories, local harbours and docks. A smaller number have occupations in catering and call centres. Because of migration of mainly low-skilled labourers, overall migrants’ command of English is generally poor. Nonetheless, most Polish people appear to have at least some basic language skills that are useful in everyday life situations, though it is often insufficient for accessing vital services (McDermott 2008: 14).

The Polish community becomes increasingly visible and audible in the public space of Belfast by carving out ‘ethnicising spaces’ in the urban landscape of the city. This is particularly conspicuous in splendid Polish ethnic festivals, the omnipresence of Polish cuisine, community papers, and so on (Delargy 2008; McDermott 2008; Geoghegan 2010). Polish migrants make themselves visible to the local community, finding themselves in a complex politicised space of sectarian division, permeated with memories of the Troubles, where religion continues to be an important component of ethnic identity (Jenkins 1996; Cairns 2000). Geoghegan comments that in such a context:

New migration brings with it the possibility that Northern Ireland could become a genuinely pluralist society, a development that would also have important consequences for the relations between orange and green. But equally, there is the danger that new migrants will simply be hoovered up into existing sectarian blocks. (2010: 107)

Social life has for a long time been organised around the system of delineations; with an influx of migrants, incidents of hate crime and racism have become new social problems that the Northern Irish community has to tackle. A number of organisations and authors have underlined the issues of racism towards migrant workers in particular (Betts and Hamilton 2006; McVeigh 2006; Watt and McGaughey 2006; Holder 2007). Martynowicz and Jarman report that examples of unfair treatment due to prejudice and racist attitudes include the ‘denial of access to employment rights, difficulties with accessing health service provision, being subjected to inappropriate questioning in job interviews and the exploitation on the housing market’ (2009: 23).
Ethnic prejudice may have serious implications for the members of minority groups. Not only does it affect their daily lives, but it also influences the ways they perceive themselves and the members of the mainstream society. With this in mind, I discuss the narrative construction of a self image as victimised group among Poles in Belfast. By analysing the stories of individuals who experienced perceived ethnic discrimination or hate crime, I explore how migrants tend to weave their stories of perceived victimhood. I link this to a predisposition of my informants to underemphasise or deny positive aspects of their relations with the members of the local community. I then relate this tendency to the centrality of victimhood in Polish nationalist discourse, also discussing the visible legacy of postsocialism in the propensity of Poles to concentrate on the negative aspects of reality. Before presenting methods used in my research and analysing the narratives, I briefly outline relevant theoretical perspectives on narrative constructions of identity.

**Narrative Constructions of Identity**

Jerome Bruner points out that there are two fundamental ways of knowing, managing perception of the world and ordering experience: paradigmatic and narrative modes of thought. The paradigmatic mode is based on a search for universal statements of truth and it affirms by ‘appeal to formal verification procedures and empirical proof’ (Bruner 2001: 97). The narrative mode establishes ‘not truth but truth-likeness or verisimilitude’ (ibid.). The truth of the stories is not the historical or scientific truth but rather ‘narrative truth’ (Bruner 1990: 111). As Asher Shekedi (2005: 11) asserts:

> Narratives are never straight copies of the world like photographic images. They are interpretation. Past experiences are not buried in the ground like archaeological treasures waiting to be recovered and studied. Rather the past is recreated through telling.

It should be emphasised that I do not focus here on the factual cases of discrimination and hate crime, but rather on how individuals make sense of their experiences and how, in turn, this affects their self-image. In this view, stories are regarded as enabling them to construe who they are. In other words, story-telling is an act of elicitation in which the story-tellers shape their personhood:
The person, understood as a character in a story, is not an entity distinct from his or her ‘experiences’. Quite the opposite: the person shares the condition of dynamic identity peculiar to the story recounted. The narrative constructs the identity of the character, what can be called his or her narrative identity, in constructing that of the story told. It is the identity of the story that makes the identity of the character. (Ricoeur 1990: 147–148, cited in Josephides 2008: 110)

According to Somers (1994), narrative is an ontological condition of social life. Bruner (2003: 210) mentions that as individuals we ‘constantly construct and reconstruct a self to meet the needs of the situations we encounter, and we do so with the guidance of our memories of the past and our hopes and fears of the future’. In relation to this, self-construction should be seen as a process of ‘co-creation, which implicates the self with the other through such processes as intersubjectivity, interlocution, self-externalization and self-objectification’ (Josephides 2008: xxi).

Another significant dimension of the construction of narratives is the way that a story is told, which is informed by what Potter and Wetherell referred to as ‘interpretative repertoire’ (1987: 149). The story is only the content of the narrative, a sequence of events. The interpretative repertoire ‘is a culturally familiar and habitual line of argument comprised of recognisable themes, common places and tropes (doxa)’ (Wetherell 1998: 400–401). The concept of interpretative repertoire is very similar to the concept of discourse. However, the latter emphasises the deterministic function of culture, whereas the term ‘interpretative repertoire’ was coined to give more space for human agency. Edley (2001: 202) comments:

On the one hand, the concept of discourse is often used within a context of research which adopts more of a Foucauldian perspective . . . Work declaring itself under this banner . . . tends towards a view of people as subjectified. In contrast the concept of interpretative repertoires is used by those who want to place more emphasis upon human agency within the flexible deployment of language. Compared to discourses, interpretative repertoires are seen as less monolithic. Indeed they are viewed as much smaller and fragmented, offering speakers a whole range of different rhetorical opportunities.

The interpretative repertoires are informed by certain cultural scripts which individuals employ to tell their narratives. As McAdams (2008: 200) suggests,
Life stories mirror the cultures wherein the story is made and told. Stories live in culture. They are born, they grow, they proliferate and they eventually die according to the norms, rules and traditions that prevail in a given society, according to a society’s implicit understandings of what counts as a tellable story, a tellable life.

From this point of view, the individuals do not create their stories in cultural vacuum but rather cultures are vocabularies of narratives (Bruner 1986, 1990). This is important point, as within such an understanding the migrants’ interpretative repertoire and representations of the local community are informed by their culture. I will return to this point later in this article, and now proceed to discussion of my methodology.

**Methodology**

This article is based on one year of fieldwork among Polish migrants in Belfast, from January 2008 to January 2009. At the initial stage of my research my status as a native anthropologist helped in establishing rapport with gatekeepers, in particular the Polish Association of Northern Ireland, and the Polish Saturday School. As a native speaker of the Polish language, employed as an interpreter, I was also able to collaborate closely with organisations dealing with issues concerning migrants, such as the Northern Irish Council for Ethnic Minorities (NICEM), PSNI (Police Service of Northern Ireland) and CAB (Citizen Advice Bureau).

My main research methods were participant observation and unstructured interviews. I communicated with my informants and gathered ethnographic data in Polish. Initially, I mostly participated in formal events of the community, such as the Polish Saturday School, Polish Sunday Mass and meetings of Polish parents and children. In this way, I also established informal contacts, and subsequently was able to spend more time with Polish migrants on everyday social occasions, often being invited for tea or coffee, for birthday and name’s day parties, and so on.

Thanks to my insider knowledge of the tacit rules – ‘unspoken traditions imposed by myriad social forces on past, present and future’ (Wolcott 2005: 53) or ‘socio-cultural grammar that guides behaviours and interpretations of these behaviours’ (Fleisher 1995: 12) among the members of my society – I had a better awareness of how these rules constrain meaningful interpreta-
tions of events and serve as a guide to action. In practical terms, I was able to maintain good relations with my informants, as I possessed intuitive knowledge about what kind of behaviours were acceptable in certain social situations and which were not. This has been particularly important in the context of conducting interviews with vulnerable individuals, who experienced ethnic hatred or discrimination.

Throughout my research, I took special care not to affect my informants negatively. The interviews discussed here concerned sensitive issues, and improperly asked questions could have caused feelings of distress and emotional harm. While talking with my informants, I made sure that it was not a problem for them to speak about their experiences, and I assured them that they could stop at any time if they felt it was necessary. Moreover, I always probed if enough time had passed since the event in question.

Having sketched the methodological issues, I now turn to the discussion of the stories of ethnic discrimination and racism. To endow my informants with agency, which some of them felt that was taken away from them by the individuals who inflicted harm on them, I present the narratives in the first person, giving them opportunity to speak for themselves.

**Ziutek’s Story: Discrimination in the Workplace**

Ziutek’s narrative reveals a story of ethnic discrimination in the workplace, at an upholstery company in Newtownabbey. Ziutek is from Warmińsko-Mazurskie county and had already been living in Northern Ireland for three years before I interviewed him. Ziutek was an upholsterer and a painter in Poland and he was also a well-known artist in the area surrounding his hometown. The reason for his migration was economic. Upon arriving in Northern Ireland, Ziutek found employment at an upholstery workshop located in Belfast. Half a year later, he was joined by his wife Kasia and two children, Ola and Witek. Kasia does not work because of chronic illness. Ola and Witek attend an integrated primary school near Newtownabbey where they live. Ziutek possesses only an elementary command of English whereas Kasia’s English is better – she takes English classes at the local college. They intend to stay in Northern Ireland until their children have finished their compulsory education. When I interviewed Ziutek, he was working for an upholstery company located in Glencollin. He was also exhibiting paintings at an art gallery in Lisburn, with a view to selling them. This is his story:
I was working at an upholstery company with many Poles and Slovaks. Polish, Slovaks and other foreigners were treated like rubbish. What we went through will stay forever in our memories. While I was working at ‘X’, I was forced to do overtime under the threat of losing my job. During the course of my employment there, I was of course never paid for the overtime. The boss originally stated that I would be paid for a 40 hour week plus an additional 10 hours of overtime. However, he required me to work 65.5 hours a week . . . During the 14 months of my employment I was neither paid for any of the overtime nor for my holidays. This problem concerns all of the Polish people employed by X, but not the Northern Irish people . . . Next, the boss reduced my hourly wage, which was against the terms of my employment. Despite my claims, this lasted for a couple of months, when the boss finally agreed that he would return the money to me, but it was again not true, he never did. My boss would frequently remark: ‘A stupid Pole will not know what is going on.’ When I was employed by the company, I took the sick leave of four days at the beginning of March. During my absence from work, I looked after my children since my wife was in hospital. Can you imagine that, being chronically ill, she had to shorten her hospital stay because of my boss’s wrongful behaviour? During these four days I visited the factory on several occasions in order to show my boss documentation from the hospital to keep him informed. Nonetheless, I had to return to work under the threat of dismissal. This is the usual way that Polish people are treated in this factory. . . . I broke my thumb and I was unable to work. This is when I decided to give the notice to my boss and I became employed by another company. A day before I left, he swore at me, calling me Paki, and other racial slurs. Of course, he did not pay me a dismissal wage of one week. When I started the lawsuit, I met him in the presence of a professional interpreter to discuss my allegations against him. He then said: ‘I was calling you Paki? How is it possible? I don’t even know what this word means.’ He asked me: ‘Do you really intend to accuse me of calling you a Polish pig, and so on?’ When I said ‘Yes’, he answered: ‘Ok, then myself I will sue you for libel and be prepared to lose plenty of money because I will use the best lawyers and you will get into serious trouble’. I can’t believe someone can lie like this. Of course he never sued me – he would have lost the case . . . I resigned from work at ‘X’ as I felt abused, deceived, humiliated and that is why I reported this matter to the Citizens’ Advice Bureau. When my former boss showed me the Nazi’s salute, I understood what kind of person he was. I was humiliated numerous times by my boss because I was Polish, and I heard many racial slurs
Ziutek depicted a negative experience of ethnic discrimination at a place of work. He presented his former boss in a negative light, as someone who took advantage of him and his Polish colleagues. Ziutek decided to sue his former employer to prevent the situation from reoccurring; his case is still pending. Kasia told me with bitter tone in her voice: ‘Many Polish people do nothing; they are afraid of losing their jobs and therefore keep their mouths shut. We decided to sue the company because it is a start to challenging the present situation’. It is a matter of further investigation as to what extent the boss’s malpractice was aimed only at Polish people, being ethnically motivated. Unfortunately, as I did not have access to Ziutek’s Irish colleagues, I only had a partial story, based on his subjective interpretation of the events. In Ziutek’s narrative, he used a wide array of rhetorical devices in order to present a story of victimisation of Poles. Expressions such as ‘the boss’s wrongful behaviour’, ‘I was humiliated numerous times, and I heard many racial slurs (Paki, soft ass, stupid Pole, Polish pig)’ invoked strong emotions in me as I listened to Ziutek’s story. This was certainly an important tool in the construction of his self-image of a victim. Ziutek’s experience and identity as a victimised member of society in turn affected any further interactions he had with local people. In fact he did not integrate with the Northern Irish, and once explicitly said to me: ‘It makes no sense to hang out with the locals. They believe you are not worth a shit.’ He also commented: ‘You never know what to expect from the Northern Irish. They are hypocritical. They smile at you but then they may come up with something malicious you least expect from them.’ He also became distrustful of the locals. For example, on one occasion, when Ziutek received a cheque from his current employer, he assumed that it would bounce. On another occasion, when he did not receive his annual tax form in timely manner, he was immediately suspicious. His wife on that occasion said: ‘Usually Ziutek’s boss’s wife talks to me when we meet, but this time she avoided me.’ It seems that these assumptions proved false, as he finally received his form although it was two weeks late.

I knew Ziutek for a lengthy period of time and we met on a regular basis. I could observe that he obtained a lot of support from members of the local community. In fact, on one occasion he acknowledged that the Citizens’
Advice Bureau helped him a great deal in comparison with the Polish Association of Northern Ireland. While one would expect the Polish community institution to be more supportive of its Polish members, this was not the case according to the couple. As Kasia put it: ‘People there are just incompetent and not helpful at all. It is a waste of time to go there’. Furthermore, Ziutek after leaving his job was doing well at his new workplace. He said that he was treated fairly by his new boss. He even told me about an incident when a Northern Irish man came to do an internship at his new workplace. When the Northern Irish man told the boss that he did not want to work with a Pole, the boss said that if he did not like it, then he should leave and look for some other internship opportunities.

Ziutek and Kasia also received a great deal of help in their daily lives from the local community. For example, Kasia attended free English classes held at a local college. One day she told me: ‘My teacher is now going to Guatemala as a volunteer. I need to thank her for her help before she leaves. I bought her a photo album about Latin America.’ Also, Ola and Wiktor seem to be well integrated into the local school. They often receive invitations to birthday parties from their classmates and go on class trips with them. Wiktor goes to extracurricular judo classes with his friends, while Ola takes Irish dancing lessons. Moreover, Ola and Wiktor’s teachers kindly facilitated their extended holidays in Poland by letting them finish their school term earlier.

Nevertheless, the number of instances cited by Ziutek as ‘unfair treatment’ by Northern Irish people superseded other occasions when he referred to his positive experiences. In fact, when I directly asked Ziutek whether he could recall any positive aspects of his relations with the members of the local community, he responded: ‘You know yourself that I had no positive experiences with the Northern Irish. They are all two faced and that’s it!’

This seems to confirm that although Ziutek may have had positive experiences with Northern Irish people, he continuously reconstructed a narrative of past sufferings inflicted on him by the members of the local community when he was conversing with Polish people. (I was actually struck when already during my first visit to Ziutek’s and Kasia’s house, they told me their story. I felt somehow uncomfortable as, to my mind, sharing such experiences would normally require a better rapport and more trust between the story-teller and the listener, which may suggest that they were constantly reliving their experience.) Furthermore, Ziutek did not seem to acknowledge any positive aspects of his relations with the majority group, although he and
his family had received a warm welcome from certain individuals. By focusing on the negative aspects of his life in Northern Ireland, and even denying the positives, he seemed to reinforce his self-image as victim.

**Tomasz’s Story: Language Barriers**

Language barriers are a significant obstacle that often prevent Poles from accessing basic social services and frequently inhibit them from obtaining certain resources. In some situations, a poor command of English may be a factor leading to perceived ill-treatment by the members of the local community. This was the case of Grażyna and Tomasz, a middle-aged married couple from Warsaw. When I met them, they were filing their case at the Ombudsman Office against the Northern Irish Police Service. Grażyna had been a court clerk in Poland and was familiar with police and court procedures. Her former professional experience made her cautious about PSNI practices and she quickly realised that the relevant official procedures were not followed. Tomasz wove his narrative in the following way:

One day I was driving my car and I collided with another car at a crossroad. I was just going to my English lesson with my friends. They left after the collision because I did not want them to miss the English lesson and I stayed on my own at the scene of the accident. The police came and took me to the police station without mentioning that I would be arrested; I thought we were going there to explain the whole situation. I would have understood if they told me that I was going to be arrested as the word for ‘arrest’ is the same in Polish. When we came to the police station, I was taken into the custody suite and I talked to the interpreter on the phone when they were taking me into the detention. I was surprised when I found out that they accused me of driving through red lights while I am convinced this was not the case. I was definitely paying attention to the lights. I was allowed to make one phone call, so I called my wife to inform her that I was at the Police Station. When she arrived at the enquiry office, she was not informed I had been arrested. She did not know what was going on and she was worried about me. In the meantime she picked up our friends from English lesson and they were all waiting in the enquiry room wondering what had happened. Finally, after being interviewed I was released on bail and my wife was in shock when she found out I had been arrested. She started shouting at the policemen in Polish ‘But how? Why?’ The interpreter who was standing beside me at
that time tried to calm her down. We went home and only then did we realise that we had not received any documentation regarding my detention. We went back to the Police Station the following day and were advised to return on Saturday as the constable who had dealt with my case was absent. My wife said she wouldn’t leave the Police Station until the relevant documentation was received [...]. One hour later, the policemen advised us that unless we left the police station right away we would be arrested. We would have stayed and let them arrest us, but it was just before Christmas so we decided to go home. We again went to the police station on Saturday [...]. The policeman responsible for our case was sick again but this time my wife could not stand it and said she would not leave the police station until we receive the relevant form. As a result they provided us with the documentation we asked for. Subsequently, we spoke to our solicitor and were advised to return to the police station to insist on the witnesses being interviewed. However, when we came back to the Police Station to ask them to take witness statements, we were informed that we would have to cover the charges for the interpreters from our own pocket. It surprised us and because we are from another town we went to our local police station to ask if it was legal and whether they could interview witnesses themselves. The policeman told us that we have a right to a free interpreter and called the police station in Belfast to explain the situation. We got a phone call from a policeman attached to the police station in Belfast the following day. He informed us that the witnesses would be interviewed in Belfast. Because we were dissatisfied with the way we were treated by the police we decided to seek advice from the Citizens’ Advice Bureau which since then has been dealing with the case. They also suggested that we raised this issue with Ombudsman’s Office. We will see how the case proceeds. We do think we were discriminated against: first of all, it is not true that I was driving through red lights; secondly, the policemen did not offer the official documentation, and thirdly, did not want to provide me with the free interpreting service. I believe I was treated this way because I am Polish and for this reason I am raising allegation of ethnic discrimination against the PSNI.

Tomasz’s narrative points to a perceived ethnic discrimination at an institutional level, which in his opinion was incorporated into the structures, processes and procedures of state organisations. Of course, some of his claims, such as his conviction that he did not commit the driving offence, may have been overstated, but others, like the right to use the interpreting service and obtain the charge sheet containing the summary of the allegations made
against him, were reasonable. However, whether or not it was really the case of discrimination is secondary; what matters here is that these circumstances generated and reinforced Tomasz’s belief that Polish migrants were being victimised by the local community. As in Ziutek’s case, he received a great deal of support from the Northern Irish institutions, especially the Ombudsman Office. However, this was not a part of Tomasz’s narrative. I had to ask him whether he received any help from the local community and only then was he able to refer to the positive experiences that he had regarding his case of perceived discrimination. Namely, Tomasz said to me that he had also received help from Northern Irish Council for Ethnic Minorities (NICEM). When he and his wife were interviewed regarding his case, they used an accredited community interpreter, thanks to whom they were able to overcome language barriers.\(^2\) Tomasz told me:

We were glad that finally there was someone willing to listen to our story, and I thanked the interpreter for all the effort she took to interpret to the best of her knowledge. I also thanked the investigating officer from the Ombudsman office who requested as many details as possible in order to help us. Even if we don’t win the case, as the evidence will be weighted in court, we will be happy enough with that, because we received fair treatment with the help of NICEM.

In this statement Tomasz revealed his gratitude to locally embedded institutions, in this way acknowledging that he also had positive experiences with the Northern Irish. However, to express that, he needed prompting and further questioning; and I had to seek out positive aspects of his circumstances. By focusing only on negative aspects of his life in Northern Ireland, Tomasz, like Ziutek, appeared to construct an identity of a victimised member of the society.

**Monika’s Story: Sectarian Division and Polishness**

Whereas in the previous section of this article I discussed Tomasz’s narrative of discrimination experienced in formal settings of a state institution I will now proceed to present Monika’s story, who experienced ethnic hatred in her local area of Newtownabbey. I met Monika’s family in December 2008 when they were staying with Monika’s brother Sebastian and his girlfriend Zosia. They were looking for accommodation in Belfast, having been forced
to move out of their previous house because of problems they had with members of the local community. Monika’s husband, Krzysztof, came to Belfast in August 2006 in pursuit of better life conditions. Family members who were already in Belfast helped him find a job. At the beginning of his stay Krzysztof worked for a cleaning company and lived in North Belfast. Monika joined him in October and their children came to Northern Ireland in December. When Krzysztof was employed as a welder by a company in Mallusk, the whole family moved to Newtownabbey. Monika recalled the story of their relations with the members of the local community:

We moved into Newtownabbey on 26 January 2007 and the initial problems started around the end of February, beginning of March. But these were minor problems. They were throwing pebbles at our windows. There were metal balls shot from a child’s gun. They would shout at us ‘Hey, Poland. Hey, Polish people.’ But these were primary school kids. The serious problems started in mid-March. I think it was 17 March for a period of three consecutive days. Stones, stones, stones and racial slurs one evening. The next evening there were stones, racial slurs, taking off clothes. I think that even girls were there. It was about 10 or 15 teenagers. The window got smashed. On the third day they wanted to set our house on fire. They went into our garden but when I saw they were holding a lighter, they ran away. It was in March 2007. Then spring and summer were okay. The problems started again before Halloween. It was maybe a week before Halloween. Well, in fact I don’t remember when it was. I know it was Sunday and they threw milk at our windows. No, it was after Halloween. The next day I went to talk with the family, hoping to solve the problem. The parents said they would talk to their children. But the following day they put fireworks under the doormat. But luckily it was raining so they didn’t go off. It was 10 fireworks tied together. This was last year. After this event everything was okay, the Christmas was okay, the New Year’s Eve was okay. After New Year, in January they kicked our doors. We called the police. So there was peace until October 2008. But in October they started throwing stones at our windows and kicking our door again. After this event we moved out. We were talking to the police, and to the Housing Executive. There is a section of the Housing Executive that deals with these issues. I think it is called the Community Cohesion section. But these situations repeated themselves, so apparently these talks didn’t help. They were shouting at us: ‘Polish fuck off’ and even gave us the Hitler salute. I think that the decisive factor was that we
were Polish and then the next was that we were Catholics. This is also the problem of them being from a dysfunctional family. Now it will be different, in the city centre there are many foreigners, Hindi, Chinese. There are all possible nationalities and Protestants and Catholics live together.

In her story, Monika focused on a sequence of certain negative events, weaving a narrative of perceived victimisation of Poles in Belfast. The cumulative character of their story has been important: each and every incident of hate-crime has intensified the feelings of suffering in Monika and her family. A self-image generated in such a way had a backlash effect on Krzysztof’s and Monika’s attitudes towards the members of the local community. When Krzysztof lost his job during the credit crunch, he said: ‘Irish people, they will one day say “a good man” and on the next day they will turn their back on you.’ Every negative experience reinforced Krzysztof and Monika’s conviction that Poles in Belfast are treated as if they were inferior by the other members of the society. Although at some point in her narrative, Monika made attempts to find a reasonable explanation for their mistreatment (that perhaps these were members of a dysfunctional family responsible for the attacks), she then went back to her original story of victimhood, arguing that it would be easier to live within a multicultural environment. What is highly significant is that by pointing to her possible ‘ally’ (other foreigners), consciously or not, Monika only reinforced the existing system of categorisations, where ‘we’ (the foreigners) are united against a coming threat from the mainstream society group (the Northern Irish). Monika’s case was very similar to Ziutek’s case in the way that both of them would refer to the negative experiences in their daily lives. Her husband and she would often moan ‘Ah, Ci Ajrishe’ (Ay, these Irish!). When I directly asked them if they had had any positive experiences with the locals, they both said ‘overall our relations with the Northern Irish are bad’. I had to probe further to find out that they had some positive experiences as well. For example, it turned out that they gained a lot of support from the Community Safety Unit, a branch of the Housing Executive. When in January 2008 a local youth kicked her door, she reported the incident to the PSNI, who referred her to the mediation service of the Housing Executive. She told me:

We were talking to the parents of the children responsible for the anti-social behaviour. The pastor was talking with them, too. The parents said they would speak to their children. So there was peace until October 2008.
Monika appreciated the help of the Housing Executive and she believed that they did their best to help her. However, I needed to cross-question her. Similarly, I had to ask Monika and Krzysztof whether they had any positive experiences with the locals in their everyday life. They could not remember. Because I interacted with them on a daily basis, as an objective observer, I could find many instances when they received support from the Northern Irish. For example, when Krzysztof lost his job he went to the GEM organisation, which helped him look for job opportunities. He once asked me, ‘Please translate my CV into English, you don’t have to be perfect, they will correct it for me’, or he would inform me: ‘I went to GEM today, they told me they are looking for welders in Mallusk, I will go there today.’ Krzysztof’s gratefulness was apparent in his accounts of those instances. However, when asked about positive experiences, he could hardly remember any. It is also worth noting that Marta, his step-daughter was doing very well at the local school and she often received invitations to birthday parties from her classmates. Any mention of this was missing from our conversations directly regarding Krzysztof’s experiences in Northern Ireland. This again illustrates how Poles tend to represent themselves being treated as inferior by members of the local community, despite the fact that they may also have had positive experiences during their stay in Belfast.

The main question that arises from these narratives is what makes Polish people concentrate so much on the negative aspects of their social reality while dismissing the positive experiences. I will examine this in the next section of this paper, focusing on the notion of victimhood as a central theme of the Polish nationalist discourse. I will also refer to a certain tendency of the Polish to complain, seeking explanation in the legacy of the communist past of the nation.

**Polish Martyrdom and Cultural Repertoire of Whining**

Earlier in this article, I mentioned that narratives are told in the ways allowed by a society’s norms. In this specific context, I believe that the narratives woven by the Polish migrants are influenced considerably by two forceful factors: first, victimhood as an immanent theme in Polish nation identity building and, second, inertia and a propensity to complain – characteristics that were inculcated in individuals during the communist regime.
Golańska-Ryan comments that ‘in the postsocialist context, the recreation and affirmation of identity often comes with references to the glories of the past or the injustices suffered under the foreign occupations of the Germans or the Soviets’ (2006: 173–174). These injustices in the case of Poland included partition of Poland from 1772 to 1918, the ‘horrors of the Second World War’ (2006: 170), ‘painful experiences with the Soviet Union’ (2006: 172), ‘memories of betrayals, expulsions to Siberia, the Gulag, the lies of the communist past and lack of choice’ (2006: 172). In relation to this, figures of martyrs are symbols of the Polish nation and they are often used as symbols of specific political ideas and doctrines. Thus, the notion of victimhood is a central theme in Polish nationalist discourse. It is so deeply embedded in Polish national consciousness that often when Poles are abroad they adopt the stance of ‘victim’; for this reason the theme of martyrdom is also present in their narratives.

There is also a motif that exists apart from this collective self-image of victimhood, which seems to be missing from the anthropological analyses. Namely, many of my informants pointed to a propensity of Poles to complain; there is a common auto-stereotype prevalent among the migrants that Poles tend to whine more than any other nation. From this point of view, one could argue that in the cultural repertoire of Polish migrants there are various whining strategies available that reinforce narratives of victimhood. One could look for the explanation of this in the communist past of Poland, which has greatly contributed to development of ‘whining strategies’ by individuals. The paternalistic state looked after individuals and bred ‘learned helplessness’ and ‘passivity’ (Marody 1992). There was a saying: ‘No matter if you stay or lay, you should get 2000’ (Czy się stoi czy się leży, dwa tysiąc sie należy). As a result people adopted receptive and demanding attitudes (postawy receptywno-roszczeniowe) (Ziółkowski et al. 2001: 258). Polish society is a reflexive society, thinking all the time about what is going on and what could be going on; it also is a nation that is continuously comparing itself, usually with a point of reference or a comparator, which they find better than themselves (we are talking here of upward comparison); finally, it is an impatient nation, which would like to see fast effects of the changes in place (ibid.: 261). These three characteristics, outlined by the authors, may help to explain why Polish people appear to moan more than people of other nationalities.

It seems that these two dominant characteristics of Polish society – victimhood as a notion eminent in the politics of Polish nationalism and the
receptive and demanding attitudes – serve as cultural scripts that shape the narratives of the Polish migrants translating their experience into a tellable story. Furthermore, there appears to be a parallel process taking place, namely that these traits seem to be simultaneously fed and exacerbated by migrants’ experiences in Northern Ireland. In the context where migrants may find themselves in a state of limbo, often feeling alienated by the majority group, they relate to certain cultural norms with which they are familiar and which help them to deal with the emotional distress, which belonging to a minority group may cause.

**Identity Construction and the Scripts for Interpretations of Reality**

In this paper I dealt with narratives of perceived ethnic discrimination and hate crime. What I was interested in was therefore not the objective, paradigmatic truth but rather migrants’ perceptions and interpretations of what they considered as unfair treatment by members of the local community. As Somers (1994: 613–614) points out:

> Persons construct identity by locating themselves or being located within a repertoire of emplotted stories, and make sense of what has happened and is happening to them by attempting to assemble or in some way to integrate these happenings within one or more narratives.

While it cannot be doubted that my informants’ experiences shaped their personhoods, it is simultaneously through the weaving of narratives that individuals actualise and reconstruct their identities of a victimised stratum of the society. Seen from this angle, their stories are the sites in which identity is instantiated and negotiated, and the practice of narration involves ‘the doing’ of identity.

In this process, my informants focus on the negative aspects of the social reality that surrounds them, representing themselves as condemned to the suffering inflicted upon them by the locals. This occurs regardless of the fact that they all had certain positive experiences with Northern Irish people. Such self-representation calls for seeing the stories as both individual – an actively formulated narration of someone’s life – and simultaneously informed by recurrent interpretative repertoires. In the case of my informants, their narratives appeared to be ordered by two cultural guides for action. The first
was the theme of victimhood, which is embedded in the politics of Polish nationhood. Imagery of Poles as martyrs has been a theme prevalent in building national Polish ethos. The second guide which moulded migrants’ stories was a propensity of Poles to whine. This national trait has its roots in the communist past of Poland, with passivity and helplessness being prominent features of that time.

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Notes

1. It is standard procedure that a person released on bail receives a document with a summary of the allegations made against her or him, and possibly notification of the court appearance date.
2. According to the official data, figures for interpreting assistance by public services in 2005 revealed that Portuguese, Polish and Lithuanian migrants collectively accounted for 70 per cent of the entire requests in this period (McVeigh and Fisher 2006: 19).

References


Genealogical Avenues, Long-Distance Flows and Social Hierarchy

Ḥaḍramī Migrants in the Indonesian Diaspora

Johann Heiss and Martin Slama

Abstract: The article reflects on the role of genealogy in the process of Ḥaḍramī migration to Indonesia and explores the relation between genealogy and the construction of hierarchy and identity among diaspora Ḥaḍramīs. In addition to persons and ideas travelling along genealogical networks from the Ḥaḍramawt to Indonesia, the authors examine long-distance flows originating from Middle Eastern centres of Islamic learning, which were used to question a genealogically based social hierarchy. After discussing the flows and movements of the colonial period, our focus advances to the present, as we investigate the consequences of both new and renewed long-distance connections between Indonesia and the Ḥaḍramawt.

Keywords: diaspora, genealogy, Ḥaḍramawt, Indonesia, Islamic reformism, long-distance flows

Introduction

In their long history of migration, Ḥaḍramī Arabs spread to almost all regions bordering the Indian Ocean, that is, East Africa, India and South-East Asia. On the Malabar coast, for example, historical evidence points to Ḥaḍramī settlements in pre-Islamic times (Ilias 2007). Despite such an early presence in particular sites of the Indian Ocean littoral, it was only from the middle of the eighteenth century that Ḥaḍramīs migrated in larger numbers. While India was originally their main destination, it was superseded by South-East Asia during the nineteenth century, especially after the advent of steamships and the opening of the Suez Canal in 1869 (Jonge 1997: 94; Khalidi 1997: 69). The flows of migration into these regions lasted until the middle of the twentieth century, when, due to the establishment of nation states, conditions
became increasingly unfavourable for border-crossing societies. In the 1930s, 110,000 Ḥaḍramīs – 20 to 30 per cent of the country’s total population – lived in the diaspora, and they were very unevenly distributed, with around 90,000 Ḥaḍramīs living in the Netherlands East Indies, today’s independent Indonesia (Lekon 1997: 265). Most Ḥaḍramīs were active in trade or had established various businesses (Clarence-Smith 1997), forming one ‘entrepreneurial diaspora’ (Freitag 2003: 2–7) in South-East Asia among several others, most notably the Chinese (Reid 1997).

Ḥaḍramīs of all social categories, which are basically four (see below), migrated to the Netherlands East Indies and became equally successful businessmen. Almost exclusively, it was men who migrated and then married local women. However, they maintained a distinct Ḥaḍramī identity by marrying off their children, especially their daughters, to the offspring of other diaspora Ḥaḍramīs or to Ḥaḍramī men having recently arrived in the Netherlands East Indies. Due to this marriage strategy – based on elaborated genealogies, a patrilineal reckoning of descent and a rigid endogamy – relatively stable Ḥaḍramī communities came into existence in the diaspora. Consequently, Farid Alatas (1997: 29), inspired by Ibn Khaldūn’s Muqaddimah, emphasises the role of genealogies:

Ḥadhramis in the diaspora had for centuries married into East African, South Indian and Malay-Indonesian communities without losing the sense of Hadhrami identity, because such identity was neither national nor ethnic, but was based on kinship. The locus of Hadhrami identity was not so much language but nasab (lineage), which formed the basis of a uniquely Hadhrami type of ‘asābiyya [social cohesion].

Closely connected to the central role of genealogy in Ḥaḍramī identity formations are family names and Islam, which – as Engseng Ho (2006: 188) has shown – mark Ḥaḍraminess amid changes that occur in the diaspora: ‘Throughout the diaspora, the names given to offspring draw from a relatively small and constant stock that is recognizably and typically Hadrami. As well, religious affiliation remains constant. Other attributes, however – such as phenotype, mother tongue, and cuisine – change.’ Although not all Ḥaḍramīs keep written genealogies, genealogical thinking that accounts for the transmission of family names remains important in the diaspora.

Most of the literature dealing with Ḥaḍramī migration focuses on the time when the diaspora entered its main phase of formation, that is, from the eighteenth until the middle of the twentieth centuries (see e.g. Freitag and Clarence-Smith 1997; Jonge and Kaptein 2002). The authors of this article did research in contemporary Indonesia, and we are thus able to compare and contrast our findings with the valuable work of historians and anthropologists working historically. As a result, the continuities and changes experienced by the diaspora over time come to the fore. Especially with regard to identity formation, changes in social stratification and the construction of the Ḥaḍramawt as homeland,
long-distance flows crossing the borders of colonial empires cannot be ignored, since they had considerable influence on the development of the Ḥaḍramī communities in the Netherlands East Indies. By comparing historical avenues (linking the Ḥaḍramawt with South-East Asia) with present connections, we finally examine ‘temporal variation’, one of the three registers of the explicit dimensions of comparison proposed by Fox and Gingrich (2002: 20), in order to illuminate the significance of transnational flows for today’s Ḥaḍramīs.

Given this emphasis on long-distance flows, the following theoretical tools, conceptualised in anthropology during the last decades and dealing with the phenomena of globalisation, transnationalism and diaspora, are crucial for our analysis. To start with a central concept of the anthropology of globalisation, the term ‘transnational (or global) flows’ refers to various mobilities – of people, ideologies, technologies, media and finance. Introduced into anthropology by Arjun Appadurai (1996) and Ulf Hannerz (1992, 1996), this concept urges the researcher to identify influences affecting or even producing phenomena at the local level, as well as to follow them across national borders or, historically, across the borders maintained by European empires (Appadurai 1996: 33). For Hannerz (2002: 5), ‘[o]ne fundamental fact about flows must be that they have directions’ pointing to ‘the net asymmetry of flow during the last century or so’ (ibid.: 6) between centres (primarily Europe and North America) and (post-)colonial peripheries. Hannerz recognises counter-flows and a structure of multiple centres and peripheries but does not want to abandon the identification of centres and peripheries, as some of his critics propose. He disagrees with the assumption that we are at a point ‘when it has become entirely impossible to tell centres and peripheries apart’ (ibid.). Partly relying on the idea that a centre is a site from which flows can originate, we want to add that we consider the term ‘centre’ to have a strong relative meaning, depending on for whom (and from where) a particular place constitutes a centre (or a periphery). In developing Islamic reformist ideas, Cairo, in the time of Jamāl al-Dīn al-Afghānī (1838–1897), Muḥammad ʿAbduh (1849–1905) and Rashīd Riḍā (1865–1935), certainly was a centre where reformist ideas originated and spread to other places, influencing the Ḥaḍramī diaspora, for example. However, Cairo was recognised as a centre only by reform-oriented Muslims, not by conservative ones, although the latter could not escape some of its effects.

The literature dealing with the phenomenon of transnationalism refers to new technologies connecting long-distance networks with increasing speed and efficiency. For example, Steven Vertovec (2009: 5) states that ‘the dispersed diasporas of old have become today’s “transnational communities” sustained by a range of modes of social organisation, mobility and communication’ (see also Hannerz 1996: 98). For Vertovec (2000: 154), ‘an increasingly key avenue for the flow of cultural phenomena and the transformation of diasporic identity is, not surprisingly, global media and communications’. Although he does not elaborate on the metaphor of the avenue, for our purposes an avenue connotes a useful facility that enables and constrains flows to take certain directions:
it narrows down countless possibilities to just a few or only one. Avenues can follow the asymmetries of centres and peripheries, but they need not necessarily do so. In our analysis, we consider genealogy as an avenue giving the flows of cultural phenomena a certain direction, mainly, from the Ḫaḍramawt to Indonesia. Not only do cultural phenomena, such as marriage patterns or cuisine, travel (and change) on this metaphorical avenue, but people also use it in a similar way: the direction may be initially induced by a relative living along the way or in a certain place in Indonesia, thus determining the itinerary of the traveller or im/emigrant.

Referring to the movements of Ḫaḍramīs along kin-based networks, Ho (2006) coined the term ‘genealogical travel’. Comparing genealogy with the medium of print journalism, he calls Ḫaḍramī genealogies an ‘older technology for traversing distance and duration’ (ibid.: 182). In our analysis, we start from this important observation. However, we prefer to use the metaphor of avenues as defined above, since both Ho’s print journalism and Vertovec’s global media and communication – important as the former has been and the latter are for the Ḫaḍramī diaspora – do not have the same capacity as genealogies in giving flows certain directions. Especially communication technologies are not used to provide orientation or direction; rather, they facilitate and accelerate communication, for example, along the lines of genealogy.

Genealogies are not limited to providing spatial orientation; they often contain ideas and norms about how society should be organised. We thus suggest that genealogies can be viewed as ‘social imaginaries’, that is, according to Dilip Parameshwar Gaonkar (2002: 4), as

ways of understanding the social that become social entities themselves, mediating collective life … They are embedded in the habitus of a population or are carried in modes of address, stories, symbols, and the like. They are imaginary in a double sense: they exist by virtue of representation or implicit understandings, even when they acquire immense institutional force; and they are the means by which individuals understand their identities and their place in the world.

Although Gaonkar (ibid.: 5) has in mind concepts such as ‘the national people’ or ‘the ethnos’ (see also Taylor 2004: 23), we refer to his understanding of social imaginaries when we examine genealogies, since genealogical imaginaries entail concepts of belonging and distance, similarity and difference, kinship and ideal marriages. Moreover, these imaginaries can travel along genealogical avenues, for example, from the country of origin to diaspora locations and vice versa.

For our analysis of the long-distance flows interconnecting the Ḫaḍramawt and Indonesia, we follow approaches in diaspora studies which call into question the seemingly fixed categories of ‘diaspora’ and ‘homeland’ (Levy and Weingrod 2005). As Levy (2005: 72) points out: ‘[T]he relationships between diaspora and homeland, or better, these very classifications themselves, may be fluid, historically conditioned, and even multidirectional.’ Not only among Jews
who migrated from their Moroccan diaspora to Israel, analysed by Levy, but also among Ḥaḍramīs in Indonesia, it is not always clear what is to be considered as homeland or diaspora in which period of time. As will be shown in this article, for a considerable number of Ḥaḍramīs in today’s Indonesia, the Ḥaḍramawt has almost lost its image as homeland – along with all the sentiments attached to it (Heiss and Six-Hohenbalken forthcoming; Safran 1991). Ḥaḍramīs may thus be considered to constitute, at least partly, a ‘diaspora with weak centers of gravity’, as Hanafi (2005: 112–117) concludes for the Palestinians as a whole, making the relationships between ‘homeland’ and ‘diaspora’ uncertain and negotiable. How the Ḥaḍramawt is perceived by diaspora Ḥaḍramīs represents a case in point for the importance of genealogical imaginaries. Furthermore, these imaginaries influence their reception of long-distance flows and their construction of social (in)equality. It is the latter topic that we turn to now.

**Genealogical Imaginaries and Social Hierarchy**

Similar to other regions of the Yemen, traditional society in the Ḥaḍramawt is characterised by the existence of social categories which are perceived in a hierarchical order. In Ḥaḍramī as well as in Western literature, descriptions of the partitioning of these social groups differ to a certain extent. Additionally, their hierarchical ranking can become disputed and unstable in certain historical situations. As Frode Jacobsen (2007: 473) suggests, this ranking ‘might be better viewed as ideological model’, not always in accordance with the ‘social inequalities in real life’. The place at the uppermost end of the hierarchy is usually assigned to the sādah (sing. sayyid) – those who trace their origins back to the family of the prophet Muḥammad. Their position may be disputed by the mashāyikh (sing. shaykh) and by parts of the tribal population. The arms-bearing tribal people, the qabā’il (sing. qabīlī), are usually described as the third societal layer. The places at the lowest ranks of Ḥaḍramī society are taken by persons categorised as ‘weak’ (da‘īf, pl. du‘afā’), mainly peasants, certain craftsmen, such as blacksmiths, and former slaves (cf. al-Bakrī 1935, 1936; Berg 1886; Boxberger 2002; Camelin 1997; Dostal 1965, 1985; Knysh 1997; Mobini-Keshokh 1999; Serjeant [1957] 1981).

Genealogy (or the lack of it) is crucial for the identity construction of social groups in the Ḥaḍramawt, yet genealogy is perceived and used differently. For the sādah, it is essential that their genealogy reaches back to the times of the prophet Muḥammad, from whose family they derive their origins. Their position in society, their occupation in religion, law and mediation, is legitimated primarily through their genealogy, which is recorded and sometimes even remembered in full. Therefore, sādah families keep written family trees that enable them to show their genealogical connections. In the Ḥaḍramawt, sādah genealogies were collected and written down by specialists, the most famous of them being ‘Abd al-Raḥmān b. Muḥammad al-Mashhūr (at the time, the muftī
of Tarīm), who recorded the genealogies in his volume Al-Shams al-Zāhirah al-Ḍāhiyah al-Munīrah (The Clear, Shining, Illuminating Sun). The text was completed in 1890 and printed for the first time in 1911 in Hyderabad (cf. Ho 1997: 140). The main purpose of these sādah genealogies was (and still is) to prove with certainty, and without any caesura, the complete and unbroken nasab (genealogy) of the families.

With their activities, the sādah partly superseded the mashāyikh and partly rivalled them, since the latter were engaged in the same field before the arrival of the sādah. The mashāyikh were a kind of ‘aristocratic group’ (Serjeant [1957] 1981: 3) who also fulfilled religious functions (Lammens 1919; Serjeant [1957] 1981: 4f.). Serjeant contends that, as a social group, the mashāyikh were already existent in pre-Islamic times and describes them as ‘the next approximation to a caste sacerdotale’ ([1957] 1981: 4f.; cf. Heiss 2005). The arrival of the sādah inevitably led to rivalry with the mashāyikh. Genealogy became an important legitimation in the sādah’s struggle for the top position in society, while at the same time motivating the mashāyikh to preserve their own genealogies in written form.

The members of the qabā’il group are defined by genealogy, too. Each tribe has its ancestor – whose name, in many cases, is given to the tribe – and its members are imagined as his progeny. The same goes for subgroups or lineages of tribes: they also have their ancestors, whose names usually function as epo-nyms of the respective groups. Yet, at least in everyday life, only the ancestors of the tribes and their subgroups, as well as the last few generations of ancestors, the fathers, grandfathers and so on, are remembered in order to define group membership. Between the ancestors and the few remembered generations of parents, grandparents, etc., there is a ‘floating gap’ (Assmann 1999: 49; Vansina [1961] 1973: 23f.), which enables tribal genealogies to be kept at approximately the same length over time and allows for manipulations, such as the incorpo-ration of groups into (or their removal from) the genealogies. Thus, although tribal genealogies are fundamentally different from those of the sādah, they have the same function – to exclude and to include, in this way defining the boundaries of (sādah or tribal) groups. They are essential for the construction and maintenance of identities and for the collective modi memorandi.

The members of the lowest-ranking groups of Ḥaḍramī society, the ‘weak’ (dū’āfā‘), have no remembered ancestors such as the prophet Muhammad or the tribal progenitors. Of course, they know their personal forebears, their parents, grandparents and so on. But this personal genealogy does not define their respective groups. In their case, the group boundaries are brought about mostly by their occupation, by being (or having been) a blacksmith or a slave, etc. Thus, these groups are characterised by both the lack of genealogy and occupational social boundaries.

In the course of their emigration to Indonesia (and to other parts of the world), the Ḥaḍramīs preserved their hierarchical social categories, but with certain shifts or alterations that were triggered and accelerated by socio-economic developments and, as will be discussed in the next section in detail, by
the influence of new ideological flows. Accordingly, genealogical imaginaries also changed. Already in colonial times, members of the lowest group, the *du’afā’*, had managed to climb the social ladder by becoming well-to-do merchants and entrepreneurs. In independent Indonesia, they could also succeed in prestigious professions, for example, by becoming notaries public. Today, they refrain from presenting themselves as ‘weak’, regarding the term *da’if* as a ‘bad’ word. Seen from their initial position in the Ḥaḍramawt, the *du’afā’* did not have much to lose – or rather, they could only win in the diaspora. Similar to nearly all other immigrants from Ḥaḍramawt, their first marriages were with indigenous women, and consequently they call the Javanese, Balinese and other indigenous populations their *akhwāl* or mother-brothers. Also, in the next generations, many *du’afā’* men did not object to marrying indigenous women. As a consequence, after a few generations, they had partly ceased using the Arabic language and had lost the Ḥaḍramī part of their identity, as commented on by L. W. C. van den Berg (1886: 215): ‘Ce qui disparait le premier, c’est la langue arabe, puis l’habillement et enfin le nom de famille.’ These nineteenth-century arrivals have thus become fully assimilated into the host society and can today no longer be identified as Ḥaḍramīs. However, some of the former *du’afā’* maintain their Ḥaḍramī identity by joining Ḥaḍramī-dominated organisations and by marrying within the group. Among those, the most influential *du’afā’* families in present-day Indonesia are the Sunkar and the Makārim.

Whereas *qabā’il* tend to feel superior to *du’afā’*, even up to the present time, many of them question the social position of the *sādah*. Although they usually possess no written genealogies, *qabā’il* still frequently marry among themselves. Many of them are engaged in trade, especially textiles, and some are entrepreneurs on a larger scale, for example, in batik production. Like the *qabā’il*, a large number of the members of the *mashāyikh* group are quite well to do, earning their money as traders and entrepreneurs. Also similar to the *qabā’il*, the *mashāyikh* question the status of the *sādah*. Many *mashāyikh* families (e.g. Bāḥalwān, Bārās, Bāḥānan, al-ʿAmūdī) are in possession of written genealogies, but they own no centrally collected genealogies as the *sādah* do. It appears that families or groups who originally had a lower social standing can sometimes present themselves in Indonesia as members of the *mashāyikh*. We even met people (including members of the Sunkar) who claimed *mashāyikh* status, despite the fact that their families belonged to the lowest social group in the Ḥaḍramawt. It would be impossible to state their origins as coming from the *qabā’il* or from the *sādah*. Thus, we can confirm what Jacobsen (2007: 480) observed in Ḥaḍramī communities in Bali, Lombok and Sumbawa – that the category *mashāyikh* seemed to function in many contexts as a kind of lump category where all non-sayyids were lumped together.

As purported descendants of the prophet Muḥammad and as religious specialists, the *sādah* place themselves on the top tier of Ḥaḍramī society in the diaspora, using their genealogy to keep this position and the privileges that are associated with it. Crucial for this is the office of the Al-Rābiṭah al-ʿAlawīyah,
situated in Jakarta, where all the sādah genealogies are collected and electronically processed, and from which the sādah can get their genealogies in an ‘official’ form. In addition, the already mentioned genealogical collection, *Al-Shams al-Zāhirah al-Dāhiyah al-Munīrah*, was printed for the first time in Hyderabad. Jakarta and Hyderabad, both in the mahjar (diaspora), stand as signs of the growing contention and uncertainty over societal hierarchies in the diaspora, where the status of the sādah is being challenged by other Ḥaḍramīs, not least by questioning the accuracy of their genealogies.

The Ḥaḍramī sādah from all over the world can be registered and obtain their genealogies at Al-Rābitah in Jakarta. Placed in a gilded frame, genealogies are often hung on the wall of a sādah parlour where visitors are entertained. Due to their genealogical imaginary, in which their connection to the prophet Muḥammad and to important scholars is essential, the sādah consider themselves to be key representatives of Islam in Indonesia and hold their custom of endogamy in high esteem. Like other Ḥaḍramīs, the sādah are involved in businesses of different kinds, but some of them still practise their traditional activities as religious specialists and mediators. The al-Jufri family in Palu, Central Sulawesi, for example, heads the Islamic organisation Al-Khayrat and is known for its charismatic religious leaders, who are also engaged in various businesses, such as trading the batik products of their family members based in Pekalongan, Central Java.

Ḥaḍrami social groups are defined through genealogy or the lack of it, making the genealogical imaginary an important factor with regard to how boundaries between the groups are perceived – at least in the Ḥaḍramawt. In the diaspora, however, genealogy as a boundary marker has lost its force among Ḥaḍramīs of mashāyikh, qabā’il and  đu‘āfā’ descent, whereas this does not apply to the sādah. As a consequence, the Ḥaḍrami community in most parts of Indonesia today is divided between the mashāyikh, qabā’il and  đu‘āfā’, on the one hand, and the sādah, on the other (Jonge 2000). The next section deals with the history of this division, which is closely connected to the major ideological flows of the early twentieth century.

**Reformers and Egalitarian Flows**

When people leave their native country to settle in other parts of the world, their understanding of their own society – initially viewed as something ‘natural’ – is often altered through exposure to other ways of living. In the diaspora, hierarchical divisions come into sight and can thus be questioned. Paul Dresch (1993: 248) finds such occurrences during the civil war (1962–1970) in the north of Yemen, when Yemeni workers returned home from abroad:

*They [the sādah] were no longer ‘our’ learned men or ‘theirs’ but began to seem to many a ‘class’ whose relevance might be judged by the standards of other countries.*
The factions were not defined in solely Yemeni terms, and the war forced comparison and generalization on almost everyone … The point of such comparison and generalization was greatly sharpened by the presence within the country of a new social group: Yemeni workers who had returned from abroad soon after the coup and, based in the cities, now pinned their hopes for a better life on Arab nationalism and the promise of socialism. From their point of view, shaykhs and tribesmen, whether royalist or republican, seemed a throwback to the ‘feudal’ age.

Similarly, the mashāyikh, qabā’il and dhu’afā’ Haḍramīs started to question the status of the sādah after their migration to the Netherlands East Indies. This occurred at the beginning of the twentieth century, when the colony witnessed the foundation of modern organisations by its subjects (Shiraishi 1990). During this process, the Haḍramīs established their first non-kin-based association, Jamʿiyat al-Khayr (the Benevolent Society), which opened its first school in 1906. This school and the following ones differed considerably from traditional centres of Islamic learning in the Indies, the madrasa (day school) and the pesantren (Javanese boarding school). Modelled on modern European schools, these new schools did not abandon an Arab-Islamic identity: students were taught about the Arab language, the Arab world and how Islam is practised properly (Mobini-Kesheh 1999: 36–37). The schools of Jamʿiyat al-Khayr received fresh impetus due to long-distance Islamic networks in which Haḍramīs in the Netherlands East Indies took part. These networks certainly crossed Mecca, where the young Sudanese scholar Ahmad b. Muhammad al-Sūrkatī held a prestigious teaching post. Sūrkatī was invited by Jamʿiyat al-Khayr leaders to visit their schools and was instantly appointed school inspector after his arrival in Batavia in 1911.

Sūrkatī was heavily influenced by ideological flows originating from the centres of Islamic scholarship, notably Cairo. There Muhammad ‘Abduh and his disciple Rashīd Riḍā developed their programme for a modern Islamic society, which they spread through a major global medium of their time – a journal. Through this journal, titled Al-Manār (The Lighthouse), ideas of reform travelled throughout the Arab world, reaching Sūrkatī, who is credited with having ‘injected the spirit of Islamic reformism’ into the Ḥaḍramī community (Mobini-Kesheh 1999: 55), first in Mecca and then in Batavia. However, certain reformist views were not met with approval by more conservative leaders of Jamʿiyat al-Khayr, leading to quarrels within the organisation. At that time, the Haḍramī community was occupied by the question – provoked by a complicated case in Solo, Central Java – as to whether a woman of sādah origin should be allowed to marry a non-sādah Muslim man, thereby challenging the traditional sādah demand of equality of marriage partners (kafā’ah), as well as the sādah’s sense of superiority based on genealogy (see also Manger 1999: 117–118). Sūrkatī, asked for his opinion about the matter, came to the conclusion that such a marriage is in accordance with Islamic law. For conservative sādah, this was unacceptable: for them, genealogy was constitutive of their
social imaginary, which emphasised customary endogamy. The following quarrel eventually led to the resignation of Sürkatî from Jam‘iyat al-Khayr in 1914 and to a schism of the community. Those who left Jam‘iyat al-Khayr, almost all of whom were Ḥaḍramī traders of non-ṣādah origin, established a new organisation, the Jam‘iyat al-Islām wa-al-Irshād al-‘Arabiyyah (Arab Association for Reform and Guidance) (Abu Shouk 2002). After Indonesia achieved independence in 1949, the organisation changed its name from Al-Irshād al-‘Arabiyyah to Al-Irshād al-Islāmīyah, and today it is usually referred to as Al-Irsyad, a practice we will follow in this article.

For non-ṣādah Ḥaḍramīs, the ideas introduced by Sürkatî became a welcome weapon to counter ṣādah hegemony. The reformist interpretation of the basic Islamic texts emphasises that there is no superiority among Muslims except ‘in knowledge and godliness’ – an argument one can still hear from Irsyadis in today’s Indonesia. This emphasis on equality among Muslims was not the only ideological flow introduced at Al-Irsyad schools and during Al-Irsyad meetings. Another flow – that of nationalism – became equally important. In Al-Irsyad schools, students learnt patriotic songs and poetry about their watān, their homeland, imagining the Ḥaḍramawt while living on the other side of the Indian Ocean. When the schools were opened in the 1910s, coincidentally with the rise of Indonesia’s first anti-colonial mass organisations, it became common practice for Ḥaḍramīs to show affection for their homeland in a distinctly nationalistic way. This was particularly true for Al-Irsyad members who held the opinion that reforms, already on the way in the diaspora, should also be carried out in the Ḥaḍramawt itself. Al-Irsyad activities were first confined to the Netherlands East Indies, and there mainly to the island of Java. Only later, with much greater difficulty and less success, did they spread to the Ḥaḍramawt, where the ṣādah used their stronger position to prevent Irsyadis from gaining ground (Mobini-Kesheh 1999: 121–124).

In the Netherlands East Indies, Al-Irsyad was successful not only in educating its students. As part of the vanguard of the reformist Muslim movement, it also affected the non-Arabic population. Particularly during the hajj pilgrimage, Indonesians came into contact with reformist ideology. Among them, most prominently, was Ahmad Dahlān, the founder of what would become Indonesia’s largest reformist organisation, the Muhammadiyah (Noer 1973). As the story is told today by Irsyadis, the two reformist leaders, Sürkatî and Dahlān, came across each other by accident: sitting opposite from Dahlān on a train from Jakarta to Yogyakarta around 1912, Sürkatî was surprised to see a Javanese reading the reformist flagship journal Al-Manār (Badjerei 1985). In the following decades, alumni from Al-Irsyad schools became important figures in Muhammadiyah. Consequently, the organisation itself stated in 1939 that ‘Muhammadiyah is the pupil of Al-Irsyad’ (Affandi 1999: 220). This fitted very well with the Ḥaḍramīs’ self-perception of possessing some kind of superiority in terms of religious matters vis-à-vis the native population – a view shared by the ṣādah and Irsyadis alike. Concerning this issue, Sürkatî’s
view was not different, since he explicitly stated that the future of Islam in Java would depend on the future of its Arab population (Affandi 1999: 170).11

Haḍramīs’ long-distance nationalism (Anderson 1994; Glick-Schiller 2004) and the Irsyadis’ attempt to bring about religious reforms in their homeland – two features which cannot be separated from each other – lost force with the ever-growing strength of Indonesian nationalism in the 1930s. A new generation of Haḍramīs of sādah as well as non-sādah background – most of them muwalladin (Arabs of mixed parentage) of the first generation (Ho 1997), that is, with an Indonesian mother – began to imagine their future not in, at best, a reformed and modernised Haḍramawt but in an independent Indonesia. This goal was institutionalised by the foundation of the Indonesian Arab Union (Persatoean Arab Indonesia) in 1934, which eventually joined the nationalist struggle by renaming itself a party – the Partai Arab Indonesia (PAI) (Mobini-Kesheh 1999: 128, 141). When Indonesia gained independence after the Second World War, Haḍramīs, especially those of the PAI, became part of the national elite by dismissing the PAI and by joining various Indonesian political parties (Algadri 1984: 133). Similarly, Al-Irsyad – changing its name from Al-Irsyad al-Arabiyyah to Al-Irsyad al-Islamiyyah – had no difficulties in finding its place in the newly independent country.

However, during the last decade of the twentieth century, Al-Irsyad underwent a crisis that is being felt up to the present day. A struggle for leadership between the long-serving chairman and younger cadres led to a split in 1998 (Badjerei 2003: 208). What followed were congresses and counter-congresses of the two opposing camps, failed attempts at reconciliation and a legal battle that finally came to an end in 2005, when Indonesia’s High Court ruled that the camp of the old chairman has the exclusive right to represent Al-Irsyad. Since the ruling, the organisation has remained divided. Only some of those branches that joined the younger leadership have returned to the camp of the old chairman, although he finally resigned, giving way to a new chairman (of his own camp). Nevertheless, Al-Irsyad maintains its activities, since the local branches in Indonesia are by and large financially independent from the central board. There was no comparable crisis among the sādah during the last decades.

Having presented the influences of reform-oriented ideas originating from Cairo on the Haḍramī community and the consequences they had for the construction of hierarchy and identity among Haḍramīs, we focus now on present long-distance flows between Indonesia and the Haḍramawt. As will be seen, the differences between the sādah and non-sādah are reflected in these flows.

Current Long-Distance Flows

From the late 1960s onward, Haḍramīs in Yemen and Indonesia were divided by the borders of the Cold War.12 After the breakdown of the socialist regime in South Yemen in 1989, Indonesian Haḍramīs started to establish new relations
with the Ḥadramawt. The sādah especially revived their connections relatively quickly. Prominent ḥabā‘ib – as Islamic scholars of sādah origin are called now in Indonesia, since the title sayyid had become a matter of contestation during the disputes with reform-oriented non-sādah (cf. Heiss 2005: 132) – travelled to the Ḥadramawt and visited their families, thereby revitalising their genealogical avenues. As a consequence, the sādah from the Ḥadramawt started to attend religious rituals, such as ḥawl, held by their family members in Indonesia, and vice versa. A case in point is the ḥawl of Ḥabīb ‘Alī al-Ḥabšī in Solo, Central Java, which is now visited every year by al-Ḥabšī family members from Sayyūn, Ḥadramawt. There a similar ritual is staged in honour of Ḥabīb ‘Alī, who was a central religious figure and poet in late-nineteenth-century Ḥadramawt. In turn, when al-Ḥabšīs from Indonesia visit their family in the Ḥadramawt, they are guided by their genealogy to pray at the grave of Ḥabīb ‘Alī al-Ḥabšī. Furthermore, since the middle of the 1990s, the sādah began sending their sons to the Ḥadramawt for religious education, where a new Islamic boarding school, Dār al-Mustafā, was opened by local sādah in Tarīm. Obviously, these sādah can also prove their distinguished genealogies, a precondition for Indonesian Ḥrami sādah to enrol their sons in this institution. According to its alumni, it has at least as many students with Indonesian passports as with Yemeni ones. The head of the school is a young, charismatic ḥabīb who travels to Indonesia every year. He is extremely popular among sādah, and although he still is in his forties, we could see posters of him in almost every sādah household we visited during our field research.

At the end of the 1990s, the first alumni of Dār al-Mustafā returned to Indonesia, and some of them managed to open their own pesantren, modelled after the Tarīmī school, near Solo (Central Java), in Surabaya (East Java) and in Palu (Central Sulawesi). Despite their relatively young age, the alumni of Tarīm are usually held in high esteem in the sādah community, since the Ḥadramawt is imagined as a place of extraordinary piety. One of the Tarīm alumni told us that when he was a child, stories about the Ḥadramawt circulated in the sādah community of Solo – tales about the dry climate in the Ḥadramawt and, above all, about the pious life of former generations there. Consequently, he was not disappointed when he went to the Ḥadramawt for the first time: ‘The atmosphere there is supportive for learning. There is no sinful behaviour … no television. The women cover their whole body. They wear the cadar and leave the house very seldom. It is the head of the household, the father, who goes to the market, and the vendors are also men … There is no cinema, no café at all.’

Today, Ḥaḍramīs who own travel agencies offer tours they call haji plus: a tour through the Ḥadramawt before undertaking the pilgrimage to the Ḥaramayn (the holy places of Islam). In the month Sha‘bān, a sādah-owned travel agency also organises a tour guided by a ḥabīb to perform a pilgrimage to the tomb of Nabī Hūd east of Tarīm. But not only the sādah are now offering tours to the Ḥadramawt. An owner of a travel agency from a mashāyikh family with close ties to Al-İrsyad told us about his first trip to the Ḥadramawt, which he undertook
in 2004 when preparing to arrange a tour. Due to this business venture, he was able to visit the home village of his family. He recounted enthusiastically that he was warmly welcomed there and that his family still owns a genealogical record which he could now update despite the interruption of communication between the two family branches for such a long time. During his visit, he was struck by the respect that his relatives demonstrated for the local sādah, an attitude that he strongly criticised. As a result of this trip to his family’s home village, he eventually changed the itinerary of the tour, giving his customers one or two days to visit their relatives. Especially among wealthier Irsyadis, there is a growing interest in making a trip to the Ḥaḍramawt and reviving family ties.

However, by and large, Irsyadis show much less affection for the Ḥaḍramawt than their sādah counterparts. When we asked a former Al-Irsyad official, who had visited the Ḥaḍramawt in 1994, whether he would send his son to school there (as the sādah do), he answered resolutely: ‘They are 50 years behind. Why should I send my child there?’ This is in line with the accounts of those who experienced life in the Ḥaḍramawt when they were young. A Ḥaḍramī born in 1936, who was sent to the Ḥaḍramawt at the age of seven and stayed there for 11 years, told us: ‘It’s not good in the Ḥaḍramawt. There is no electricity, no water.’ He never returned to the Ḥaḍramawt. For him, as a reformer who rejects genealogical thinking, it is much easier to break with the land where his ancestors are buried than it is for the Ḥaḍramī sādah.

Al-Irsyad recently opened branches in Saudi Arabia and in other Persian Gulf countries, as well as in Australia – places where Irsyadis pursue their studies or where entrepreneurs with an Al-Irsyad background develop their businesses. But the drive to reform the Ḥaḍramawt, a central goal of Al-Irsyad’s founding generation, has long been lost, and there is no indication so far of a revitalisation. However, just as in the past, there is considerable interest in ideological flows emanating from the Middle East, especially among the younger Al-Irsyad cadres who challenge the old leadership and who sympathise with Saudi Wahhabism. Irsyadis today still look to the Middle East – but certainly not the Ḥaḍramawt – for guidance in ideological matters.

Conclusions

The founding of Al-Irsyad was intrinsically connected to global flows of people and ideas. The reformist ideology originating in Egypt arrived with scholars like Al-Sūrkatī and was spread by journals like Al-Manār. As a consequence, this ideological flow was accepted or rejected along genealogical fault lines, making Egypt a centre for the mashāyikh, qabā’il and ḍu‘afā’, but not for the sādah. Due to the attempts of the Irsyadis, Islamic reformism also reached the Ḥaḍramawt, not directly from Egypt, but via the Ḥaḍramī communities of Indonesia, where the social stratification of Ḥaḍramī society became increasingly contested. This made Indonesia – or rather Java – a centre for reform-minded non-sādah in the
Whereas Irsyadis turned to Cairo and regarded the Ḥaḍramawt as a place in urgent need of reform, the sādah viewed their former homeland as a site of ancestral authority and Islamic piety. For them, the Ḥaḍramawt was a centre from which they received their ideological flows through manuscripts (genealogies, collections of poems and prayers) and personal travel (family visits, pilgrimages) along genealogical avenues. The sādah rather endeavoured to transfer their ideals from the homeland to the diaspora, trying to influence other Ḥaḍramīs and local Muslims.

The establishment of nation states and the advent of the Cold War reduced the flow of people between the Ḥaḍramawt and Indonesia dramatically. In terms of migration, this still holds true. Yet if we consider limited stays for studying, travelling, visiting relatives, participating in religious rituals and the like, the flow of people between the diaspora and the homeland seems to be on the rise again. Particularly, the sādah show strong sentiments about the country where their ancestors are buried. They also revived sādah scholarliness in the Ḥaḍramawt with the objective of educating the younger generation, especially from South-East Asia. This project resulted in the strengthening of sādah religious institutions in Indonesia. The new flow of people and ideas along genealogical avenues linking Indonesia and the Ḥaḍramawt clearly animates the genealogical imaginary of the sādah community in Indonesia. Their imaginary is reinforced and accelerated through new information and communication technologies, such as the electronic processing of genealogies at the Al-Rābitah office in Jakarta. Similarly to colonial times, however, the sādah’s emphasis on genealogy and hierarchy provokes outright rejection among Irsyadis. The difference is that in the colonial era Irsyadis were driven by the new flow of Islamic reformism, whereas today the sādah benefit from the revitalisation of their genealogical avenues to the Ḥaḍramawt.

Whereas in colonial times Ḥaḍramīs used these avenues to migrate to Indonesia, today they use them to revive family connections between Indonesia and the Ḥaḍramawt. Furthermore, and as they did formerly, Ḥaḍramīs today use genealogies to guide their movements when they travel and migrate inside Indonesia. In this way, genealogy functions as an avenue not only for the sādah but also for Ḥaḍramīs of other social categories, except for the lowest rank of the society, which is characterised by its lack of genealogies. Yet even among them, family ties can provide orientation and help. With regard to group membership, the partitions between non-sādah are becoming increasingly blurred, especially among those active in Al-Irsyad who refrain from using genealogies as boundary markers. This results in phenomena ranging from members of the lowest societal rank claiming mashāyikh status to young Ḥaḍramīs who no longer identify with social categories.

As a consequence of their migration to Indonesia, for which genealogical avenues were crucial, Ḥaḍramīs came in contact with ideological flows that questioned a social hierarchy based on genealogy. These flows were partly absorbed and partly rejected by the Ḥaḍramī community, again along genealogical lines.
Hence, genealogy used as an identity marker of groups remains a contested issue up to the present time, not least because the sādah have revived their connections to the Ḥaḍramawt and thus to their (genealogical) ancestors. Yet on the more pragmatic level of family and business networking, genealogical avenues remain important – inside Indonesia as well as beyond it – among almost all Ḥaḍramıs, even those who belong to the severest critics of genealogical imaginaries. Moreover, different perceptions of genealogy still influence the acceptance of long-distance flows, the relations to the Ḥaḍramawt and the social relations among diaspora Ḥaḍramıs themselves.

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**Notes**

1. Ḥadramis then started to move to the Persian Gulf states, especially to Saudi Arabia, where some of them became remarkably successful businessmen, establishing dynasties such as the Bin Mahfūz and the Bin Lādin.
2. Extensive field research was carried out in Indonesia by conducting a multi-sited ethnography at the following locations: Jakarta, Pekalongan, Solo, Tuban, Surabaya, Pasuruan, Bondowoso, Banyuwangi (on the island of Java); Negara, Singaraja, Denpasar (on the island of Bali); Palu, Gorontalo, Manado (on the island of Sulawesi); Ternate; and Sorong (in West Papua). The essential methodological tools were participant observation and loosely structured interviews.
3. As pointed out by Fox and Gingrich (2002), comparison as a method is always implicit in social anthropological research. Since anthropologists conduct research in various contexts and often are strangers in their fields, it is necessary to engage in at least 'elementary sociocultural translation, which usually involves the use of terminologies from both contexts; of necessity, such "translation" involves a minimum amount of systematic comparison between them' (ibid.: 20). Furthermore, there is the domain of explicit dimensions of comparison consisting of three registers, as Fox and Gingrich outline: 'One register is the study of *regional variations* within fuzzy, historically shaped boundaries. A second, related set of procedures is the study of *temporal variation and diffusion* that can move along two lines: (1) processes of generational transmission, or (2) historical processes. Finally, *distant or macro-comparison* of a limited number of selected topics represents a third register proposed here' (ibid.: 20–21).
4. The ancestor of today's sādah, Ahmad b. ʿĪsā al-Muhājir, arrived in the Ḥadramawt from the north in the year ad 952. Up to this day, the Ḥadrami sādah are also called ʿAlawiyīn, after a grandson of this Muhājir named ʿUbaydallāh.
5. In Ḥadrami society, the last name of a person, the *nisbah* (cf. *nasab*) or family name, usually indicates the affiliation with a social group.
6. Al-Mashhūr’s work is one of the main sources for the electronic processing of the sādah genealogies undertaken by Al-Rābit.ah al-ʿAlawīyah.
7. Our research has shown that today this division is especially strong in Java, where the largest Ḥadramī communities are located. In some regions of eastern Indonesia (e.g. in the central and northern parts of Sulawesi), it is not so significant.
8. Sūrkatī (1915) published his exemplary deliberations in his *Ṣūrat al-Jawāb*.
9. This is how the organisation spells its name today in Indonesia. We follow this spelling.
10. Even in colonial times, Al-Irsyad had opened branches in Sumatra and in peripheral areas of eastern Indonesia. However, our research shows that today, especially in central and northern Sulawesi, its influence remains weak.
11. Sumit Mandal (1997, 2002) demonstrates that it was not only Ḥadramī’s self-perception that positioned them above native Muslims, but also the perception and policies of the colonial administration (for Dutch policies see Jonge 1997). Hadramīs were suspiciously identified by the Dutch as ‘natural leaders of native Muslims’. In Mandal’s (1997: 186) stimulating analysis, this view contributed considerably to ‘Arab assertion of leadership over natives in Islamic matters [which] became the basis for the articulation of an ethnically exclusive culture’. Although we do not want to downplay the influence of Dutch policies on Ḥadramīs’
identity formation, we nevertheless emphasise the role of the genealogical imaginary, which outlived the colonial and several post-colonial regimes and still is – at least in the case of the sādah – of prime importance.

12. This section is partly based on Slama (2005).

13. Interview in Solo, 18 February 2004. Interviews were conducted in Indonesian and in Arabic. All translations by the authors. In present-day Java, not all Muslim women wear the headscarf, and they certainly do not cover their faces. Trading and operating businesses are commonly accepted activities of Javanese women (see Brenner 1998).


15. Interview in Jakarta, 17 February 2005.

16. Interview in Pekalongan, 8 May 2003.

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Both ‘One’ and ‘Other’: Environmental Cosmopolitanism and the Politics of Hybridity in Costa Rica

Mark Johnson and Suzanne Clisby

ABSTRACT
Cosmopolitans are frequently characterized as living and perceiving the world and their environment from a distance. Drawing on ethnographic work among a small group of Western migrants in Costa Rica, we complicate this portrayal in a number of ways. First, we demonstrate that these people think in similar kinds of ways as social theorists: they too are worried about living at a distance from place and are seeking what is, in their way of reckoning, a more engaged relationship with their surroundings. Second, however, we explore the social context and corollaries of these migrants’ attempts to bring together a putatively “modern/cosmopolitan” way of relating to place and a “traditional/place-based” way of relating to surroundings. Specifically, we demonstrate how migrant claims to transcend the differences between “tradition” and “modernity” create new forms of social exclusion as they, both literally and figuratively, come to claim the place of “the other.”

KEYWORDS
cosmopolitanism, migrants, hybridity, environment, tradition, modernity

Introduction: Cultural Anxieties and Alternative Cosmopolitanisms

Szerszynski and Urry (2006: 113) have argued that “humans increasingly inhabit their world only at a distance.” This view from afar, they claim, is an intrinsic sociocultural condition of cosmopolitanism. Cosmopolitanism is a difficult term to define. Beck and Szaïder (2006) usefully distinguish between normative cosmopolitanisms, that is, a cultural ideal of one sort or another, and cosmopolitanism as a way of sociologically describing and thinking about the significance of social processes that exceed both the real and imagined boundaries of the nation-state. Szerszynski and Urry’s argument is that increased mobility and expanding visual cultures create a sense of detachment from
place and locality and generate normative cosmopolitan perspectives characterized by a “greater sense of both global diversity and global interconnectedness and belonging” (2006: 122). Construed in this way, cosmopolitanism may be seen as akin to that environmentalist perspective whose understanding of nature is of something global and universal, ultimately separate from, even if variously threatened by or responsive to, human interventions and protection in particular places or localities (Milton 1996: 175–187).

Critics of cosmopolitanism have argued that detachment reflects the situation of a relatively elite minority. It fails to describe the majority of people who not only identify themselves in terms of particular places but also are variously constrained by real material circumstances and struggles within particular localities (Friedman 2002). Similarly, critics of a globalizing environmentalist discourse suggest that there were and remain alternative ways of understanding the world in order to reflect a more engaged and embedded relationship with place and surroundings (Ingold 2000). Whether or not the experience of detachment is understood to be a generalized condition of (post)modernity or a characteristic of cosmopolitan elites, it is clear that many social theorists perceive detachment from place and surroundings as a cause for concern (Escobar 1999; Ingold 2000; Szerszynski and Urry 2006). Szerszynski and Urry (2006), for example, draw on and extend Ingold’s (2000) critique arguing that the modern perception and experience of place characterized by “globs,” “landscapes,” and “map-readers” is displacing more traditional perceptions of place characterized by “spheres,” “taskscapes,” and “way-finders” with, they suggest, potentially devastating consequences both for social life and the environment. What is needed, they contend, citing Latour (2004, in Szerszynski and Urry 2006: 127), is an alternative form of cosmopolitanism: one that engenders not only greater global awareness and sensibilities but also genuine engagements with place and surroundings.

This paper investigates one example of an alternative form of cosmopolitanism, drawing on an ethnographic pilot study conducted in the summer of 2002 among a group of European migrants living and working in a small village on the northwest coast of Costa Rica. The people we describe were not cosmopolitan elites, but they were a relatively privileged group of people who shared normative cosmopolitan perspectives and expressed global environmental concerns. Like the social theorists cited above, they too expressed concern about living detached lives. For these people, movement from one place to another was both a literal and symbolic journey from “modern” to more
“traditional” ways of relating to place and surroundings. That movement was not conceived of, however, as a simple or absolute move from one state to another. They did not, in other words, want to be traditional people, only to learn from and become like them in respect of their presumed greater knowledge of place and surroundings. Their movement toward new ways of living and working was conceived of as bringing together the best elements of both the traditional and the modern: the remedy proposed by Szerszynski and Urry (2006) was echoed in the attempts of these mobile cosmopolitans to find new ways to live in places they imagined to be closer to nature.

Our ethnographic study of these migrants raises a number of interrelated points for thinking about and assessing alternative cosmopolitanisms. First, we are concerned with the particular social context and corollaries within which people articulate different ways of relating to place and nature, and we ascribe them to different sorts of people that inhabit those places. In the situation described below, migrants’ claims to greater engagement (over and against others who are deemed to be more or less detached) are about claims to place and belonging in a country that is not their own. The point is that the use of categories to identify one’s own or others’ relationship to place and surroundings must be seen in terms of the social context within which they are expressed and the political uses to which they are put (Bender 1993, 1998; Bender and Winer 2001).

The second issue is about what counts as engagement and, more specifically, who and what qualifies as the “traditional.” What migrants consider to be “traditional” in this situation was largely conditioned by what they expected traditional people and knowledge to look and be like. When people who were supposed to act in recognizably “traditional” ways did not conform to expectations of appropriate engagements with their surroundings, they were considered to be out of place: neither appropriately modern nor authentically traditional. The point is that what counts as the particular, the local, or the traditional is always contingent and conditional on the terms and process through which it is recognized and established in dominant discourse (Ingold and Kurttila 2000; Chernala 2005; Choy 2005; West 2005).

Finally, we think it is important to situate migrant concerns about detachment, their search for alternative ways of living, and their appropriations of the traditional within a broader historical and postcolonial perspective (Torgerson 2006). While rational control over and distance from nature has been a defining characteristic of Western modernity, this has historically been accompanied by a nostalgic sense of loss and
longing for a primitive state of living within nature and various attempts to reconcile, both philosophically and practically, the “traditional” and the “modern” (Grove 1996; Argyrou 2005). The primitive, the indigenous, the traditional peasantry and rural “other”—whether geographically outside of the “West” or existing on the boundaries or in the marginal spaces of the “West”—have always been a necessary figure in the Western imaginary, insofar as these “others” confirm the possibility of these other ways of being in the world. Nonetheless, there has been a discursive shift over the last century in mainstream Western culture from negative perceptions of those others as being culturally inferior because of their association with nature to their positive valorization within recent environmental discourse as culturally superior because of that presumed proximity to nature (Milton 1996; Argyrou 2005). Our point here, however, is that just when the traditional has begun to be accorded some political legitimacy and purchase in environmental terms, people who might otherwise claim that distinction not only are increasingly disqualified as not being suitably traditional but also their place at the table has been claimed, and the stakes of the game raised, by others who contend that what is required is the best of both the traditional and the modern.

Migration, Tourism, and Environmentalism in Costa Rica

Costa Rica is often regarded as being unique among Central American countries for a number of reasons: it has no armed forces (although the police are extremely well armed); stable democratic institutions; comparatively good health, welfare, and educational systems; and a relatively healthy economy (Daling 1998). It is celebrated for the splendor and diversity of its natural environment and a variety of travel guides and brochures collected in the region describe it as a jewel of nature, a green land of peace, Noah’s Ark, and, as also noted by Daling (1998: 4), the Switzerland of Central America. More than any other Latin American country it has been successfully marketed (both by the government and by local and international entrepreneurs) as a premiere ecotourism destination for visitors and investors alike.

For these and other reasons, it is not only a major tourist destination but also one of the few countries in the region to have had substantial immigration. The majority of immigrants are from neighboring Central American countries such as Nicaragua, El Salvador, and Guatemala, with Nicas in particular estimated as making up roughly 15 per-
cent of Costa Rica’s population of approximately 4 million (U.S. Department of State 2006). However, there has also been a small, but significant and increasing, number of relatively affluent immigrants from North America and, to a lesser extent, Europe, estimated to number 30,000 to 50,000.¹ These include leisure and retiree migrants, some of whom maintain homes in both their countries of origin and in Costa Rica, and others who have moved to Costa Rica to live and work on a semipermanent or permanent basis.

North Americans and Europeans have generally found it easy to move to and settle in Costa Rica. This is largely an effect of “race” and economic power, but, we would argue, it is also related to the fact that both previous and contemporary settlers have been able to mobilize a discourse that has identified them with nature protection and conservancy. In fact, the history of conservation in Costa Rica is one in which expatriate settlers have played an important, if sometimes overstated, role (Evans 1999). Perhaps the most widely known example is that of the North American Quakers who settled in Monteverde in the 1950s. Their invitation to North American scientists to visit and study the area in the 1960s eventually led to the establishment of the Monteverde Cloud Forest Preserve in the 1970s (Vivanco 2006: 54–63). Similarly, in the Nicoya Peninsula in northwestern Costa Rica, the nature reserve of Cabo Blanco (created in 1965) was in part founded owing to the activism of a retired Swedish officer and his Danish wife who had “moved to the peninsula in 1955 to live a simpler life and raise organic fruit” (Evans 1999: 61).

Though the number and variety of settlers have increased over the years, the discourses and imaginings of the migrants that we describe in this paper are clearly part of a process that has been going on for several decades. This does not mean, however, that Euro-American migrants have always been welcomed. As Vivanco (2006) suggests, some campesinos (and other Costa Ricans) feel their roles as traditional guardians of nature and as environmental activists have been overshadowed by northerners. Moreover, Ticos (Costa Ricans) sometimes express resentment about the perceived preferential treatment given to wealthy “gringos” and frequently lament the fact that the majority of prime coastal property is now owned by foreigners, effectively turning Ticos into tourists in their own country (Biesanz et al. 1999: 54, 121).

Costa Rican ambivalence provides at least a partial explanation for the continuing need that some Euro-American migrants have to legitimize both their ownership of land and their claims to place and belonging. Our interest here is in exploring how this legitimacy is con-
structured through contrasts drawn by one particular group of migrants between the ways in which they and others understand and relate to place and nature. We are also interested in the discursive shifts taking place in what Vivanco (2002: 223) describes as the “culture of nature,” by which he means the different ways of thinking and talking about “the boundaries between nature and culture” that are part of the everyday politics of place in Costa Rica.

Specifically, the discourse of earlier Western settlers in Costa Rica tended to reproduce and align them with a global environmental discourse that privileged rational scientific understandings and interventions, over and against those who were identified with traditional and putatively backward practices. Among the migrants we are concerned with in this paper there is, as suggested in the introduction, a far more subtle discourse. That discourse echoes the desire of previous settlers to live a “simpler life” more in tune with nature. However, it also recognizes the importance of traditional knowledge acquired through practical engagements and seeks to synthesize a different way of relating to place and surroundings, one that brings together both the “traditional” and the “modern.”

**Ethnographic Situation: Green Cosmopolitans in Guanacaste, Costa Rica**

The migrants we describe in this article live in a small, relatively sleepy village along the northwest Pacific coast of Costa Rica. Inevitably the village is set to change, as there is a major road renovation program being undertaken that will make access between towns, villages, and the nearest airport much easier (Clower 2007). The village also lies between two major tourism developments and close to a national marine reserve for leatherback turtles. It is composed of a number of small hotels and restaurants, a primary school, a few shops, and a row of houses of various descriptions that run along one side of the beachfront. Most of the village residents are recent settlers having moved to the area in the last five or ten years, the bulk of them from Nicaragua or other parts of Costa Rica. However, among the settlers are a dozen or so European migrants, approximately half of whom have lived in Costa Rica, though not necessarily in this particular village, for more than 10 years.

The migrants included an Italian family who owned and ran a restaurant in their home, a family (made up of a German man, a Costa
Rican woman, and their two children) who lived on and ran a small hotel and campground fronting the beach, a German family who owned a small hotel and restaurant but lived on a farm about 4 km inland, and two single men (one Dutch, the other German), one of whom worked as the chef in the German family’s hotel and restaurant and the other of whom worked in property management for an American who was developing a coastal estate and leisure complex near the village.

The European migrants living in this village could not be categorized as elite cosmopolitans, at least as that group is defined by Friedman (2002). They are, nevertheless, privileged migrants with cosmopolitan concerns and characteristics. While the migrants were not wealthy, they were well off compared with the Costa Rican and Nicaraguan village residents, most of whom had settled on unoccupied land along the beachfront and are variously involved in small-scale gardening and fishing, and working mainly as unskilled labor in the tourism and leisure industries, including a few who work in the hotel and restaurant owned by the German couple in the village. Moreover, as important as their economic position was the fact that these individuals also had symbolic and social capital. They possessed symbolic capital because they both possessed an ascribed status as Europeans and were generally well educated and conversant in current events and politics and able to use the language of environmentalism—an important discourse within Costa Rican context. Social capital could be seen, amongst other things, in terms of access and ability to cultivate networks of other expatriates beyond the immediate locality.²

These residents had cosmopolitan characteristics inasmuch as they routinely described themselves as “world citizens” and did not see their country of origin as providing the primary or exclusive point of identification. Moreover, they clearly articulated an appreciation for cultural difference and cultivated openness to other places and people. Thus, for example, those couples that had children sent them to local Costa Rican schools, rather than to international or American schools (of which there was one just outside the village). While the cost of the latter may have also been a factor in their choice of where to send their children to school, what was emphasized by the parents was that they saw children’s attendance at local school and their engagements with other Tico children as an important part of their multicultural education, and as also one further means for them as foreigners to meet and interact with local Ticos.

Although these European migrants gave a variety of reasons for choosing to leave their country of origin, ranging from the desire to
get away from the excessive materialism of the West to fleeing the demands of an ex-wife, most said that the primary motivation for relocating to Costa Rica was the natural environment, placing importance on living in harmony with nature. For example, the couple owning the small hotel and campground said that they run their business and live their lives in a holistic ecological way, growing their own food in the campground and advertising their ecofriendly credentials on the Internet. The expatriate couple who owned a slightly larger hotel and restaurant, but lived on a farm, similarly saw themselves as seeking to live and work in an environmentally friendly way. However, they did not openly advertise their ecocredentials, regarding the “eco” label as being overdone and suspect in the Costa Rican context. The following explores in more detail how these migrants talked about themselves, their work, and their lives in Costa Rica, drawing on conversations with three of our expatriate interlocuters: Johann, Peter, and Bridgette (all pseudonyms).

Johann was a single man from the Netherlands who had worked his way around various places and hotels in Costa Rica. He was hoping to settle down and had recently met and was involved in a relationship with a local Tico woman. In many respects Johann did seem to represent the mobile cosmopolitans described by Szerszynski and Urry (2006). In our conversations before the evening restaurant rush, Johann often talked about Costa Rica in ways that reflected a view of nature and surroundings as something to be appreciated or worried about as a detached observer and consumer. For Johann, however, appreciating the glorious sunsets was only one aspect of his encounters with place and surroundings. Johann told us that one of the reasons he had moved around so much in Costa Rica was that he was looking for a working environment that would allow him to acquire a real “feel” for the place and people.

His concern with and attachment to locality was mainly expressed and embedded in his working practices as a chef. Specifically, he told us with pride that he sourced all of his food locally, buying meat from a local butcher, getting fruit and vegetables from local producers, and buying fish straight off the boat from local fishers who would pull up on the beach. He was especially keen to draw a distinction between what he did as compared to what the large, all-inclusive leisure/hotel complex next door did, that is, sometimes shipping in food not only from other parts of Costa Rica but also from other parts of Latin and North America. He felt that while he respected and, significantly, added value to the local environment and producers, the large-scale, inter-
nationally owned leisure complexes that were being developed along coastal areas had little or no engagement with place and did not value the land or environment other than as a means to developing their capitalist ventures.

Peter and Bridgette, originally from Germany, had lived in Costa Rica for more than ten years and had a long-term commitment to it. They were not just buying property but making a small working farm and ranch where they stabled horses and offered rides to tourists, both along coastal paths and also into “traditional” local villages. At the time that we met them they had plans to expand their hotel, having, in principle, secured the necessary permits and concession from the municipal government. Their children attended local Costa Rican schools, and while maintaining contact with and making periodic visits back to Germany, they regarded themselves as long-term settlers in Costa Rica.

Peter and Bridgette were keen to point out the differences between themselves and large-scale tourism developers, differences also stressed by Johann and the other migrants we spoke to in this village and elsewhere in the region who were involved in small-scale tourism. Those developers, Peter said, were simply out to make as much money as possible and had little respect for or knowledge of place or people. He said that while these big developers often talked about care for the environment and advertised themselves as being ecofriendly, in fact they were responsible for denuding the forest and acting in environmentally irresponsible ways. He cited, as an example, a very large tourist complex facing the next beach down from the village. Among other things, the complex had a golf course built on land that had previously been forest. There, so the advertisement went, one could play “eco-golf.” The beach had once been a nesting site for leatherback turtles, and while the occasional turtle still laid eggs there, the numbers had decreased significantly since the development of the complex.

Contrasting the corporate developers with themselves, Peter and Bridgette said they took great pride in acquiring a working knowledge of the land, and they saw themselves as actively involved in preserving what they understood to be a more authentic Tico way of life that was rapidly on the wane. Peter described to us, for example, how he was paying older campesino women from an inland village to tell him local plant lore, their different uses as medicines and food, so he could write them down. Similarly, both Peter and Bridgette recounted how they relied on the experience of Tico cabañeros both in animal husbandry and in negotiating their way around the countryside.3 The
latter was particularly important for Bridgette, who was more closely involved on a daily basis with tending the horses and managing their small farm. In this respect they saw themselves as being like traditional campesinos and cabañeros, who treated their natural surroundings as something to be lived in, worked with, and taken care of, rather than simply lived off or sold for quick money.

As these two examples demonstrate, the migrants we spoke with clearly seek to become more embedded within place and surroundings. While involved in tourist enterprises, they define themselves in opposition to those other “moderns”—capitalist developers—who live at a distance from place and positively identify with those engaged in what they perceive to be a “traditional” relationship with their surroundings. The latter is no doubt in part what Ingold and Kurttila (2000) describe as “modern traditional knowledge (MTK),” the desire to codify and preserve a readily transmissible form of cultural knowledge identified as “traditional.” The latter is explicitly seen in Peter’s recording of campesino plant lore. However, these expatriate settlers also talk about respecting and seeking to learn from what Ingold and Kurttila refer to as “local traditional knowledge (LTK)” : that is, to acquire through working with and alongside local campesinos and cabañeros, something of their more intimate and close-lived relationship with and knowledge about place and surroundings. However, none of the migrants that we spoke to ever claimed that they aspired to or could ever become completely like “traditional” Costa Ricans. Rather, the way they talk about the need to learn from the “traditional” ways of relating to place and surroundings echoes Szerszynski and Urry’s (2006) call for a new kind of cosmopolitanism. Specifically, as discussed above, these settlers articulate what might be seen as an alternative kind of cosmopolitan hybridity: one that draws on what they perceive to be the best elements of tradition and modernity while discarding the worst to articulate a new and progressive relationship to the environment.

The “Other” Side of Hybridity: Squatters as Neither One nor Other

The expatriate settlers we are talking about in this paper never explicitly used the term “hybrid” in reference to themselves or their cultural projects. However, we think it is empirically appropriate and analytically useful to describe what they talk about in terms of hybridity. First, they consciously see themselves as attempting to think and do things
in a way that brought together and combined elements, or ingredients, of different ways of living and thinking and cook them in new ways: moving to Costa Rica was for all of them about finding a different way of living. Second, while they appreciated and sought to learn from the various skills and knowledge of those local people they perceived to have an intimate acquaintance with their surroundings, they presumed neither that they would ever acquire the same kind of relationship to the land that these people had nor that they would ever lose the knowledge and skills, and indeed some of the prejudices, they had acquired as people socialized into modern capitalist ways of thinking.

We think hybridity is analytically useful because it highlights some of the paradoxes and contradictions involved. On the one hand, labeling what these expatriate settlers are attempting as hybrid at the very least calls attention to the fact that they do not neatly fit into the overdrawn dichotomization of people into locals and globals, traditionals and moderns, each of whom have distinct ways of perceiving and understanding the environment and their surroundings. The problem with such overgeneralized distinctions or “covert essentialism[s]” (Carrier 2003: 20) is that they obscure the complex coexistence of apparently contradictory understandings and relationships that exist in specific historical situations.

On the other hand, however, it is also clear that the expatriate settlers themselves drew on and reinforce these categories and distinctions in ascribing different ways of relating to different groups of people and understanding the environment. In this sense, as both critics and advocates of the concept suggest (Friedman 1999; Pieterse 2001), hybridity is dependent on categorical boundaries, even as it variously challenges and reinscribes them. Moreover, these classificatory processes do not take place in a vacuum: rather, as already indicated, they are developed and deployed within specific social contexts as a way to claim social authority, enact and affirm social distinctions, and legitimate claims to place and belonging over the claims of others. In claiming to combine the best of both the modern and the traditional, the expatriate settlers not only define themselves in distinction from those who are seen to belong to these respective categories, the capitalist developer and campesino; rather, they also define themselves in opposition to another group of people who might be seen as representing the “other” side of that alternative cosmopolitan hybridity: namely, those who are categorized and classified as squatters.

Squatters are poor Costa Ricans and Nicaraguans who, like the migrants themselves, were recent incomers who had built homes and
occupied small parcels of land fronting the beach. Although putatively referring to the fact that these were people who had, as yet, no formal entitlement to the land they occupied, their designation as squatters by Western migrants (and others) references a much broader and more pejorative set of ascribed characteristics. Before going into this, however, we want to note that two of the expatriate families had land within the Zona Marítimo Terrestre or Marine Terrestrial Zone (the 200-meter zone within which building and land ownership is technically restricted), and their legal standing was as questionable as the land settled by those they deemed to be squatters. While the land claimed by the couple owning the hotel and restaurant was in a preliminary draft of a Plan Regulador (a municipal plan that grants concessionary property rights), the status of the plan itself was uncertain as it apparently had yet to come into effect. Meanwhile, their neighbors, who ran the small hotel and campground, did not have their property registered in the municipal plan and so could claim rights only on the basis of occupation and improvements to the land. Perhaps because of these insecure claims, conversations about squatters did not usually center on questions of legal rights or land conflicts. In fact, so far as we were able to ascertain, none of the European migrants living in the village had ever been involved in any direct conflict over land or property with any of the individuals they classified as squatters. Rather, the issue of squatters most frequently arose in the context of discussions about “good” and “bad” Ticos.

Squatters, or bad Ticos, were unlike the good Ticos—that is, the true campesino and/or cabañero, in that they were considered to have little or no regard for their place or surroundings. Peter recounted, in a story like those widely repeated by Johann and others, how squatters moved into the village, built some small shanties, planted small gardens along the coastline, and then sat awaiting their fortunes. The expectation was that tourism development would come to the village soon and that they would sell up and be wealthy. In their stories about squatters, they emphasized the tragedy of native Ticos systematically squandering their own land and natural resources. Rather than take the opportunity to acquire a piece of property and start their own business and really make a go of things, those who did manage to acquire land and sell it were usually spendthrifts. They would go off to the capital, San José, spend their money on the high life, and then end up broke and back in Guanacaste without work, money, or property.

For these people, the problem with squatters was that they just had not been able to make an appropriate transition to modernity, and they
were rapidly losing not just their way of life but also their own country, which was being sold from under them. Migrant squatters were, in fact, just one sign of a more general problem, the inability of many rural Ticos to adapt to new conditions. Peter related a story of how a local hacienda owner had lost most of his land when he failed to register it properly with the government some years ago. At that time, Peter said, the roads were barely passable except by oxcart, and the hacienda owner was sure he was both isolated and powerful enough that he would not be affected by changes in the law. Alas, the hacienda owner lost most of his land and left his family with virtually no property. What property they did have left included land with a derelict building directly in front of Peter’s hotel. The family had no interest in developing the site but were waiting for someone to make them an offer or pay them compensation to tear it down. The latter was more likely, Peter suggested, since the family really did not have legal title to the land, and the building violated the Marine Terrestrial Zone prohibition on building within 50 meters of the high-tide mark.

This decaying and derelict building encapsulated many of the problems Peter saw with squatters: it was a blot on the landscape, characteristic of individuals who were not really interested in making something of the place because they no longer treated it like their home. Indeed, what Peter and Bridgette saw as really distinguishing them from squatters, as well as from property developers and absentee landlords, was that they considered and treated Costa Rica as home.

Expats and Squatters: Neocolonial Transformations of “One” and the “Other”

The people described in this article are migrants who might be characterized, and indeed characterize themselves, as being in some respects betwixt and between their own and other cultures, or we might say, cosmopolitans. However, unlike the way in which mobile cosmopolitans have previously been construed, these migrant settlers in Costa Rica do not simply live and experience the world at a distance. Rather, they are people who in various ways seek engagement with place and locality. The latter is central to their environmentalist sensibilities and to their attempts to bring together what they perceive to be the best of different ways of living in the world.

At the same time, their stated project to bring together and synthesize traditional and modern ways of relating to place and surround-
ings not only reproduces these categorical boundaries but also extends forms of symbolic and social exclusions through the creation of that which they are not, namely, the squatters. The categorical conversion of the campesino into squatter, the good Tico into the bad Tico, is part of a more widespread and systematic moral discourse, among both the wider expatriate community and various transnational environmentalists, that increasingly constructs the rural poor as one of the primary dangers to place and the environment in Costa Rica (Vivanco 2002, 2006). Squatters are denied the social authority and legitimacy of being good people of the land in a situation that continues to be characterized by inequalities in the distribution of, and access to, land and resources. Individuals categorized as squatters are also denied recognition as being rational and strategic actors who are staking their claim in the land-speculation game that has historically been the underlying basis of economic power and capital accumulation, particularly in this part of Costa Rica (Edelman 1992).

The situation described above is by no means unique to Costa Rica. As Sylvain (2002) suggests, with reference to the circumstances faced by various San peoples, those individuals or groups deemed to have “lost” their traditional relationship to their surroundings, whether through choice or compulsion, are consequently disqualified from being truly “indigenous” and hence are without wholly legitimate claims to land and resources. Similarly, groups opposing Aboriginal land rights in Australia increasingly participate in discourse that suggests Aboriginals are not, or at least not any longer, truly living in harmony with nature. Conversely, white landowners (such as cattle ranchers) suggest that they have similar kinds of attached relationships to land as Aboriginals claim to have (Strang 2004, and in this volume).

There are, however, two issues that need to be addressed and clarified with respect to the above. The first is to say something about Costa Rican responses to expatriate constructions of good Ticos and bad Ticos, campesinos and squatters. A full answer to this question requires further investigation, and it is important to acknowledge here the limitations of our data in this respect. Nevertheless, we are able to make some points by drawing on the research of others as well as on preliminary observations and conversations with local Ticos during the pilot study. As others have noted, while the rural poor are often identified as squatters, the people so categorized refer to themselves as campesino (Vivanco 2006). Moreover, Vivanco suggests, it is precisely against the backdrop of both their perceived environmentally polluting status and the ongoing struggle over land and resources that the rural
poor have consciously striven to reclaim and redefine their campesino identity in terms of always having been good conservationists. Similarly, the widely held view of a peasant mentality rooted in locality, unable to cope with the demands of modernity, is challenged by campesinos in Costa Rica and other parts of Latin America, who are banding together in transnational social networks (e.g., the Via Campesina) to challenge the inequalities of global capitalism (Edelman 2005).

Second, it is important to reiterate that European migrant representations of their own (and others') relationships to place and surroundings are not simply instrumental in the way that Australian cattle ranchers' appropriations of “culturalized” claims of land occupation appear to be. Certainly, Western settlers in Costa Rica, like the Costa Ricans themselves, are very aware of the currency of environmentalism: both employ these strategically in different ways. Furthermore, the environmentalist claims of Westerners by and large still carry greater weight and social authority than do the environmentalist claims of Costa Rican campesinos, backed up by greater access to political and economic resources. However, just as important as these differences in wealth and position, we would suggest, are the different sets of cultural concerns and lived experiences that inform their particular articulations of environmentalism.

Western migrants moved to Costa Rica because they felt detached from the world: they sought to be closer to nature and develop a more authentic relationship to place and surroundings. Indeed, one of the central contentions of this paper is that the anxieties expressed by Western social theorists such as Szerszynski and Urry (2006) about the detached and distanced lives of cosmopolitans is one with which these (and we suspect other) mobile cosmopolitans concur and are seeking to do something about. Campesinos, by contrast, may be subject to displacement but, we would tentatively suggest, do not feel themselves to be detached from place and are certainly not seeking more engaged relationships with place and surroundings in the same way that Western migrants do.

Following Ingold and Kurttila (2000; see discussion above), campesinos might already be said to have the experience of “local traditional knowledge” though they may not recognize it as such. However, precisely because they are increasingly deemed (by others) to have lost (or be losing) that local traditional knowledge, they increasingly are drawn into describing and defending what they do in terms of “modern traditional knowledge”: codified forms of knowledge readily transmissible and identifiable as traditional in a global marketplace (see
also Chernala 2005; Choy 2005; West 2005). Western migrants, on the other hand, who think of themselves as lacking the authentically local traditional knowledge, seek to acquire it through living and working alongside others who are deemed to have it in some measure or another. Further, if, as we have already suggested, what they end up with is some kind of modern traditional knowledge, that knowledge is seen by them to at least partially include and approximate in some (but not all) respects local traditional knowledge.

The point is both Western migrants and campesinos experience and articulate a hybridity of sorts, but these discrepant hybridities have not led to any kind of common meeting ground precisely because of the different social positionings and cultural starting points of these two groups of people (see Latour 2004). The broader theoretical point is that while certain articulations of hybridity may disrupt and challenge essentializing discourses of identity, hybridity may also be articulated in ways that further extend and consolidate forms of symbolic and material power. Moreover, while the identification with the position of, in Bhabha’s (1994) terms, being neither one nor other may have productive potential for some postcolonial migrants and exiles in the metropolitan centers of the West, the “neither one nor the other” ascribed to squatters by those who now claim to combine “both one and other” has very different political consequences and effects. In sum, the space historically accorded the other is now increasingly being taken up and taken over not only by those who claim to speak for and about the traditional other but also by those mobile cosmopolitans who are literally and figuratively moving into the place of the other.

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Notes

1. Biesanz et al. (1999) report 20,000 U.S. and Canadian immigrants, while the U.S. Department of State (2007) mentions upwards of 20,000 U.S. citizens. There are no available official figures for the total number of American and European migrants, but Richards and Hanson (2006) estimate this to be 50,000. Figures for the total migrant population in Costa Rica range from approximately 200,000 to 600,000. The largest migrant group is Nicaraguan, with estimates ranging from 150,000 (Tico Times 2005) to 400,000 (Inside Costa Rica 2006). However, “unofficially the estimate of Nicaraguans living and working in Costa Rica is really more like 800,000” (ibid). According to Lowtax.net, which advises on U.S. immigration to Costa Rica,

   In March, 2004, the immigration agency (Migracion) said that the migratory situation in Costa Rica was “out of control” and that they would in future be restricting residency approvals to the minimum. Migracion has begun to apply an economic criterion, stating in some cases that an applicant “would not add any input to the economy of Costa Rica or create employment for Costa Ricans.” Immigration and residency rules are currently under review in Costa Rica, and in an effort to reduce the numbers of “perpetual tourists,” in 2005 lawmakers began considering new rules that will likely make it more difficult to obtain residency in the future. (www.lowtax.net)

New immigration legislation came into effect in August 2006.

2. None of the Euro-American residents and settlers whom we encountered in Costa Rica openly embraced the term “expatriate.” Nevertheless, the majority recognized that they might be considered expatriate, and some ironically referred to themselves as such. Most were conscious, moreover, that whatever their own personal situation, they occupied a relatively privileged position in comparison to the majority of Costa Rican nationals, some of whom, they acknowledged, resented their presence. Our reference here to the broader network of expatriates highlights status and power differentials in situations of migration and settlement that might be described as neo-colonial (Fechter 2007: 1–13, 17–19).

3. Most of the migrants that we spoke to used the term cabañero (sing.) or cabañeros (pl.); however, the term used more commonly in Costa Rica for “cowboy” is sabanero.

References


Resisting Fortress Europe: The everyday politics of female transnational migrants

Elisabetta Zontini

Abstract: This article considers the political engagement used by Moroccan and Filipino women in Southern Europe. It argues that immigrant women should be seen as active subjects rather than passive victims who accept subordinate roles both in their families and in the societies where they have settled. In order to appreciate the kind of political agency migrant women deploy, the article suggests two preliminary steps: extending the definition of the political so as to incorporate power and inequalities beyond political institutions, and adopting a transnational perspective so as to include the social fields encompassing more than one country in which these women operate. The article goes on to describe the different ways in which the two groups of women negotiate their citizenship rights in Southern Europe, focusing especially on how they negotiate entrance and rights to settle and how they try to improve their living and working conditions.

Keywords: agency, citizenship, migration, mobilization, transnationalism

Today we are witnessing the consolidation of a “Fortress Europe” whereby stricter rules are passed in all of the member states to “protect” them from what public opinion and policymakers perceive as waves of “dangerous” third-country immigrants threatening the stability of a supposedly ethno-culturally homogeneous Europe (Stolke 1995). Whereas internal borders within the EU have been progressively lifted and previous “aliens,” such as Southern Europeans, are becoming accepted in northern countries, external European borders have become tougher, separating Europe from its Third World “others” (Shore 2000). After a period of regulated immigration following the Second World War, from the 1970s onward, Northern European countries have started to limit the entrance of both migrants and asylum seekers. The privileges enjoyed by colonial populations have eroded and European states have moved toward harmonization and convergence (usually based on the most restrictive national legislation available), lessening the distinctiveness of different European migratory regimes (Kofman et al. 2000). Southern Europe represents a partial exception to this trend, having become, during the 1980s, a new destination of mass immigration after the sealing off of Northern European borders (King 1993, 2001). Southern European governments started to recognize the need for foreign domestic labor
for their transformed economies, granting permits to incoming workers in areas of labor shortage, such as agriculture, construction, industry, and domestic work. Here too, however, in spite of the continuing demand for unskilled workers, immigration policies have shifted toward control and reduction of numbers, after an initial laissez-faire period. Predictably, these policies have resulted in a growing number of undocumented workers joining an expanding informal sector rather than tighter border control (Zontini 2002).

Although the new immigrants are prevented entrance, those already living within European territory are subjected to policies aimed at fostering their “integration” in the societies where they are now residents. On the one hand the underlying discourse behind such policies appears to be one that sees immigrants as a threat to Europe, and on the other hand, one that sees them as intrinsically problematic, lacking skills and resources, and thus destined for the margins of European societies. Immigrants are generally depicted as objects of public policies rather than as political actors in their own rights (see also Però 2007).

Among immigrant groups residing in Europe, Muslim women are those whose agency is most often obscured in both academic and popular accounts (see De Filippo and Pugliese 2000; Magli 1999; Phillips 2006; Sartori 2000; for a critique see Moualhi 2000). In a European climate characterized by “cultural fundamentalism” (Stolke 1995), gender relations and sexuality become central in defining boundaries between who is considered “modern” and “European” and who is assumed to be “traditional” and incapable of being included in the nation.

“Religion has become the key signifier of incompatible differences. Islamic groups, regulated by patriarchal structures, are singled out as being too distinctive in their daily lives and social norms to be able to cohabit with groups whose practices are derived from Christian traditions.” (Kofman et al. 2000: 37)

The validity of this diagnosis for the Southern European context I have studied is, unfortunately, confirmed by the ideas advanced by some Italian intellectuals. In an article in an Italian newspaper entitled “The Muslim invasion in Italy” anthropologist Ida Magli (1999) writes:

“The arrival of so many Muslim groups both from Africa and the Balkans is organized, directed, programmed from above. Women and children are sent ahead not because it is more difficult to send them away but because they are territorially and culturally more invasive since they can procreate and multiply.”

Muslim women, we can infer from the above quote, are considered only as passive victims, oppressed by their fundamentalist and traditionalist men, and merely concerned with giving birth to high numbers of children.

The material on which this article is based draws on a larger three-year doctoral project comparing the experiences of Moroccan and Filipino female immigrants in Bologna and Barcelona (Zontini 2002). This article aims to challenge the views and perspectives previously presented and focuses instead on the active political role of immigrant women, arguing that, rather than passive subjects, they are actively engaged in negotiating their citizenship rights and in securing a space for themselves and their families in Europe. However, in order to be able to appreciate the kinds of engagements of immigrant women, I argue that two preliminary steps are necessary. The first one is the adoption of a broad definition of the political that includes (as anthropologists and feminist scholars have long argued) more than the sphere of institutional politics. The second one is a shift toward a transnational focus. I will illustrate these two points in the first two parts of the article. The last part adopts the definition of citizenship as a negotiated process developed by Stasiulis and Bakan (1997) in the Canadian context and applies it to the European one. In so doing it explores the ways in which immigrant women are responding to their situation in Bologna and Barcelona and are organizing in order to gain rights and access to citizenship. Specifically, I will focus on how immigrant women negotiate
their rights to entrance and settlement and how they try to improve their working conditions. Throughout the article different forms of female political organization—or engagements—will be explored: those built around community solidarity, associationism, and trade-union involvement of the Filipinas and those built around motherhood and gender identity as a strategy to make claims on housing and welfare deployed by Moroccan women.

Extending the definition of the political

Before dealing with immigrant women’s political activities it is necessary to spell out what is meant by “political” in this article. Conventional definitions associate it mainly with electoral politics and formal institutions. These kinds of definitions are inadequate for interpreting women’s citizenship politics generally (see Lister 2005) and immigrants’ in particular. They in fact generally lack voting rights at the national and, in the majority of states, even at the local level. If we were to focus on formal political processes, immigrant women would indeed appear as non-active and excluded. They, however, act and participate in other spheres that, though going beyond what is normally understood as conventional politics, are no less “political.” Their activities usually take place at the interstices between the public and the private sphere. According to Ruth Lister (2005: 21), migrant women ‘are becoming active citizens in what Nancy Fraser (1987) has called the “politics of needs interpretation”, forging practices of “everyday-life citizenship.”’

If we take anthropology’s and feminists’ understanding of politics as concerning power and inequalities beyond political institutions (e.g., Lister 2005; Vincent 2002) and adopt the definition of political engagement of this special issue, we can appreciate how migrant women are involved in a wide variety of political activities through which they aim at challenging power relations within the home, the workplace, and society at large. Kofman et al. (2000: 163) stress the importance of migrant women’s political engagement: “As the social and civil rights of migrants have been eroded …, this has brought new forms of engagement, and migrant women frequently take the lead in this form of activity.”

Apart from electoral politics, the forms of female political engagements identified by Kofman et al. involve struggles in the workplace, campaigning for immigrant rights, community political activities, and politics of the country of origin and pan-European organizations. Some recent work has started to examine in detail migrants’ forms of collective action both transnationally (Østergaard-Nielsen 2003) and in the countries of settlement (Però 2007). This article looks specifically at women’s involvement in forms of collective action, but I have chosen to extend the analysis to other forms of infra-politics that are articulated at the individual, rather than collective, level. This is because many of the most vulnerable subjects I worked with found it hard to organize collectively given their precarious legal status and their confinement to the isolation of domestic work, but were no less involved in trying to improve their families’ living conditions and to confront exploitation and oppression.

The political activity of my interviewees was often rooted in their personal experiences. As Julia Sudbury (1998) has noted, black and immigrant women’s struggles are often linked to their everyday lives. Her study indicates how children are often central to black women’s politics. For black women, she argues, the family becomes a site of political resistance, not just to patriarchy but also to institutional racism. One example of a typically female political strategy rooted in daily experience is the “motherist movements” (Werbner 1999), whereby maternal qualities such as caring, compassion, and responsibility for the vulnerable are valorized and used for making political claims. Werbner considers these movements important because rather than being hidden (as several female resistance strategies tend to be) they are “by definition, overt; a move into the public domain which challenges the confinement of women to domesticity” (Werbner 1999: 231).
Adopting a transnational perspective

The second step necessary to understand immigrant women’s actions is the adoption of a transnational perspective (see Glick Schiller, Basch, and Blanc-Szanton 1992) or, as Wimmer and Glick Schiller (2002) would put it, the abandonment of “methodological nationalism,” which is the tendency, common in much migration research, to limit the focus of analysis to the receiving society and use the nation-state as the natural framework from which to assess the experiences of migrants. My research has shown how migrant women are both migrants enmeshed in transnational webs and settlers who are involved in creating long-lasting links with the local contexts of reception. Their experiences not only seem to confirm Brah’s (1996) point that transnational movement and the maintenance of strong ties with more than one society are not incompatible with settlement, but show that such transnationalism is the actual way that settlement takes place.

The Filipinas I worked with, for instance, were at the center of transnational kinship and other networks: Through their work they maintained family members in the Philippines and through their contacts and the rights they acquired in Italy and Spain (e.g., nationality) they could sponsor the migration of children and parents to Italy and Spain and beyond. There had been a phase in which migrant women were sending their children away to be raised in the Philippines; now there is a new trend of “importing” grandparents to care for the immigrant’s family while the woman dedicates herself totally to paid work (Zontini 2002). Moroccans in Spain also receive help, support, and information from their families and former neighbors living not only in Morocco but also in other European countries. It is through these channels that women learn about laws and entitlements in other destinations and thus can assess their situation in Southern Europe and act to improve it.

This type of settlement has implications for reception policies, which at present do not seem to recognize the possibility of multiple identities and different loyalties, neither do they appreciate the primary role of women migrants in the settlement process. Both Filipinos and Moroccans live transnationally, maintaining close links and participating in social and family life in at least two countries. This is not necessarily in conflict with their desire and efforts to establish themselves in Southern Europe. It may, however, be in opposition to reception policies that tend to oversimplify migrants as inevitably “excluded” and in need of “integration” in the local society.

For example, the recent rich international literature on Filipinas describes them as transnational migrants condemned to a situation of “partial citizenship” (Parreñas 2001) and “provisional diaspora” (Barber 2000). Such concepts refer to Filipinas “liminal” position both in their countries of destination as well as of origin. Filipino migrants’ constant talk (and yet postponement) of return, their spending of savings on the purchase of properties in the Philippines, their prolonged feeling of obligation toward kin left behind, and their constant sending of remittances that do not seem to decrease over the years, can all be seen as evidence of such a position of liminality in host societies.

Filipinas’ strong ties and commitments toward their country of origin and their ambiguous position toward return certainly emerged from my own research. However, my work also shows that Filipinas in Southern Europe, rather than being “liminal,” are in some respects quite rooted in their immigration contexts. Their involvement in their societies of origin and their centrality in transnational links do not imply their passivity or their lack of interest or concern with their situation in the receiving context. On the contrary: They buy properties there, they develop links with local civil society, they assert their political and citizenship rights, they reunite their families there.

This difference with the situation of Filipinas in other contexts may be due to the somewhat favorable conditions they encounter in Southern Europe. Here, although they are restricted to the domestic-sector niche and therefore suffer from deskilling and a lack of opportunities,
they can gain among the best wages worldwide for this type of work and more than a professional earns in their own country. They can also obtain long-term residence in Italy and even privileged access to citizenship in Spain, allowing them to plan for long-term settlement. What is more, they can obtain entrance for relatives and friends more easily than in other countries. This often occurs not through policies for family reunion, whose restrictive criteria are also difficult to meet in Southern Europe, especially for live-in domestic workers, but rather thanks to Filipinas’ position at the top end of the hierarchy of domestic workers in the region and the very high demand for their services.

In this article I argue that a transnational focus is necessary in order to interpret the experiences of immigrant women. An exclusive focus on the context of arrival may lead us to depict them as an oppressed group marginalized for reasons of class, gender, and race. These women are indeed oppressed; however, such a focus obscures the agency and the personal story behind each of these women. By focusing exclusively on their oppression we do not explain why they accept these situations and often act in ways that may seem irrational from the point of view of the receiving society. Considering the commitments linking immigrant women to other members of their scattered families and their simultaneous involvement in different societies gives us clues to interpret and perhaps better comprehend some of their decisions and their migration experience in a broader sense.

For instance, the main reason given by married Filipino women for migration was the need to pay for their children’s education. Women give up their qualified jobs at home in order to take manual jobs in Europe for the well-being and futures of their children. Gender roles clearly play a part here since it is the mother who is the one who has to “sacrifice herself” for the family; her job is invariably considered more disposable than that of her husband (even if she is a professional). But married women can also use their responsibilities toward the family to their own advantage, for example, to get away from unhappy relationships without incurring the local social stigma that a separation would entail. This is the case for Maricel, who found herself having to provide alone for her five children in the Philippines because of the negligence of her alcoholic and abusive husband. When she left her job as a police officer in Manila in 1986 and paid traffickers to reach Southern Europe she saw in emigration both an escape route from her unhappy marriage and a viable option for providing independently for her children. For many Moroccan widows and divorcees, low-skilled jobs in Southern Europe offer new possibilities of economic independence, ways of supporting their children and families, and an escape from their stigmatized social position (Zontini 2002).

How migrants negotiate citizenship

A transnational focus does not mean that issues of citizenship lose salience for contemporary transmigrants, quite the opposite. One criticism that can be aimed at Western-European-based (especially British) feminist discussions on citizenship (Anthias and Yuval Davis 1992; Lister 1997; Lutz, Phoenix, and Yuval Davis 1995; Yuval Davis 1991, 1997; Yuval Davis and Webner 1999) is that they tend to focus on ethnic minority women, paying scant attention to the processes of exclusion experienced by immigrant women. Although ethnic minority women and immigrant women may share a number of experiences—such as their presence in gendered and racialized labor markets—there are important differences between the two, not least the fact that the former enjoy full formal social and political rights, whereas the latter do not. The fact that many immigrants in Southern Europe (including women) are undocumented enhances the relevance of this difference. Whereas feminist debates in Britain center on new notions of citizenship that can offer women more than formal rights, in the Southern European context the issue for immigrant women is their access to basic rights such as the right to enter, reside, and work there. The case of Maricel mentioned previously illustrates this point well.

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As we saw earlier, emigration was her only chance to support her five children and she had to pay traffickers to access “Fortress Europe.” She tried three times to emigrate until she finally succeeded in 1987. It was Maricel’s mother who helped her raise the money to leave by borrowing money and mortgaging the house. Her first attempt collapsed because the agency proved to be a fake. The “directors” of this agency collected considerable sums of money from Maricel and other Filipinos eager to leave the country, gave them false documents, and then disappeared to North America. The second time Maricel tried to leave through an agency based in Barcelona recommended to her by one of her sisters who was already working there. Again they gave her false documents and she was apprehended by the police at Barcelona’s airport and sent back to the Philippines. After having lost her mother’s money twice and under a lot of pressure from her family she turned again to the same Barcelona agency begging them to give her a second chance. She had to pay more money, but this time she managed to enter the country, arriving through Alicante. Maricel’s problems did not end there. After having finally reached her destination she realized that she was an illegal immigrant who could potentially be arrested by the police and deported any time. She lived in this nightmare for three years, frightened that she would be forced to leave before paying back her considerable debts. Thus, she spent her first years in Barcelona working extremely hard, scared even to walk around the city.

In the debate on citizenship, an approach that seems more relevant for the situation of immigrant women in Southern Europe is the one developed by Stasiulis and Bakan (1997). Their idea is that citizenship should not be seen as static, but rather as a negotiated relationship:

Subject to change, it is acted on collectively, or among individuals existing within social, political, and economic relations of conflict that are shaped by state hierarchies that are gender, race, class, and internationally based. Citizenship is therefore negotiated on international, as well as national, levels (Stasiulis and Bakan 1997: 113).

Stasiulis and Bakan analyze how Filipino and Caribbean women negotiate their citizenship rights in Canada by “engaging” with those individuals and institutions that deny them access to basic rights. Stasiulis and Bakan (1997) show, on the one hand, how Western states—like Canada—try to exclude these women from citizenship rights but also how, on the other hand, such women are far from passive. In fact, they manage entry in spite of stricter border controls, they try to improve their living and working conditions in spite of regulations that tie them to live-in domestic work, and they struggle to obtain landed-immigrant status in spite of their recruitment as contract workers.

Despite their difficult positions in Southern Europe, Moroccan and Filipino women have also developed several strategies to negotiate their rights and positions in Italy and Spain. These included the ability to enter Southern Europe in spite of stricter border controls, get a legal status in Bologna and Barcelona for themselves and their families, and to improve domestic workers’ working conditions.

Negotiating entrance and rights to settle

Contrary to common assumptions that portray them as passive victims, migrant women often see and undertake migration with a clear emancipatory goal. For instance, in the case of the Moroccan women I have worked with, their aims were to study, earn an income, enjoy more freedom, elude social control, start a new life, and so on. Patriarchy—which comes with the assumption that fathers have primary responsibility for the welfare of their families—dictates sequential migration whereby men migrate ahead of their wives and children. It is only when their economic position in the receiving context is secure that Moroccan men feel that their families should reunite with them. In several cases men tried to delay the migration of their families, having failed to secure enough earnings to allow them to continue to remit to Morocco and support their nuclear family in Southern Europe. Women, however, bargain with their husbands and their families in order to be able to
join them in Southern Europe, and in many cases they are successful.

Fatima, for instance, had to wait three years before being able to join her Moroccan husband in Italy in 1999. She was a young Moroccan woman from Casablanca and had been a university student but had given up her studies to work in a factory to help her family financially following the sudden death of her father. She had married Mustafà during one of his holidays to Morocco from Italy—after having turned down two other suitors who were also migrants in European countries. Her delayed arrival to Italy was partly a result of the difficulty that her husband had in meeting the requirements for family reunion, the most problematic one being adequate housing, but it was also due in part to the opposition of her in-laws. It took a lot of time for Fatima to convince her husband to take her to Italy. Her argument for coming to Italy with him was that she would be able to work in Bologna and thereby more quickly save enough money to fulfill their dream of building a house in Morocco. Migration thus became a form of “political engagement” itself, used to alter power inequalities within the household and the family.

For Filipinas migration tends to be more in line with their roles as dutiful daughters, sisters, and mothers who have to “sacrifice themselves” for the family well-being by working abroad. Yet, they too, even if more subtly, exercise their agency and try to fulfill personal objectives. They tend to opt for conflict-free ways of bettering their position within families and kinship groups; such strategies allow them to avoid upsetting social expectations but at the same time allow them to gain more control and independence over their lives, for instance, when they seek de-facto separation from their husbands through migration.

Getting access to Europe proved difficult for most of my interviewees, who nevertheless in the end had of course managed to challenge current borders and reach their planned destinations. A great number of my interviewees arrived in Bologna and Barcelona illegally, in spite of the existence of quotas for domestic workers and laws that protect family reunion. In both groups a majority of women moved from one migrant status to another with little control over their lives. Their living situation was thus strongly characterized by precariousness. For example, they went from tourist to illegal immigrant when their visas expired, from illegal to legal immigrant after an amnesty was granted, and from legal to illegal immigrant again when the elderly person for whom the migrant was working died and the residence permit could not be renewed. Such switches occur not only because of changes in the circumstances of the individual migrant, but also because legislation can change abruptly, modifying the conditions under which a person can acquire a residence permit or taking away rights that were previously enjoyed. The latter happened with the introduction of the restrictive Spanish immigration law 8/2000 and the Italian law Bossi/Fini.5

Often women undertake the considerable risks involved in emigration with the citizenship rights of their children in mind. They are not only interested in immediate economic gains but often conceive their moves in order to get access to citizenship rights for themselves and above all for their children. Batul and Ilham moved from France, where they had originally migrated from Morocco, to Spain in the hope of being legalized. Once in Madrid, they both got jobs as live-in domestic helpers and with the help of their employers managed to legalize their position.

Selma said that she decided to go to Spain for the sake of her son. She was a Moroccan woman in her late forties who had migrated to Spain in the early 1990s after her husband had taken a second wife. In Barcelona she supported herself and her son by working as a domestic helper.

“When I came here it was for my son. He didn’t want to study in my country, he didn’t want to do anything. I was thinking of what to do and finally I thought—better that we go to Europe to look for something. Because you know we [Moroccans] have to study a lot but there isn’t any work and my son didn’t study a lot and so,
what kind of job will he find? There isn’t anything. I thought—I have family in Belgium, my brother and my sister—but I didn’t want to go there. I thought—Spain is near, close to my country, it’s better to go there so when we want to go to Morocco it’s very near.” (Interview, September 2001)

Batul, an illiterate woman from Tangier and 37 years old at the time of the interview, separated from her husband a few months before her baby was due. She found herself alone in Barcelona with no economic support and a newborn. She immediately found a job and for a year spent half of her income to pay for the babysitter who looked after her daughter. Her family in Morocco had offered to take care of the baby but Batul waited a year before accepting this arrangement. She wanted to make sure that her daughter had all the right papers for acquiring Spanish nationality. Today she says that the future citizenship rights of her daughter are her main concern.

“In my family they are all asking me why I don’t go back to Morocco, but I don’t want to go. You know what happens is that my daughter is from here, she has got a father who has Spanish nationality and she has Spanish papers. When my daughter will grow older there will be a lot of problems, she would tell me that she doesn’t like to work in Morocco, that she wants to work in Spain, a lot of problems. It’s better for me to stay here, now I’m suffering but one day I’ll be fine.” (Interview, November 2001)

Filipino mothers also do all they can to ensure that their children have access to citizenship rights in Western countries. Vivian, for instance, a Filipino domestic worker in her thirties, left her job in Bologna and went to stay with her sister in the US in order to give birth in that country. After she achieved what she had planned (a US passport for her daughter), she returned to Bologna with the baby where she could earn more money. She explained that this passport is an investment for the future of her child, which will solve many problems for her daughter in the future.

**Improving living conditions**

The main area of political engagement of Moroccan women centered on accessing and extending services previously denied to migrants, especially in the sphere of housing and childcare. The Moroccan women I worked with used their maternal function as a political strategy to negotiate with local authorities, as theorized by Webner (1999). In Bologna, Moroccan women had arrived in the early 1990s usually to reunite with their husbands, who had migrated to Italy a few years previously. Their husbands worked in local industries, whereas the women found part-time employment as cleaners in offices and sometimes as domestic workers in local households (see Zontini 2002). Most were working-class, illiterate women from rural backgrounds, but there were also some who were younger and better educated among them. All of them were confined to the cleaning and domestic sector in Bologna. These women used both their socially prescribed roles as good mothers and household managers and the existence of state and international legislation protecting children’s welfare to demand that the local authorities in Bologna fulfill their obligations. Not only did they protest at the Institution for Immigration Services (ISI), but they also started to engage in direct action. Such actions included camping out with their children in the offices of the ISI forcing the officers to take up their cases and through their protests publicly denouncing the inadequacies of the council’s provisions for migrants. These women can thus be seen as political actors, attempting to alter power relations between public institutions and immigrant families excluded by service providers. By using their gender role to improve the situation of their families, they also challenged their position as passive receivers of social policies.

The strategy employed by Moroccan women that has received most media and public attention in Bologna is that of the illegal occupation of empty buildings. The first of such occupations occurred at the beginning of 1990, when about 200 Moroccans (many of whom were women and children) occupied a former school and di-
vided it up into a number of “flats” that became their home (Bernardotti and Mottura 2000). Saida, a Moroccan divorcee in her forties, was among the people who took part in that occupation. She went to the Immigration Service of the City Council to see if they could help her to find accommodations to be able to reunite with her children (at the time she was living in a bed-sit provided by the co-operative where she was working). They were not able to help her but it was there that she heard that some Moroccans were going to occupy an empty building and transform it into temporary housing; she decided to go along with them.

“I heard about it because when I went there [at the ISI] I talked with this person and the other and they were saying: ‘have you seen that there is a house, an empty house, you know’ … It wasn’t the Council that gave it to me. It was just a group of people who went there like that, you know, I wasn’t the only one, there were a lot of people without a house then, without anything.” (Interview, February 2000)

As a growing number of immigrant families, particularly those with children, did not have adequate housing, the Council was forced to intervene in the early 1990s and take responsibility for the problem. When in 1993 the first reception center for families was opened, the first immigrants to be housed there were those who had carried out the occupations. Other female-headed initiatives followed at this center, such as the mother’s campaign against drug trafficking and criminality. These unconventional forms of politics forced local authorities to approve for the first time a housing policy for migrants, which was a remarkable victory for nonvoting residents. Even the Moroccan women who were against the occupations and did not participate in them were actively engaged in trying to negotiate rights for adequate housing for themselves and their children.

As documented by authors working in other geographical contexts (e.g., Hondagneu-Sotelo 1994 for Mexicans in the US; Jones-Correa 1998 for Latin Americans in the US: or Ganguly-Scrase and Julian 1998 for Hmong in Australia), as for Moroccans in Southern Europe, it is the women who deal with the public services in order to obtain resources. This is one way in which women reinforce their positions within the family and consolidate the process of settlement. By so doing they also break out of domesticity and get involved in the public sphere. They are not only involved in changing power relations between migrants and local institutions, but also in altering their subordinate position within the home. By having to negotiate with local authorities, these women acquire knowledge about the receiving society, which gives them more bargaining power within the household. Some of the Moroccan women I interviewed were reluctantly granted the freedom to travel in the city unaccompanied by their husbands because the husbands recognized the crucial role their wives had in securing benefits, contacts, and goods from charities and local authorities.

Filipinas were absent from this type of engagement. They generally accepted their exclusion from council housing and were less involved than Moroccans in legalization campaigns. This can be partly explained by their different purpose in migrating. For Filipinas the primary goal of migration was economic gain and their migratory project centered on being able to sustain their transnational families, rather than settling into the new environment. They looked negatively on the possibility of relying on the state and saw this as undermining their identity as workers and providers for their distant families. Contrary to Moroccan women, the sphere of work is where Filipinas in Southern Europe focus their political activity.

**Improving working conditions**

Most immigrant women in Southern Europe are employed as domestic workers. This is a sector in which “the workplace is foreclosed as a site of political activity” (Kofman et al. 2000). Yet, the women I worked with were politically engaged in trying to improve their rights as workers in a number of ways. This is particularly the case for the Filipinas. Filipinas are making a
career out of domestic work and have become highly specialized in this sector. I noted how they play with the stereotype of Filipinas as being docile, hardworking, and dedicated domestics, using it to their own advantage as a kind of marketing strategy to sell their labor more expensively than other groups on the labor market for domestic services. Filipinas in both Bologna and Barcelona seem to spend a great deal of energy in preserving the good reputation of the group, since such a positive image is considered an asset for securing good working conditions and higher rates of pay.

They also try to improve their position through small steps, negotiating better working conditions each time they change employers. Filipinas normally start working as live-in maids, accepting the hardest and most demanding jobs. As they acquire skills and experience (in many cases they never did domestic work before) they move to better-paid jobs and/or jobs with better working conditions. They leave the previous occupation to the newcomers and those starting their “career.” The ones with more years of experience normally work as live-out domestics with indefinite contracts and do the less demanding tasks within the household.

Some of my interviewees wanted to get out of domestic work altogether. Their options are very limited, however. A form of political engagement to which many of them have resorted has been to try and improve their work situation by checking out another market in a different country. Priscilla and Eleanor both went to try to work in the US. Their stories defy the stereotypes about the passivity of Filipino women and their submission to domestic work. Both women were working in this sector and both suffered a severe downturn through migration. Both also nevertheless tried hard to escape this market niche by using their transnational connections. Eleanor finished high school in the Philippines and trained in information technology in Barcelona, whereas Priscilla had been a teacher in the Philippines. As many of their Filipino counterparts who are also often graduates or professionals, they had to renounce more engaging, but low-paid jobs in their home country for economic security in the West. Once in Europe, the only jobs they could access were in the domestic-service sector, even though both had lived in Barcelona for nearly 20 years and had acquired Spanish citizenship.

Eleanor worked for a while as a cashier in the US. She did not dislike the job but her earnings were low due to the fact that she did not have a work permit. She stayed in Los Angeles three months and then decided to return to Barcelona. Like Eleanor, Priscilla tried to see if she could escape the domestic-service niche by exploring working opportunities in other countries. First, she went to Japan with the help of a brother. There she worked in a factory and as a babysitter. She thought that the work possibilities were better in Japan but she finally decided to go back to Catalonia because it was where her family was. Subsequently she went to San Diego (US) to open up a business with the help of another brother who was living there. She tried to open a video rental and a Filipino food shop with the capital her brother lent her (he had the same type of business). However, she stayed only five weeks and then returned the money and went back to Barcelona because she did not manage to convince her youngest daughter to stay in the US.

In addition to informal and individual strategies, Filipinas are also getting organized (see e.g., Anderson 1999 for the UK context). In Bologna and Barcelona some of the women who realized that changing their occupation would be unfeasible and who have achieved part of their economic goals are now reducing their working hours and engaging in voluntary and community activities. Women in both cities have become the pillars of well-organized and internationally linked Filipino associations. These bodies cover cultural/recreational activities and campaigns for the protection of worker’s rights, and are active participants in and sustainers of various church groups. All women involved in such organizations talked about the personal fulfillment they got through these activities. Contrary to the experience of most other immigrant
groups in Southern Europe, for Filipinos the so-called “community leaders” chosen as preferential interlocutors by the local institution are usually women. They are operating in groups and associations where their activities in favor of Filipino migrants have brought them popularity and respectability among their compatriots.

In the late 1990s a group of 16 Filipinas founded “Liwanag,” the association of Filipino women of Bologna, after having met the delegates from Rome of the Dutch organization CFWM (Commission for Filipino Migrant Worker’s Network). The aim of Liwanag was to give support to Filipina domestic workers in the city. One of the founding members, Jenny, then got involved with the local branch of the trade union CGIL (Italian General Confederation of Labour). She worked for four years as a volunteer in the Centro Diritti (Rights Centre) giving free advice to foreign domestic workers. Thanks to this activity she learned the legislation concerning domestic work and started to spread the word (“ho sparso la voce”) within the Filipino “community.” From then on, several Filipinas started to visit the CGIL “to get further information.” Over the years Jenny and her colleagues at the Union helped several domestics to solve their work-related problems (“a mettersi a posto”). Jenny realized that several Filipino maids did not know their entitlements and this benefited their employers. At the CGIL she started giving information about things like holiday entitlements, child benefits, unemployment benefits, and maternity leave (several women did not know about this right and were going to the Philippines to give birth).

Initially Liwanag was only a loose organization sharing information among its members and organizing occasional events. In November 1999, however, they opened their own office. Their aim is to provide the same service Jenny was offering at the CGIL, but every day rather than once a week, as well as new services, such as language courses. Although Liwanag now has its own office, Jenny wants to remain closely linked to the CGIL because through them she can keep updated on the latest legislation concerning domestic work and immigration. For the same reason, the members of Liwanag were also planning to affiliate with RESPECT, the EU Commission for Filipino Migrant Workers International. They already have other international contacts through the Dutch CFWM (Commission for Filipino Migrant Workers) (their mother organization) as well as national links through FILCAMS (Italian Federation of Commerce Tourism and Services Workers). Over the past two years delegates from Liwanag participated in several local events, in an international meeting on the conditions of domestic workers, as well as a national meeting organized by FILCAMS in Modena.

In Barcelona there are several active Filipino associations, generally headed and staffed by women. They are active both locally and internationally and lobby the Filipino national government. It was Filipino “transnational” networks that opened up a channel for me to do my fieldwork in Barcelona. I approached the President of the Association of Filipino Women in Bologna thanks to the details of her association outlined in a publication of RESPECT given to me by members of Liwanag in Bologna. The main activities of Filipino associations in Barcelona involve providing information and training to Filipino women as well as organizing cultural activities. The Association of Filipino Workers has specialized instead in dealing with cases of labor conflicts. The president of the association in Barcelona acts as a mediator in conflicts that may arise between workers and employers, trying to impose conciliatory resolutions whenever possible and in so doing helping maintain the good reputation of the group. Open conflict is preferably avoided since it is believed to be detrimental not only to the individual worker but also to the general “community.”

By networking (both locally, nationally, and internationally) Filipinas are trying to keep updated on the changing national and European legislation on domestic work and immigration. They then inform and sensitize Filipino workers in Bologna and Barcelona as to their rights and help to implement them through the trade
unions. This strategy seems to be working. Many of my interviewees were aware of their rights and several cited episodes in their work histories in which they turned to the trade union to solve work-related matters. Such success is also confirmed by my interviews with staff members at job-centers in Bologna who bitterly lamented that Filipinas have changed in the last few years, becoming more expensive, difficult, choosy, and aware of their rights (and insisting to have them implemented).

Although present in trade unions, Moroccan women were generally less active in workers rights than their Filipino counterparts. The Moroccan women I worked with found it hard to accept that all their aspirations were confined to an undervalued domestic job. Rather than improving their position in this sector, many women I interviewed hoped to leave this sector altogether. They tended to consider paid work, especially unskilled and devalued domestic work, a sign of poverty and something that sets them apart from the ideal of the housewife/mother supported by a breadwinning husband. My research has shown how patriarchy may become a refuge from a marginalized role in the economic system for Moroccan women. Many Moroccan women find themselves faced with the choice between a low-paid, hard, and (for them) degrading job, or a full-time position as wives and mothers in a patriarchal household. Many have chosen the latter option after disappointing experiences in the local labor markets. Few Filipinas have this choice. They are the economic pillars of their extended families who have often incurred high debts in order to make migration possible. Often their husbands have low-paid jobs in the Philippines. Moreover, as Barber (2000) has pointed out, their autonomy and prestige increase with migration thanks to the wages they earn abroad.

Conclusions

My work has shown that the possibility of enjoying full citizenship rights in the immigration country does not lose importance in the age of transnationalism; quite the opposite is true. The enjoyment of social and political rights has a direct impact on an immigrant’s position in the receiving society. Their often-insecure legal status has important consequences for their position in the labor market and in relation to their family commitments and ability to conduct a transnational life. The lack of basic rights directly reduces the space of women’s agency and conspires to render them weak and powerless subjects as sometimes portrayed in literature and as preferred by some employers. The exclusion of resident workers from a number of rights shows the irresponsibility of Western states in apparently endorsing the power of capital to super-exploit immigrant workers.

In spite of their precarious circumstances, however, migrant women are far from passive. By adopting a definition of the political derived from anthropology and feminism, this article has documented the ways in which seemingly powerless actors engage with power relations in a number of spheres. It has shown how Moroccan and Filipino migrant women struggled to achieve some of their entitlements, such as nationality, family reunion for all those who were potentially entitled, and legal work contracts. I have also explored how they engaged with power inequalities within their households and families.

The analysis of the experiences of Filipino and Moroccan migrant women shows that there are different strategies deployed in the migration and settlement processes that lead to different possible outcomes depending on varying circumstances in the sending and receiving contexts. Whereas Filipino immigrant women were concerned with improving their working conditions, Moroccan immigrant women focused on accessing services. In spite of all their differences, the stories I have collected have important similarities and common threads. They all develop and articulate in more than one context; they unfold in relation to people and realities beyond those of the place where the women are residing. Nation-states exert their power over these women by controlling their moves, attaching degrading labels to them, denying
them rights, and facilitating their economic exploitation. Yet, these women develop skills and build connections that allow them to partly bypass nation-states.

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Notes

1. “Integration” is a problematic concept. It is commonly used in academic and policy circles as the opposite of “exclusion.” A generic and open definition of integration would be “the process by which immigrants become accepted into society, both as individuals and as groups” (Pennix 2005). However, many grassroots activists fear that when mainstream politicians and policy makers declare to be promoting integration they do not have in mind a two-way process requiring adaptation on the part of both newcomers and the host society (Castles et al. 2003) but rather a one-sided process of adaptation in which “immigrants are expected to give up their distinctive linguistic, cultural, or social characteristics and become indistinguishable from the majority population” (Castles and Miller 2003: 250).

2. The research involved participant observation and in-depth interviews in the two locations over a period of one year. One hundred interviews were conducted, 76 with migrant women from the two groups and the remaining ones with NGO representatives and policy makers.

3. Focusing exclusively on ethnic minorities is also problematic in Northern European countries that (like Britain) continue to be the destination of a variety of new migrants, including considerable numbers of undocumented workers (Vertovec 2006).

4. This involved several strategies ranging from accepting demanding jobs that were linked to a work permit, to crossing borders on foot and paying so-called “traffickers.”

5. The law 8/2000 restricted many rights previously guaranteed to migrants and was strongly opposed by both immigrants and a wide spectrum of civil society. Among its new provisions were important limitations on the social and political rights of immigrants. With this law “undocumented” immigrants lost the right to association and reunion as well as that of union affiliation; the right to work and to social security was also eliminated for undocumented immigrants; tighter conditions for entry were introduced; visas could now be refused without written justification; stricter rules for family reunification were introduced, eliminating the clause that allowed the reunion with “other family members” besides the spouse, parents, and children. The same process of contraction of immigrants’ rights also happened in Italy, where the “center-right” government of Silvio Berlusconi passed the very restrictive Bossi-Fini law.

6. The Institution for Immigration Services (ISI) was a Council-run office that centralized all the services for immigrants in the city. Its responsibilities included housing, and it was in charge of Council residences for immigrants (Zontini 2002).

References


Aging Away: Immigrant Families, Elderly Care, Ethnography and Policy

Rita Henderson

ABSTRACT: This article considers how immigrant retention relates to family obligations, drawing a complex portrait of a common family dilemma involving the care of aging kin. The ethnographic life-history approach offers an important perspective on how health and well-being are not simply structured by formal access to institutions of care, but by the socio-cultural, economic and geographic flexibility of families to accommodate their needs. Analysis draws on the interdependant migration histories of a family of six adult sisters originating in Tanzania. In the case of this family, the dilemma surrounding the care of aging parents is not so much caused by migration’s disruption of traditional filial obligations. Instead, it is the effect of social pressures stirred in both sending and receiving countries, which frame opportunities for eventual social integration, relocation or sometimes reluctant repatriation. A reflexive approach argues for the active presence of ethnographers in policy debates.

KEYWORDS: health, immigrant retention, life history, Tanzania, transnationalism, well-being

This article is structured along two overlapping discussions, one involving the ethno-graphic process itself, the other considering ethnography’s relevance outside of anthropology. The first discussion revisits the transnational family biography I compiled with six adult sisters and their close kin living in different parts of the world. Members of this family now live on three continents, having settled and resettled in as many as a dozen countries since their first migration to Germany as a family during the sisters’ early childhood. In that project, I asked what the experiences of these young, educated, ‘black’ women coping with a rapidly changing world have to offer our general knowledge about what it means to belong to a nation. Their collective life history offers a nuanced picture of contemporary migration, in which migrants are not simply portrayed as disempowered casualties of the political régimes that decide their formal status as citizens. In the course of my research, most members of the family I was studying confessed to me both personal and collective anxiety over who would care for their aging parents when they could no longer care for themselves. In the end, the concerns raised about the precarious nature of elderly care in this transnational network remained unmentioned in the final text. Considering now what before I left unspoken, my objective here is not to ‘set the record straight’, but to reckon with the predicament still faced by the family I studied. Not unlike the participants of most anthropological studies, the people involved in this project live in a world in which state and capital interests, cultural politics and other material and ideological influences frame, for better or for worse, their life choices and opportunities. They have an immediate interest in the academic knowledge that was generated from their circumstances, as that knowledge meets audiences that are actively pursuing positive social change.

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The second discussion addresses the potentially clumsy insertion of ethnography into policy discussions, relating an episode that transpired when I first presented results from this project to a policy-interested audience. Although awkward, the episode underscored the difficulty of effectively conveying to non-anthropologists the valuable context and nuance of migrant decision-making, processes that are generally only accessible through extended participant observation among small groups such as this. Part of the problem arose from my reluctance to parcel analysis into thematic areas encouraged by the policy research domain with which I was familiar. Consequently, I permitted myself to believe that my anthropological concerns were simply incompatible with the applied drive of policy research. In hindsight, I am curious as to how my idea of policy research at the time of writing the Mistral family biography constrained my ability to classify and analyse this particular family dilemma, which crosses the frontiers between typical policy research themes such as (1) immigration and citizenship, (2) health and aging, (3) gender and family, (4) paid and unpaid labour in formal and informal economies, (5) social capital and (6) foreign credential recognition. I argue that my apprehensions about explicitly directing analysis towards policy initiatives were merited, given institutional differences in research goals and approaches. Nevertheless, my critical energy might have been strategically incorporated instead of allowing it to distance my analysis from innovative perspectives circulating in policy networks in Canada and internationally.

A Transnational Family Biography Revisited

As multisited research that ‘followed people and their biographies’ (Marcus 1998: 90–94), the Mistral’s family biography is situated between oral and life-history methods. Over a period of four months, I travelled to London, Berlin, Dar es Salaam and Calgary to the various homes of Mistral family members, meeting all six sisters, the four husbands of those who were married, their children, parents, and paternal grandmother. I directed attention to learning their collective history, while emphasizing experiences in their current locations. Of primary interest were the stories that the sisters emphasised when they described to me their migration experiences. How did they attribute personal, historical and social meaning to the stories they chose to tell me? And what did reflections on their lives and transnational mobility communicate about migrant agency? The life-history method has faced criticism for its heavily localised scope and tendency for sentimental underpinnings (Crapanzano 1984: 954). Mindful of the challenge, I drew on Alessandro Portelli’s work on oral sources as offering invaluable knowledge about political processes through the examination of personal experiences. Through oral history, he argues that many disciplines (including history, sociology, psychology, linguistics, ethnology and anthropology, folklore and music) tap into the past, which is available, distorted and ultimately given greater meaning through memory and dialogue (Portelli 1991: xi, 52). In Portelli’s words, ‘[o]ral sources tell us not just what people did, but what they wanted to do, what they believed they were doing, and what they now think they did’ (50).

Some years ago, I had met Agatha, the youngest of the Mistral sisters, while we were both working as au pairs (foreign nannies) in Finland. The year following our meeting, I helped Agatha arrange to study Travel Tourism at a technical college in my hometown of Calgary, where she lived for several years before moving to Berlin and marrying her Danish boyfriend. Prior to re-
search, I had only ever met Agatha and Anника (who also eventually came to Canada for studies), although their sister Heidi and Agatha’s husband, Tim, had themselves met my family in Calgary on occasions when I was at university across the country. While I had made arrangements in rented accommodations during fieldwork, and planned to carry out semi-structured interviews as my primary source of information, the sisters I already knew insisted that the family would anticipate my staying in their homes. As is bound to happen when a researcher shares lodging with those she or he studies, participant observation quickly replaced my early plans for recordings and interview transcripts. In fact, interviews were virtually impossible given that they seemed to provoke an unnatural distance between myself and the people I was trying to learn about. The information that interviews were designed to draw out was abundantly available in friendly conversations while preparing dinner together or while driving to another town.

Methodologically, the collective life-history approach injects current perspective into kinship studies, a theme long central to anthropology’s understanding of culture (Thomas and Znaniecki 1958; Mintz 1960; Lévi-Strauss 1963: 50; Shostak 1981; Cruikshank et al. 1990; Muratorio 1991; Chamberlain and Leydesdorff 2004). Similarly, the project stirred poignant and sometimes unexpected reflections on what often seem like more fashionable research themes, including globalisation (Appadurai 1997; Sassen 1991; Bauman 1998; Smith 2001), post-colonialism (Bhabha 1994), and transnational migration (Basch et al. 1994; Brah 1996; Papastergiadis 2000). Among the arguments to emerge from my analysis was that, as the Mistral family reveals, transnational communities involve many more people than just ‘immigrants’ living away from ‘homes’. Such migrants do not usually leave familial responsibilities behind upon migration. Typically, migrating to a developed country increases the pressure on a person to provide for more people than they would have otherwise (cf. Fuglerud 1999; Jayapalan and Oakley 2005). Finally, migration is far from a unidirectional, temporally fixed event. It frequently involves interdependence between sites in diaspora, remittances, regular return visits and voluntary or involuntary repatriations (cf. Ong 1999; Gamburd 2000; Fournon and Glick-Schiller 2001). Given this, not only citizenship status, but gender, race, ethnicity, age, education, religion, sexuality, language, skills and plain good luck inform a person’s access to resources that can enable or impede social mobility and personal well-being.

Despite the sometimes comforting rationality of kinship diagrams, the task of ethno-graphically profiling a family is particularly complex. Although group membership may be relatively unambiguous, identifying dominant personalities can be as difficult as grasping the subtleties that years of intimacy can bring to relationships between individual members. In this case, tensions resulting from the family’s unresolved dilemma over care for their aging parents are framed by the sisters’ various insertion in the societies in which they live, their access to economic security, and the influence of their Western husbands. As will be elaborated in the text that follows, the problem is not so much about the disruption of family traditions or the much-needed accommodation in North America and Europe of elderly citizens from cultural minorities. It is in the context of their own migrations to and from Tanzania that the Mistral sisters have become increasingly apprehensive over how to ensure the care of their aging parents, who wish to remain in Dar es Salaam. Nathan and Evangeline themselves care for Nathan’s elderly mother, Emily, who is over 100, now blind and nearly deaf. All three belong to a Kihaya-speaking diaspora from northwestern Tanzania, now
living in the country’s largest city. This dilemma is further complicated by Nathan and Evangeline themselves, who have insisted on remaining in Tanzania, where they have networks of social support, but where few of their daughters feel at home or are prepared to return permanently. The parents wish to remain in the bungalow they secured from a religious community upon leaving it over ten years ago.

A significant aspect of the Mistral family’s collective biography is that for twenty years, starting during the sisters’ early childhood, the family belonged to a transnational religious community in which they lived and worked. A central goal of the Christian Integrated Community (CIC), which was founded in Europe following the Second World War, was to pursue a brighter and more viable future for what members saw as a divided, post-war world. The Mistral family, first moved to Germany as part of the CIC, their purpose being to learn faith-based communitarianism in order to one day build a collective farm in Tanzania. It was ten years before anyone in the family returned to live in Africa, and close to twelve before a collective farm in south-central Tanzania was converted into the first African chapter of the congregation. As the Mistral family described it to me, the spiritual basis of the CIC united a diverse group consisting mostly of Europeans, many of whom were disillusioned by their fast-paced, workaday lives, which had left them spiritually lost. The sisters explained that in their childhood experiences, exclusion or discrimination simply did not exist among members of the Community. As members lived together, the sisters grew up with doctors, lawyers, professors, mechanics, midwives and cooks in their home. This close contact with all kinds of people coming together in Christian faith is what all the Mistral family attribute to giving them the social ease in relating to anyone as an equal, no matter what his or her background.

The family eventually parted ways with the CIC on somewhat sour terms because some of the sisters opted to withdraw as adults in order to pursue their personal life paths. As Nathan and Evangeline explained to me, even though they were pressured into leaving because of their daughters’ choices, it is important for them to retain a connection to many people they knew there. The youngest sister, Agatha, once told me that she and her sisters often avoid speaking with strangers and friends alike about their years with ‘the Community’ (or at least its religious aspects), because it is frequently chalked up to being naïve or cult-like to those who do not understand the impact it had on their lives. She observed that few Community outsiders have appreciated how involvement afforded this family the chance to move to Europe when otherwise their modest circumstances would have made it difficult to accumulate enough financial capital to let anyone go at all, let alone all to go at once. Furthermore, unlike many immigrants to Germany and other Western nations, the Mistral family were immediately welcomed into a largely German milieu thanks to the generosity of their hosts. What is more, belonging to the Community enabled Nathan and Evangeline to trust that they could grow old surrounded by the support of an extended network, free from the worry of having had no sons, who according to tradition are the ones who would normally care for aging parents. However, Nathan and Evangeline’s eventual and unfortunately reluctant departure from the Community has meant that the sisters have had to anticipate a burden that their parents once hoped to spare them. Each with dependents of her own, the sisters now find themselves pinched between ensuring the well-being of their parents and that of their children and husbands.
**Complicating Concepts: Ethnography and Policy Research**

My familiarity with social policy research derives from my association with a significant international network of policy makers, scholars and interest groups specifically brought together with the goal of optimizing the exchange of policy-relevant immigration research. Throughout studies for my master’s degree, the network was working with interested academics in several universities and NGOs (non-governmental organisations) in Canada’s Maritime region to establish a research centre in the Atlantic Provinces. Prior to beginning fieldwork, I had worked as a research assistant for a citizenship action group. I had also attended the network’s national conference as a volunteer representative of a local NGO providing legal services to asylum seekers.

By the time I travelled to Calgary, London, Berlin and Dar es Salaam to meet the Mistral family, I had become weary of what I perceived to be an absence of ethnographic analyses found in published work in the network. I could not discount that the network had achieved a success uncommon for social policy research, bridging a gap between the knowledge-base of universities and the practical worlds of government and interest groups. Nevertheless, the interdisciplinary nature of the network’s research objectives meant that a range of disciplines seemed to compete for funds to research similar areas of interest. Unsurprisingly, some disciplines seemed more conceptually ready than others to adapt to the policy-interested audiences keen for fresh analyses of immigration’s impact on Canadian society. However, as I saw it at the time, I was reluctant to reduce the life histories of the Mistral sisters to what seemed like policy objectives driven by a fashionable concern for immigrant integration and retention. These sisters had a vast bank of cultural capital that enabled them to adapt to a range of social milieux, be they in North America, Europe or Africa. If one were to seriously explore their integration and retention in various host countries, a critical observer would quickly discern that the motives behind their frequent resettlements had less to do with their own abilities to adapt, than with host societies themselves.

By the time I presented my research results at an international conference organised by the network, I had resigned myself to believing that anthropology as I understood it was incompatible with the immigration-policy domain. I presented an ironic sketch of minor political subversions that Heidi, a Mistral sister then working in short-term call-centre jobs in London, enacted in her everyday life. I simply hoped to complicate how we might conceptualise multiculturalism, offering a view of how at the level of the individual, the principle of protecting cultural pluralism is often lived through cultural essentialisms (Taylor 1992). I did not
expect to be given much more than passing regard. However, during a coffee break in our session, I was approached by an official in a Canadian bureau responsible for citizenship and immigration. Apparently my article had struck a negative chord. Rather than critiquing my interpretation and analysis of the data, it seemed that my methods were the most troubling to my critic. She asked exasperatedly: ‘So what if one black woman in London finds a personal space in which she can bite back at the various regulative authorities which marshal her behaviour, dress, and her very sense of happiness and social belonging?’ For my critic, this family seemed an incredible exception to the immigrant norm. She questioned how their stories were possibly representative of anything beyond the family itself. In retrospect, I had miscalculated my policy audience. I mistook the unfamiliarity of audience members with anthropology for actual lack of interest in applying qualitative research to policy. I had tried to translate my research from one foreign language into another, from thick ethnographic description into a theory-rich critique of multiculturalism, neither offering clear lessons for the policy-interested. But I had neglected to explicitly articulate that our methods of participant observation and ethnographic description are uniquely poised to reveal phenomena that are scarcely otherwise accessible, elaborating how statistics on and trends are lived in the everyday as hopes and strategies that frequently subvert normativity. I might have noted that without knowledge about how immigrants like Heidi perceive policies designed to encourage pluralism in the workplace, we risk not grasping whether such policies are experienced as effective by the very people they aim to help.

Any critical understanding that researchers may generate about the health and well-being of immigrant groups, as an example specifically relevant to this special edition of Anthropology in Action, should necessarily recognize that the concepts and categories we use to characterise such populations are contextual and often in important need of qualification. It should go without saying that calculating social integration would be reductive if any one indicator—such as citizenship, level of education, age or duration in the country of residence—eclipsed all others during analysis. Contextualisation of concepts and categories of analysis implies that we at least anticipate how such indicators are lived, and not treat them as variables alone to integration. Without question, all aspects of the sisters’ identities are relevant and her very sense of happiness and social belonging? For my critic, this family seemed to evaluating their different degrees of well-being. Ethnographically considering indicators together enables us to envision how some categories play out more significantly depending on the individual. Taking age as an example, the order of the Mistral sisters’ births played a significant role in determining where (in Europe or Africa) each sister lived at different points during her youth and education. As it happened, the two eldest (Julia and Mariannik) were approximately nine and ten years old when the family first moved to Germany from Tanzania, whereas these were the approximate ages of the two youngest (Vero and Agatha) when the family returned. Upon the family’s repatriation to Tanzania, the three eldest sisters remained in Europe to finish their secondary and eventually post-secondary studies. This meant that by adulthood, Heidi, who is the youngest of the elder sisters who remained in Europe to finish their secondary and eventually post-secondary studies. This meant that by adulthood, Heidi, who is the youngest of the elder sisters who remained in Europe to finish their secondary and eventually post-secondary studies. This meant that by adulthood, Heidi, who is the youngest of the elder sisters who remained in Europe to finish their secondary and eventually post-secondary studies. This meant that by adulthood, Heidi, who is the youngest of the elder sisters who remained in Europe to finish their secondary and eventually post-secondary studies. This meant that by adulthood, Heidi, who is the youngest of the elder sisters who remained in Europe to finish their secondary and eventually post-secondary studies. This meant that by adulthood, Heidi, who is the youngest of the elder sisters who remained in Europe to finish their secondary and eventually post-secondary studies. This meant that by adulthood, Heidi, who is the youngest of the elder sisters who remained in Europe to finish their secondary and eventually post-secondary studies. 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not unlike those of many others who find
themselves as strangers in new locales. And
although they may seem privileged in com-
parison to other Tanzanians and residents
of the largely impoverished nations of the
southern hemisphere who can expect little
socioeconomic mobility in their lifetimes, the
Mistrals were not always as fortunate as they
appear today. Removed from abstractions in
social theory, the life histories of the Mistral
family subvert prevailing understandings of
transnational migration, which reduce the
phenomenon to questions of integration and
retention in receiving countries. Through the
particularities of this family’s story, rather
than through that which renders the Mistrals
representative of countless others like them,
we can begin to envisage the horizons of
policy broadening beyond inadequate dual-
isms, categories of immigrant versus native,
home versus host, integration versus ex-
clusion.

A Family Dilemma

As if there were an elephant in the room that
everyone was trying to ignore, I too avoided
the troubling question of who would ensure
Nathan and Evangeline’s comfort in coming
years. I followed the Mistral sisters and their
husbands in relegating uncertainties about
the care of their elderly parents (who were
by then in their early seventies) to sometime
in the general future. I was myself bewil-
dered by the lack of any obvious or agreeable
resolution. At times during our correspon-
dence I desired to mention the various solu-
tions presented by family members, but it
seemed unfair to draw on one person’s reflec-
tions, without contrasting them with the per-
spectives of others. For instance, Marianne’s
German husband, who had recently moved
to Tanzania for his second time, explained
to me that either Annika or Heidi (the only
two unmarried sisters) would soon be
obliged to return to Tanzania to care for Na-
than and Evangeline. As he told me, the other
four sisters were unable to do so because of
commitments to their husbands and chil-
dren. This was a substantial statement, given
that his wife was, at the time, the only Mistral
sister then living in the same country as their
parents. It seemed as though, for him, being
single women made Annika and Heidi avail-
able to fulfill a family duty for which their
married sisters were too occupied caring for
their own families. I was confounded as to
how to relate such comments to passing pro-
nouncements of other family members about
how much financially each sister should con-
tribute to their parents’ care. These com-
ments were usually part of broader conver-
sations about financial assistance for
studies and emergencies, sums transferred
regularly across this small transnational net-
work as part of their ethic of support. Some-
times the differential financial security of the
sisters stirred suggestions that the wealthiest
among them should contribute a greater
overall amount to the care of their elderly
parents. However, such speculations were
generally balanced when others would com-
ment that each sister should be ‘held account-
able for her own life decisions’. Those
purporting this view seemed to be sug-
gest ing that they thought it only fair that
all should contribute the same amount, be it
financially or otherwise.

This last proposition seemed to pin subtle
judgment on Heidi in particular, who was
unmarried in spite of several genuine mar-
rriage proposals over the years, and who in
her early thirties remained unsettled in her
career. As mentioned already, in having ac-
quired a German passport several years ear-
lier, which was actually done through a
staged marriage and divorce, Heidi re-
nounced her Tanzanian citizenship (as the
African nation does not recognize dual citi-
zension). As she told me, feelings of being ‘at
home’ in her country of birth were uniquely reserved for visits to family. Given that she speaks Swahili with a German accent, she is generally mistaken in Tanzania for South African, a group that according to the family is increasingly perceived to be (and resented for) dominating the country’s post-socialist economy. Without Tanzanian citizenship, Heidi is now required to apply for a visa whenever she visits her family in Dar, making it further unlikely she will ever permanently return.

It is difficult to ignore the significance of marriage in establishing long-term well-being among these sisters. Unlike Heidi, those who have also married Western husbands (Mariannik, Julia, Vero and Agatha) have chosen not to pursue the acquisition of new citizenship. Incidentally, none lives in the country of her husband’s nationality, which makes it difficult to speculate how being married to Westerners has increased the long-term well-being of the married Mistral sisters. For instance, Julia’s Australian husband, who owns an African art gallery in London’s trendy Notting Hill neighbourhood, started his business over twenty years ago. Through his business reputation, Julia has acquired permanent residence in the United Kingdom, where she gave birth to their second son. Having visited Australia on several occasions, she carefully explained to me that London’s racial and cultural diversity seem the more promising for her eventual reintegration into the workforce as a nurse.

Also unlike Heidi, Mariannik did not renounce her Tanzanian citizenship for a European passport upon marrying a German. She instead holds an indefinite visa to Germany. However, marriage to a German has not necessarily implied that she would remain there permanently. A few years ago, Mariannik conceded to her husband’s dreams to build a business in Tanzania, and returned to her country of origin to live. Putting his training as an engineer to good use, her husband created a sturdy iron-framed wooden-door design and set up a small business that now employs more than two dozen local workers on a plot of land on the western edge of Dar es Salaam. For Mariannik, the return to Tanzania has been a trying process. Accustomed to the company of others, the isolation of her new living arrangements seemed to be taking a toll when I met her in Dar. This was especially the case since giving birth to her daughter only three months before my visit. In Germany, she had been used to a houseful of people, having worked for a wealthy couple who had adopted children from Sudan, Ethiopia, India and Rwanda. Unable to travel anywhere by car without someone to hold her newborn daughter, Mariannik was often frustrated in Tanzania. Just to be able to securely stroll down the road with her newborn and a friend was an impossible comfort that left her homesick for the safety and extended support networks she knew in Germany. While she would spend days and nights on end at her parents’ bungalow, located in a more central Dar neighbourhood, during my visit Mariannik seemed like a new mother in a foreign land who was in as much need of care and support as were her aging parents.

Regarding accountability to life decisions, Annika seemed to be spared the harshest of judgment. As I was frequently reminded, had it not been for her working as an office manager in an international safari company when the family first left the Christian Integrated Community, much of the family would not be as financially secure as they are today. Julia insisted that Annika was like the family’s living angel. Had Annika not been able to afford private school tuition during the late-1990s, Agatha and Vero may never have finished high school. Had Annika not purchased Agatha’s flight to Finland as a first means of finding her youngest sister opportunities in Europe, Agatha would
never have met me or wound up in post-secondary studies in Canada. Annika was the only one among her sisters and parents to secure stable employment during the period immediately following the family’s departure from the Christian Integrated Community. Had she not shared her income so widely, the garage on Nathan and Evangeline’s property would not have been transformed into a guesthouse that they now rent out for a small income. Had it not been for the renovation of the guesthouse, Nathan would not have met his current boss, also from Bukoba and a native Kihaya-speaker, who hired him as a mechanic in a large trucking company for which he still works. None of her sisters could fault Annika for pursuing studies into her thirties, as it was widely believed that she was the most academic in the family. Many expressed great relief that she found the opportunity to study in Canada, since her attempts to pursue a degree in linguistics at the University of Rome fell through for the unfortunate reason of an abusive boyfriend and his family who initially sponsored her move to Italy. Although her dreams for an education were bitterly compromised throughout her twenties, her sacrifices for the family’s welfare did not go unappreciated by her sisters.

However, gratitude for Annika’s resourcefulness would not be enough to enable her to stay abroad. As I was finishing the project, she received news that in spite of finding a job upon graduation from college in Canada, her work permit application was denied. According to Citizenship and Immigration Canada, because of her special circumstances in having her study permit extended for a second programme, she should have found a job in her last three months of studies and applied for the permit prior to graduation, instead of within the three months following. It was a bitter end to a three-year attempt to increase her status and credibility in Western countries in order to successfully migrate to Canada. Because of the short timeline of her departure, she was unable to secure visas to join her sisters in London, and in the end was pressured into returning directly to Tanzania. In the years since, Annika has admitted that she desires to permanently move abroad again, as she sees little future in Dar es Salaam for career and marriage opportunities in line with her life experiences. As time passes, her family in Tanzania has shown an increasing need for her support. Mariannik appreciates the presence of her sister, whereas Annika’s presence with her aging parents is a comfort for those living in Europe. She may not yet be the emissary sent to care for her parents through old age, but circumstances have once again conspired to make her the most likely to sacrifice personal goals to fulfill this family obligation.

Although the dilemma over Nathan and Evangeline’s elderly care was presented to me as a minor concern confronting the Mistrals’ family, the specific predicament it posed for each sister raises interesting questions about how researchers like myself might anticipate the social pressures faced by immigrants, and subsequently how we frame arguments about why immigrants leave or why they stay in a given place. This led me to ask why I avoided addressing the family tension over Nathan and Evangeline’s elderly care. Why did I relegate explanation away from my interest areas of immigration and citizenship, and towards another research domain vaguely to do with health and aging? The answer to this question is twofold. First, it was not immediately evident that the dilemma of caring for elderly parents had much to do with immigration at all. All manner of families of adult siblings, even those in which all live in the same city, face such uncertainties and tensions. One could ask whether the Mistrals’ dilemma was not rather a symptom of modernity’s disruption of traditional customs surrounding the care of aging citizens? But then again, it is increas-
ingly difficult to ignore that the frustrations Annika faced as a young, single, ‘black’, educated, and underemployed female migrant in Western Europe and North America are significant in how her family eventually came to depend on her to return to Tanzania. As a result, the looming resolution to the family’s uncertainty seemed in large part structured by international citizenship régimes that judged Annika’s presence in Western countries as less worthy of permanent status than that of her sisters.

A Place for Ethnography in Social Policy Research

At their annual meetings held in June 2005, the Canadian Sociology and Anthropology Association (CSAA) co-sponsored an invited panel on the theme of immigration and aging with the national branch of the migration policy network discussed earlier. The panel was an encouraging move on the part of researchers to generate increased awareness of problems uniquely facing the elderly and their families in the context of transnational migration. Some important points underlined by presenters were that elderly care, whether or not it occurs in a transnational context, is generally a highly gendered domain, frequently involving unpaid work for those who cannot afford (or those who simply refuse) to put an elderly family member in a long-term care facility. Presenters also noted that elderly citizens of diverse ethnic origins face particular challenges in terms of language and cultural adaptation to Canadian society, as well as access to community support. Unquestionably, policy research is needed in the area, and I believe the panel demonstrated clear progress in Canadian research into questions around immigration and aging. Only four years earlier, some of the researchers involved in the panel had outlined a modest policy research platform calling for age-sensitive research to address “...how advanced age relates to the processes and consequences of immigrant integration” (Durst 2001: 1). At that time, the scholars remarked that neither gerontological, nor immigration literature sufficiently treated scholarly and policy issues surrounding relocation later in life. Extending ethnographic knowledge generated from the Mistral’s experiences of migration, we can complicate this research area further: What impact on local communities in developing countries might Canada’s open recruitment of educated young foreigners have? What obligation do our policies have to ensure that our poaching of skilled labourers from underdeveloped economies does not endanger the lives of elderly relatives and dependants of those we encourage to immigrate? Might official recognition of such circumstances foster sensitive policy that could increase immigrant retention? If we desire to understand why immigrants stay and why they leave, ethnography offers a valuable guide for directed research and analysis. It is at this juncture, the point at which policy research becomes innovative in its categories of analysis, where anthropologists have the greatest to contribute.

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Notes

1. Domestic servants for the family in Dar es Salaam were Malawians in the country unofficially.
2. Marriage and children opened many of the sisters into host country networks that Annika and Heidi lacked as single women.
3. Both Annika and Heidi had post-secondary educations in line with which they were challenged to secure and retain work.

4. The Christian Integrated Community, like the personal and family names of Mistral family members, is a pseudonym used to protect the collective identity of those studied. In this article, whenever the word ‘Community’ is used on its own and capitalised, it refers to the Christian Integrated Community to which the Mistrals were members for almost twenty years.

References


The Cosmohermeneutics of Migration Encounters at the Immigration Museum, Melbourne

Philipp Schorch

**ABSTRACT:** Drawing on a narrative study of Australian visitors to the Immigration Museum in Melbourne, this article explores the hermeneutic complexities of migration encounters through the meaning-making processes of museum visitors. Throughout this process of interpretive negotiations, museum exhibitions and visitor biographies become intertwined through narratives of migration. The empirical evidence emphasizes that the humanization of migration through stories and faces renders possible an understanding, explanation, and critique of sociopolitical contexts through the experience of human beings. Migration emerges as a practice that transforms cosmopolitanism from an abstract, normative ideal into a lived, interpreted reality. This article, then, is devoted to the cosmohermeneutics of migration encounters, that is, to an experienced and thus “actually existing cosmopolitanism” (Malcomson 1998) that entangles self and other through visitors’ interpretive dialectics of reflexivity and empathy. The article suggests a cosmopolitan museum practice that opens interpretive spaces for shifting subjectivities and multiple identifications across differences and commonalities.

**KEYWORDS:** cosmopolitanism, hermeneutics, migration, museums, narrative, visitor research

**Introduction: Museums, Migration, and Cosmopolitanism**

Ours has been widely branded as both the “age of migration” (Castles and Miller 1993) and the “age of minorities” (Deleuze and Guattari 1987). While the practice of migration is an “anthropological constant” (Wonisch 2012) and an inherent aspect of the “conditio humana” (Baur 2010), the volume and intensity of migratory movements has substantially expanded through the forces of globalization, induced by modern means of transportation and communication and the associated mobility of people (Babacan and Singh 2010; Castles and Davidson 2000; Jacobs 2011; Mansour and Lobo 2011). Reflecting this growing global significance in contemporary life, museum scholars and professionals have demonstrated an increased interest in the theme of migration. In Europe, for example, a major international research project (Whitehead et al. 2013) has been devoted to this topic, and contributions to the German-language literature (Baur 2010; Poehls 2010; Wonisch and Huebel 2012) illustrate how the “museumization of migration” (Baur 2009) is gaining more attention even in countries that historically have not considered themselves to be countries of immigration.
In the context of Australia, which is often referred to as a country of immigrants, Andrea Witcomb (2009) has traced the historical trajectory of Australian migration exhibitions. She discerns an exhibitionary evolution from the liberal tradition of “celebrating diversity” encapsulated by the “enrichment narrative” (McShane 2001), in which the focus is on the contribution made by non-Anglo-Celtic migrants to Australian culture and their “rebirth” (ibid.), to sociopolitically and historically contextualized approaches. The National Museum of Australia (NMA) exists as a preeminent example of the interpretive contests involved in the discursive construction of migration in museums in Australia. Specifically, the Horizons: The Peopling of Australia since 1788 gallery opened in 2001 and placed individual experiences of migration in wider sociopolitical and historical contexts, thus venturing beyond a purely cultural celebration of “enrichment” and “rebirth”. The NMA, however, received harsh criticism from conservatives, who accused it of a “black armband”, or overly critical, view on history (Message 2009). In the end, the conservatives won a major battle in the “history wars” when, in 2009, the exhibition was replaced by Australian Journeys, which represents a largely apolitical and celebratory history of Australia’s transnational connections that is mostly devoid of sociopolitical contexts (Ang 2009; Message 2009; Witcomb 2009).

While there is a growing discussion around the politics of the representation of migration in museums both in Australia and overseas, there remains a paucity of empirical research on how visitors construct or experience the representation of migration in the museum literature. One exception is Laurajane Smith’s (2013, forthcoming) extensive qualitative research on the identity and memory work that visitors undertake at different genres of museums in Australia, the United Kingdom, and the United States, including museums of immigration such as the Immigration Museum in Melbourne (IMM). This article aims to build and extend upon Smith’s work by providing a case study of how audiences engage with the representation of migration at the IMM. The particular contribution this article seeks to make is to theorize such an interpretive engagement through the concept of cosmopolitanism, in a process that I call cosmohermeneutics, as an at once reflexive and empathetic performance.

Cultural theory scholars have pulled “cosmopolitanism” from the level of abstract normative ideal into the realm of concrete lived experience by focusing on urban settings (Anderson 2004), encounters (Delanty 2011), performances (Woodward and Skrbis 2012), and practices (Kendall et al. 2009). Museums, however, do not explicitly appear in many of these theoretical discussions and empirical investigations. At the same time, there have been only “limited incursions” of cosmopolitan theories into the fields of museum and heritage studies, despite their extensive interrogation in the humanities and social sciences over the last two decades (Mason 2013: 42). In one recent example, Sharon Macdonald (2013) examines the “memorylands” of contemporary Europe and detects evolving forms of cosmopolitan heritage and memory. She shows, however, that these cosmopolitan identifications do not simply override other frames of reference and forms of attachment such as the nation, as other commentators have also cautioned (Daugbjerg 2009; Daugbjerg and Fibiger 2011; Mason 2013). Macdonald (2013: 173) goes on to argue, however, that “memorial forms in the cityscape,” such as museums, “become important stimuli for bringing interlocutors together … to engage in some kind of transcultural interaction.”

Given the omnipresence of cultural differences caused by migrating practices, a museum devoted to migration such as the IMM might offer a place and space for such interaction to happen, and to potentially assume a cosmopolitan quality. In this article, I draw on an empirical investigation of the encounter between visitors and exhibitions, which has also become the analytic focus of other visitor studies (Macdonald 2002; Sandell 2007). I intend to show that this encounter can facilitate a form of interpretive engagement, or interaction, through the interpre-
tive dialectics of reflexivity and empathy, which hermeneutically produces an entanglement of self and other and thus a cosmopolitan moment across differences and commonalities. These interpretive dynamics involved in the cosmohermeneutics of migration encounters, I would argue, offer insight into an “actually existing cosmopolitanism” (Malcomson 1998) that goes deeper than the “banal” found in other studies and discussed by Ben Dibley (2011). Instead, visitor experiences reveal a form of cosmopolitanism as a “mode of critique” (Delanty 2012a) that can also be detected in the IMM’s history and current practices.

The IMM was founded in 1998 as Australia’s second migration museum after the South Australian Migration and Settlement Museum in Adelaide was established in 1986. Being born out of an initiative by the state of Victoria and specifically devoted to the topic of immigration, the IMM has assumed a specific political position by constructing immigration as an integral part of Australia’s history rather than simply as a form of cultural “enrichment”, which becomes obvious in the words of the museum’s patron, the governor of Victoria at the time, who stresses that “the story of immigration is essentially the story of all non-Indigenous Australians” (IMM 1998: iv). This founding inclusive principle has been translated into museum practices and collection policies, and is reflected in the interrelated permanent galleries and temporary exhibitions. While the latter are dedicated to particular communities, the former present critical approaches that place individual experiences within the sociopolitical and historical contexts of migration, thus providing an analysis of the host society as much as a history of migrants themselves (Witcomb 2009). Thus, these galleries deal with the history of immigration policies and their impacts on those affected by them, the reasons for migration, and the experiences of migrants in Australia. They do so by using a mix of multimedia displays, first-person narrative, and personal memorabilia, as well as archival documents, films and photographs, and ephemera such as political posters and popular culture items. Whereas the NMA had to back down from such a critical engagement, as we have seen above, the more recently developed IMM has further strengthened its critical edge by tackling contemporary issues such as racism in the latest exhibition, *Identity: Yours, Mine, Ours.*

At the beginning of the research project informing this article, I conducted a focus group with museum staff working in management, education, customer service, the curation of collections, and exhibition development. The group discussion highlighted the museum’s attempt to shift its discursive focus from the “stories of migration” to the “issues associated with migration.” That is, the museum set out to create “serious conversations” with its visitors about “serious topics” by telling the stories of migration and exploring the historical and contemporary dimensions of migration such as immigration policies and questions of identity and belonging. Visitor feedback and evaluation indicated that people wanted the museum to deal with the “grittier issues” and their relevance in contemporary life. The tackling of gritty issues has led to perceivable changes in visitor dynamics and comments, as one focus group member pointed out. While the IMM has always provided an “intimate kind of experience” that allows visitors to connect with the museum and converse with its staff through “their own family immigration experience,” as will also be shown below, “conversations” can now be more “difficult” and even “confronting.”

The IMM’s history and current practices might be understood as having appeared in line with the critical cosmopolitan lens I adopted to investigate how audiences engage with the representation of migration at the museum. I proceed in this article by introducing the concepts of “critical cosmopolitanism” (Delanty 2012a) and “cultural encounters” (Delanty 2011) as theoretical and interpretive frameworks of the empirical study. Then I lay out the methodological framework and research design of a narrative study that humanizes migration encounters at the IMM through a narrative-hermeneutic analysis of museum visitors’ experiences. From here I present empirical insights into visitors’ reflexive and empathetic engagements with migration
exhibitions, and conclude by suggesting a cosmopolitan museum practice. Scholars of museum studies have wondered what could replace the essentializing and restricting notion of “ethnicity” (Ang 2009) and how we could “represent difference” while also emphasizing commonalities (Witcomb 2009). I argue that a cosmopolitan museum practice, which pays tribute to an “actually existing cosmopolitanism” as a lived and interpreted ontological reality of shifting subjectivities and multiple identifications, might offer an answer.

**Theoretical Framework: Migration Encounters at the IMM**

The key underlying characteristic of cosmopolitanism is a reflexive condition in which the perspective of others is incorporated into one’s own identity, interest or orientation in the world. This is what distinguishes it from global culture, internationalism, transnationalism, which may be preconditions of cosmopolitanism: it is less a condition expressed in mobility, diversity, globalizing forces than in the logic of exchange, dialogue, encounters.

—Gerard Delanty, “Cultural Diversity, Democracy and the Prospects of Cosmopolitanism” (emphasis added)

This article sets out to draw a connection between this understanding of cosmopolitanism as a reflexive, critical process based on the logic of dialogue, exchange, and encounters with the processes of interpretive engagement that occur when visitors come face-to-face with stories of transnational migration. A relationship between the inherently transnational practice of migration and cosmopolitan forms of life freed of ethnic confines, traditional restrictions, and national responsibilities has been drawn in the literature (Clifford 1997; Malcomson 1998). Meyda Yegenoglu, however, warns us against overemphasizing the liberating character of migrating mobilities without paying proper heed to the underlying economic, sociopolitical, and historical complexities, thus alluding to the reductionist dangers of using “the migrant as a metaphor of cosmopolitanism” (2012: 418). By assuming the lens of a “critical cosmopolitanism” (Delanty 2012a) as an at once empirical and normative concept, I do not equate cosmopolitanism with migratory mobility or transnational movement per se, but instead deploy it as an empirically grounded normative critique of these globalizing processes and their representation and experience in a museum setting such as the IMM. That is, a critical cosmopolitan framework allows me to build a conceptual bridge between the representations of migration at the IMM and the experiences of visitors through the interpretive dynamics of cosmopolitan migration encounters.

Such a conceptual synthesis requires overcoming two significant shortcomings in the cosmopolitan literature, namely, the overreliance on abstract normative ideals rather than lived experience and the tendency to override local concerns with universal values (Kendall et al. 2009). Gerard Delanty’s (2011) emphasis on “encounter” presents a promising alternative that enables me to delve into the empirical realities of “actually existing” cosmopolitan engagements in a specific spatial setting, such as a museum. Moreover, museums and their practices of collecting and displaying the other might offer multifaceted “opportunities for encounters beyond the self” (Mason 2013: 44–45), especially in a museum devoted to migration and the associated movement between cultural worlds of meaning. A potentially cosmopolitan “reflexive condition”, then, grows out of the interpretive dynamics experienced and performed in occasions of encounter, exchange, and dialogue, rather than being prescribed by abstract ambitions. Such an empirically grounded normative reflexivity through “which the perspective of others is incorporated into one’s own” (Delanty 2011: 634) allows both cultural actors, or museum visitors, and researchers through different levels of interpretation to reflect upon particular migration
experiences and critique their underlying sociopolitical, economical, and historical contexts. In other words, a “critical cosmopolitanism” corresponds to a “reality” and its “moral and political interpretation” as well as to an “approach to the analysis of the social world” (Delanty 2012b: 8).

Delanty’s notion of “encounter” thus provides me with a nuanced unit of analysis to interrogate the experience of migration exhibitions at the IMM. There is, however, a significant deficiency in Delanty’s conception. While the “relational theory of culture” might be the “most appropriate way of theorizing cultural diversity” through “cultural encounters” (Delanty 2011: 633), it is still a line of thought that sets out from the cultural. That is, by conceptualizing “encounters between cultures … when one culture meets another” (ibid.: 642), this cosmopolitan framework perpetuates the reduction of culture to “an underlying collective identity” (ibid.)—that of a culture—despite claiming and intending the opposite. I argue, instead, that it is not cultures that meet but cultural human beings. A culture cannot speak or engage in encounter, exchange, and dialogue; it would disappear without the face and story of a cultural actor. It follows that there cannot evolve a cross-cultural dialogue between totalized collective entities but only an interpersonal dialogue among cultural human beings (Schorch 2013). A practice of cosmopolitanism, then, requires the humanizing of culture, diversity, and encounters as the basis for a political and moral engagement so that a cosmopolitan “self-transformation in light of the encounter with the other” (Delanty 2011: 642) can occur. I therefore turn to the methodological framework that humanizes migration encounters at the IMM through interpretive actions, movements, and performances negotiated by museum visitors.

**Methodological Framework:**

**Humanizing Migration Encounters at the IMM**

[C]rucially there must be an active process of interpreting cultural difference by social agents:
a frame which actively identifies the character of “otherness” as applying and which invokes the cosmopolitan impulse.

—Gavin Kendall, Ian Woodward, and Zlatko Skrbis, *The Sociology of Cosmopolitanism*

Kendall et al. (2009)’s insistence on the interpretive agency of social agents, or cultural actors, is indeed crucial. Not only a potentially reflexive cosmopolitan condition but also culture itself grows out of interpersonal encounters. While any such encounter is inevitably embedded in sociocultural contexts, it can only be performed through the individual’s interpretive or hermeneutic agency. Cosmopolitanism, then, needs to be approached through “actually existing” encounters, as a “performance” (Woodward and Skrbis 2012) and a “mode of managing meaning” (Hannerz 1990). These are the interpretive practices across cultural differences through which a cosmopolitan encounter can be established, navigated, and nurtured. Understanding how these practices take place paves the way to understanding how different cultural actors engage in the process of cultural and potentially cosmopolitan world making, a process that, I argue, always starts with an act of interpretation (Schorch 2013).

A biographic-narrative-interpretive method approach, as suggested by Tom Wengraf (2001), enabled me to develop a narrative study of visitors’ experiences and their interpretive construction of narrative meanings (Schorch forthcoming) at the IMM. Wengraf (2001) offers a detailed discussion of such an approach, arguing that biographic-narrative interviews with “minimalist interviewer intervention” allow the interview narrative to reveal its *Gestalt,* or unified whole, through the interviewee’s “system of relevancy.” One of the advantages of this method is that it limits the findings, or knowledge claims, being “artificialized” (Bruner 1990) by the research-
er’s “system of relevancy” (Wengraf 2001). Wengraf (2001) proposes a three-stage structure of biographic-narrative interviews, which I applied in this study.

Due to the limited scope of this article, I am not able to point out all the intricate details of this particular interview method. I can, however, briefly allude to the significance of the opening “narrative-inducing question” (Wengraf 2001), a single question asked to initialize the interview. The design of this single question is of crucial importance. Narratives presuppose a temporal perspective by referring to events occurring over a period of time. Thus, while my initial question had to be thematically and temporarily focused on the IMM visit rather than on other life experiences, I had to adhere to the “principle of deliberate vagueness, which allows and requires the interviewee to impose their own system of relevancy” (Wengraf 2001: 122). That is, I had to ask a single narrative-eliciting question while giving the interviewee the space to decide when and how to start and end the story. Strictly adhering to this principle of “pro-subjective vagueness” (Wengraf 2001), I posed exactly the same question at the start of each interview:

Please tell me about your visit to the Immigration Museum today. Begin wherever you like, I will just listen and will not interrupt. I am interested in your perspective and story, and will only take some notes to use after you have finished telling me about the museum experiences of importance to you.

Apart from posing this single narrative-eliciting question, my role was strictly limited to that of a “story-facilitator” by offering only “non-directional facilitative support” (Wengraf 2001: 125) without interruptions or helpful prompts so that the interviewee’s spontaneous Gestalt could express itself. It becomes apparent that the terms “migration” and “cosmopolitanism” were not used in the opening narrative-inducing question. While “migration” featured, quite naturally, prominently throughout the interviews, “cosmopolitanism” was not brought up a single time by the interviewees. While my goal had been the investigation of cross-cultural and potentially cosmopolitan meanings, I adhered to the interview format, allowing each informant’s “system of relevancy” to reveal itself through the narration and associated meaning making. In other words, I gained access to cosmopolitan meanings beyond the word “cosmopolitan”, which is why “the hermeneutical problem begins … where linguistics leaves off” (Ricoeur 1991: 27).

In December 2012, I conducted eight narrative interviews with twelve interviewees, four each with individuals and pairs of adults, after their visit to the IMM in one of the education rooms. I recorded and transcribed the interviews, which lasted between 20 and 40 minutes, and used the “zoom model” (Pamphilon 1999) of narrative analysis, zooming in on the different levels of narrative and the multiple layers of meaning and context. Three months later, in March 2013, I conducted follow-up interviews via phone and followed the same procedure with regards to interview format, transcription, and analysis. In this article, I opt to interweave the insights gained from both initial and follow-up interviews with regard to emerging themes across all interviewees instead of framing a pre/post comparison of individual informants. The interviewees were sampled along the lines of broader generations (younger and older than 35 years) and equal gender distribution. All participants identified themselves as Australians, which was another selection criteria and, as will be seen in the following section, emerges as an inherently “cosmopolitanized” (Beck 2006) label that unwittingly incorporates the other within the self.

The biographic-narrative approach allowed me to closely interrogate museum experiences without inspecting entire biographies. However, these narrative meanings were not exclusively bound to the IMM visit, but revealed biographical traces of other life experiences. That is, the practice of migration is often not confined to museological representations, but has been personally experienced by a large share of visitors to the IMM. Consequently, it is not surprising that this study’s informants, while identifying themselves as Australians, have all been affected
by migratory experiences in one way or another. As will be shown below, museum exhibitions and visitor biographies thus become entangled through narratives of migration.7

Visitors, Migration, and Cosmopolitan Biographies

Paul, a man in his seventies, was my first interviewee. His opening narration, in which he introduced himself and did not touch on the museum visit, offers the first example of a self-identified Australian with a “cosmopolitanized” biography that intertwines self and other through shifting interpretations provoked by a history of migration:

My family, while we were still in Hungary, after the Second World War, we were forever talking about leaving, starting a new life, the challenges of doing that. My family had a long history actually of migration, which means that I have relatives in Sweden, in Denmark, in France, in the United States, who had left at various times, some before the Second World War.

Paul continues:

My father was … both a left-wing journalist and a Jew…. We were really keen to go to the United States. But once we left as refugees it became obvious that you’ d have to wait for many years before you could get into America…. Lived in Austria for ten months and then this opportunity came to come to Australia. We grabbed it because we were sick of being displaced persons as we were then.

Paul’s experience of migration extends beyond his own biography over several generations through his whole family and connects him with various geographic knots in the global web of migrating threads. His story encapsulates both the partially dramatic dimensions of migratory movements, caused by persecution, exile, and no return, and the potential outlook of a new sense of belonging. Peter states that “when we came, the Hungarians of the 1950s, I mean there was no way back … we had escaped and there was no place for us to return until, I guess, the 1980s, by which time we were Australians.” Out of necessity instead of “choice”, Peter’s “biographical cosmopolitanization” (Beck 2006) and experience of “polygamy of place” (Beck 1997) through the practice of migration equips him with the discursive tools of a “shift ing Self” (Schorch 2013). That is, Peter identifies with the “multiple loyalties” (Beck 2006) of being both “Hungarian” and “Australian”, both “migrant” and “refugee”, as well as Jew, French, European, and would-be American.

Barbara, daughter of first-generation immigrants from Greece, offers another example of the multiple identifications of a cosmopolitan biography, which should not be understood as the celebration of diversity or the accumulation of an elitist cultural capital (Calhoun 2002), but as the expression of a profoundly “cosmopolitanized” life:

My parents would comment on different things of their homeland or their nostalgia for home, how Australia is like … a prison without bars, that was a very common thing for them to say. Because they felt like they always wanted to go home, but this is now their home and right near the end, right before they passed away, that’s how they felt, that this is now their home, you know. Greece has a special place in their heart, but this is always going to be their home now.

The “nostalgic feeling” of her parents, longing to leave the “prison without bars” and return “home,” left an “air of sadness all the time,” which, as Barbara laments, “for me was horrible, because it was always sad.” Her parents’ experience of migration and the associated “longing in belonging” (Ilcan 2002) has become a “vicarious memory,” the “strong emotional attachments”
passed from one generation to the next in “narrative form” (Climo 1995: 176). Despite the overwhelming sense of loss and pain, there gradually emerges, however, a new sense of “home” through the generational progression of Barbara’s family:

That’s where I’m coming from, to show my children, alright, we had a history in Greece, but we’ve also got a history here. I got my grandmother buried here, I’ve got my parents now, you know, I got a nephew, like there’s at least five generations buried here, so it’s not we’ve just come from Greece, we’ve also got a history here. And I want to sort of connect that for them, pass it on to them.

Barbara’s family take their roots with them (Appiah 1996) and ultimately embrace their multiple “histories” both “in Greece” and “here” in Australia. Importantly, while their interpretive agency enables Paul and Barbara to negotiate and revise their sense of self through new forms of belonging and home, they are simultaneously subjected to wider sociopolitical contexts that affect the destination and destiny of “displaced persons”. This interpretive agency, however, is the reason why the migrant experience is best understood through the critical lens of cosmopolitanism, which “concerns ways of imaging the world” and thus is “more than a condition of mobility or transnational movement” (Delanty 2012b: 3). While Paul’s and Barbara’s migrating journeys have led to multiple identifications and shifting subjectivities through a “cosmopolitan imagination” (Delanty 2009), it is once again important to avoid the pitfalls of equating the practice of migration with cosmopolitan liberation. In both cases, their cosmopolitan orientations grew out of unwanted and difficult circumstances and encounters rather than through abstract normative aspirations. Moreover, the migrant experience does not lead to the erosion of boundaries, but subjects these to an endemic “ambivalence” (Marotta 2008) through the constantly shifting processes of selfing and othering.

The biographical stories of Paul and Barbara serve well to emphasize the significance of visitors’ backgrounds in framing their IMM experience. Both brought cosmopolitan biographies and a strong identification with migration matters to the museum. Paul describes himself as a refugee activist and Barbara assumes the role of the family migration historian. It could be suspected, then, that the IMM might offer a shrine of remembrance and therapeutic remedy, but can only preach to the converted. By turning to Tanya, however, we can observe the discursive function of the IMM in mediating the stories of migration. Tanya, now in her thirties, stated at the beginning of her interview that “I have lived in Asia, in my twenties, and traveled to various countries throughout my twenties and thirties and grew up in both Melbourne and regional areas of Victoria.” In the follow-up interview, three months after her visit to the IMM, Tanya merges her biography with the museum through stories of migration:

It makes me appreciate living in Melbourne again. It makes me feel a sense of connectedness and being home in Melbourne, after I’ve only been back for nearly 18 months or so and so my experience in going to the Immigration Museum makes me feel connected to my city and makes me feel like I’m finally back in a city where I feel like I understand the place and I belong because of that diversity that is what the Immigration Museum is about. … So it’s always nice to be reminded that I’m home and I think the Immigration Museum does that for me.

Travel, as a specific and mostly temporary form of migration, has enabled Tanya to connect with both “various countries” in “Asia” and beyond and “Melbourne and regional areas of Victoria.” For Tanya, the IMM itself functions as a particular discursive tool for “home-building and place-making” (Castles and Davidson 2000), as ontological tasks implicated in the interpretive becoming of forms of travel, migration, and life. These shifting ontological realities require a certain “cultural competence,” which, as Tanya stresses, “is something that you never learn or
gain, it’s something that you’re always learning and always should be considering and, yeah, it’s fluid and ongoing and it’s a process.” In the following section, we will see how, if at all, the museum offers the interpretive means to develop the required “cultural competence” and “repertoire” (Kendall et al. 2009) to understand and explain migrant experiences and critique their complex and multilayered contexts.

The IMM, Migration, and Cosmopolitan Migration

I turn to the interview with Tony, who emigrated from England to Australia in the 1970s and whose experience of an introductory film at the entrance to the Leaving Home gallery (figure 1), which explores the reasons why people leave their countries to come to Australia, demonstrates the museum’s potential to reframe understandings (Kelly and Gordon 2002; Sandell 2007; Schorck 2013) and facilitate an interpretive engagement with other migration experiences.

When you see the devastation, famine and war. … There were so many different nations that I didn’t think about, seeing that film, that for some reason had to migrate, whether it be famine or war, whatever. I found that very interesting. … That brought it home to me that there are a lot more people coming here than just the British and whatever, Europeans.

Tony’s partner Julia, who joined him at his visit to the IMM, elaborates on her impressions of the same film about migrations:

Well there were wars, but there were also the natural disasters that just ripped peoples’ lives to bits. … So in the 1930s it was at the hands of the Nazis and then Kosovo and … just this kind

Figure 1. Leaving Home long-term exhibition, Immigration Museum, Melbourne. Source: Museum Victoria. Photographer: Jon Augier.
of way in which human beings play the same cruelty out on other people again and again. People have to live in appalling circumstances and it takes great courage, I think, to make that decision to get away, no matter what.

Both narrations indicate that the film treats migration as a phenomenon that can only be understood through the relationships between different localities enmeshed in the global flow of migrating populations. The cinematic pictures and their embodied narratives perform a type of agency that unsettles the viewer through the reframing of understandings and the creation of empathy for other experiences beyond one’s own. Rather than simply presenting migration as a transnational phenomenon of mobility, the film reveals the multiplicity of causes such as natural disasters and famine and enables a normative assessment of the various and complex contexts that provoke migration. That is, the cinematic encounter with transnational migrations becomes cosmopolitan through the act of interpretation and the interpretive movements of reflexivity and empathy. In the cases of war and the global economy, common assumptions mostly conceal the reality that receiving countries, such as Australia, are active participants in the processes leading to migratory movements (Sassen 2010).

The discursive construction, deconstruction, and reconstruction of migration and its respective boundedness to specific sociopolitical contexts contrasts the cosmopolitan outlook of the museum with the, at least until the recent past, predominant Anglo-Celtic focus in Australian school education, as Tanya emphasizes: “When I was a child going through the Australian school system, I was taught about James Cook, I was taught about the First Fleet and I was taught it over and over and over again with very little really provided in regard to Australian history from the perspective of Aboriginal people and Australian history from the perspective of people who have arrived in the last hundred years.” Some of this “richness” of Australia’s history of migration, which Tanya has missed throughout her school education, is discovered by Kyle, who just emigrated with his girlfriend Lisa from Ireland to Australia, at the IMM. Kyle concludes that while the “history of Victoria has always revolved around immigration,” there have also always existed bureaucratic instruments such as “Chinese immigration policies” and the “dictation test,” which, according to him, today is being “conducted differently … but yet there’s still a language test.” Although the changing and continuing sociopolitical contexts of migration throughout history can be discerned, as in the case of Kyle, I argue that they can only be understood by humanizing migration through experiences.

Humanizing Migration: Entangling Self and Other

The Getting In gallery at the IMM, which tracks the changes in Australia’s immigration policies through history, illustrates this point. Part of this gallery is an interview booth, an interactive touch screen that puts the viewer in the position of both an immigration officer and a visa applicant (figure 2). The display thus requires the viewer to imaginatively assume the roles and perspectives of various others. Ken from Queensland reflects on his experience of the interactive immigration interview booth at the museum:

The last person I remember viewing was the chap from Iraq … it appeared he [the interviewer] was trying to trap him, but all he was trying to do was get the dates fixed … unfortunately … he didn't have them written down … so each time he gave the answer, the dates were … choong! Whether they were right or wrong, they’ll still be inconsistent. … Boy it was a tough life, very tough. I didn't feel good about that, witnessing that, even though it was just a play, I didn't feel good about it.
Ken, who is a descendent of immigrants with Irish, English, and German heritage, first attempts to “put” himself “in the position of … Asian people” and then “the chap from Iraq.” We can sense how the exhibition puts the “audience” in a position where “you literally squirm in your seat, uncomfortable at the lack of imagination and sympathy on the part of the officials” (Witcomb 2009: 63). Although being “just a play,” Ken clearly “didn’t feel good about … witnessing that.” It becomes apparent that the display does not simply represent migration in the form of transnational flows, but invites the visitor to critically interrogate migration’s underlying complexity through individual experiences. The point here is not only that the IMM is using personal biographies, as do many other social history exhibitions, but it is using them to open up a process where the building of empathy is possible. In the process, the exhibition opens a hermeneutic terrain that facilitates both an interpretive movement beyond the self and an engagement with the other, and that can thus be understood as a discursive cosmopolitan space.

For Angela, who visited with Tanya and who works in immigration detention health services in Western Australia, such an interpretive and empathetic identification evolves into a reflexive and critical examination of sociopolitical contexts through the experiences of “someone from Iraq” and her own life. Being confronted with a face and “story behind” a “poor policy” is, according to her, “absolutely appalling” but “doesn’t surprise” her, since she is “working with people who do those interviews.” The interview booth at the IMM and her professional life full of “direct experience working with immigrants and asylum seekers” enable Angela to understand the concrete “story” of “someone” behind an abstract “policy”. This humanization of migration shapes an interpersonal rather than abstract “encounter”, and renders possible a moral and political relationship between self and other. That is, the “reflexive condition” of cosmopolitanism as a “mode of critique” (Delanty 2012a) can only emerge through the practice of meaning making and the “act of interpretation” (Schorch 2013). A cosmopolitan “fusion of
horizons" (Gadamer, quoted in Ricoeur 1991) through which the perspective of the other is being incorporated into the broadened horizon of the self, as rightly suggested by cosmopolitan scholars (Delanty 2012a; Held 2002), can only be hermeneutically achieved through the concrete interpretive performances by individuals rather than the abstract merging of collective entities. In other words, a culture cannot reflect, critique, or transform itself. Instead, it requires the reflexive, critical, and transformative faculty of cultural actors.

The above interview excerpts indicate that the interview booth facilitates a dialogical empathy rather than a one-sided sympathy with other experiences (Witcomb 2009), and a cosmopolitan critique of the respective contexts in which they occur. This interplay hints at the mutual hermeneutic constitution of context and experience implicated in the discursive constructions and interpretive negotiations of migration. That is, a context without experience is just as devoid of meaning as an experience without context. According to Barbara, the IMM offers “an opportunity for other people who haven’t had that opportunity to get close to people and at least see that there’s a human side behind it.” “Because we always portray that they,” that is, immigrants to Australia, “are all horrible people, but,” she protests, “they’re living a tragedy themselves and I think that’s something that I’ve got a lot of … empathy for.” Empathy is a “prerequisite for dialogue, for the recognition of commonalities” (Witcomb 2009: 64). The IMM, then, emerges as vital discursive space that creates empathetic encounters with humanized others and through this generates reflexivity, critique, and transformation of the self. The interpretive dialectics of reflexivity and empathy shape a “common sphere” (Dilthey 1976) across cultural differences and in the process entangles self and other through the interpretive performance of what I term cosmohermeneutics.

By turning to the follow-up interview with Julia, we can see how another exhibition at the IMM facilitates an exchange across humanized cultural differences, thus activating an encounter between viewer and display that becomes cosmopolitan through interpretive engagements. Julia reflects on her experience of the Leaving Dublin temporary exhibition, which photographically captures the current generation of Irish migrants (figure 3),11 and alludes to the endemic presence of a “diversity” or “difference within” (Bhabha 1994):

“I was impressed by the diversity of Irish people who decided to make the move. I mean they weren’t just all people who were struggling to find employment in Ireland or who maybe came from a particular social stratum or anything like that, there was a huge variety. There were young women, young men, and sometimes they were married and a part of a family unit that moved or sometimes they just headed out by themselves.

“The diversity of Irish people,” which “impressed” Julia, prevents her from “characteriz[ing] them as being a particular type of person.” It becomes apparent anew that the exhibition humanizes culture by transforming the abstract category “Irish” into concrete stories and faces, thus shaping a “pluralist cosmopolitan space” (Schorch 2013) that facilitates multiple identifications in a shared discursive terrain and subjects otherness to an endemic relativity. The normative prescription of “multiculturalism” instead celebrates a diversity that, as Ulrich Beck (2004: 446–447) correctly argues, lacks “ambivalence, complexity, or contingency,” and, by presupposing collective cultural labels such as “Irish”, is “necessarily opposed to processes of individualization” and other forms of difference beyond the cultural. It follows that the complex experience of migration cannot be sufficiently understood, explained, and critiqued through the cultural lenses and dichotomous view of multicultural binoculars. Rather, the relocating of existential roots and building of multiple homes through migrating movements, which we witnessed in the stories of Paul and Barbara, are better illuminated through a critical cosmopolitan lens zooming in on the interpretive performances of individuals.
By returning to the interview with Paul, we can observe the interpretive agency of *Leaving Dublin* in facilitating an encounter between viewer and exhibition through engagement with faces and stories (figure 4): “I like the exhibition. The photographs were fantastic, very evocative and artistically ... I mean I’m no photographer, but I was struck by just how wonderful the photographs were and just related some of this to my own experience.”

The exhibit provides at once a window to the other and a mirror to the self. That is, by engaging with the “evocative ... photographs” depicting other migrants, Paul can relate “some of this” to his “own experience” of having been a “refugee” and “migrant”, which he elaborated on earlier. He proceeds and shifts his engagement from the photos to the “stories”: “The individual stories were quite touching, bringing up all these things of fear and loss and leaving a community and realizing that to have a decent life, this was again a theme in the exhibition, people need to somehow take roots in a new community which may be quite strange and forbidden even.” Mirror and window, or self and other, become entangled through the interplay of embodied narratives and narrative embodiment. That is, Paul's “own experience” is embodied in the “photographs” of fellow migrants' faces, while “the individual stories” embody the “fear and loss and leaving.” “These are the thoughts that come to me,” Paul concludes, “by looking at a picture or photographs and hearing particular stories.” The simultaneous presence of embodied narratives through faces and narrative embodiment through stories humanizes migration and entangles the “experiences” of self and other. It becomes apparent that “evocative ... pictures” of bodies and their “touching ... stories” are irretrievably intertwined dimensions of Paul’s interpretive engagement, thus pointing to the mutual constitution of interpretive strategies such as stories.
and embodied responses such as feelings throughout the performed practices of a lived experience (Schorch 2014a).

The interpretive interplay between “picture” and “story”, or embodied narrative and narrative embodiment, assists in opening the encounter between exhibition and viewer to empathetic and reflexive engagements. For Julia, “the photographs” of “them,” the faces of the protagonists, embody a “kind of symbol” that hints at a potentially happy end of their stories:

What I liked about the photographs was the darkness, but in most of them there was light shining through at some point. Something was illuminated and quite bright gold light, which I guess relieved that sense of sadness and, you know, the pain of saying goodbye with this kind of symbol of something new, maybe in the distance but that was going to come to them. I hope it did for them.

Lisa, who recently emigrated with her boyfriend Kyle from Ireland to Australia, shares Julia’s empathetic identification with the experiences of the other and in the process reflects upon the self:

Parts of the exhibition were related to Dublin, Ireland, which I found particularly enjoyable. It was good to hear the stories of fellow immigrants and see that we are not alone … young people coming over for work and to start a family just because it’s difficult to do at home in Ireland at the moment, and that would be part of why we came over, with a view to starting a new life for ourselves. And just to see that people had done that before and it’s the same emotions and missing family and the same kind of struggles.

Lisa’s encounter with the exhibition becomes an interpretive engagement that is at once empathetic and reflexive. The interpretive dialectics of empathy and reflexivity create commonalities across differences, thus entangling self and other through what I have called the cosmohermeneutics of migration encounters.

Conclusion

Drawing on a long-term narrative study of Australian visitors to the Immigration Museum in Melbourne, I interrogated “migration” as an experience and explored its hermeneutic complexities through the meaning-making processes of museum visitors. The empirical evidence suggested that the museologically produced and represented experiences and contexts of migration meet the migrating experiences and histories of visitors who entangle both sides of the encounter through the interpretive dialectics of reflexivity and empathy. By humanizing migration encounters through stories and faces, the IMM facilitates both interpretive and empathetic engagements with the other and reflexivity, critique, and transformation of the self. The museum is thus best understood as a cosmopolitan discursive space that does not equate migration with transnational mobility per se but allows for normative orientations, critical assessments, and ways of imaging a world of migrating experiences and contexts. I have argued for the cosmohermeneutics of migration as the interpretive movement performed by cultural actors, or museum visitors, in encounters embedded in particular spatial settings, such as the IMM, and across differences and commonalities.

These interpretive realities and their historical and contemporary manifestations should provide a more viable basis for the development of a “positive recognition of difference” (Delanty et al. 2008: 14) than the abstract intervention of a normative ideal, whether it is called multiculturalism or cosmopolitanism. Moreover, I argue that the IMM is well placed to assist in developing such a “positive recognition” further into a “critical recognition ethics” (Turner, quoted in Kendall et al. 2009) that does not hesitate to critique across differences. That is, the inextricable interpretive entanglements of self and other caused by the “cosmopolitanized” condition cannot be disentangled but need to be transformed into reflexive, critical, and transformative entanglements. A cosmopolitan museum practice, which places humanized cultural perspectives and other forms of difference in a global context, can nurture the “cultural competence,” as Tanya put it, that is needed to understand both differences and commonalities. I conclude with Peter, who assisted me first in beginning and now in finishing this article, and his view that “it’s a great little museum and I hope that it will endure for as long as there are migrants, which is forever I guess.”

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NOTES

1. In their review of the museum visitor studies literature, Volker Kirchberg and Martin Troendle (2012) conclude that most studies follow a particular focus on learning, marketing, or leisure, and foreclose a more complex understanding of the experience of exhibitions. With regard to exhibitions dealing with difficult subjects, including migration, Andrea Witcomb (2013) laments the lack of studies on, and the limited understanding of, visitors’ engagements. The project Eunamus—European National Museums: Identity Politics, the Uses of the Past and the European Citizen incorporated research on visitors,
including minority groups (Dodd et al. 2012), and the ongoing project Mela—European Museums in the Age of Migrations will include visitor research at a later stage (Whitehead et al. 2013).

2. The Migration and Cultural Diversity Collection Development Plan is currently being reviewed.


4. For an empirically grounded discussion on a Gestalt experience as a unified whole, which enmeshes thoughts and feelings, or narrative and affect, and thus complicates the opposition between representational and nonrepresentational forms of analysis, see Schorch (2014a).

5. This methodological innovation made sense because according to the visitor profile, 64 percent of visitors to the IMM visit in pairs of adults (25 percent individual adults, 11 percent adults with children). The museum literature also offers examples of the “museum experience as social practice” (Coff ee 2007).

6. According to the IMM visitor profile, 49 percent of visitors from Melbourne were born overseas and have parents who were also born overseas, 15 percent were born in Australia and have parents born overseas, and 36 percent were born in Australia and have parents also born in Australia.

7. Throughout the research project informing this article, I use pseudonyms for the people I interviewed.


9. See Andrea Witcomb (2013) for a useful discussion on “the role of affect in producing a critical pedagogy for history museums” and “building empathy”. For a related study of Australian high school students’ experiences of differences and negotiations of prejudices at the IMM see Schorch (2014b).


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Migration, literature and cultural memory
Jacqueline Bel

Abstract

The current appreciation of migrants’ literary work in the Netherlands shows that this literature is becoming established and is no longer limited to a few isolated successes. Migrant writers belong simultaneously to two cultures, a fact inevitably reflected in their work. The migration of entire communities has caused borders to fade, while cultures cease to be bound to so-called ‘fixed cartographies’. Literature is no longer studied as an autonomous phenomenon, disconnected from its context, and it is now generally accepted that authors write about or allude to real events, mixing fact and fiction and interweaving various discourses. This article asks to what extent Dutch migrant literature reflects the specific history of groups of migrants. To what extent does this literature relate to the cultural collective memory of authors who have links with two cultures? And, more generally, what is the role of literature in historical consciousness?

Keywords: migration; cultural memory; Dutch Moroccan, Dutch East Indies literature; Frans Lopulalan

Bi-cultural literature by migrants is becoming increasingly popular in the Netherlands today (see Anbeek 1999). This is borne out by the impressive book sales of first- or second-generation migrant authors. *Bruiloft aan zee* (1996) [*Seaside Wedding*], by the Moroccan-Dutch writer Abdelkader Benali, was reprinted fifteen times in short succession and translated into several other languages;¹ *De voeten van Abdullah* (1996) [*Abdullah’s Feet*], by Hafid Bouazza, also of Moroccan descent, was reprinted several times;² Khalid Boudou made his debut in 2001 with *Het schnitzelparadijs* [*The Cutlet Paradise*], which received positive reviews from the leading national newspapers and was reprinted for the eleventh time in 2007.³ Moreover, it is not only Dutch Moroccan authors who are popular; currently all migrant authors seem to be attracting attention. In 2001, the theme of the Dutch National Book Week was ‘The country of origin’ raising the issue of being between two cultures. Most newspapers and magazines regularly review migrant literature and Salman Rushdie was invited to write the complementary publication given to every customer spending more than 12 euros in the bookshop (he wrote the short novel *Woede* (2001) [*Anger*]⁴). In 2006, the Iranian refugee Kader Abdolah entered the Dutch Top 100 bestseller list with his novel *Het huis van de moskee* [*The House of the Mosque*].

The current appreciation of migrants’ literary work in the Netherlands shows that this literature is becoming established and is no longer limited to a few isolated successes. Migrant writers belong simultaneously to two cultures, a fact inevitably reflected in their work. The migration of entire communities has caused borders to
fade, while cultures cease to be bound to so-called ‘fixed cartographies’. Literature is no longer studied as an autonomous phenomenon, disconnected from its context, as Ann Rigney discusses in her article ‘Portable monuments: literature, cultural memory and the case of Jeanie Deans’ (2004). It is now generally accepted that all authors write about or allude to real events. They may write about historical events, about the experience of collective changes or traumas, each in their own distinct literary way, using literary strategies, mixing fact and fiction and interweaving various discourses. But to what extent does this migrant literature reflect the specific history of these groups of migrants? To what extent does this literature relate to the cultural collective memory of authors who have links with two cultures? More generally, what is the role of literature in historical consciousness?

Cultural memory
In his well-known study Das Kulturelle Gedächtnis (1992) [Cultural Memory], the German Egyptologist Jan Assmann stated that a group’s cultural memory is not based on fact but is a remembered history. A group’s identity is determined by its relation with its own past. Assmann distinguishes several stages in the formation of cultural memory. First, there is the phase of what he calls ‘communicative memory’: this is made up of memories of the recent past that people share with their contemporaries. Assmann refers to everyday communication, in which everyone, according to him, is equally competent. After three to four generations, namely eighty to a hundred years, communicative memory transforms into cultural memory, which then becomes more or less fixed. According to Assmann, there is a period of transition after about fifty years when a community starts to develop the way it wants to be remembered. Collective memories are made manifest through monuments, rituals and celebrations in historiography but also in cultural products such as in film and literature. Rigney (2004) describes this as a process by which collective memories are located in a specific combination of cultural activities, writing and reading included. According to Assmann, by reverting to a shared remembered past, a group expresses its identity. At the same time, shared language or a common environment also contribute to a collective identity.

Starting from the assumption that a group will determine how it wants to be remembered, it might be productive to explore this idea with respect to Dutch-Moroccan authors and the present-day stereotype: the double identity of the migrant author. Indeed, the Dutch-Moroccan author would seem to have the best of both worlds. Nevertheless there are signs that the group wants to escape the cliché of the exotic migrant. In his essay Beer in bontjas (2001) [Bear in Furcoat], Bouazza stresses that he does not want to be seen as an exotic migrant, but wants to be judged simply as an author. When asked about his reading preferences, Benali answered that he was interested both in Western and Moroccan writers. Similarly, Bas Heijne, a well-known Dutch critic and writer, wrote that the migrant writer is put in a straight jacket, making him a pinned-up butterfly deprived of his freedom, and only appreciated because of his exoticism’ (Heijne 2001: 27).
Historical background

The first group of Moroccan migrants, euphemistically called ‘guest workers’, came to the Netherlands in the late 1960s (Amersfoort and van der Wusten 1975). Like much cheap labour at the time, they were recruited from countries surrounding the Mediterranean. Initially, they were brought in to fill gaps in the labour market. However, in the last quarter of the twentieth century many of these ‘guests’ decided to stay and become foreign workers, bringing over their families. Our migrant authors are the children of these so-called guest workers and often have lived in the Netherlands for no more than three decades: Bouazza (b. Morocco, 1970), Boudou (b. Morocco, 1974) and Benali (b. Morocco, 1975) all came to the Netherlands with their parents when they were very young.

According to Assmann’s theory, this places them in the first phase, that of communicative memory; collective cultural memory is still in the process of formation and communicative memory is expressed through a variety of modes. However, after just over three decades, it is still too early to comment on the cultural memory of Moroccan migrants in relation to their literature, since their cultural memory is still in flux. Moreover, Dutch-Moroccan literature is relatively young and often refers to the recent past: the departure from Morocco or arrival in the Netherlands. The first Moroccan-Dutch novels were published in 1995: *De weg naar het Noorden* [The Way to the North], by Naima Bezaz, and *Hoezo bloedmooi*? [How Come – Stunning?], by Hans Sahar. Sahar’s is a picaresque novel in which the main protagonist is a stereotypical, young uprooted criminal Moroccan young man. This is a very different identity from the one Bouazza presents us with in *Beer in bontjas*.

For this reason I focus on earlier migrant groups who came to the Netherlands after decolonization, such as Indonesian and Moluccan migrants from the former Dutch colonies, the Dutch East Indies (later Indonesia), who arrived in the Netherlands from 1950 (Doorn 1995: 87–8). 21 March 2006 marked the fifty-fifth anniversary of the day that 12,500 Moluccan soldiers of the colonial army (KNIL) and their families arrived in the Netherlands. Among other factors, this migration can be seen as resulting from the fact that the new Indonesian government vehemently wished to protect the colonial cartography of the Dutch East Indies. A separate state on the Moluccan islands, the Republik Maluku Selatan (RMS), was out of the question. After the transfer of sovereignty in 1949, the Moluccan soldiers of the colonial army were transported to a ‘home country’ they had never seen. They were told initially by the Dutch authorities that their stay was to be temporary, until they could return to their own state. But the Republik Maluku Selatan was to remain a fata morgana. The Moluccan troops and their families were housed in temporary encampments in the Netherlands. These proud colonial soldiers were then demobilized and left feeling humiliated and rejected. Segregated life in the camps encouraged the development of a single ideal: the return to their islands and the creation of the Republik Maluku Selatan. Later they were urged to move into special residential areas but Moluccan bitterness over their perceived betrayal by the Dutch authorities grew. In the 1970s, the separation of the Moluccan minority from the rest of society led to serious conflicts with the Dutch authorities. This culminated in an incident when
groups of young Moluccans hijacked a train and occupied a primary school, resulting in several deaths (Kamm 1980; Boomgaard 1996). After Indonesia’s President Soeharto resigned in 1998, civil war broke out in the Moluccas between the Christian and Muslim communities. Late in 2000, Moluccan groups in the Netherlands again drew attention to their cause claiming that the Dutch government intended to urge the United Nations to send a peacekeeping force to the Moluccas. They warned that bomb attacks and other terrorist acts would follow. Talks with the Dutch authorities failed. It is clear that fifty-five years after their arrival in the Netherlands many Moluccans still live in two worlds.

How are Assmann’s theories relevant to this situation? Assmann claims that five decades after arrival a migrant community will find itself in a state of transition during which their image of themselves starts to become fixed. In what way, then, can literature be seen as an indicator of the cultural memory of the Moluccan community? A comparison between a novel written by a second-generation Moluccan migrant, Frans Lopulalan, in 1985, *Onder de sneeuw een Indisch graf* [*Under the Snow an Indonesian Grave*], and novels by other migrants from the Dutch East Indies, may shed some light on this question. But first a short detour to Salman Rushdie’s India.

**Cultural memory and literature**

In his essay ‘Imaginary Homelands’ (1991) Salman Rushdie starts with a description of a photograph of his former home in India. This black and white picture from the 1950s represents his homeland and forms the basis of his idea of India. When he travelled to India and actually saw his birthplace – not in black and white, but in full colour – he realized that reality was different and that he had created a homeland that only existed in his imagination. His novel *Midnight’s Children* (1981) portrays a broken mirror of the past, a fragmented image.

Work by second-generation Dutch East Indian migrant writers also contains visual images to symbolize the past. Here, though, novels by the Dutch East Indian writers Marion Bloem (1983), Ernst Jansz (1983) and Jill Stolk (1986) recall images of volcanoes, palm tree and rice fields as depicted on the paintings often seen in the homes of people of Dutch East Indian descent. As in Rushdie’s work, the protagonists in these novels wrestle with their past. None of the authors was born or brought up in the Dutch East Indies. They know the country only through the stories of their parents, who migrated to the Netherlands in the 1950s.

**Dutch East Indian literature**

The children born out of relationships between colonists and Indonesian natives in colonial times were often named, in a derogatory manner, ‘Indo’s’ (or ‘mestiso’). However, they identified strongly with Dutch society and felt no affiliation with the new Republic of Indonesia that emerged after the bloody colonial war that led to independence in 1949. This Dutch East Indian community was indeed not welcome in Indonesia and as a result many migrated to the Netherlands. Novels by writers from this group refer to a historical reality. However, the authors only know of the Dutch East Indies through their parents’ stories, photographs and paintings, language
Migration, literature and cultural memory

(so-called marketplace-Malayan), food (rice), ‘krontjong’ music and, of course, literature. Although their knowledge about their country is second-hand, they grew up within two cultures, Dutch East Indian and Dutch.

Marion Bloem’s novel Geen gewoon Indisch meisje (1983) [Not an Ordinary Dutch East Indian Girl], Ernst Jansz’s De overkant (1983) [The Other Side] and Jill Stolk’s Onder de blauwe sarong (1986) [Under the Blue Sarong] all describe the quest of their protagonists’ own identity, in which their youth and paternal home plays a central role. The French-Vietnamese writer Linda Lê, a first-generation migrant living in Paris (Poel 2000), characterizes the conflict between the two cultures in her writing by means of a dramatic metaphor. She depicts it as a perennial struggle with her look-alike, the country of her birth that she cradles in her arms like a dead child for whom she must find a grave. The metaphor of struggle also features in the three Dutch East Indian novels mentioned above: the protagonists are engaged in a constant battle between their Dutch and East Indian selves. In Bloem’s novel, this is represented by two protagonists: Sonja, the Dutch, assimilated version and Zon, the Dutch East Indian. In the search for their identity, the protagonists in the novels by Bloem, Stolk and Jansz visit their lost country of Indonesia and discover what Rushdie saw and Lê established: that the Dutch East Indies no longer exists except in the past and in their imaginations. It has become another country. In modern Indonesia they are strangers. The Dutch East Indies, the place they longed for in the Netherlands, is only a picture with a sawah [paddy field] and palm tree that is not in accordance with reality: as for Lê, it is a dead child who has to be buried; it turns out to be a myth, an Indian myth, as Frank Vermeulen points out (1988: 232).

Lopulalan

In Onder de sneeuw een Indisch graf (1985) [Under the Snow an Indonesian Grave] by the Dutch Moluccan writer Frans Lopulalan, there is no mention of the Indonesian landscape; instead, there are portraits of ancestors on the wall. Nevertheless, this novel is also diffused with a longing for the country of origin, the Moluccas. Lopulalan is also a second-generation author, born in a Moluccan encampment in the Netherlands in 1953. His knowledge of the homeland, the Moluccas, originates, again, from stories told by his parents and other elders, and although in a different way to the other authors discussed, his stories portray a confrontation between two cultures.

Under the Snow an Indonesian Grave is told in the first person by the main protagonist and comprises two stories, ‘De barak’ [‘The barracks’] and ‘De veertigste dag’ [‘The fourtieth day’], which can be read together as a novel. Here, location plays a remarkable role in different ways, not only the country of origin – the Moluccas – but also the place where the protagonists live in the Netherlands: first in the camp and later on the Moluccan housing estate. In ‘The barracks’ the protagonist, Frans (with the same name as the author), describes his early childhood in a Moluccan camp in the Netherlands. The story starts and ends with the move from the camp in the small Dutch town of Woerden to a housing estate in the town of Leerdam that was built especially for Moluccans. Frans depicts his days in the camp, where he lived with his parents and his older brother, Bert. His father, an employee with the railways,
was an ex-KNIL sergeant, and his parents, from the islands of Porto and Saparua in the Moluccas, were both brought to Holland against their wishes. Frans and his brother were born in the camp. Frans spent many hours with his mother in the communal kitchen where, sobbing over the onions, she often expressed her grief about what had gone wrong in their lives (Lopulalan 1985: 24–5). But once the onions were peeled, she picked up her daily routine. With his father, little Frans engaged in quite different activities, such as practising martial arts (pentjak silat) on Sunday mornings. Bert looked after Frans inside the camp as well as at school. Frans and his brother slept in a bunk bed in the ‘living room’ behind a curtain. In the evenings, they listened to the gloomy conversations in Malayan between their parents on the other side of the curtain. The boys had two other siblings, both of whom died in the camp before Frans was born: a sister after a fall, a brother from a disease.

The story of Frans’s youth also gives a picture of daily life inside the camp. Each family had just two rooms in a larger wooden building, the barracks, with a long passage leading to communal toilets. There was a separate building with a communal kitchen, where the women would cook and wash up. Men and women bathed in separate washrooms. The only white person living in the Moluccan camp was the warden, who lived near the entrance gate. In a situation where everyone lives on top of one another, privacy is virtually non-existent. Of course, this often led to situations and problems between the inhabitants. As the ‘camp elder’, Frans’s father settled local conflicts; on a shelf above Frans’s bunk bed, he kept all the weapons he had confiscated during his attempts to maintain the peace.

Apart from the milkman, greengrocer, baker and the warden, very few white people visited the camp. Once a year, a representative of the Dutch government, who was despised by all, inspected the ramshackle, stinking and leaky buildings. On every visit, this functionary received a chilly reception from Frans’s father. Camp life is characterized by a strong group culture. The shared resentment against the Dutch proves to be a binding factor – almost no Dutchman gets a positive report in the stories – and the feeling of belonging in the Moluccas instead of the Netherlands: ‘Jongen, als ze je vragen waar je vandaan komt, zeg dan nooit dat je uit Woerden komt, maar uit Porto op Saparua’ (1985: 24–5) ['Boy, if they ask you where you come from never say Woerden, say Porto on Saparua’ (my translation)], Frans’s mother insists. Of course, the sense of group identity was also promoted by being packed together in close proximity in the camp.

The adults in the camp, like Frans’s parents, communicate in Malay, a language that not all the children fully understand, and they talk about the past, about the Moluccas. Women dress in sarong and kabaja, traditional Indonesian women’s wear. The main staple for the people in the camp is rice, not potatoes – the common Dutch staple. Religion is very important and every Sunday all the inhabitants of the camp go to the local Christian church, and Frans’s parents conduct a ritual in which coins representing members of the family, the diseased children and ancestors as well as important events (like the passage to Holland) are put on a special plate in the shape of a cross (piring natsar).
The portraits of ancestors on display in the family living room play a big part in the everyday life of Frans and his parents, keeping a watchful eye on their descendants. On important occasions, they appear to people in dreams to deliver judgement. In fact, their presence is already felt from the very first page; when the Lopulalan family is preparing to move out of the barracks, Frans asks himself: ‘Hoe konden mijn grootouders toestaan dat we tussen de blanken gingen wonen?’ (Lopulalan 1985: 13) [‘How could my grandparents permit us to live among white people?’]. The portraits of the ancestors seem to bridge the gap between Holland and the Moluccas perhaps even more efficiently than the sawah pictures do in Dutch East Indian literature.

Although living conditions in the camp were basic, life inside the camp created a sense of togetherness for Frans in that he lived among those who loved him. At school, too, the Moluccan children are separated from others, and in class they have to sit together reciting ‘A tropical island in the grey Dutch sea’. Frans creates a club with Bert and a few Moluccan boys from another camp, and even when Bert goes to secondary school, he still keeps an eye on his younger brother and if there was any trouble he would skip class and drop by to help.

The second story, ‘The fortieth day’, which is set much later, is about the death of Frans’s father, literally the fortieth day after his physical death. It is a belief in the Moluccan community that the deceased stay with the living for forty days before finally departing. Frans, as a grown man, looks back at the last years his parents spent together, and asks why they did not return to the Moluccas, when what they ended up with was an existence tainted with disillusionment in a depressing suburb of Leerdam. Frans divorces his Dutch wife, who is too emancipated for his liking. He is no longer religious and has dropped out of university. His elder brother had a child and this grandchild was an excuse for his parents not to return to Indonesia. His last visit to his father is described in detail, just like the plans to return to the home country, which were never realized. He describes his father’s deathbed and the first days after his death, when the whole community gathered. Even the ancestors are present, in the dreams of others. Through the various conversations Frans has with his relatives, especially Uncle Salomo, the head of the family, the author explores topics varying from education to the train hijackings of the 1970s. Forty days after his father’s death, Frans returns to Woerden, where the camp used to be, to visit the graves of his dead sister and brother. Their simple graves are covered with snow, a scene that is echoed in the title of the book. The incongruous juxtaposition of the words Dutch East Indian and snow emphasizes the pain and confusion.

Once again, the setting is of the utmost importance: here it is the housing estate, built in an isolated location surrounded by fields near the graveyard. There is still a sense of longing to return to the Moluccas, accompanied by an aversion to all that is Dutch or from the Netherlands. Lopulalan uses ‘othering’ strategies to describe the Dutch,10 a style that is often used in colonial literature to stereotype the ‘locals’. For example, the people of Leerdam are described as ugly products of inbreeding and white women who start a relationship with foreign men as frustrated types who fall for losers. All the Moluccans portrayed by Lopulalan have an intense sense of connection to their homeland. However, their identity is also moulded by location:
the Netherlands. Thus the country they loathe and the country of origin are all carried in their memories. Not only the Netherlands, but also the camp, and later the housing estate define their identity yet integration is warded off on all fronts.

Although Lopulalan’s text concentrates on the events in only two phases of Frans’s life, the stories cover a longer time span, from the time of the grandparents (ancestors), parents, and children to that of the future grandchildren (the child of his brother Bert). From a Moluccan perspective, many important events took place in this period. Beginning with the colonial army in the Dutch East Indies, the Japanese concentration camps, decolonization and proclamation of the free Republic of the South Moluccas (RMS), followed by evacuation to the Netherlands, demobilization, the camps, the move to housing estates and the growing resentment towards the authorities that resulted in the explosion of violence in the 1970s. For the Moluccans, both the colonial era and their time in the Netherlands are turbulent, and the stories reflect these events.

Assmann argues that, in the first period after a remarkable event, conversation is an extremely important factor in the constitution of memory. In Lopulalan’s text, the distant past is evoked through conversations, in which adults remember the old days back home. This text was written some thirty-five years after the dramatic departure from Indonesia. In terms of the creation of an identity, it forms part of the passage from communicative to cultural memory, in which memory is more or less consolidated, and this is borne out in memories of the departure from Indonesia.

Assmann discusses monuments and memorials that work to create cultural memory. At the end of Lopulalan’s second story, Frans visits his brother’s and sister’s graves in Woerden. This brings back memories of a poignant moment during his sister’s funeral when his father was unable to lower the small coffin. On his way home, the train stopped for a time at the very spot where he used to cycle with his father. Thus, on the fortieth day after his death, the memory of his father once more becomes tangible. The book ends in a minor key: ‘Op die plek is een spoor achtergelaten, een dierbare herinnering aan de tijd dat ik het vechten van mijn vader leerde en nog niet wist dat het bestaan voor onze mensen in dit land veel erger zou zijn dan die paar vervelende kinderen op school deden vermoeden’ (1985: 165) ['On that spot a trace was left behind, a precious memory of the time that I learned to fight from my father and when I didn’t yet know that existence for our people in this country would be much less bearable than those few bullies at school led us to expect']. These closing words, highlighting the problems facing the Moluccan community in the Netherlands, refer to ‘traces’. It is as if this text is searching for these traces in memory and in the landscape. The descriptions of the graves of Frans’s brother and sister seem to breathe life into the dead. The book combines these memories and, as the title suggests, becomes a memorial not just for the deceased brother and sister but also for the father. Of course, the topos in which literature functions as a memorial is as old as literature itself.

Lopulalan’s book is a literary work but, perhaps, it can also be viewed as a monument: a monument for the Moluccan community that helps create a cultural memory in which camps and housing estates play an important role and through which significant historical events are given a place. Partly because it is literary fiction,
the book does not paint a univocal picture: several generations speak, different opinions are aired and various voices can be heard. There are, for example, many allusions to trains, which refer indirectly to the dramatic train hijackings that shocked the Netherlands in the 1970s. In this way, the text can be seen as a tangible monument to Moluccan identity, like the Moluccan Museum in Utrecht: a single concrete literary expression in a predominantly oral literature. Indeed, the camps and this museum can be viewed as Pierre Nora’s concept of ‘lieu de mémoire’, following Halbwachs’s notion of collective memory (see Ashcroft, Griffiths and Tiffin 2002).

When we compare Lopulalan’s text with the Dutch East Indian novels mentioned above, there are many similarities. The motherland – the Dutch East Indies or the Moluccas – is in both cases the main source of inspiration. Two different worlds are set in opposition. However, not all Dutch East Indian novels concentrate on difference in the same way as in Onder de sneeuw een Indisch graf. So-called ‘Indo’ protagonists marry Dutchmen, strongly encouraged by their parents who wish to assimilate into Dutch society. In Lopulalan’s text, Dutch society is not a subject, merely a negative backdrop. Although the strict isolation of the Moluccan community is not apparent in the second story – Frans no longer lives on a segregated housing estate like his parents – Frans was married to a Dutch woman, even though the marriage broke down and the ancestors had rejected her in dreams.

A return to the land of origin is also the main theme in all the texts, and, in Lopulalan’s text, too, it is all an illusion. Nevertheless, there is at least one essential difference between the Moluccan and other situations. While, to the Dutch from the Indies, the Dutch East Indies turns out to be a myth, India for Rushdie is an imaginary homeland, and for Linda Lê Vietnam is likened to a dead infant, the Moluccas and the Moluccan community are still a topical problem in the year 2001. ‘The Empire writes back’ (see Ashcroft, Griffiths and Tiffin 2002): that goes for the Netherlands too, not only in literature, but also in reality, when through terror, or the threat of terror, attention is being drawn to the ordeal of Moluccans in the islands and their relatives in the Netherlands who still feel profoundly connected to their homeland.

This article started with the case of Dutch-Moroccan migrants, but, according to Assmann, it will be several decades before we can identify any real sense of cultural memory. But is this not also the case for the Moluccan community? They arrived in the Netherlands more than fifty years ago but the traumatic events of the 1970s are still recent memories. Likewise, they are affected by the recent civil war between Muslims and Christians in the Moluccas, which caused intense anxiety within the Dutch-Moluccan communities. This would thus seem to challenge Assmann’s theory, especially his rather neat timelines. Assmann’s work is useful in drawing up a rough outline of the process wherein cultural memory takes shape, but in practice a community’s experience of history constantly evolves. New developments and views keep reshaping the collective memory, and thus a story has to be rewritten over and over again. Literature can thus help communities to shape a common heritage by clothing specific events with mnemonic status. Moreover, it can give communities access to a heritage that is not their own (Rigney 2004). In this way a geographical move becomes a change in lieux de mémoire.
Notes
1. Other books by Benali include De langverwachte (2002) [The long Expected] and Feldman en ik (2006) [Feldman and I].
4. Some 725,000 copies of Anger were printed.
6. Of course, in the context of Dutch migrants, one of the questions is which particular moment can be viewed as a break: the 1960s, when the first guest labourers came to the Netherlands, the years of family reunion, or the moment the second generation became vocal. Assmann ignores the complexity of these processes.
8. On the occasion of the fifty years’ commemoration on 21 March 2001, pictures were shown on TV of the arrival of KNIL soldiers and their families in the Netherlands in 1952.
9. Moluccans are referred to in the book as ‘Ambonese’, as was be common then, because the majority originated from the main island of the Moluccas, Ambon.
10. See Toni Morisson (1992); see also Maaike Meyer (1996), who uses Morisson’s ideas.
11. The following pages refer to trains: 18, 103, 131, 161, 164–5. Page 161 refers explicitly to the train hijackings.
12. The decision to start a Moluccan museum was a result of the talks between members of the Moluccan community and the Dutch government.
13. Lopulalan’s text is almost unique, within an oral literary tradition, in that it was written down and published and is, as such, an exception. See Straver (1999) and Dolk (1998). Lopulalan published another novel in 1994 (Dakloze herinneringen) [Roofless Memories].
14. Assmann refers to the French sociologist Maurice Halbwachs. Halbwachs (1925) introduced the term ‘memory’ as separate from history (referring specifically to reconstruction and explanation). Memory refers to our complex and diverse relationship with the past – the term was later elaborated by Pierre Nora (1984–1992). Rigney also refers to Halbwachs and Nora.
15. ‘The empire writes back’ refers to the eponymous book by Bill Ashcroft, Gareth Griffiths and Helen Tiffin which describes how postcolonial writers from former colonies write novels against their former suppressors.

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Migration in the Twentieth-Century Sephardic Song Repertoire

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Abstract

This article deals with the Judeo-Spanish musico-poetic repertoire narrating the emigration of Sephardi Jews to Israel. These events find their expression either in original musico-poetic compositions or in melodies borrowed from well-known popular songs but with the addition of new words in Judeo-Spanish. The repertoire encompasses various phases of the migration phenomenon including the problem of obtaining official entry to Palestine during the British Mandate, the despair of those left behind in the Sephardi diaspora and the difficulties associated with new trades, both rural and urban. This repertoire of migration songs shows, once again, the creative vitality of the Sephardi Jews.

The Judeo-Spanish repertoire of the twentieth century displays, time and again, the creative drive of the Sephardic communities. Whether using popular melodies of their time and place or composing original tunes, the Sephardim expressed their social experiences, their worries and their hopes in original lyrics in Judeo-Spanish. Some of these songs deal with social life, problems and changes within Sephardic society. Others reflect historical events such as the impact of the Balkan wars (1912–13), the fires that affected the Jewish quarters and the subsequent migrations. Yet other songs refer to the economy within Sephardic communities (crafts, occupations and monetary problems), and still others present local figures and specific events.

Finally, there are songs describing the process of adaptation and problems concerning urban and rural work after the Sephardic Jews’ immigration to Israel, while scholars in Spain in particular have been more interested in the Sephardic ballads that have their roots in Medieval Spain. Songs composed in the twentieth century did not receive the attention of scholars until recently. Some musical aspects of this repertoire have been addressed by Edwin Seroussi, Judith Cohen, Rivka Havassy, Ankica Petrovic and by myself.

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would contend that now the time has come to pay attention to this repertoire as a whole: a corpus that makes clear that the Sephardim not only preserved the gems of the Peninsular Medieval tradition, but in their new Diasporas, as an urban – and, in a certain sense, also a cosmopolitan – people, they created new poems in the Judeo-Spanish language that they cherished as a core component of their distinctive identity. In this current focus, the texts and historical references of the majority of my recordings of these themes were studied in the monumental work of Elena Romero, Entre dos (o más) fuegos, (2008).5

Among songs composed and sung during the twentieth century among the Sephardim of both the Eastern and the Western Mediterranean, I will deal in this article with those relating to migration, one of the political and historical events that most affected these communities. As is well known, social conditions and, especially, economic problems led young Sephardi men to leave their homes and travel, even far away, in search of better life opportunities. This geographical mobility resulted in the establishment of new Sephardi communities all over the world, such as those in the cities of North and South America. Meanwhile, in a different direction, during the first half of the twentieth century there was a strong flow of immigration to Palestine. Among the numerous migration processes, I will deal in this article with the consequences of Sephardi migration and the conflicts and problems related to their arrival, adaptation and work in pre-State Palestine and Israel, and on the effect of migration on the Jewish communities in the Sephardi Diaspora.6 The diacritic signs should be included: as I wrote them in a first printed draft: with accents like ’for the pronounced like in French “jeux”, and the others as in my other publications that Hilary has, according to Hassan’s method of texts’ transcriptions.

Text One

Our first song expresses the worries of Izmirli Jews preoccupied by the bureaucracy involved in emigrating to Palestine. The British Mandate authorities, ruling Palestine since 1917, imposed a strict limitation on immigration. A certificate or special permit that served as an entry visa and residence permit, and took a long time to obtain, was required. To convey this idea, the song employs a literary formula, ‘seven years and seven more’, borrowed from or influenced by the Romancero (‘siete añ os lo esperí  y otros siete vo esperar’). Golden, a Jewish Agency employee sent to organize the Jewish immigration, appears in the lyrics:

Añ o ’ntero
Añ o ’ntero pan y aceitunas
para ir a Palestina,
chicos y grandes mos vamos a ir
para laborar la tierra,
yo nunca me voy enfadar
de laborar la tierra.

Ande Golden me aderezé
para ir a Palestina.
Siete años asperí
para que me den la visa,
y otros siete voy ‘esperar’ yo ‘esperar
para ir a Palestina.

El vapor se va alejando
los mis ojos van llorando.
Chicos y grandes mos vamos a ir
para laborar la tierra,
yo nunca me voy enfadar
de laborar la tierra.

(NSA Y5680/16, 17)7

Text Two

Many Sephardic immigrants from Turkey had to work in construction and
particularly as bricklayers, an occupation for which they were unprepared.8 I
recorded the following song in 1976 at a senior citizens’ club in Jaffa. It was
sung by Shoshana Niego, an informant who declared that this song was
composed by her husband. It consists of four stanzas structured as monorhymed quartets, with two refrains:

Con grandes dificultades a Palestina entrimos,
imaginándonos mašiah que tupimos,
fist’a la seš la hora, osotros laburimos, mosotros…
osotross los qaplanes, veinte grošes ya ganimos. Maldichos los qaplanes…

Aide, many, many,
dice qaþlan Jany,
no podemos, estamos en taanit.

Teneke de betón al hombro mos echaron
y todas las estrellas mos se aparecieron.
En el segundo piano, mis pies titireando.
Maldichos los qaplanes que ya mo lo mundaron!
No spantes amigos
buen kaźik comimos,
y enteros mos enchulimos.

Dia de šabat se hace, a la playa nos vamos
curiendo detrás de bajurot, ya mos amurchamos,
se gozan de la vida, osotros encantados. mosotros…
Cargados de burnuses a casa mos tornamos.

No spantes, amigos…

Para ganar cincuenta grošes, lavoro demandimos.
- Vened, fijos, dijo el qaplan, a acarrear ladrillos.
Fist’a la seš la hora, mosostros laburimos.
Maldichos los qaplanes, veinte groses ya ganimos.

No spantes, amigos,
buen kaźik comimos,
y enteros mos enchulimos.

(NSA Yc 1661/4)

Text Three

The Bulgarian Sephardim were active in bringing about the Zionist dream, participating in the establishment of Jewish agricultural colonies, moshavim and kibbutzim (cooperative or communal settlements, respectively). I conducted various interviews (in 1993 and 1999) with those Sephardim who live to this day in Moshav Beit Hanan. I was able to record their Judeo-Spanish repertoire, composed by Bujurachi Yehuda Benaroya, one of this moshav’s founders. To gather information about this local poet/songwriter, I interviewed his daughter, Dvora Pili-Benaroya in Moshav Beit Halevy where she lives since leaving Beit Hanan at the age of twenty-five. Bujurachi Benaroya was born in Istanbul in 1879 and nicknamed Bujurachi (from the Hebrew bejor) because he was the firstborn son, and in Beit Hanan he was always called Bojor or Bujurachi. His bride Lea was a young Bulgarian Jewess who travelled with her mother to Istanbul to meet her intended groom. As was usual at that time the young couple then lived with his parents. Benaroya travelled on business to Marseilles and brought his family there. Subsequently, the family with two children established itself in Sofia, where Bujurachi was a prosperous merchant. With the beginning of Bulgarian aliyah Lea’s two brothers immigrated to Palestine. Bujurachi, influenced by the ideals of Herzl and
Nordau, decided to take all his family, and in 1924 they arrived at the port of Jaffa. Since he preferred to work in agriculture, he found employment in the citrus groves owned by other, richer Bulgarian Jews. It was hard work, but he never grumbled and was always in good spirits. For example, he composed the following stanza addressing David, one of his bosses:

Davidchó n, ven aquí ,
beve una de raksi ,
guí evešicos enhaminados
y pipinos en trují .

(NSA Y6532/21)11

Text Four

A group of Bulgarian Sephardim established a moshav at Beit Hanan, near the Arab village of Ubede (south of today’s Tel-Aviv, near Ness Ziona). The bureaucracy took a long time in allocating the required land, and in 1929, with all of the members investing their own money, Beit Hanan was founded. It was the first all-Sephardi moshav. Bujurachi dedicated the following stanza to Dr. Asherov and Haim Ben Yosef, two of the most active members of the founders’ group:

Doctor Asherov y Ben Yosef
al lavoro si mitieron
tan presto que quisieron
siete añ os sufieron.

(NSA Y6532/22)12

Text Five

Thanks to Dvora Pili-Benaroya (NSA Y6590/3) and also Moshe Moiseieff and Belina-Ben Bassat-Elazar in Beit Hanan, I recorded a song in which Bujurachi reveals his pride in the achievements of the Bulgarian farmers. The Hebrew refrain comes from the Hebrew song from which Bujurachi borrowed the melody: ‘Joy and songs, we the Bulgarians will build the houses’. According to Dvora, she had brought the song home from her daycare centre and Bujurachi learned it from her. All the moshav members would join in the chorus when they would gather on Sabbath afternoons, seated on bales of hay, listening to and singing Bujurachi’s songs. This is how they learned these
songs and why they keep singing them today. The text stresses the hard conditions of the land, the stony soil, where the jackals dwelled until the Bulgarians came to plant orange trees (portukales):

Estas tierras piedregales,
qui moravan los chacales,
y agora los bulgaros
ya plantaron portukales.

Sason ve simhá,
gila ve riná
anu habulgarim
nivne et habatim.

(NSA Y6532/20)13

Text Six

Bjurachi again emphasizes their achievements in a song written for Moshav Beit Hanan’s tenth anniversary. His pride was justifiable considering the hard work needed to make fruitful land that was partly stony and part swamp: ‘Come, those who opposed us, and see what we did in ten years, as gardens and groves (Ar. bayaras) are not made with words alone’. Once again he expresses thanks to Dr Asherov and his family for funding this colony:

Veigan, veigan los contrarios
lo que hicimos en diez añ os
huertas, tierras y bayaras
no se hacen con palabras.

Sason ve simhá,
gila beriná,
anu javerim
nivne et habatim.

Doctor Asherov con su famiya,
rengraciaremos noche y dí a,
que fundó la coloní a
con su gran baraganí a.

(NSA Y6532/7, 45)14
The text goes on to present a comic legend about the history of Beit Hanan, from the time before the houses were built, when the men lived in nearby Rishon LeZion and used to come every day to till the soil and build the houses of Beit Hanan. Although depicted in a comic way, the locust plague was a real worry for the Bulgarian farmers. In his song, Benaroya uses the locust as a device to express the Bulgarians’ pride in what they had accomplished in Beit Hanan:15

this is the text that follows in the same recording: NSA Y6532/20

Josito horas doce
alhad de la medianoche,
hechando asefá
en la casa de Ben Bassat.

Uno mos veniva,
él mos deciva:
– Judíicos correr!
langosta en Gan Ravé!

Todos al auto saltaban,
él no caminaba,
cuatro arrempujaban,
tres alelumbraban,
para quemar taván
y salvar a Bet Hanán.

Estos que sintieron
que los bulgaros vienen
la langosta se spantó,
y una no quedó.
Un loco quita cien
y esto es para bien.

Text Seven

As regards the Moroccan repertoire, emigration was a serious blow to the Jewish communities of Northern Morocco. Our next example, from Tetuan, is sung in Haketia, the Judeo-Spanish dialect spoken by Moroccan Sephardim. It depicts the impoverished situation of the Tetuan community with young men leaving for a better life in America. It focuses on the difficult situation of the young women who had been left behind in Tetuan; they cannot find anyone to marry because all prospective husbands have left for Argentina, Brazil or other parts of South America. In the song, Joli (the nickname for Rahel) visits family as is usual on Timimona, the last day of Passover. She walks through the
streets of Tetuan. It is empty of Jews; she finds no one to greet her with the usual expression: ‘Be esh hal, Joli?’ (How are you, Joli?) because all the men have gone. Some had left for South America, others for Palestine. For the latter she says ‘Bilbao’, disguising the destination for fear of the authorities, ‘pa mor de los goyim’, as Zionist activity was strongly forbidden in Morocco. This frustration is expressed by parodying a common Spanish expression ‘para vestir santos’, referring to the unmarried women who busied themselves dressing the saints’ statues in church. In our Moroccan song this is transformed into the Jewish equivalent: ‘pa’ vestir sefer’, with the unmarried women dressing the Torah scrolls. The girls are furious because the last remaining young men have been offered work in the shops of the rich Benalal family.16

The song was composed by Lucy Garzon, who emigrated from Tetuan to Venezuela. She is the sister of Raquel Garzon-Israel, whose version I recorded in Madrid on 8 July 1997. The melody is borrowed from the popular Spanish pasodoble El relicario, first sung in 1914 by the singer Raquel Meller and made famous in the 1957 film El último cuple where it was performed by Sarita Montiel. The Moroccan version parodies the Spanish text, which begins: ‘Un día de San Eugenio/ yendo hacia el Pardo le conocí’.17 In the Sephardic version this becomes the day of Timimona (called Mimouna by Arabic-speaking Southern Moroccan Jews), a day celebrated by exchanging visits with one another:

Un día de Timimona
a visitar la familia fuí,
en toa la calle no había un mancebo
que me dijera be esh’hal Joli.

Unos se fueron a la Argentina,
a Venezuela o al Brasil,
otros se fueron a Palestina,
diremos Bilbao, pa mor de los goyim.
Y me quedé con mis amigas
entre jilaba, Mohamed y Ali.

Patalea Simi,
patalea Tamo,
que pa’ vestir sefer
en Tetuán vamos a quedar,
porque los cuatro
que aquí quedaban
pa’ kadearlos
se los llevaron los Benalal.

(NSA Y6446a/8)18
Immigration to Palestine and later on to Israel provided the setting where Sephardic immigrants from differing points of origin could meet. My last example reflects the encounter between immigrants from Turkey and Bulgaria who met regularly at senior citizens’ clubs like the one in Jaffa where I recorded this song. The melody is that of a well-known Bulgarian folksong. The text recalls a social custom in Bulgaria where it was usual for a group of people to meet on a fixed day every week in different homes. In Israel such meetings take place in the Clubs for Senior Citizens organized by the municipalities, where they enjoy being together.

Text 7

La parea turcas y bulgaras
son de pasar la hora,
quen se quere aunarse
en parea hora.

En la boca de la ĝente stamos,
de dinguno no mos espantamos,
rie, baila, canta,
metalik no damos,
cada’l día en el moadón estamos.

Un día en mi casa,
otro en tu casa
cada día en una casa
vamos a pasar la hora.

En la boca de la ĝente stamos,
de dinguno no mos espantamos,
rie, baila, canta,
metalik no damos,
cada’l día en el moadón estamos.

(NSA Yc1661/3)

In conclusion, besides revealing different characteristics of Judeo-Spanish, already pointed out in each example, the songs presented here offer direct or indirect information about Sephardi communities, their musical practice, their names and significative toponyms, and show diverse influences, both literary as well as musical:
• Real names: the Jewish Agency employeee in Izmir, Golden (Text 1); Ben Bassat, Ben Yosef and Doctor Asherov, important figures in the settlement of Bulgarian immigrants (Text 4); the Benalal family and also typical Moroccan Sephardi girls’ names: Simi, Holí and Tamo, vs. Arab names for men, Mohamed and Ali (Text 7).

• Precise toponyms: Beth Hanan and Gan Ravé (Text 3); specific names of the countries to which Moroccan Sephardim migrated: Argentina, Brasil, Venezuela; and indirect information about the prohibition of Zionist emigration to Palestine (Text 7).

• The custom in Sofia anad other Bulgarian communities of meeting together in people’s homes to sing (‘Un día en mi casa, otro en tu casa’).23

• A motif borrowed from the Romancero (‘siete años y otros siete’) to express fidelity (in the ballad, fidelity to the husband, in the song, fidelity to an ideal (Text 1).

• A motif borrowed from a Christian saying and used in parody in the Jewish context (‘para vestir santos/ para vestir sefer’) (Text 7).

• Musical borrowing and adaptations: music borrowed from a Bulgarian folksong (Text 5), from a popular Spanish pasodoble (Text 4), from a Hebrew song, keeping part of the original song (Text 3), or adapted from the Turkish makamlar (Text 2) in makam Sabah.

The examples presented here are but a small selection of songs that expressed the joys and fears of the Sephardim. By means of borrowing, adapting and parodying they succeeded in finding musical support for these poems that related their complaints, criticisms and boasts, usually cushioned in humour. As we have seen, this Sephardi creativity flourished until quite late in the twentieth century.
Musical Transcriptions

1. Sung by Malka Dayan and Mazal Ginni, both from Izmir, recorded by S. Weich-Shahak in Yahud, 26 December 1988, NSA Y5680/16, 17.

2. Sung by Shoshana Niego (Istanbul) and a group, NSA Yc1661/4, recorded in Moadon Yefet, Jaffa, 9 July 1980.


5. Paradigmatic comparison of the example here presented, sung by Mazalto Lazar (Mustafa Pasa) accompanied by a group of Turkish and Bulgarian women, recorded by S. Weich-Shahak in Yaffo, at the Senior Citizen’s Club Yeffet, on 29 September 1980. NSA Yc 1661/3, with two versions of the Bulgarian folk song Dirim dirim, one notated by Professor Nikolai Kaufman (1995: 36–37), and the other, sung by Dora Conforti (Dupnitze), recorded by S. Weich-Shahak in Yaffo, 23 March 1996 (Y6357b).

Notes

1. The present study is part of the research I have been conducting since 1974 at the Jewish Music Research Centre at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem, about the Judeo-Spanish musico-poetic repertoire. All the recordings that I collected in fieldwork, in Israel and abroad, are catalogued at the National Sound Archives (NSA) at the Jewish National and University Library (JNUL) in Jerusalem; their numbers in the catalogue are noted for each item.

2. About the use of melodies borrowed from the local music repertoire in the Balkan countries, whether from the local folklore or foreign melodies, see Weich-Shahak (1998), published in Balkanistica.
3. For songs related to historical events and social changes in Sephardi society both in the Balkans and in Northern Morocco, see Weich-Shahak (2001). See also Weich-Shahak in press. For discographic versions of the Judeo-Spanish repertoire of the twentieth century, see Weich-Shahak 1998–2000.


5. See also her study of two coplas about fires in the Balkan Sephardi communities with comprehensive research on the date and place of each fire. (Romero 2005)

6. For the transcription of the texts I have adopted a system based on that proposed by Prof. Jacob M. Hassan and used at the CSIC (Consejo Superior de Investigaciones Científicas del Ministerio de Educación y Ciencias de España), consisting of writing in the normative Spanish spelling, but adding diacritic signs to reflect the pronunciation characteristic of Judeo-Spanish. The signs used are: š, j, like ‘She’ in English; š, j, ž, like ‘jeux’ in French; j, ĝ, ĵ, like in Italian ‘giovanne’, and v pronounced like b. (See Hassan 1978). I have added diacritics to show the vowels pronounced differently from modern Spanish: ė, almost like i; ô, pronounced almost like u; i, pronounced almost like e. For the musical transcriptions I have employed a ‘comfortable’ register on the staff, in a mode or scale having few or no sharps or flats.

7. Sung by Malka Dayan and Mazal Ginni, both from Izmir, recorded in Yahud, 26 December 1988, NSA Y5680/16, 17. Translation of the text: The whole year we had only bread and olives, just to go to Palestine, young and adults we will go to cultivate the land, I will never get tired of farming the land. I went to see Golden in order to go to Palestine / Seven years I waited to be given a visa, seven more I will wait to go to Palestine. The ship departs, my eyes weep. Young and old we will go to cultivate the land, I will never get tired of farming the land.

8. Sung by Shoshana Niego (Istanbul) and others in Moadon Yefet, Jaffa, 9 July 1980. Many words in this song stem from Hebrew: qaplan (the contractor of construction: Hebr. qablan), masiah (= the Messiah), bajurot (= young women) and from the Turkish: grosses (gurus = a small coin), burnuses (blisters), Sukur Allah, Turkish expression (= Blessed be God!), kazik (a stick; quite a gross expression!) and also, from the Balkan languages: aide! Translation: With great difficulties we got into Palestine imagining that we had found the Messiah, we worked up to six o’clock, cursed be the construction contractor and we earned twenty cents. Go, go says the contractor Jany we can not, we have not eaten! A can of cement they put on our shoulder and we saw all the stars. On the second floor, my feet were shaking. Cursed be the contractors that had us so (exploited us). Don’t be afraid, my friends, we got a good stick and we are full of dirt. When Saturday comes, we go to the sea shore running after the girls, we already shrieveled up, we are enjoying life, we are charmed. Covered with blisters we return home. To earn fifty cents we demanded work, come, sons, - said the contractor, you shall carry bricks. Up to six o’clock we worked. Blessed be God! We earned twenty cents.

9. I found some specific data about our Bulgarian poet Bujurachi Benaroya in the laissez-passer shown to me by his daughter Doret/Dvora. It was issued in Sofia on 15 September 1922, for Yehuda Benaroya, forty-three years old, a Turkish citizen, born in Constantinople, occupation: bricklayer, with his wife Lea, forty years old, and his sons David, age fifteen, Henri, age thirteen and Joseph, age nine and his daughters, Doret (mentioned above as Dvora Pili-Benaroya, his fourth child) and Ester. See Weich-Shahak 2000.

10. Aliyah, Jewish immigration to Israel (Hb.).

12. NSA Y6532/22: Translation: Doctor Asherov and Ben Yosef/ got to work/ they wanted it to be fast/ but had to suffer for seven years.

13. Translation: These lands, rocky grounds/ where jackals lived/ and now the Bulgarians/ have already planted orange trees.// (The refrain, in Hebrew: ) Delight and gaiety/ gladness and joy/ we, the Bulgarians/ we will build the houses.

14. NSA Y6532/7, 45: Those that were against us should come and see/ what we made in ten years:/ gardens, lands and plantations of orange trees / those were not made with words.// Delight and gaiety/ rejoice and gladness / we, comrades,/ we will build the houses.// Doctor Asherov with his famil / we will thank him night and day/ for he founded the colony/ with his great courage. The rhyme is varied: abab, aabb, from monorhymed (aaaa) to totally free.

15. Translation: Just at twelve o’clock,/ Sunday eve at midnight,/ having our meeting/ in Ben Bassat’s house.// Someone came to us / and he told us:/ - Jews, come running,/ there is locust in Gan Ravé . // Everyone jumped into the car / but it did not move,/ / four people pushed,/ three people set light to,/ and burned straw to save Bet Hanán. // As soon as the locusts heard / the Bulgarians coming/ they panicked/ not one remained./ One madman takes a hundred/ and this is for good. (This is a closing formula for folk tales).


17. This was an annual celebration when the Royal Park, the Parque Real del Pardo, was open to the public. See also Weich-Shahak (2008: 298–299) and (2001: 109–112).

18. NSA Y6446a/8. Translation: One day of Mimouna/ I went to visit the family/ in the whole street there was not even one young man / to greet me, saying: ‘How are you, Joli’?// Some have gone to Argentina,/ Venezuela or Brazil,/ others to Palestine./ We shall say they went to Bilbao, because of the Gentiles./ And I remained with my girl friends,/ between the jilabas, Mohamed and Ali.// Simmi stamps her feet,/ Tamo stamps her feet,/ ‘We shall remain single in Tetuan, to dress the Holy Scrolls/ because the Benalals, to finish them off, have taken away the last four remaining men’.

19. Recorded in Yaffo, at the Senior Citizen’s Club Yeffet, on 29 September 1980, sung by Mazalto Lazar ( born in Mustafa Pasa, Turkey but raised and lived in Sofia, in the poor neighbourhood of Yuchpunar until her emigration to Israel in 1948) accompanied by a group of Turkish and Bulgarian women, NSA Yc1661/3.

20. For the musical comparison of the following Judeo-Spanish song with the original tune of the Bulgarian folk song ‘Dirim, dirim’ “Dirim, dirim”, see Weich-Shahak (1998: 97).


22. Translation: The pairs of Turkish and Bulgarians/ like to have a good time/ who ever wants to join them now.// People speak about us/ but we are not scared of anybody./ laugh, dance, sing,/ we don’t give even the smallest coin (meaning: we do not care!)/ everyday we are at the club.// One day in my house,/ another day in your house/ every day in another house/ we will have a good time.//

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The Preludes to Migration

Anticipation and Imaginings of Mexican Immigrant Adolescent Girls

Lilia Soto

ABSTRACT

This article explores the immigrant journeys of Mexican immigrant adolescent girls raised in transnational families. Based on interviews conducted with this young cohort I examine how they experienced migration long before they neared the United States-Mexico border. Using a transnational approach to migration and the intersections of gender and age as analytical categories, I highlight how Mexican immigrant adolescent girls are uniquely situated within their families so as to have a different set of experiences from men, women, and adolescent boys. Their stories reveal that before migration their lives were saturated, because of their parents’ departures and visits, with anticipation and imaginings about Napa Valley, California, and with interruptions of migration. Their lives always seemed to be on the brink of migration. This also means that the very reason for their parents’ migration—to better provide for their children—placed the children en route, as it were, to the United States.

KEYWORDS

adolescent girls, age, family stage migration, gender, Mexican-U.S. immigration, transnational families, transnational migration

Introduction

Silvia grew up in a transnational family1 in Michoacan, Mexico, where she lived with her mother and younger brother until she was fifteen. Throughout these years she overheard conversations about the place where her father worked—Napa Valley in California. Her father, who was fifteen when he first migrated to Napa, established his U.S. residency in 1986 through the Immigration Reform and Control Act (IRCA). After he married, he petitioned to bring his family to Napa. Silvia knew from a young age that her move to Napa was inevitable. She just had to wait her turn.
Stories like Silvia’s are common among immigrant girls her age, yet, with few exceptions (Parreñas 2005), they remain understudied. They point to gaps in current research on the immigration of transnational families. Existing research provides an incomplete account of the conditions and consequences of this familial arrangement on young girls, and narratives like Silvia’s point to how their experiences are outside the adult-centered frame of research on transnational migration. For example, transnational migration studies rarely examine the lives of those who remain behind. Instead, these focus on how adults engage in transnational practices—maintaining a hometown through remittances, influencing local politics and/or maintaining a family from afar (Jones Correa 1998; Hondagneu-Sotelo and Avila 1997; Basch et al. 1994; Rouse 1991). The experiences of girls are also different from those related in the cumulative causation approach to migration which tends to focus on the journeys of adolescent boys. Within the cumulative causation framework, adolescent boys take center stage since, unlike girls, they are expected to take on the journey of migration when they deem it best to do so (Chavez 1992; Martínez 2001; Massey et al. 2002). Stories of adolescent girls who are born into transnational families also reveal how they are caught up in their parents’ migration patterns.

This article, which is based on interviews conducted in the fall of 2006 at a local high school in Napa, California, explores the experiences of Latina immigrant adolescent girls who grew up in transnational households. I use gender and age as analytical categories to show how their experiences differ from those of other family members.

For girls like Silvia, the immigrant journey begins long before they leave home. Extended periods of family separation, of anticipation and anxiety about the actual relocation, and of imagining the journey make their lives in their native countries seem temporary and transitory. They occupy an almost liminal space between Mexico and Napa: their lives seem to be on the brink of migration (Sandoval 2000; Pérez 1999; Anzaldúa 1987). Ultimately, adolescent girls have little say over when and how they migrate because their parents make those decisions. However, they do hold strong opinions, dreams, and desires—at times romanticized notions—of El Norte and about moving to Napa. The migratory patterns established by fathers and mothers put their daughters on the migrant path years before the actual journey takes place.
This aspect of migration—the prelude to migration—affects narratives about this process. The stories of these immigrant adolescent girls provide fresh perspectives that expand our understanding of transnational families and immigration.

**Transnational Families, Gender and Age**

For the many Latino families—particularly Mexican families who migrate in stages (Hondagneu-Sotelo 1994)—the formation of transnational families is the first step in the migration process. Parents may state that they choose to migrate for their children’s sake (Boehm 2008; Espiritu 2003; Hall 1987), yet their departure can deeply affect those who remain behind. The formation of transnational families is not a new phenomenon (Dreby 2006; Schmalzbauer 2004; Basch et al. 1994). In the Mexican experience, both U.S. and Mexican governments have sponsored these familial arrangements; they have also been the result of “voluntary” decisions. As early as the 1860s, men from northern Mexico crossed the border to work in San Jose, California, returning home to visit the families that remained behind (Pitti 2003). During the instability of the Mexican Revolution families were forced to live in different locations (Schmidt Camacho 2008). U.S. recruiters traveled into Mexico during this period to hire men as railroad laborers (Massey et al. 2002). Finally, the Bracero Program (which ran from 1942 to 1964), jointly instituted by the U.S. and Mexican governments, sponsored the migration of Mexican men who were willing to fill U.S. labor demands during World War II (Calavita 1992). Married men were considered perfect candidates and they were strategically sought, thus accelerating the formation of transnational households (Rosas 2006). These programs and policies established a pattern in communities throughout Mexico and other Latin American countries.

Today the formation of transnational families continues, promoted by the effect of globalization on local economies (Basch et al. 1994). Men continue to migrate, normalizing transnational households in areas where the frequency of out-migration is high, but gender differences in migration patterns are being noted as more women become transnational mothers. The expectations for migrating fathers and mothers are
tied to gender-based familial roles (Dreby 2006; Schmalzbauer 2004, 2005; Parreñas 2005; Gamburd 2000; Levitt 2001). The departure of a transnational father is considered an extension of his duties as the provider for the family (Dreby 2006; Parreñas 2005; Massey et al. 1987). Within the family his departure is expected, celebrated, and normalized. In contrast, the departure of a transnational mother—a relatively recent area of study (Dreby 2006; Nicholson 2006; Schmalzbauer 2004; Hondagneu-Sotelo and Avila 1997)—is complicated by gender-based roles since she is expected to raise her children, to educate them and look after them. When she is not physically present because she has to find a way to support them from afar, she risks being portrayed as a “bad” mother who abandons her children (Parreñas 2005: 37). To avoid being labeled a “bad” mother, transnational mothers become “super moms” and overcompensate in their expected role (Parreñas 2005: 103). They have to negotiate mothering practices from across borders (Hondagneu-Sotelo and Avila 1997). The responses of the children who are left behind vary, depending on the sex of the parent who migrates (Parreñas 2005).

Age also plays an important role in the decision-making process of women and men who choose to migrate (Hondagneu-Sotelo 1994). As previously mentioned, for young men migration is considered a rite of passage into male adulthood (Massey et al. 2002; Martínez 2001; Chavez 1992). For young adult women migration is not a rite of passage. Rather, they either react to a presented opportunity or rely on other women’s help to migrate (Hondagneu-Sotelo 1994). In fact, research on adult women’s migration to or across the U.S.-Mexico border is quite extensive (Segura and Zavella 2007; González-López 2005; Hondagneu-Sotelo 1994), but this is not the case regarding the migration of adolescent girls whose journey—as the stories of the girls in my study show—depend almost exclusively on their parents. I argue that it is their age that limits them in making their own decision to migrate. So, while adults depend on social networks and other means of support to make migration possible, adolescent girls cannot yet access these resources.

Age, then has a bearing on the success of migration for adolescent girls. As Thorne et al. state, with few exceptions, little attention has been given to “age as an organizing dimension of migration” (2003: 243). Age limits girls’ access to the decision making process of migration and
social networks. However, they do possess agency and they are savvy. They build friendships and social worlds amongst their peers that allow them to express their hopes and dreams for U.S.-bound migration.

Pierrette Hondagneu-Sotelo (1994) was among the first to bring children into the migration narrative by noting that just like their parents, children raised in transnational households migrate in stages. Despite this observation, researchers had largely overlooked the effect of transnational migration on children until recently (Suárez-Orozco et al. 2008; Avila 2008; Dreby 2007; Parreñas 2005; Orellana et al. 2001; Suárez-Orozco and Suárez-Orozco 2001). Recent studies have shown that the motivation for a parent’s migration is frequently the welfare of her or his children (Boehm 2008; Espiritu 2003; Hall 1987), that a child’s attitude toward a transnational parent differs according to the sex of the parent (Parreñas 2005), and that a child’s exposure to adult conversations and rumors about the United States has an impact on his or her perception of migration and life in the U.S. (Dreby 2009). Children, however, are more than luggage that parents transport across a border (Orellana et al. 2001); they are key actors in the process of migration. The information they are able to gather, the conversations they have with friends and their own understanding of life on the brink of migration provides a much needed space from which to analyze their experiences.

It is the intersection of each of these strands of research—on gender, age, and growing up in transnational families—that provides insight into the experiences of immigrant adolescent girls.

The Study

The data for this study was collected at a public high school in the heart of Napa, California, with the assistance of three school administrators. This high school was selected because it has a large population of English Language Development (ELD) students; in 2005, 28 percent of the students were ELD learners. I recruited girls who had arrived in Napa within the previous five years so that their memories of growing up in a transnational family would be recent. During the interviews I introduced myself as a graduate student interested in writing about their lives. I mentioned to each girl that I had moved to Napa at the
age of ten and that I was also raised in a transnational household. The interviews were conducted in the fall of 2006, just a few months after the nationwide protests against the draconian Border Protection, Anti-terrorism, and Illegal Immigration Control Act of 2005 (HR 4437). The protest affected the participant recruitment process, limiting the number of girls who were willing to participate in the study. Twenty girls were finally interviewed either at their home or on school premises, although one interview was conducted outside the Napa City-County Library. Eighteen interviews were conducted in Spanish and two in English. Each interview was about an hour long, and I recorded them and transcribed each verbatim. I was also responsible for the translations from Spanish to English.

The girls had emigrated from various locations. Nineteen came from Mexico. Of these girls, seventeen were from the states of Michoacán, Jalisco, Zacatecas, or Guanajuato—all points of origin for the laborers who were recruited during the first half of the twentieth century (Massey et al. 2002). Two girls came from the state of Oaxaca (which is sending an increasing number of migrants). One girl came from the Tecún Umán region of Guatemala. At the time of the interviews, nine girls were in the twelfth grade, four in the eleventh grade, one in the tenth grade, and six in the ninth grade. They ranged in age from fourteen to seventeen years. All had immigrated to join one or more family members in Napa: fourteen girls joined their fathers, two joined their mothers, two joined both parents, one joined a sibling, and one joined her grandparents.

Several themes emerged from the interviews. More than half the girls were raised in what Rhacel Salazar Parreñas calls “father-away” (2005: 68) transnational families, suggesting that this continues to be the most common familial arrangement among transnational families. The fathers of these girls had been commuting to Napa since they were young men. I noticed that in many ways the girls’ lives in their native countries were structured around their parents’ visits and absences. The most significant finding was how their sex and age affected their experiences with migration. The following sections explore the stories of the girls I interviewed, looking at how they were affected by a father’s absences, how a parent’s departure placed them on the migrant path, and how uncertainty and anticipation shaped their immigrant experiences before they traveled to the Napa Valley.
Fathers’ Absences

Most of the girls I interviewed grew up in a “father-away” transnational family that had a long history of U.S.-bound migration. For some girls it was the grandfather who had first migrated to Napa. The father, who was then a young single man, eventually joined him. Family ties to Napa had been established long before the girls were born, and family stories about El Norte made Napa a familiar place. Fourteen of the girls grew up with a father who lived and worked in Napa and visited them in Mexico once or perhaps twice a year. These visits structured their lives, disrupting daily routines and usual modes of interaction. For some girls the visits were positive experiences that made them feel part of a normal family; for others the visits brought discomfort and unhappiness. In every case the cycle of visits and absences prepared the girls for their eventual trip to Napa.

“Like something very pretty inside”

Elena and Leti related similar stories. Both girls were raised in transnational families from birth, and each had a father who, from a young age, began commuting to Napa. Elena’s father began commuting from Oaxaca to Napa when he was fifteen. He visited the family in Oaxaca three or four times a year, his visits always falling around the same time. Each time he visited Oaxaca he stayed for two to four weeks. As his arrival date approached, Elena waited eagerly. His visits meant a different routine that included going out as a family.

We would go out to eat, or go out anywhere. Or during the town’s fiestas in April, the twenty-fifth, he always went. And we were used to going to the rodeo and after, in the early evening, we’d go to the fair. And it was hard because sometimes we waited for him and he wouldn’t come. And at times, the whole month would go by and we continued to wait and he wouldn’t come and it was hard not seeing him, but at the same time we were used to him not being able to [visit us].

Elena lived in this transnational familial arrangement with her mother and younger brothers until she was thirteen, when the family joined her father. These years were filled with dates, carved into Elena’s memory, which marked her father’s returns and departures. Elena’s town had a satellite community in Napa, and the grown-ups always wanted to
know when her father was leaving so that they could send *encargos* (gifts) to relatives. Discussion of his next journey to Napa was restricted to adult conversations, yet Elena always overheard enough to know that his departure was inevitable.

Leti was born into a transnational family in the state of Michoacan. Unable to find a job in Mexico, Leti’s father went north at a very young age, choosing Napa because Leti’s grandfather had earlier migrated to Napa. Leti’s reaction to her father’s visits was much like Elena’s, although Leti’s father commuted less frequently than Elena’s father did. Leti’s father visited his family once (or occasionally twice) a year. Leti recalled how much she looked forward to his visits.

> I remember that when my dad went, I always behaved well [at school] because I was a little troublemaker. We went to a private school and um, my brother and I, and he’s older than me, and they [teachers] would always, always made me stay indoors during recess because I always talked and talked [in class] and I wouldn’t do any work… When I knew my dad was coming, well, I would be like, I would study more and all so that he wouldn’t get mad at me…um, whenever he went, it felt good because I hadn’t seen him in a while and it felt like, like something very pretty inside.

Leti’s description hints at the yearning she felt for her father’s visits. She loved her father’s visits so much that she controlled her behavior at school in order to maximize her time with him. The visits altered and gave structure to Leti’s life. She felt happier when he was around, and her family felt complete. When he was gone, Leti cared very little for school-related activities and her unruly behavior returned. Losing privileges held almost no meaning for her.

Details of these stories and the tone of voice in which they were told reveal the impact of each father’s migration. But just as their lives were structured by the father’s returns, the same was true of his absences. Each Sunday Elena walked down the street to the town’s phone booth to await her father’s weekly phone call, usually wearing a Sunday dress chosen by her mother for such a special occasion. These weekly phone calls allowed Elena to stay connected to her father. In Leti’s case her rebellious behavior returned after her father’s yearly visits, and she was constantly in trouble at home as well as at school. She, however, found comfort in the letters he regularly sent to her, and this maintained her connection to him. When she was too young to read, her mother read
the letters aloud, over and over, until Leti had memorized them. She said that recalling her father's letters sustained her until his next visit.

_**She Preferred His Absences**_

Not all the girls welcomed their father's visits. Both Silvia and Sonia expressed negative feelings, but for different reasons. Silvia's father had commuted between Michoacan and Napa since he was a teenager, and for fifteen years Silvia rarely saw him. He visited for two weeks in July or August and two more weeks in December. Silvia grew used to his absences. When he did visit, she felt bothered by his presence.

> I felt weird... when I would see that strange man. The first time my dad arrived, I was older and he got there, and I said that he was a man [not my father] and my mom told me to hug him [because he was my father], and I couldn't hug him, I didn't care for him. I didn't feel I cared for him.

Unlike Elena, Silvia made no mention of gifts or trips to the fair or restaurants. She found her father's visits awkward, and she was impatient for his departure. But while his visits were uncomfortable, his absences made her feel conflicted: “When he left, I stayed worried because I [heard of] a lot of accidents... I prayed to God to look after him because I didn't feel like I cared a lot for him, but I did love him. He was my father.”

Children who grow up in transnational families can develop an estranged relationship with their parents (Parreñas 2005); in Silvia's case, her father's long-term absences bred emotional distance. Like Silvia, Sonia did not look forward to her father's visits to Jalisco. Her father commuted back and forth to visit Sonia, her mother, and her two brothers and two sisters for at least twenty years. Her father rarely sent money, and when he did, it was never enough. As Sonia noted, “He never thought of us and, my mom, I remember that she needed money, um, she needed many things, and he simply was not there.” Everyone, including Sonia, had to work to make ends meet. When she was eleven years old, Sonia decided to drop out of school for a year so that she could help her grandmother run her mini-market. She said this allowed her to feel useful, almost as if she, too, were working for a salary to contribute to the household income. When she returned to middle school, Sonia enrolled in the evening session to free her mornings for
work. She began to resent her father as she recalled how little he helped her family. The financial problems at home began to affect how she viewed her father’s role within the family.

Sonia said she learned to live with a father who came and went, but she preferred his absences. She could not stand the fighting and chaos that erupted during her father’s visits especially since she felt he had few rights at home. With disgust, Sonia recounted how he would pick up a bottle, become intoxicated, and start hitting her mother as a way to exert his role as head of the house as soon as he arrived in Jalisco. Sonia and her siblings were also targets of his violent temper. Whenever she learned that her father was coming for a visit, Sonia would begin to brace herself for the beatings that would surely occur. After he left the family dynamic would return to normal.

The stories told by Elena, Leti, Silvia, and Sonia reveal the degree to which their fathers’ visits affected their lives. Not all the girls had happy memories, countering the idea that migration is always a step toward a better life. Their stories reveal family dynamics that were affected negatively, as well as positively, by migration. These girls grew up witnessing their fathers’ arrivals and departures and hearing stories about the Napa Valley. The migration to Napa became a familiar cycle.

**Imagining and Anticipating the Migrant Path**

Each of the girls interviewed anticipated and imagined her own emigration to the United States because she grew up in a transnational household. In some cases this expectation was heightened by a wait for residency papers or simply through expressing the desire to move. Napa and migration were constant topics of conversation in the girls’ lives, taking place within and outside the home. They lived in towns with satellite communities in Napa, so the comings and goings of adults were familiar events.

As astute listeners, the girls knew of their pending move to the Napa Valley. The conversations they overheard coupled with their own desires make them active agents of their own understanding of their future. Elena, Silvia, Dulce and Leti had anticipated their migration to the United States from a young age, confident that it would eventually take place. For Lorena and Erika the wait had many moments of uncer-
tainty. Migration, even when imagined and anticipated, did not seem like a clear-cut process in the girls’ lives.

“At times just playing around”

Elena grew up overhearing conversations about when her father would bring the family to Napa. Elena’s aunts, uncles, and grandparents were distressed by the family’s arrangements in Oaxaca, and they wanted to know when her father would move the family to Napa. Most relatives felt it was best for the family to live together. These conversations, coupled with her father’s commutes, caused Elena to wonder if she would ever have her chance to migrate. She recalled anticipating her own move.

At times, just playing around, I thought I’d be moving, but at times I did think [about it]. Because for me, what we have at the house is that we always sit around and talk. And then, when they decided to come over here, I knew we’d be moving here, that we were going to fix our papers to come over here because my mom and dad, well, they had told us many times. We thought so [too] because we would overhear their conversations with other people and we had an idea that one day we would all be here together.

In her role-playing games, Elena imagined Napa as the place where she and her family would be together. The decision to leave, however, was not hers to make. She had to wait for her father to make the decision.

Silvia, whose story introduces this article, knew that her move to Napa was inevitable. When her father legalized his status, he petitioned to bring his family to Napa. Silvia’s mother waited for years for news from the consulate on the status of their application for U.S. residency. The wait affected Silvia’s education. Because her rural hometown had only an elementary school, those who aspired to go on to middle and high school had to commute to the nearest urban center. Silvia started seventh grade, but her mother did not want her to continue. Silvia relates that her mother reasoned that since they would be moving to the United States immediately after receiving their papers, Silvia was better off waiting to go to school in Napa. Silvia, who had always enjoyed learning, found this upsetting. She began to imagine Napa as the place where her goals of going to school could be realized, as the place where she would complete high school and go on to college.
Yes, I wanted to [move to Napa]. I wished for it because over there [in Mexico], I was never ever able to go to school. I mean, I could, but I wasn’t allowed to study because she [her mother] always … she told me that it was better to stay [at home in Mexico] and that I would study [in Napa] when I got there.

Silvia did not want to move to be with her father; she wanted to move so that she could have an education. Her life in Michoacan began to seem temporary after she had to leave school.

Elena and Silvia anticipated migrating to Napa, but they never verbalized this to their parents. Dulce, however, was more articulate about wanting to move to Napa. She grew up in a transnational household in the state of Guanajuato. Her father began commuting to Napa as a young single man and, once married, continued migrating there to support his family. After her older sister left for New York City, Dulce, who was then thirteen, began to express her interest in moving to the United States.

My sister, she was already here [in the United States], but she’s not here [in Napa], she’s in New York. She wanted to come, and so I’d tell my mom that I wanted to come too, but, like, I only said it jokingly. Then later … my mom said that we were all coming [to Napa] and I felt like … well, I thought my mom was just saying it jokingly, but no. Then she said that maybe we were coming to Napa, and that was it. I felt like, on the one hand I wanted to come, and on the other hand I didn’t because I was going to miss … [Guanajuato] a lot.

Although she said she was joking when she first expressed a desire to move, Dulce confessed that she wanted to see for herself the place that everyone in Guanajuato was talking about. Guanajuato has a satellite community in Napa so stories about Napa were always circulating. She said that she often wondered if she would ever join her sister and her father in the United States. For Dulce as well as Silvia, anticipating and imagining her trip seemed to have little to do with her father or with family re-unification. Dulce seemed to want to experience living in the United States for herself.

While some of the girls based their anticipation on conversations they overheard or on clear evidence that they would migrate, such as waiting for their residency papers, Leti said that she simply knew that she was moving to Napa. During his visits, her father often asked Leti and her brother if they wanted to join him. Leti said she felt animada
(excited) whenever her father asked this question. When I asked if she had anticipated moving to Napa she responded, “Sí, yo lo sentía” (“Yes, I simply felt it.”)

The stories told by Elena, Silvia, Dulce and Leti show that from a young age, and long before her migration, each girl began to imagine how she, too, would move to Napa. Migration to Napa represented an adventure—seeing the place that everyone talked about—and the fulfillment of dreams. In Napa, plans would come to fruition, and families would be re-united. Elena and Silvia in particular held romantic notions about Napa and the United States—notions related to the American dream that immigrants seldom encounter. These girls arrived in Napa when the anti-immigrant rhetoric was prevalent. While they lived in Mexico, it was difficult for them to image the context into which they would arrive. Instead, they imagined they would regain precisely what migration took from them—family re-unification and the opportunity to go to school.

“Maybe I’ll be moving to El Norte”

For some girls the journey to Napa included long periods of waiting that caused much anxiety. Dulce fully anticipated her move to Napa, but there were many uncertainties surrounding her departure. Although she had conversations with her mother about moving, the decision did not depend on her mother, but on her father. Her parents regularly discussed the migration to Napa, but her mother revealed little of these conversations. Dulce shared her doubts with her best friend.

I would start to tell her, “No, friend … maybe I’ll be moving to El Norte, but I don’t really know.” And my friend didn’t believe me, so then I’d tell her, “No, I am, I’m serious, I’m going.” And I felt like, like [I’d tell myself], “No, no, now I don’t think so.” And I felt like, I don’t know, at times I’d say [to myself], “No, I’m just getting my hopes up, and I’m not going,” and that was that. Sometimes the hope would go away, but yeah, I kept thinking that maybe I would be moving.

For Dulce, who was left out of the decision-making process, imagining her migration was accompanied by uncertainty that prolonged the wait. Lorena and Erika experienced the uncertainty of migration differently. Lorena’s mother left Jalisco when Lorena was eleven. She told Lorena that she and her younger brother would follow her to Napa.
Her brother left approximately four months after her mother’s departure as instructed, but Lorena refused to go. She said, “I didn’t want to go because, well, I like it here [in Mexico]. I mean, how should I put it? It’s because, like, I’ve never liked moving away from my town. It’s where I’m from.” During the next three years Lorena’s mother called regularly from Napa, and each time she asked Lorena whether she was ready. This constant questioning made Lorena anxious. Her mother finally made the decision for her. One Thursday evening she called to tell Lorena that she had made arrangements for Lorena to fly to Tijuana the following Monday, where her uncle would meet her. With only four days to prepare, there was no time for Lorena to doubt the plan. She left as instructed and wondered how Napa would change her life.

Erika grew up in Guatemala with an older sister and four younger brothers. When she was ten, her mother migrated to Napa. Erika was left in the care of her maternal grandparents. Erika said that her grandmother constantly punished her. She was the only sibling who was expected to work to supplement their grandparents’ limited income and this prevented her from going to school. Tired of the beatings and feeling like the black sheep of the family, Erika was certain that life would be different in Napa. Each time her mother called, Erika begged her to send for her, and finally her mother agreed. Erika was ready to go. She said, “[I wanted to come to Napa] because … I had many problems and things that happened to me over there and I became anxious. So yes, yes … I wanted to move over here.”

Perhaps to comfort Erika, her mother told her that money and instructions for the move to Napa were on the way. Filled with joy, Erika was certain that she would soon join her mother in Napa, where she would finally be able to go to school and not have to work as much. Each day for two years Erika waited eagerly for the mail, but the promised money and instructions never arrived. Whenever Erika inquired about the money, her mother assured her that it was on the way. When she was sixteen Erika finally decided to take matters into her own hands. At that time she was employed at a restaurant that was frequented by men who had returned to Guatemala after working in the United States. In the restaurant she met a thirty-four year-old man who took an interest in her story. She told this man how much she wanted to go to school, but that she could not because of money troubles. This man, perhaps moved by Erika’s story, offered to pay for her tuition at a boarding
school. Erika accepted the offer, knowing that her mother would disapprove and immediately send for her. The plan worked. Her mother heard of Erika's whereabouts a few months into the semester. Worried about her daughter's future, Erika's mother sent for her.

Although she was anxious to leave Guatemala, Erika lacked the social networks to travel to the United States without the financial support of her mother. Expressing a desire to migrate was not enough. Nevertheless Erika found a way to expedite her migration to Napa. She successfully manipulated the situation to push her mother into finally sending for her.

What allowed these girls to anticipate and imagine migration, in spite of the uncertainty they felt, was the connection that they had to Napa via their transnational mothers and fathers. This connection placed them on the migrant path where their migration seemed like a matter of time.

**Conclusion**

Stories like those of Erika, Lorena, Leti, Elena, Dulce, Sonia and Silvia are common among immigrant adolescent girls who were raised in transnational households, yet these stories are rarely included in conversations about immigration even though they are essential to an understanding of the nature of transnational families. As the global economy continues to disrupt local Mexican economies and prompt the migration of thousands, families will continue to be forced to live apart. The first step of a family's migration is the departure of one parent, resulting in a transnational familial arrangement (Suárez-Orozco and Suárez-Orozco 2001). For children who remain behind, waiting for the next step in which they too, will travel across the border makes life seem temporary. Migration is a process that enters their lives long before they are born. For adolescent girls, who are dependent on their parents, migration begins in their imaginations. Their sex and age place them in a category apart from not only their parents but also siblings who are male, older or younger. Their experiences with migration are usually very different.

The adolescent girls interviewed for this study are crucial actors in the migration process. They are key witnesses to the range of emotional consequences that shaped their experiences—experiences that they
brought with them when they finally moved to Napa. Their stories are essential for a full understanding of transnational families. Through such narratives we are able to witness the extent to which transnational lives are affected at a local level. They tell us that the migration of their parents places them on the migrant path. These girls knew, just like their parents, that their futures were in Napa. For Erika, Lorena, Leti, Elena, Dulce, Sonia and Silvia, their experience of migration began in Mexico, long before they crossed the border and arrived in the Napa Valley. We have much to learn from their experiences.

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Notes

1. Rhacel Salazar Parreñas defines transnational households as “households located in two or more nation states” (Parreñas 2005: 4).
2. There is a broad range of literature on the experiences of immigrant children within the United States. This does not include their experiences before migration or during the process of migration. Rather, this body of literature focuses on the experiences of immigrant children in the schools.
3. The stories of those who remain behind are more common in the media, particularly in documentaries and films. See for example the documentary, Los Que Se Quedan and the film Sin Nombre.
4. As Douglas Massey (1999) explains, the cumulative causation theory states that migration alters the social context within which subsequent decisions to migrate are made.
5. Chicana feminists do not necessarily engage in transnational migration discourse, but the liminal, borderlands, and/or third space they utilize seems fitting as a way of understanding the lives of girls on the brink of migration.
6. I am cautious here about using the word “voluntary” because, as theories of international migration show, there are macro and micro factors that influence peoples’ decision to migrate to the United States.
7. The gender-based expectation in transnational families—father away or a transnational mother—has also been examined in recent films such as La Misma Luna and Sin Nombre. In La Misma Luna, Rosario, the mother, leaves behind her son Carlitos whereas in Sin Nombre, it is Horacio, the father, who leaves his daughter Sayra in Honduras. Both films approach the duties of a mother or a father differently. In La Misma Luna, Rosario is the sacrificing mother who aches for her son, whereas in Sin Nombre, we know very little of Horacio other then the belief that he would have not returned for Sayra had he not been deported.

8. This is not the case in fictional accounts or first person memoirs in which stories of immigrant children begin at home, long before they migrate to the United States. See, for example, Esmeralda Santiago’s When I Was Puerto Rican; Loida Maritza Pérez’s Geographies of Home: A Novel; and Edwidge Danticat’s Brother, I’m Dying, to cite just three.


10. Although Erika, the only girl interviewed from Guatemala, comes from a very different social, political and economic context than the girls who come from Mexico, I chose to include her story and focus on the common experience she shared with the Mexican girls.

11. When I asked Silvia why her father had moved to Napa, she said he had left to fix his papers through la amnistía (the amnesty). Although she did not specify the Immigration Reform and Control Act of 1986, I assumed that her father returned to Napa to legalize his status under this law.

12. The approximate length of time for family members of U.S. residents to legalize their status is five years or longer if children of the applicant are unmarried, and under twenty-one years of age. If they are older and/or married, the process is lengthier. See www.immspec.com/family-based-information.htm.

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Abstract • This article examines how the topics of migration, cultural diversity, and discrimination are depicted in current Austrian school textbooks and how they are discussed and perceived by pupils of different age groups attending different types of schools. The discussion concentrates on three main issues: the representation of migration as problematic; the use, critical or otherwise, of specific terms; and whether the history of migration to and from Austria is represented and perceived as part of a common Austrian history. Alongside the findings of the textbook analysis, we show how the involvement of pupils in textbook and migration research can contribute to the production of scientific knowledge in this area.

Keywords • Austrian migration history, migration research, national narratives, participatory research, representations of migration, textbook research

Introduction

Although some researchers have studied the representation of migration and diversity in Austrian textbooks, such projects thus far have concentrated on textbooks as products and neglected their target groups: pupils and teachers. Work with pupils and teachers was an integral element of the design of the research project “Migration(s) in Textbooks—A Critical Analysis by Pupils, Teachers and Researchers”, which was carried out by the authors between 2011 and 2013. Accordingly, the findings on which
this article is based cover not only representations of migration and diversity in Austrian textbooks, but also the discursive production and reproduction of these topics by Austrian pupils.

Austria has a long tradition as a country of immigration and emigration. According to estimates by the Austrian Foreign Ministry, about one-half million Austrian citizens live abroad. Almost 1.6 million people living in Austria, nineteen percent of the total population, are from migrant backgrounds, with the proportion in Vienna twice as high; more than one-quarter of these 1.6 million were born in Austria. The resulting demographic, cultural, and religious heterogeneity of Austrian society is reflected in the composition of classes in schools, particularly in Vienna and other major cities. More than half of all pupils in public primary schools in Vienna in the 2009/2010 school year had a first language that was not German.

Regardless of this situation, Austria’s national self-perception is still one of a homogenous and monolingual society. Even the linguistic rights of the autochthonous minorities in Austria that are protected by Article 7 of the Austrian Constitution and the “Law on Ethnic Groups” (Volksgruppengesetz) of 1977 are not undisputed. For instance, the right of the Slovenian minority in the province of Carinthia to bilingual place-name and similar signs was a source of conflict until as late as 2011. German language skills are one of the key issues in the public and political debate on migration and cultural diversity in Austria and are generally viewed as the single most important prerequisite for a successful process of integration into Austrian society. Immigrants who fail to provide evidence of their knowledge of German after a certain period of time face nonrenewal of their residence permits. The reluctance expressed in these and other circumstances to conceive of and imagine Austria as a plural and heterogeneous migration society is also in evidenced in the Austrian law on citizenship, which is still solely based on the principle of jus sanguinis and is one of the most restrictive in the European Union.

The hegemonic discourse on the topic in the media and the political sphere has for a long time been generally characterized by a representation of migration and cultural diversity as a problem and a threat to the majoritized Austrian society, its social system, security, and economic stability. This goes hand in hand with the prevalence in this discourse of objectifying depictions, paternalistic attitudes, simplified views of immigrants as perpetrators or victims, and the construction of immigrants as “others”. While, for example, Austrian emigration is largely disregarded in public debate, immigrants and other minorities are widely seen as a problem. Moreover, the more recent history of migration to and from Austria has no natural and undisputed place in the constitutive post-Second World War narratives of the country, especially with regard to the history of labor immigration and emigration.
is also reflected in school textbooks, where migration has only gradually begun to be included after decades of neglect.¹⁴

Textbooks are of particular significance in this regard, as they can be read as “national biographies”.¹⁵ They have long been regarded as the “preferred instruments of civic education and national instruction”¹⁶ and in most countries impart state-approved and thereby authorized and canonized knowledge. Those used in Austrian schools have to undergo an authorization procedure conducted by the Federal Ministry for Education, the Arts and Culture. A list of approved textbooks is issued by the ministry every school year, and only books on this list can be ordered free of charge by schools. Textbook content is highly selective and represents what Thomas Höhne calls “hegemonic representational knowledge” (hegemoniales Repräsentationswissen).¹⁷ In this sense, we understand textbooks as significant documents representing the dominant political and social thinking and discourse of a given time. Along with other teaching materials, they influence self-perceptions and perceptions of the “other” in a society, map social norms, and reflect existing stereotypes.¹⁸ This is particularly true for history, geography, and social studies textbooks.¹⁹

Teachers often rely on textbooks when preparing and organizing lessons, as confirmed by the findings of a survey²⁰ among teachers of all grades and subjects in Austria, conducted as part of our study. Forty-two percent of respondents always use textbooks for scheduling the school year, and forty-one percent often use them for this purpose. Altogether, 88 percent of the teachers in the sample always or often prepare their lessons with the aid of textbooks. Only a negligible proportion, barely 1 percent, never uses a textbook in this context. Textbooks are of lesser importance when it comes to the actual work in class, although here more than 50 percent of teachers often use them when giving instructions and for pupils’ independent work.

As indicated above, one of the principal issues with current textbook research in general concerns its preferential focus on textbooks as products, rather than on their use and potential effects.²¹ Neither teachers nor pupils are routinely included in research on textbooks, despite the fact that they are the ones these media primarily address. A number of studies have shown that pupils are perfectly capable of evaluating their textbooks.²² A study by Bodo von Borries, for instance, illustrates that pupils tend to be much more critical than their teachers when evaluating the same textbooks, especially with regard to issues such as comprehensibility or their potential to motivate pupils.²³ In the present study, pupils and teachers were actively involved in the research process, as we will outline below.

One of the crucial findings of our study is the difference in perceptions of Austrian migration history between majoritized Austrian pupils and pupils with an immigrant background. Whereas the former do not
think that migration and its history have anything to do with them at all, the latter feel that migration and its history concern them because of their family background. Both groups share the attitude that migration history is solely the history of migrants, that is “foreigners”, and not a shared element of Austrian history as a whole.

In what follows we will first introduce the methodological approach that we used in the study. Basing our viewpoint on our textbook analyses and an investigation of the material gathered during the workshops we ran with pupils, we will then argue that the tendency visible in textbooks to depict Austria’s migration history not as shared history affecting all, but as the history of a specific and separate group within society, supports and reproduces pupils’ perceptions and attitudes. We further argue that, instead of challenging the hegemonic discourse we have described, textbooks reproduce stereotypical images of immigrants and adopt the approach, prevalent in current discourse, of portraying immigration and cultural diversity as problematic. These representations not only perpetuate constructions of “us”, Austrians without immigrant backgrounds, as opposed to “the others”, but also contribute to the idea that migration “has nothing to do with me [as part of the majority] personally.” In the concluding section, we will propose recommendations on how these perceptions and stereotypical representations can be challenged in textbooks and classroom discussions.

**Methodological Approach**

Action research, as it was conducted in our study, stands out in academic research by its proximity to real-life practices. It focuses on individual instances of such practices, including, in relation to schools, school-based interactions, a child’s or teacher’s life situation or story, a specific lesson, or interactions within a group such as a class or informal study group. To extend the single-case perspective, this type of research creates links between the particularities of individual cases and knowledge of generally operating structures and processes. This was the fundamental approach underlying our study.

The analysis we conducted of textbooks was based on content analysis according to Mayring, in combination with critical discourse analysis as developed by Jäger. For an initial test analysis of fifty textbooks, we applied a global analysis approach following Legewie. The sample was based on the textbooks in use by the participating classes at the time of the project’s field phase. This sampling strategy enabled us to include new textbooks with innovative approaches, often chosen by the teachers involved, as well as almost all the most frequently used geography and history textbooks in Austria. A detailed analysis was carried out on
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twenty-two geography and history textbooks, focusing on the following research questions:

1. Which histories of migration to and from Austria are narrated in current Austrian textbooks? Is migration history represented as a constitutive part of Austrian history or as a separate, additional story?28

2. How are immigrants and people with a migrant background represented in the textbooks? Are they discursively constructed as part of the national/European self, or as outsiders or “others”?29

Direct work with pupils was an integral component of our study. Actively involved in the project were 170 pupils aged between thirteen and nineteen, from eight different year groups and from two Austrian cities, Vienna and Salzburg, along with eight teachers.30 The cities of Vienna and Salzburg were chosen because of their high rates of multilingual pupils and pupils with migrant backgrounds in comparison with rural areas and other Austrian cities.31 In each city the project team cooperated with classes from the following types of schools:32 new secondary schools (Neue Mittelschule or Kooperative Mittelschule), which are more generally and vocationally oriented; schools that prepare pupils for university: lower-level academic secondary schools (Allgemeinbildende Höhere Schule – Unterstufe) and upper-level academic secondary schools (Allgemeinbildende Höhere Schule – Oberstufe); and schools for higher vocational education (Berufsbildende Schule). The percentage of pupils with migrant backgrounds in each school varies considerably depending on the type of school and the federal state in which it is located.33 This is also true for the proportion of pupils with migrant backgrounds who took part in of the project,34 and is a circumstance that demonstrates the substantial extent of the Austrian school system’s tendency to afford opportunity based on socioeconomic background.35

Three half-day workshops were conducted with each class to complement our analysis of textbook examples, which was focused on the principal questions of the research across all sample groups included in the study. The workshops were structured in the same way for all the classes, but were specifically adapted to particular requirements, such as pupils’ language skills or perceived needs to include or exclude specific topics, after consultation with the teachers in each case. The first workshop was interactive and aimed at covering the pupils’ everyday experiences of migration in general, as well as the role of textbooks and their representational impact in general. The focus of the second workshop was on Austrian migration histories and their visibility or lack thereof in both society and textbooks; in particular, we used the workshop to reflect on the construction and inclusiveness or exclusiveness of history. In the third workshop, pupils had the opportunity to practice the basic methodological skills required for the analysis of textbooks. In a learning circuit
and in small groups, they analyzed textual and graphical examples from their textbooks together with the researchers. This work was guided by a prepared list of questions about the text. What emerged from this analysis proved useful in terms of our interrogation of the tendency of academic research into textbooks to privilege such processes of analysis. Accordingly, we gave greater analytical weight to the group discussions that took place at intervals during the workshops. We strategically chose varying sizes for the groups, ranging from whole-class to small groups, for the purpose of making internal group hierarchies more visible and allowing those voices to contribute that might normally struggle to be heard. We ensured that the group discussions took place in an atmosphere in which the voicing of all kinds of opinions was permitted and encouraged. The researchers moderated discussions and intervened only if the discussion failed to take account of arguments the researchers considered important.

All workshops were audio-recorded and photo-documented, and on occasion video-recorded. Some of the video material was analyzed using the documentary method, while most of the photographs and some videos were used as supplementary material to the audio documentation, making it possible to identify pupils during different discussions. The audio-recorded material was transcribed and analyzed using thematic coding. Special attention was given to differences between individual classes and to special group dynamics within classrooms and between different working groups, recognizing the influence of small cohesive groups within the classroom setting on the expressed beliefs and behavior of pupils. The analysis of the workshop material also focused on hierarchies and power relationships within the different classroom settings. The findings regarding power relationships were also discussed with the teachers in each case and the outcomes of these discussions were included in the analysis. Additionally, we conducted participant observation during the workshops. After each workshop, the researchers met to reflect on the workshop, their own positions, and their influence on classroom dynamics. These reflections were also recorded and analyzed to reveal the impact of the interventions conducted by the researchers during the workshops.

The following sections will present selected findings of the workshop analysis while also referring briefly to findings from the textbook analysis.

The Timeline: Whose History Is It?

As other studies have shown, migration history in textbooks is often represented as an additional story about, but not as a constitutive and essential part of, a country’s history. This was also one finding that emerged
from our study. It also became evident that it is common practice in educational and textbook discourse to concentrate on a few selected topics and histories relating to migration and to disregard others. One striking example is the manner in which more recent Austrian emigration histories are ignored, with the implicit consequence that certain movements of migration are consistently depicted as being undertaken by “others” rather than by “us”. This is accompanied by the marginalization of transmigration and remigration processes, and a resulting static and one-directional image of migration that sometimes gives an inaccurate impression of the actual numbers involved. Such an image is particularly in evidence with regard to Austria’s role as the principal country offering asylum to those forced to emigrate after the Hungarian Uprising of 1956 against Soviet control. This historical event is one of the main sources on which Austria draws in its depiction of itself as a welcoming reception country for refugees, a self-image that is also represented in the textbooks. The fact that the majority of Hungarian refugees only used Austria as a temporary refuge on their way to another country is hardly ever mentioned.

The perception that migration is something “others” do was often encountered among majoritized Austrian pupils in the workshops, who apparently did not think that Austrian migration history had much to do with them. The aim of one of the three workshops was to present and discuss the history of migration to and from Austria and to reflect on whether this history was perceived as part of Austrian history in general or, instead, as “another” story that does not necessarily need to be included in the overarching national narrative. According to Rainer Ohliger, migration history is “an inherent part of history as such” and the representation of it is “an essential part of how (national) societies construct themselves.” One of the aims of history education in schools is to tell the story of “our state” during different periods of time, although this does not always imply the inclusion of migration. In order to discuss this issue with the pupils, we prepared a timeline ranging roughly from 1900 to the present day that covered important milestones in Austria’s migration history.

In all the classes in which we worked, general interest in migration and migration-related issues was quite high. Knowledge of issues around migration differed according to the pupils’ level of education, and whether or not they were interested in hearing and learning more about certain periods of migration. However, it should be stressed that migration history in its “entirety” was not always of interest to them. From the discussions that ensued, and from the answers to our question on which migration issues pupils felt should be included in textbooks, it was clear that the topics the pupils found most interesting were those concerning racism and discrimination against migrants and people with migrant backgrounds, issues which, we further found, most textbooks failed to include. For ex-
ample, the death of the Nigerian asylum seeker Marcus Omofuma during a deportation flight in 1999 was thoroughly discussed by most pupils, who showed particular interest in the questions “How could this happen?” and “What can we do to stop discrimination?” The 1993 “Sea of Lights” (Lichtermeer), a large-scale demonstration against racism and discrimination, was also evaluated by the pupils as important, especially by those without migrant backgrounds, because it showed, in their view, that not all Austrians are xenophobic. As one pupil observed, “not all the 300,000 people [there] were foreigners.” Other energetically discussed historical periods included the National Socialist era, labor migration to Austria in the 1960s and 1970s, and a political campaign launched in 2006 by the right-leaning Austria’s Freedom Party (FPÖ) entitled “Home(land), not Islam” (Daham statt Islam). The wars in former Yugoslavia (1991–1995 and 1998–1999) and the associated refugee movements to Austria were of special interest in the two classes with pupils who, or whose parents, originated from this region due to their first-hand experiences. These pupils were pleased that their knowledge and experiences were recognized; however, the discussion of these issues gave rise to tension between pupils from the different ethnic groups from former Yugoslavia.

Although the pupils were interested in certain periods of history, their approaches and attitudes to the question of whether the history being discussed concerned them specifically—a question posed within the project diaries pupils were asked to complete as well as in group discussions and feedback sessions—often depended on whether the pupils had a perceived or actual migrant background themselves. For many of the majoritized Austrian pupils, that is those who did not have a migrant background or did not regard themselves or their parents as migrants, the typical answer to the question “In what way/how did the workshop affect you?” was: “As I don’t have migrant background, this workshop didn’t mean anything personal to me.” Many of the majoritized Austrian pupils were not aware that the history of migration is an important part of Austrian history, and thus their own history. Their understanding of the past, their identity, their feelings of belonging, and the way in which they constructed historical narratives depended on their own experiences and memories. From this perspective, Austrian history remains a field of exclusion, of which migrants and their histories are not regarded as an inherent part. However, one interesting fact we uncovered is that especially for these pupils, the periods and events on the timeline relating to discrimination and racism, such as the Lichtermeer, Marcus Omofuma, or the recent cases of the deportation of asylum seekers, were important issues. The Lichtermeer was mentioned frequently, because, as one pupil in Vienna stated, it “was very beautiful and it showed the solidarity among the population.” The importance of opposing the xenophobic tendencies in society by highlighting actions against discrimination, and in doing so
relieving the Austrian majority, was visible in many classes with majoritized Austrian pupils. These pupils emphasized the fact that they were against discrimination and racism, although in some of the discussion groups and classes, prejudices and skepticism toward immigrants were clearly in evidence and given voice too.

On the other hand, most of the pupils with migrant backgrounds stated that the workshop spoke to them personally because either they themselves or their parents were migrants. As Josefine Raasch has shown in her study on pupils with migrant backgrounds in Germany, such pupils often use history to engage with their own and their families’ histories in order to locate themselves within society.49 This was also the case in the current study, where some of the pupils used their family’s story to interact with specific events on the timeline. “It has something to do with me because I have an immigrant background,” was a typical response among these pupils. Some of these pupils recognized themselves and features of their lives on the timeline, and also appreciated it as “their” history. In many of the classes with pupils from former Yugoslavia, some of the stories we presented about the wars in the 1990s proved very emotional. Some pupils told us that after hearing the stories, they understood why their parents did not want to talk about the past. Another pupil said that “the workshop showed me why I am here, where I could have been, and how I could have lived, if certain historical events had not happened,” thus demonstrating that she had made connections between her own story and the wider global context. From this point of view, migration is perceived as a historical continuum rather than as an isolated phenomenon. Nevertheless, the following question remains: Do pupils with a migrant background see the history of migration to and from Austria as a part of Austrian history or not?

The pupils often claimed that they were faced with discrimination as a result of their immigrant background. During the workshops many of them seemed to be positively surprised about our interest in their stories and the opportunity to talk about them and make them visible. Based on discussions with the pupils, we recognized that many of them did not identify themselves as Austrians or as part of Austrian society. Rather they defined themselves as “foreigners,” and perceived the history of migration as a history of “foreigners.” When asked, “What is the history of migration?” the answer was “It is the history of foreigners.” Thus, although the timeline described essential parts of “their” history, it was not necessarily perceived as part of the history of Austria.

It should be stated at this point that there were different attitudes within the groups, and that the role of a migrant background when considering the history of migration cannot be generalized. Some majoritized Austrian pupils saw migration as an inherent part of Austrian history. This was especially clear in one class in Salzburg, where several majori-
tized pupils stated that migration “concerns us too.” On the other hand, there were also some pupils with migrant backgrounds who during the workshops favored assimilation of migrants into Austrian society and also Austrian history, without highlighting migration.

While having a migrant background affects pupils’ perceptions of the history of migration, it is not the only significant aspect in this regard. Individual attitudes toward migration, integration, and assimilation also play an important role; these attitudes are influenced by family and social backgrounds, media, and particularly peer groups. It emerged, both from the reflection diaries the pupils wrote as part of the project and the small-group discussions, that pupils’ views of migration and integration are influenced by hierarchies in the classroom and in society at large. Having or not having a “migrant background” was an important factor in deciding how the history of migration to and from Austria was perceived. The national narrative about migration history taught in schools and personal experiences of migration were also influential. From the perspective of pupils with both migrant and nonmigrant backgrounds, it would seem that textbooks and the way migration is taught in schools leave little room for inclusive historiographies. There is still a need to critically engage with the question of how the history of migration should be integrated into school curricula.

Problematizing Migration

A recurring finding of textbook analyses of the representation of migration in various European countries is the depiction of immigration and diversity as a problem. The present analysis confirms these findings. Examples such as the following passage from an Austrian textbook are representative: “Migration is one of the most important factors of population development and one of the essential problems [eines der Zentralprobleme] facing the economy and society, politics and culture, in the past and today.” In the same textbook, linguistic diversity in the newly enlarged European Union is also portrayed as problematic. This style of depiction is accompanied by the representation in these textbooks of only certain groups of immigrants and few countries of origin. Especially when it comes to pictorial representations, Muslim immigrants and people from African countries prevail, alongside rather marginal representation of other immigrant groups, such as Germans and immigrants from other long-time EU member states. This leads to a distinct problematization of certain groups, with the integration of Muslim immigrants into society depicted as particularly difficult in some books.

This treatment of the issues was clearly in evidence within classrooms as well. Words and phrases such as “discrimination,” “homesick-
ness,” “deportation,” “being left alone,” “humiliation,” “poverty,” “war,” “crime,” “no friends,” “racism,” “to assimilate someone,” “unemployment,” “segregation,” and “terrorism” were mentioned by pupils from a total of eight school classes when asked for their initial ideas on the topic of migration. In most of these brainstorming sessions, the negative or problem-laden aspects of the topic predominated. It was therefore clear from the beginning that it was not only textbooks that treated migration as a problem, but that most pupils likewise saw migration from a problem-focused perspective.

The discourse of migration as a problem surfaced on several different occasions during the workshops, and especially in the moderated discussions in the third workshop in each class. Within a learning circuit, pupils, after forming small groups, were shown pictures from textbooks illustrating the topics of migration, integration, and/or diversity and were asked to free-associate. Most of the discussions in the small groups focused on two topics, both of them highly problematized. The first topic was multilingualism, with the discussions triggered by a picture of bilingual road signs. The second topic was the social self-segregation of Muslims, which was triggered by pictures of Muslim women wearing headscarves. In one picture a woman is writing the word “integration” on a blackboard, two other pictures show women with children at a playground, and two more feature Muslim women in shopping areas.

Regarding multilingualism, most classes overall, although not all the pupils in those classes, put forward the view that Austria is and should be a monolingual German-speaking country, and said that they regarded multilingualism as a problem rather than a positive phenomenon. A problem emphasized by the pupils was the impossibility of “doing justice to all language groups,” as can be seen in the following excerpt from a discussion that took place in an upper-level academic secondary school:

Pupil A: For me this is not OK, because you can’t please everybody. If you make a road sign where you translate one [line of text on it] into Turkish, the other into Croatian … then those [other language groups] feel disadvantaged and so on.

Facilitator: Are there other opinions on this? Do you also think one can’t please everybody anyway? Is it better to only have the signs in German?

Pupil B: I do think, well, if you see your own language somewhere in a foreign country, then you feel … at ease. Thus, I do feel like this if I read [my first language] somewhere…. Maybe this also leads to a better atmosphere.

Pupil C: However, but I think you don’t have to go over the top, because in principle, no country does it [putting up multilingual road signs] and is as bloody cumbersome with it as Austria. (10 February 2010)
As these statements illustrate, some of the pupils were in favor of bilingual road signs, while a few others, such as Pupil B cited above, with a Western European immigrant background, commented on identification through language. However, aside from these rather personal and emotional arguments, very few points in favor of multilingualism were expressed during these discussions. Altogether, the participants showed little or no knowledge of indigenous national minority groups in Austria and their rights. This is exemplified in the following quotation of a statement made by a pupil at an upper-level academic secondary school, whose reference to bilingual road signs in the context of the Slovenian minority in Carinthia revealed a perception of Slovenians as migrants rather than as a minority group with special rights in the Austrian constitution:

I do not demand that if I live there [in a foreign country], everything should be in German. I adapt to the country in which I find myself and here [in Austria] the national language is German and here it is written in German. (Sek 2, 29 February 2012)

As Austrian society is perceived as monolingual German, the “problem of multilingualism” formulated by many of the pupils is also connected to the perceived failure of “integration” of minority groups into Austrian society. Here, the pupils evidently mistake integration for cultural assimilation, and a task to be completed only by the “others” with regard to language. In most of the groups that discussed this topic, the argument for a monolingual Austria was passionately presented and knowledge of German was seen as a fundamental means for integration: “For integration [it] makes more sense if they speak German. … Among [immigrants] themselves it’s still no problem [to speak their own language]” (Sek 2, 29 February 2012).

Multilingualism was viewed especially strongly as a problem by pupils with a majoritized Austrian background or a nonstigmatized migration background, such as German. That said, also a considerable number of pupils with a minoritized immigration background vehemently defended the notion of a German-only environment and criticized other pupils for using their first language in public. Furthermore, in some classroom environments, multilingualism was also regarded as a problem for the pupils themselves; some of the monolingual German pupils claimed they felt excluded whenever multilingual pupils used their first language to communicate. Further, some pupils, among them pupils with migrant backgrounds, thought it “rude” for immigrants to speak their native language when they were not understood by all present. English, and sometimes also Spanish, was not seen as a problem, but rather as an “important” or “beautiful” language, and was clearly distinguished from the “stress”-creating language of Turkish. When referring to this distinction, one pupil stated: “Turkish is not that beautiful because everybody is complaining about Turkish” (Sek 1, 20 December 2011).
As we can observe here, the majority of the pupils participating in our study without migrant backgrounds, and a substantial proportion of those with migrant backgrounds, regarded multilingualism, in terms of migrant languages in Austria, not as positive, an opportunity or a resource, but rather as a problem in relation to the integration of migrants into Austrian society. This group viewed not knowing or not speaking German as the primary reason for the de facto segregation of migrants within society, in-grouping, and failed integration. Pupils spoke of this particularly in connection with Turkish speakers, but also more generally in relation to all languages spoken by immigrants from eastern and southern European countries. By contrast, languages such as English, and to some extent Spanish, were regarded as necessary or beautiful.

This problematizing approach to multilingualism and migration in general emerged clearly during the discussions about the textbook pictures showing Muslim women with headscarves in a rather shabby playground with graffiti. Most pupils associated self-segregation of specific groups within society with these pictures, and linked such patterns of separateness to a lack of proficiency in the German language, immigrants’ supposed desire to keep to themselves, or gender regimes that forced segregation. By contrast, other pupils criticized the pictures, arguing that they stereotyped migrants and foreigners in a negative way. Criticism of the pictures and the problematization of migration and integration often arose at the same time in the discussion, as the following excerpt from a discussion at an upper-level academic secondary school shows:

Pupil A: “Well, I don’t think so, but if you looked [at the pictures] for the first time, you could perceive it that way, that they [the Muslim women] are just making groups [among themselves] and not integrating themselves.... Everything is very run-down, because they are sitting in the playground ... and ... the women are only ... hanging around ... and occupying the parks and the playgrounds. And ... therefore maybe people won’t send their children there because they are afraid that they might be doing something.”

Pupil B: “Well, I also saw this immediately, that they are kind of ... lumping [themselves] together or so.... And that they probably do not want to integrate themselves.... And that is how it mostly is. Because if you go to a park, like in the 11th [district of Vienna], then you basically see these Turkish families or so. They just sit there at a table the whole day, talking to each other ... and not saying anything to other Austrians. Often most of them also can’t speak any German, I don’t know if they don’t want to or so.” (Sek 2, 15 December 2011)

During the workshops it became evident that pupils with a minoritized immigrant background in particular found it difficult to advance arguments that might strengthen positive or alternative ways of thinking about
migration, but also many pupils with a majoritized Austrian background and a positive attitude toward migration expressed their desire to be able to have recourse to such. This emerged in the third workshop, where the pupils were first asked to critically engage with problem-centered quotations on the topic of migration in their textbooks and then think of positive arguments for migration. Only a few were able to suggest positive arguments and alternative views. However, at the third stage of this task, when they were asked to select from a list of aspects of migration that they thought should be included in textbooks, they chose a variety of different aspects, such as cultural and language diversity, and motives for migration, such as love, curiosity, and education; these aspects were selected alongside or even above issues relating to the advantages of migration for Austrian society. Although focal areas differed widely among the groups and classes in the study, it nevertheless became apparent that pupils both with and without migrant backgrounds, along with many teachers, need additional information in order to question the prevailing discourse of migration and integration as problems.

**Issues Concerning Terms**

From an academic point of view, the definition and explanation of terms connected to the issues of migration and integration in textbooks needs more attention and also improvement. In most of the textbooks we analyzed in detail, the term “migration” is briefly defined, as is, in part, the notion of integration. That said, only two geography books use a comparison of definitions as a way of showing that the notion of integration is a controversial issue in academia and often lacks clear definition. Only one of these books refers explicitly to academic approaches to the terms. Moreover, terms now generally considered problematic are still quite common in Austrian textbooks and would require, at the very least, a differentiated explanation regarding their usage and history. “Black Africa” (*Schwarzafrika*) which is a German term originating from colonial times and referring essentially to sub-Saharan Africa, and “cultural area” (*Kulturkreis*) are examples of such concepts, whose use runs the risk of reinforcing pupils’ existing stereotypes. Where problematic terms, such as “Gypsy” (*Zigeuner*) or “colored,” are explained, the explanation often lacks a clear and understandable historical context, meaning the background of the term and the reasons for its now problematic status remain unclear and pupils are unable to understand why certain terms should no longer be used.

It became clear during the workshops that pupils are very interested in the definition of terms and discussions of definitions. In accordance with this finding, we recommend including different definitions of the
same term in textbooks. Such an approach would enable textbooks to feature multiperspective views on the topic of migration and integration and stimulate discussion in class. One of the most common questions posed by pupils during the exercise on controversial concepts conducted during the workshops in schools was: “So, what’s the correct term?” “Correct,” for the pupils, was linked to debates in academia and the media about “political correctness”\(^5\!). Some of the pupils did not want to discriminate against minorities in general, or insult people in their lives who had migrant backgrounds. Quite a few pupils viewed it as essential that they were able to use nondiscriminatory terms for their future careers, for instance, or out of a sense of general responsibility. For a few, it was important to use terms that were acceptable to both majorities and minorities. Those with Eastern European migration backgrounds, for example, were often interested in how to refer to “Africans” or “Asians.” Others were interested in academic argumentation on textual criticism. Notwithstanding these differences in motivation, all the pupils shared a fundamental interest in scrutinizing terms critically. We did not encounter much resistance to the idea of adapting terms to societal circumstances, as we had found in the course of delivering adult education\(^6\!) on “language and discrimination”. The pupils seemed to be markedly open to this view of language as a dynamic entity. When the facilitator the small-group discussions asked whether critical engagement with terms was important or rather annoying to them, one pupil said: “For me, the concepts are important because how would we learn them if not from textbooks?” Pupils also showed critical interest in general changes in terminology. Some even extended the discussion in relation to specific terms, arguing whether they were adequate for their purpose or whether their use depended on the tone in which the word or phrase was used.

During the workshops we discussed some of the different terms that are linked to migration (such as “black” or “colored,” “cultural area,” “asylum seeker,” “Third World,” and “developing country”). Due to their history and relevance to Austria, we have chosen the terms “foreigner” (Ausländer) and “race” (Rasse) to elaborate on typical discussions within school classes and their significance in the context of their approaches to textbooks.

“Foreigner” (Ausländer)

At the outset of our work with the pupils, we all agreed on a common usage of terms regarding migrants and people with an immigrant background. Some of the younger pupils were uncertain about using the term “immigrant,” and wondered whether it was an insult. Others had already realized that, in some contexts, the term “person with a migrant back-
ground”61 is less derogatory than Ausländer. In a few cases, majoritized Austrian pupils supported the use of Ausländer, but several others, some with a migrant background and some without, intervened because they regarded the term as discriminatory and as an expression of social exclusion. Many pupils believed that Ausländer referred only to certain groups, with one commenting: “For us, the Ausländer are only [those] from the former Yugoslavia who cannot behave.” Others suggested that “Ausländer in the negative sense are actually the Turks.” At the same time, they also agreed that neither French nor American people living in Austria could be described as Ausländer.

Ausländer is a term that has negative connotations in Austria, although it is still applied in legal and statistical fields, and therefore used in some textbooks in these contexts. In other areas and contexts, quotation marks are often placed around the word. Austria has developed a sharp distinction between citizens and Ausländer in terms of legal status, although this distinction has come in for increasing criticism since the 1980s.62 A focus on a person’s descent that could be construed as racist is a key trope of Austrian political and societal discourse.63 This focus on descent was reflected among the pupils with whom we talked. The following discussion between three pupils in one of the workshops at a higher vocational education school is typical, and shows the various facets of the discussion:

Pupil A: Only the bad things about foreigners stick out and the good are not mentioned.
Pupil B: Society doesn’t change any more.
Pupil A: Honestly, the nice foreigners are the exceptions.
Pupil B: But it is true that a foreigner must prove that he is a nice person.
Pupil A: Appearance plays a big role, and theirs is often negative.
Pupil C: Most of them are born in Austria, but don’t behave like that.
Pupil B: I think it is their environment.
Pupil C: Or social class.
Pupil B: I think it’s the fault of the parents.
Pupil A: But sometimes it seems that the younger ones are worse than their parents.
Pupil B: One hears prejudices all day and with time you simply believe them.
Pupil A: I’ve not been brought up that way, but still I have the stuff in my head.
Pupil B: I really want change, because if I’m walking through Salzburg in the evening, there are two groups, foreigners and nationals. I dare not pass those foreigners, because I will be subjected to abuse every time. I don’t even want to get to know them anymore. Although I understand
their aggression, but it just makes no sense any more to me. (Sek 2, 10 December 2012)

In this example it is obvious that the pupils, even those who are positive toward migration, view “the others” and minorities as a problem, and barely take into account that they themselves, perceived as majorities with the power of definition, also have a role to play in this system. They want change for their own good, but fail to reflect on their own part in the situation. In some classes, even the pupils with migrant backgrounds did not reject these ideas, whereas in other classes pupils with and without migrant backgrounds sometimes resisted these ascriptions made to Ausländer.

In many of the discussions the pupils searched desperately for a general term for certain groups of people with specific markers. This need for labeling sometimes resulted in them referring and deferring to their peers in this matter, as the following discussion at a new secondary school shows:

Pupil A: I have an immigrant background, but nobody calls me that. Or have you ever referred to me as a person with an immigrant background? I was born here.

Pupil B: You’ve got the Austrian [citizenship], haven’t you?

Pupil C: No, he’s Czech.

Pupil B: What would you like to be called?

Pupil A: Preferably by my name. (Sek 1, 11 November 2012)

Many pupils suggested referring to people’s individual countries or regions of origin, or, even better, using people’s names, where they were known, as a differentiated alternative. During the workshops, we reflected with the pupils upon reasons for avoiding generalizing and hierarchizing terms. After the workshops, only a few participants were still convinced that there was a desperate need for generalizing concepts.

“Race” (Rasse)

The vast majority of scientists currently agree that homo sapiens cannot be divided into so-called races. The conditions necessary for the subdivision of detectable biological criteria do not exist, meaning the term lacks any validity with regard to people, as opposed to animals. Although the term “race” has been obsolete since the 1970s in Austria, and some scientists maintain that it has disappeared from mainstream Austrian society, it is still found in everyday discourse and textbooks. The concept of “race”
was by far the most difficult of the concepts we discussed, and caused consternation in some of the classes. At least one pupil in a class, but usually several, and in one class all the pupils were of the opinion that biologically distinct “races” existed.

When we asked, “What do you mean by the word ‘race’?”, many pupils referred to the phenotype, giving rise to statements such as: “Different looks!”; “For example, a white man and a black man that are different races”; “Races—that means people are different, they all look different and are from somewhere else”; “Everybody has a human race, for example, blue eyes”. Some also referred to national origin: “When a person comes from a country then he has his own race”; “Foreigners have different races”; “People from different countries are of separate species.” Others resorted to biological explanations: “There are different human and animal races”; “Some people are of pure races.” In many groups, comparisons with animal breeds were made, some in a confirmatory way: “Animals also have their own races, why not people?” One pupil tried to list the different “races”: “I think there are not only five races, there may be more than that ... There are Indians, Africans, Americans, Chinese.” Other pupils did not accept the concept of “races” and tried to deconstruct it: “There are no human races”; “I believe no one should make any subdivision by color or race”; “Each person is different”; “I think the concept is not good, it sounds like animal breeds and it reminds me of the Nazis.” While many pupils associated the term “race” with Nazism and the Second World War and therefore rejected it, responses to the term that pointed to “race” in the context of discrimination, like “racist” or “racism,” were rare.

After discussions about the history of the term “race” in the Austrian and European context, pupils were rather shocked to discover that the term can still be found in their textbooks. They tried to find excuses for the authors and explanations for their ignorance: “Perhaps they didn’t know it themselves”; “I’m sure they were probably just careless”; “Perhaps it [the concept] is scientifically unclear.”

When it came to critical engagement with concepts, what pupils understood least of all was the fact that there is no consistency in the use of terms. Even when they began to accept this, for many the question remained: “But why can’t we find critical examinations of terms in textbooks so that we can form our own opinions?” The pupils expressed a desire for the inclusion of contexts and historical derivations in textbooks, and the possibility of discussing the pros and cons of certain terms. Where details were important, such as in the timeline described above, the pupils were most interested in the people behind the histories, and the emotional and personalized aspects of the event or phenomenon in question.
Summary

Heterogeneous schools and classrooms with multilingual pupil bodies are characteristic properties of societies throughout Europe that feature significant migration. The coexistence within one society of a multiplicity of narratives and “stories” is another one. The central aim of our project was not just to analyze textbooks with regard to their representations of migration and societal diversity, but also to meet one of the main criticisms leveled at textbook research by actively involving pupils, with all their different biographies and backgrounds, in this analysis. This approach made it possible to integrate heterogeneity and multiple perspectives into the project work itself.

The findings of the textbook analysis have led us to argue that there is still a tendency in current Austrian textbooks to produce and reproduce prevalent stereotypical pictures of migration and migrants commonly accepted in Austrian public discourse and to portray the history of migration in Austria as a supplementary story and not as an integral part of Austrian history per se. In our work with the pupils it emerged distinctly that these depictions are strongly reflected in pupils’ perceptions and discourses regarding the topic. Differences between majoritized Austrian pupils and those with migrant backgrounds are evident here and need to be taken into account. We have also argued that the discourse in textbooks generally supports the view of most pupils that migration history is solely the history of migrants and not a part of Austrian history as a whole. To support this argument, we highlighted three issues: the “selective representation” of Austrian migration history in textbooks, the omnipresent discourse of migration as a problem, and the importance of the definition and criticism of terms.

The findings of our textbook analysis show that selected stories have found their way into textbooks and hence Austrian cultural memory, while others stories about both immigration to and emigration from Austria continue to be neglected and marginalized. Our work with the pupils revealed that their interest in migration issues is generally high, but that it is also selective when it comes to migration history. Pupils are in favor of an approach to the history of migration that includes biographical elements and everyday history, because this makes it easier for them to link up the knowledge they acquire with their own memories and experiences. We also found a strong desire among the pupils to learn more about racism and discrimination, structural and otherwise, in connection with migration and to discuss what has been done, and what they themselves can do, to counteract such discrimination. However, as we also observed, this interest in particular issues does not necessarily imply that pupils with majoritized Austrian background feel that migration history
“has something to do with them.” Emphasizing inner-Austrian migration and past and present Austrian emigration history in textbooks and workshops could be one way of challenging this perception and might make it easier for majoritized pupils to see migration as a possible event in their own lives and not just something that “others” do. At the same time, this would permit pupils in whose lives migration has featured to see migration history not only as their history, but as part of a broader Austrian and world history. Highlighting the heterogeneity of Austrian society, together with the related issues of discrimination and racism, might be another way of illustrating the fact that we live in a society shaped by migration, the result of a long and rich history of migration movement, and a society in which equal opportunities and rights concern everybody, regardless of their social, cultural, or religious backgrounds.

The representation of migration as a problem surfaced not only in the textbooks analyzed, but also at various points during the workshops. Multilingualism, and the assumed self-segregation of Muslims, either came in for criticism by pupils both with and without migrant backgrounds who held a positive stance toward migration and diversity, or were problematized, especially by pupils with a majoritized background. Both issues are found in public and media discourse, in which knowledge of German is deemed the most important factor for “successful integration” into Austrian society, to the extent that language skills have been made a legal prerequisite for the extension of residence permits for so-called third-country nationals and for naturalization. The discussions in the workshops and the textbook analysis allow us to draw the conclusion that there is a need for alternative, and more positive, ways of thinking and talking about migration and depicting migration issues. We also see a need for additional information that helps pupils and teachers alike to challenge and counter the prevailing discourse of migration as a problem, and feel that it is the role of academic research to provide this information in comprehensible formats.

We call upon research and textbook authors to engage actively with the criticism and definition of terms in the wider context of migration. In their daily lives, pupils are constantly confronted with categorizations and pejorative language in relation to these issues, while simultaneously being aware of debates around “political correctness” and struggling with the question of which terms are socially acceptable. What they fail to find in textbooks, and have, in our study, called for, is a critical examination of terms and concepts, together with more contextual and historical information that would enable them to understand why certain terms and concepts are discriminatory and have the power to exclude groups of people and individuals from a common narrative and society. The inclusion of such critical discussion of terms in textbooks would enable pupils to develop their own opinions and argue their positions. Such inclusion
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might be accomplished by integrating biographical elements about migrants into textbook narratives and using examples that critically scrutinize stereotyped identities. Another strategy, which emerged generally from our workshops with the pupils, is the importance of free discussion and debate. Many pupils long for open discussion without fear of sanctions for expressing particular opinions and for the opportunity to express and exchange their opinions freely, in order to learn how to formulate an argument and to deal with different beliefs and points of view.

Notes


4. The project was funded by the Austrian Federal Ministry of Science and Research within its research program “Sparkling Science” (http://www.sparklingscience.at/en/). The principal characteristic of this program is the active involvement of pupils of all age groups in research processes. In this context we would like to thank the partner schools involved in our project: BG XI Geringergasse, KMS Herzgasse, and SZU Schulzentrum Ungargasse in Vienna; and BG/BRG Christian-Doppler-Gymnasium, NMS Lehen, and BHAK 1 Johann-Brunauer-Straße in Salzburg. Our special thanks go to all the pupils involved, without whom the project could not have been realized.


6. For a brief discussion of the term “people with a migrant background”, see note 61.

Article 7 of the Austrian Constitution protects the linguistic rights of the Croatian and Slovenian minorities in Burgenland, Carinthia, and Styria. Beside the right to erect bilingual topographical signs, Article 7 also includes the right to be taught in the minority language. The 1977 Volksgruppengesetz issued stipulations on which municipalities had the right to bilingual road signs, although this became a source of conflict in the province of Carinthia until 2011, when 164 localities in 24 municipalities were defined.

Application for Austrian citizenship is as a rule only possible after a minimum uninterrupted stay of ten years in the country; only spouses of Austrian citizens and those with a high income and a high proficiency in German and/or a three-year track record of voluntary work are allowed to apply after six years. A legal right to citizenship, and therewith formal inclusion into the national “we”, can only be claimed after thirty years of residence in the country. See Sarah Wallace Goodman, Naturalisation Policies in Europe: Exploring Patterns of Inclusion and Exclusion (Florence: European University Institute, EUDO Citizenship Observatory, 2010), http://eudo-citizenship.eu/docs/7-Naturalisation%20Policies%20in%20Europe.pdf.

Majoritization and minoritization are processes in which people or groups are made into a majority or minority due to certain characteristics and historical circumstances. Part of this—in our case ethnic—construction, is a certain distribution of power.


One piece of evidence for the marginalization of this topic was the jubilee exhibition “90 Years of the Austrian Republic,” which was shown in the Austrian parliament in 2008. In the companion volume to the exhibition, which was over 600 pages long, only 12 lines were dedicated to the history of Austrian labor migration. See Gabriele Stieber, “Migration und Zwangsinternierung in Österreich,” in Österreich: 90 Jahre Republik. Beitragsband der Ausstellung im Parlament, ed. Stefan Karner and Lorenz Mikoletzky (Innsbruck, Vienna, and Bozen: Studienverlag, 2008), 101–113.

Hintermann, “‘Beneficial’, ‘problematic’ and ‘different’,” 61–78.


19. Pilvi Torsti describes in her studies of Bosnian history textbooks how constructions of “us” and “them” have changed after the Bosnian war and how stereotypes have been used in order to construct the “other” as an enemy. Martina Clemen illustrates in her study how different Spanish history textbooks discursively construct the notion of “nation” and thus the division between the Spanish state and the autonomous provinces of Catalonia, the Basque country, and Galicia. One of her conclusions is that history textbooks are often used to instrumentalize “regional-nationalistic” forces and are highly disputed due to the competing ideological perspectives of those who interact with them. See Pilvi Torsti, “How to Deal with a Difficult Past? History Textbooks Supporting Enemy Images in Post-war Bosnia and Herzegovina,” *Journal of Curriculum Studies* 39, no. 2 (2007): 77–96; and Martina Clemen, “Im Spannungsfeld von Regionalismus und nationaler Identität – zur Deutung und Vermittlung von Geschichte in katalanischen Schulbüchern,” *Journal of Educational Media, Memory, and Society* 3, no. 2 (2001): 113–136.

20. The online survey was sent to all administrators of primary and secondary schools in Austria; 2,299 teachers returned the completed semi-standardized questionnaire. Next to personal data of the individual respondents, the questions concentrated on the following issues: the usage of textbooks and other educational material by teachers, the inclusion of migration-specific content in textbooks the teachers use, and pupils’ attitudes toward their textbooks. We would like to thank the Austrian Federal Ministry for Education, the Arts and Culture for their kind support for the survey.


22. Knecht and Najvarová, “How Do Students Rate Textbooks?”


29. The third research question includes a topical and a methodological dimension insofar as we considered not only our own views as researchers on textbooks but also sought to include pupils’ perspective as well, and searched for a way to combine the different approaches and to develop a useful analytical tool. We do not discuss this research question in this contribution.

30. We would like to thank all the teachers (Karin Dobler, Paul Donner, Kerstin Kordorvsy-Schwob, Herbert Pichler, Sabine Ratzer, Veronika Richter, Christina Schwarz, and Evi Stadlmann) for their support and input during the project.

31. According to Statistik Austria, about 12 percent of all pupils in the federal state of Salzburg and about 20 percent in Vienna in the 2008/2009 school year had non-Austrian citizenship; about 17 percent in the federal state of Salzburg and 45 percent in Vienna spoke a first language other than German. In both cities, the composition of classes differs significantly according to city district and school type.

32. For more information on the structure of the Austrian education system, see the website of the Austrian Federal Ministry for Education, the Arts and Culture: http://www.bmukk.gv.at/enfr/school/index.xml (accessed 13 December 2013).

33. In general secondary schools in Vienna, about 59 percent of all pupils had a first language other than German, while in the federal state of Salzburg this was the case for 18 percent. See Bundesministerium für Unterricht, Kunst und Kultur, SchülerInnen mit einer anderen Erstsprache als Deutsch: Statistische Übersicht Schuljahre 2000/2001 bis 2007/08. Informationsblätter des Referats für Migration und Schule Nr. 2/2009.

34. While in the participating class of the Viennese new secondary school, all pupils had a migrant background, as did nearly 70 percent of the pupils in the new secondary school class in Salzburg, only about 35 percent (Vienna) and 20 percent (Salzburg) of the pupils in the upper-level academic secondary schools had a migrant background. In the lower-level academic secondary school, the proportion was higher: 52 percent in Vienna and 60 percent in Salzburg. In the participating class from the higher vocational education school in Vienna, whose pupils were focusing on technical education, the proportion was 26 percent, while it was 16 percent in the class of the higher vocational education school in Salzburg with a business orientation.


43. The pupils were provided with photographs, short life histories, and articles about different migration movements, such as Austrian emigration from the Habsburg monarchy and forced migration during National Socialism, and life histories of labor migrants or refugees from the former Yugoslavia. The material did not reveal any concrete historical details, such as dates. The pupils were then asked to relate the materials to the correct decade on the timeline, talk about the material and the results in facilitated group discussions, and then present the outcomes of their discussions to the other groups.

44. Marcus Omofuma died on 1 May 1999 of asphyxiation caused by having his mouth and parts of his nose taped during the deportation flight. After his death, and the mild sentences given to the police officers involved, many antiracism demonstrations were organized. In 2003, an Omofuma memorial stone was erected in remembrance of his death and the struggle against racism and xenophobia.

45. The *Lichtermeer* was a demonstration organized by the NGO “SOS Mitmenschen” which took place on 23 January 1993. The demonstration was against the xenophobic referendum “Österreich zuerst” (Austria first) organized by the Austrian Freedom Party (FPÖ). Almost 300,000 participants demonstrated against xenophobia and for solidarity with immigrants by carrying torches or candles through Vienna.

46. The campaign, led by the FPÖ, took place around the National Assembly election of 1 October 2006, see campaign poster and description at http://www.demokratiezentrum.org/wissen/bilder.html?index=1934.


48. Elisabeth Boesen and Fabienne Lenz point out that migration is often left out of official state narratives. They stress the importance not only of acknowl-
edging that the history of migration is a part of national narrative, but also of exploring the memories of migrants themselves by focusing on the transmission of memories within migration. See Elisabeth Boesen and Fabienne Lenz, *Migration und Erinnerung: Migration et mémoire. Konzepte und Methoden der Forschung. Concepts et méthodes de recherche* (Berlin: LitVerlag, 2010), 4.


51. See, for instance, Hintermann, “‘Beneficial’, ‘problematic’ and ‘different’”, or Lozic, “The Story about Them.” If positive aspects of immigration processes are mentioned in textbooks, this is often accompanied by the question of whether immigrants are needed or not, and whether they are beneficial to a country’s economy or demographic development. Such depictions neglect the social and cultural enrichment experienced by a diverse society, and might mean that questionable distinctions are made between different groups of immigrants.

52. Peter Gutscher and Christian Rohr, *Geschichte.aktuell 2, Bd. 1* (Linz: Veritas-Verlag, 2010), 148 (translation from German by the authors).


54. All the associations were either collected by the workshop team during the introduction of the project to the classes (Vienna) or by the teachers (Salzburg), and were subsequently documented.

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56. We chose pictures from the textbooks used by the classes wherever possible, and only resorted to other textbooks in the sample where necessary.

57. The Sekundarstufe one (Sek 1, lower level academic secondary school) includes grades five to eight, while the Sekundarstufe two (Sek 2, upper level academic secondary school) includes grades nine to twelve or thirteen.

58. Beside this problem-oriented approach, there were also a few completely different views, such as that of a pupil in an upper level academic secondary school: “I know that this picture confirms the prejudices of some people, but for me those are totally normal people in the playground with their children. Like my parents in the playground with my sister. In the background there is a lot of ‘hardcore ghetto graffiti’. ... And modern people [emphasized] of course don’t associate graffiti with ghettos [emphasized] any more, but with art” (29 February 2012).


60. The project team has been conducting seminars for teachers and other interested stakeholders on the subject of racism, discrimination, and language for a number of years.
61. Bernhard Perchinig and Thobias Troger have dealt with the question of the explanatory value of the category “person with a migration background” in comparison to other sociodemographic categories, stating that the category “person with a migration background” is part of a differentiating system with classifying hegemonic orders that provide an understanding of the social world. Such dichotomous distinctions create a hierarchy of identity positions by operating with an exclusive logic of “othering”. See Bernhard Perchinig and Tobias Troger, “Migrationshintergrund als Differenzkategorie: Vom notwendigen Konflikt zwischen Theorie und Empirie in der Migrationsforschung,” in Zukunft. Werte. Europa. Die Europäische Wertestudie 1990–2010. Österreich im Vergleich, ed. Regina Polak (Vienna: Böhlau, 2011), 283–319.


67. “The common term ‘mongolism’ is not the best one, because the disease is not related with the membership of the mongoloid race.” From a passage on Down Syndrome in Manfred Driza, Georg Cholewa, and Leo Holemy, Leben und Umwelt Kompakt Band 4 (Vienna: Ed. Hölzel, 2003), 11.

68. In this class the concept of “race” was taught in biology lessons and the textbook referred to “europid, negroid and mongloid” “races”.

69. During this process we avoided “labeling” pupils with an immigrant background as “others”.


71. Such discussions should preferably be held in small groups, since the dynamics and power hierarchies in classrooms tend to lead to the silencing of certain positions and the advancement of others.
Mobility is often mentioned in African history, but rarely is it examined to its full analytical potential. This is unfortunate, in part because in the 1960s the first generation of African historians considered cultures of mobility a means of challenging stereotypes of African backwardness and simplicity.¹ Jan Vansina, for example, used mobility to uncover “complexity” and “efficiency” in African political history—a stated goal of early Africanist historians working to debunk colonial stereotypes—and to challenge the structural-functionalist lens through which colonials and outsiders had understood African identities and social systems.² In the following decades, mobility was critical to several aspects of African history—including slavery, women’s history, labor migration, and urbanization. Yet the makings of a recognizable field of African mobility have not emerged until recently.

This review explores the contours of this growing field of scholarship through four recent publications, focusing on two shared themes. First, these publications are a counterweight to the top-down and externally generated characterizations of African mobility as unnatural or as an indication of social crisis and decline. Second, they show how studies of mobility can be decentered. They challenge

normative associations of mobility in scholarship with a specific manifestation of modernity or development.

Some of the best studies of African mobility are in recent research on the Sahara. Long defined by its seeming emptiness and resistance to change, scholars of Africa have found fertile research opportunities by studying the social and economic structures overlooked by colonial authorities and outsiders more generally. Students of mobility will find a recent edited collection, *Saharan Frontiers: Space and Mobility in Northwest Africa*, a good introduction to African cultures of movement or fixity. To situate the work, the editors show that the neglect of African movement across and within the Sahara has been used to present it as a space defined by “isolation” and “an overwhelming impression of permanence.”3 The fourteen chapters that follow offer an alternative to this conventional wisdom by examining historical connectivity and networks both in and beyond the Sahara. As the editors note, the volume’s largest contribution is not evidence of trade across the Sahara (established in precolonial scholarship), but rather specific forms of mobility that sustained life in the Sahara. In her chapter, “Saharan Trade in Classical Antiquity,” Katia Schorle argues that networks of exchange across the Sahara were means of “coping with the Saharan environment,” specifically to procure water and food in changing and fragile ecologies.4 Similarly, James McDougall contends that to survive, Saharan peoples had to engage in long-distance trade.5 Writing of a Saharan (instead of sub-Saharan) Africa, McDougall uses shifting notions of boundaries, connections, and networks to understand global change from a place defined by its apparent peripherality. To include Saharans in world events, he shows the constant renegotiation of borders and autonomy since the colonial period, stressing Saharans’ efforts “to retain control over the terms of their own existence.”6

The most useful part of the volume is its final section, “Economies of Movement.” Its chapters examine intraregional mobility through both licit and illicit economic activities—often cross-border trucking economies. They thereby present the Sahara as a vibrant and cosmopolitan space of exchange in which new borders and regimes have not erased long-standing regional and transregional relationships based on trade, religion, or ethnicity.7 By following trucks and traders

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6. Ibid., 88.
in the Sahara, the scholars build an empirical foundation for much-needed social histories of development in Africa. Though cross-border economic activity implicates international politics, the authors show that historical patterns of mobility and trade have offered alternatives for communities and national governments when official development schemes go belly-up. The volume is a road map for students of African mobility who will have to navigate modernist expectations about the use and control of space and then reconcile them with the divergent results of their fieldwork. It also makes a good case for exploring networks of exchange within regions that have been considered mere voids or conduits of passage. Marginal places are constructed through an erasure of movement and contact with the outside world, Anna Tsing reminds us, and for this reason Saharan Frontiers offers a model for reexamining such regions.

Judith Scheele, an editor and contributor to Saharan Frontiers, expands on these themes in Smugglers and Saints of the Sahara: Regional Connectivity in the Twentieth Century. A social anthropologist, Scheele’s impressive, multisited ethnography on the border between Mali and Algeria takes readers into fascinating spaces that reflect long histories of trade and mobility in the Sahara. The result is a “village monograph” in which “the village in question is stretched out over a third of the African continent.” She challenges representations of the Sahara “to invert the commonplace conceptual relationship between movement and place.” Scheele offers engaging stories about the places, characters, and infrastructure of social, religious, and economic life in the region. The narrative begins in garages (called gawarij, from the French) in Al-Khalil, Mali, an unmapped place Scheele describes as a kind of truck stop on a regional trade network. Through gawarij, the young men who work in them, and Al-Khalil’s reputation for corruption, Scheele examines the production of place and morality in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. She shows that in the precolonial and colonial periods, “setting up an oasis and maintaining it was a technical, logistic, and social achievement” that required the coordination of human, spiritual, and monetary capital across dispersed networks of trading communities, migrating pastoralists, and agricultural settlements. The same was true during the colonial period. In spite of the French state’s modernist approach to boundaries, place, and identity, Scheele shows that local social hierarchies were products of flexible and shifting genealogies based on “older notions of human connectivity” across the region. Settlement, mobility, and status were not givens, but products of

11. Ibid., 22.
12. Ibid., 127.
complex systems of debt, reciprocity, and spiritual blessing that had to be mobilized across space.\textsuperscript{13}

\textit{Smugglers and Saints} takes off with chapter 3, “Dates, Cocaine, and the AK 47s: Moral Conundrums on the Algero-Malian Border.” Through an insider perspective of cross-border trade, Scheele shows the dominance of long-held notions of proper and improper accumulation over the official designations of legality that emerged in the twentieth century.\textsuperscript{14} Experiences of mobility come to life with the author’s description of motor vehicles and the social values associated with them. For example, slow trucks were desirable spaces of sociability—because their pace left time for prayer and the reproduction of social relationships. The “technically illegal” activity conducted in fast-moving Jeeps is judged not by the letter of the law, but through moral economies of distribution—whether social ties to the wider community are created or avoided.\textsuperscript{15} \textit{Smugglers and Saints} thus joins a growing body of scholarship in which mobility and illicit forms of trade are features of social reproduction and evidence of economic development from the bottom up. The historic depth of Scheele’s case study makes it a refreshing alternative to work that emphasizes the external origins of change in Africa over regional frameworks and long-standing systems of trade. Scheele’s attention to technological detail makes the book, and this chapter in particular, an important study of the types of transport infrastructure and automobility that have been critical to economic activity across Africa, but too often written off as indications of underdevelopment.

Scheele’s conclusion is ambivalent. She reflects on the consequences of highlighting these forms of trade and movement in a political atmosphere in which the Sahara was designated a “swamp of terror” in 2004.\textsuperscript{16} Historians of Africa must find ways to place social histories of mobility and economic activity in tension with frameworks of development and governance hostile to the economic and technological worlds of Scheele’s traders. Scheele’s book (and chapter 3, in particular) deserves a wide reading in undergraduate and graduate seminars. Students of mobile populations will appreciate Scheele’s honest description of the perils and promises of multisited research, whether ethnographic or archival. “Saharan mobility is often surprisingly static,” she writes, “as people get stuck behind national borders and as trucks are trapped in the sand; the ‘sites’ of mobility are often difficult to pin down.”\textsuperscript{17} Yet Scheele’s success at uncovering technological systems and economic networks across borders shows how analytically fruitful such attempts can be.

\textsuperscript{13} Ibid., 34–50.
\textsuperscript{15} Scheele, \textit{Smugglers and Saints}, 104–120.
\textsuperscript{16} Ibid., 233–235.
\textsuperscript{17} Ibid., 19.
Readers looking for a longer history of mobility in and across the Sahara will appreciate Ghislaine Lydon’s *On Trans-Saharan Trails: Islamic Law, Trade Networks, and Cross-Cultural Exchange in Nineteenth-Century West Africa*. For scholars of mobility, Lydon’s work is a joy to read because of her attention to the materiality of mobile cultures in West Africa. Using “paper economies of faith,” Lydon shows how Muslim traders created relationships of trust in an area devoid of the economic or political institutions through which historians often analyze transactional relationships. Though the introduction of the camel and the spread of Islam are key factors in Lydon’s history, paper plays a central role in this narrative of social, religious, and economic change because it can materialize trust across space. In the nineteenth century, paper facilitated the formalization of commercial rules through spiritual connections and a spiritual language, Arabic. Paper was also an ideal trading partner for negotiating debt relationships and for tracking the increasingly complex cargo of caravans. Lydon is attentive to the gendering of mobility during this period, arguing that men’s mobility was predicated upon the labor of women, whom she calls “immobile partners” in charge of the “shore-side institutions” traders relied upon as they moved across and within the region. This impressive work is probably too much for undergraduate seminars, but it may inform lectures or case studies in general World History courses. It is a thorough, engaging, and satisfying read that deserves attention across fields.

Finally, Eric Allina’s recent publication *Slavery by Any Other Name: African Life under Company Rule in Colonial Mozambique* links mobility and power in colonial Africa. Using a recently recovered colonial archive and oral histories from fieldwork, Allina builds a valuable framework for understanding histories of forced labor from the late nineteenth to the early twentieth centuries. Scholarly discussions of chattel slavery often end with abolition and colonialism, but Allina reveals how Africans interpreted forced labor under the Portuguese as a new, modern form of enslavement. He adeptly illustrates how Africans challenged their subservient status in colonial society. Allina highlights strategies of mobility that were critical to survival during the colonial period. He dedicates a chapter to the mobile practices of forced laborers and their communities during the onset of colonialism, arguing that “European designs could not eliminate African’s mobility and their sense of flexible territorial divisions.” At least two ontologies and infrastructures of mobility competed as officials and laborers struggled over the control of space.

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19. Ibid., 236–237.
21. Ibid., 91.
Colonial officials struggled to build a reliable pool of African laborers and taxpayers, while Africans voted with their feet when they found working or living conditions unacceptable. Allina shows that such “tactical flight” forced changes in recruiting tactics that ultimately exposed the brutal violence of the civilizing mission.22 This is where Allina is at his best. Because mobility was crucial to Africans, control over space and moving bodies was a constitutive act through which colonial power was materialized and experienced.23 Allina goes beyond dichotomies of resistance and collaboration to “a realm in-between” in which Africans neither accepted nor openly rejected colonial rule; instead, they sought arenas of sovereignty through changing forms of sanctioned and unsanctioned mobility.24 Historians must continue to seek ways to uncover histories of mobility from African instead of colonial perspectives.

To these scholars, mobility is valuable as a historical analytic because it challenges representations of Africa as a fixed, immutable space in need of intervention. It thereby accommodates more types of movement and cultures of technology to historical analysis. Since the nineteenth century, European explorers, colonial officials, and, more recently, journalists and scholars have used their own mobility to produce representations of Africa as a place in need of external salvation, often citing African mobility and transport infrastructure as evidence of underdevelopment.25 But the publications reviewed here illustrate a way to move beyond the colonial-inspired expectations about African spatial and technological practices. They exemplify an emergent field of African mobility studies that can challenge the association of mobility with Western modernity and economic development. Between 2012 and 2014, three mobility-themed African studies conferences have been held or are being planned. This suggests that the field will continue to grow.26 As it does, Africanist researchers must do more than fill conceptual voids or react to external representations of African movement. Instead, like Scheele and Lydon, they must produce richly empirical work about networks and systems that are too often overlooked by officials and scholars alike.

22. Ibid., 100–104.
23. Ibid., 104, 133–134.
24. Ibid., 16.
26. During the fall of 2012, graduate students at Stanford University hosted “Mobile Africa”; in 2013, the African Studies Association’s annual meeting is organized around the theme, “Mobility, Migration, and Flows”; Africanist scholars at Rice University will host a conference on “Mobility and Authority in Africa” in spring 2014.
Joshua Grace is finishing his dissertation titled “Modernization Bubu: Cars, Roads, and the Politics of Development in Tanzania, 1870s to 1980s” at Michigan State University. He is the author of “Heroes of the Road: Race, Gender, and the Politics of Mobility in Twentieth-Century Tanzania” (Africa: Journal of the International African Institute, August 2013). He has received research funding from Fulbright and from the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation. He will join the faculty of the Department of History at the University of South Carolina in fall 2013.
Ideas in Motion

Mobility: Geographies, Histories, Sociologies

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Tim Cresswell, Royal Holloway, University of London
Colin Divall, University of York
Gijs Mom, Eindhoven University of Technology
Mimi Sheller, Drexel University
John Urry, Lancaster University

Abstract

This article is an edited transcript of a panel discussion on “mobility studies” which was held as part of a workshop on mobility and community at Aberystwyth University on September 3, 2012. In the article the five panelists reflect upon the recent resurgence of research on mobility in the social sciences and humanities, emphasizing the interdisciplinary nature of contemporary debates, and the ways in which established fields such as transport history, migration studies, and sociology are being reshaped by new research agendas. The panelists discuss the importance of engaging with issues of politics, justice, equality, global capital, secrecy, and representation, and they encourage researchers to focus on non-Western and non-hegemonic mobilities, as well as to produce “useable” studies which engage policy-makers.

Keywords

constellations, geography, history, inequality, mobilities, sociology, transport

Introduction by Peter Merriman and Rhys Jones

Mobility and mobilities appear to be everywhere, underpinning both past and present economic, social, cultural, political, and environmental processes, but also peppering conference programs, publisher’s catalogues, and the papers of academic journals. The rapid expansion of academic research on mobilities is evident in disciplines such as geography, sociology, performance studies, media studies, history, and literary
studies, but how inter- or multi-disciplinary are the research programs, questions, and dialogues being explored? Are scholars from these different disciplines engaging in meaningful two-way dialogues with each other, and are they developing shared research agendas? While mobility scholars from a number of disciplines—including geography and sociology—have been working together and engaging in active debates for a decade or so, it is only fairly recently that mobility and transport historians have been engaging in active discussions with scholars from, say, sociology and geography, and some have expressed a concern that mobility studies is all-too-frequently categorized as a particular kind of social science research focused on the contemporary era.2 It was against this background that we invited five leading mobility scholars representing different disciplinary traditions to participate in this panel discussion on the past, present, and future of mobilities research, outlining the emergence of the field, the challenges that are faced, and key themes which need to be explored in the future.

In tracing the growth of mobility studies the speakers hint at some of the different ways one could assess the transformation of the field, from quantitative studies of journal content and conference programs, to observations relating to the emergence of new journals, textbooks, handbooks, and monographs concerned with mobility. Some of these texts have been positioned as “manifestoes” for mobility studies, but as Tim Cresswell points out, many other studies are less concerned with positioning or repositioning the field—rather they just get on with it and “do” mobility studies. Interdisciplinary debates and dialogues on “mobility” are ever-increasing—whether in the pages of journals or at conferences—but we do not think that all studies need to be interdisciplinary or multi-disciplinary in their approach. Highly focused, disciplinary studies in, say, anthropology will inevitably reach beyond their discipline and may inspire sociologists or historians to do things differently. An interdisciplinary or multi-disciplinary research field such as mobility studies will inevitably be made up of a diverse array of studies, and it is often these differences which create sparks, whether that be through social and cultural theories informing historical studies, or insights from history shaping contemporary transport policy and curbing the ahistorical tendencies of scholars focused solely on the present.

The five speakers on the panel highlight the different research topics which are coming to the fore within academic research on mobility. While particular transport modes, geographical contexts and historical time periods do frequently form the basis of individual studies, the importance of social, cultural, and political theory and different philosophical approaches is evident in much of the new and emerging mobilities research being undertaken in the social sciences and humanities. This
Mobility might include the influence of Marxism, feminism, post-colonialism, and post-structuralism, or the emergence of studies with a conceptual focus on issues such as materiality, identity, diaspora, cosmopolitanism, affect, representation, power, politics, instantaneity, global capitalism, security, and secrecy. There have been extensive debates amongst mobility scholars about the different methods used to study and apprehend mobilities, as well as a strong and continuing emphasis on the inequalities and politics of mobilities. In publishing the edited transcription of this panel discussion, we hope that readers of Transfers will be inspired to think beyond the ordinary, and to think differently about mobility infrastructures, processes, and practices.

Tim Cresswell

The organizers of this panel asked us to examine “the current state of mobilities,” which I took be an assessment of where we are at now and about where we might go. Luckily, I have been writing the annual “Progress Reports” on mobilities research for the international journal Progress in Human Geography, and I have one left, which is supposed to be future oriented.

The first thing to say is that if there had been an intentional research program with “a manifesto of mobilities studies” (which there almost was, I suppose), it has been very successful. Many such programs fail immediately, but as a research field “mobility” has become extremely influential in a very short period of time. If we go back eleven or twelve years to 2000 or 2001, I think this was a launching point for mobility studies as a “thing,” notably marked by the publication of John Urry’s book Sociology beyond Societies: Mobilities for the Twenty-first Century in 2000, and a special issue of New Formations on “mobilities” which I edited in 2001, and I think it is extraordinary what has been achieved given that ten years in academic life is not very long.

So, just think about mobilities journals. We have the editors of two mobility studies journals here. Mobilities has been around since 2006, is doing very well, and is creeping up the Impact Factor lists. And then there is Transfers, which started in 2011 and is combining transport history with a different kind of mobilities perspective. Having two journals informed by mobility is an extraordinary thing to happen. Then, we have textbooks such as Peter Adey’s 2009 book Mobility, not to mention numerous monographs. For example, I have just read a manuscript by Mimi Sheller on aluminium, which is a fascinating monograph that looks at the role of aluminium in constructing modern mobilities. I would never have thought of it, but once you read it, it becomes obvious how important aluminium has been for spaceships, aeroplanes, frying pans, electrical
cables, laptop computers, etc. It is extraordinary and it is an amazing book. So this is a sign of maturity, I think, of a field that isn’t saying “come on everybody do mobilities studies,” it is just doing it. And it is doing it without the kind of manifesto element to it. There are also a large number of conferences and Ph.D. master classes, particularly in Scandinavia, which seems to be a real hotbed of mobility studies, but also Italy (where there was recently a conference in Sardinia), and in Spain. This year the Institute of Australian Geographers’ conference was themed on mobility, being titled “Inspiring Connections.” Mimi counted up the number of papers with mobility in their title at the Annual Meeting of the Association of American Geographers in Seattle last year, and there were over seventy.

What all of these things demonstrate is the success of mobilities research. If Mimi Sheller and John Urry, in their “new mobilities paradigm” paper, had been intending to have a significant impact across the social sciences, which I guess was in part their intent, then I think they have been successful—there is no doubt about it. But mobilities research has also had an impact on other disciplines. For example, I’ve been to and given talks at a bewildering array of disciplinary meetings, including ones in Literary Studies, Medieval History, Theology, Performance Studies, Migration Theory, Architecture, Transport Studies, and History in general. I wasn’t talking to people in those disciplines before, and I am now talking to and listening to them. And, I think, the reason for this is that mobilities research has been interdisciplinary from its outset. Initially I had thought it was just breaking down sub-disciplinary boundaries between say migration theory and transport geography within geography, but it has done much more than that. It is reaching out across disciplines in interesting ways.

Having said all that, I think there is work to do. I don’t think these interdisciplinary conversations are always based on a meaningful discussion of mobility. For example, scholars sometimes use the word “mobility” without necessarily taking on board some of the ontological, epistemological, and normative arguments that have been emerging within mobility theory. Last week, I was at the ninth annual conference of IMISCOE (International Migration, Integration and Social Cohesion) in Amsterdam, and the question asked was “should we use the mobilities paradigm?” This was the theme of the conference, and the way that mobility was being used seemed to reflect a level of misunderstanding about what mobility was. So, for instance, one of the significant discussions was around “What’s migration and what’s mobility, and how are they different?” The conclusion seemed to be that mobility was small-scale while migration occurred across a national border, and I was sitting there thinking: “well aren’t migrants moving and isn’t moving mobility?” This just seemed wrong, parsing out the world and saying “here’s mobility and there is something else,” rather
than thinking of it as an element of a number of things and therefore making those connections. So, we need to be aware that many scholars don’t adopt mobility as a new way of thinking about things, rather it is just used in a relabeling exercise. Mobility studies has also been seen as threatening. So although mobility was the central theme of the IMISCOE conference, there were a large number of people saying “We already do migration, so what is the point in talking about mobility. Migration is fine so we’ll just carry on doing migration theory.”

A key point is that I think it is important to link mobilities across domains, between people, ideas, and objects, and to think about the ways all of these things move. One of the themes a colleague, Craig Martin, and I have been working on is logistics, and the way logistics combines thinking about the mobility of people with things and ideas. Indeed, the way logistics is managing our lives is a very important part of our contemporary world, through, for instance, the role of RFID tags, and the ways in which people are becoming objects that are logistically managed.

Another important theme is developing-world mobilities. It was great to hear accounts of non-Western mobilities at this symposium, including experiences from India, Australia, South Africa and other places. I think there needs to be more engagement with non-Western mobilities, particularly by scholars from these places, although I have been taken to task by scholars asking, quite reasonably, “Why is it always scholars in the U.S., U.K. and Europe who talk about mobilities? What about the rest of the world?”

Representation is also very important. I know it is not trendy to talk about representation, but the tension between mobility as something that seems to disappear, to be unrepresentable, and efforts to represent it is very important. At the heart of my book On the Move was an examination of the different ways in which representation works, whether through planning, politics, or choreography, and I think this is something that needs to be developed a bit more.

I think it is important to examine how ideas, objects, people, practices, and meanings are assembled, and I am quite taken by Manuel De Landa’s version of “assemblage theory,” and the way in which things come together in order to operationalize the movement of the other. I have become particularly interested in the “mobilizing urbanism” agenda that Kevin Ward and other people have been involved in, where ideas about the city are moving, and it isn’t just an idea that magically moves, rather it moves in a book, in a computer or an iPad. And there are a significant number of people who travel around the world selling, for instance, designs to airports or neo-traditional urban planning, and ideas like that. There are systems where ideas, objects, and people create these mobilities symbiotically.
Friction is another very important thing, and I have been thinking about how Paul Virilio’s idea of instantaneity as a military-industrial way of moving is a totalitarian kind of imposition which Virilio gets excited about and worries about at the same time. Frictions have always gotten in the way of instantaneity, and I am keen to rethink friction, going back into positivist geography and work on the friction of distance (or the fiction of distance if you like), and the way that different kinds of friction have become interesting. One can observe Carl von Clausewitz talking about friction in geopolitics, and Derek Gregory talking very interestingly about how Osama Bin Laden could only travel so far from wherever he was. As Gregory shows, the U.S. (with British help) was trying to create a frictionless world with drone surveillance, able to move where it wanted, whereas Osama bin Laden could really only move a few hundred miles in that time period. I think there is more to be done, perhaps moving from a topographic to a topological ontology, toward what might be called a dromological ontology or mobilities ontology.

Colin Divall

I come at this issue through transport history, which as a sub-discipline or field has been around for quite a long time—at least sixty years. I want to talk about how far it has moved in the direction of a “mobility studies paradigm.” The answer is “quite a long way”; but transport history still remains a very broad church. For example, there are still quite a few people working on topics which would have been familiar to transport historians in the 1960s, 1970s or 1980s—studies inspired by social and economic history, labor history, and engineering history; focusing largely on single, Western modes of transport; neglecting non-mechanical forms of moving; and so on. Nevertheless, over the past fifteen years or so there has been a very considerable shift in the way in which transport history is researched and written.

This is partly due to the influence of mobility scholars. But there have been other factors at work as well, notably the contextual history of technology represented by organizations like the Society for the History of Technology (SHOT)—a great influence on how I’ve thought about transport and mobility over the past fifteen years or so. Transport historians now focus much more on understanding users, and on how they consume the mobility of people, things, and information. And there is also much more emphasis on the meaningful or symbolic nature of flows—it came as quite a shock to many older-style transport historians when we started using this kind of language.
So, despite the fact that some historians are not that happy about using abstract concepts, there have been important theoretical shifts in transport history. There have also been some significant shifts in the kinds of topics studied—in particular, a very clear move toward twentieth and early twenty-first century modes of mobility, such as auto- and aero-mobility. We also have much more nuanced understandings of how transport users (and non-users) contribute to shaping flows of different kinds. And, as I said before, there is a much wider recognition that across history, transport flows have constituted, and are constituted by, individuals, communities, and societies in ways that go far beyond the functional movement of goods, people, and information.

Older generations of historians recognized that transport was informed by and informed all different kinds of power. But I think that work in the “new mobilities paradigm” has helped us recognize that the meaningful or symbolic component of mobility flows plays a crucial role (though it is not the only factor) in constituting and exercising different forms of social, economic, and cultural power.

What challenges are we facing as historians? We have to find ways of moving beyond the single-mode study—and I say that as someone who still largely works on railways. This is probably something we have to do by working more in teams: not something that comes naturally to most historians. In short, we have to find ways of synthesizing—transcending even—our studies of single-mode transport systems, so that we understand those systems AND their associated systems of communication as ecologies of competing and complementary modes—what we might call a transport (or perhaps better a mobility) regime.

We also need to do a lot more to develop a long-term perspective on how and why the now near-global hegemony of capitalism has altered the essential characteristics of transport regimes. Most historians work on the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, but I’m currently editing a book with some essays which take us back into the medieval period, and I’m excited by the prospect of understanding more about these earlier eras. They can provide us with a very long-term view of the way in which mobility and transport have been understood and conceptualized. Such a shift toward a more culturally orientated, longue durée history of transport can open up new ways of understanding alternative, counter-hegemonic or subversive systems of moving, like walking, cycling, and motorcycling etc.

Transnational flows are becoming much more popular as a topic, but there is still far too much emphasis on histories of tourism. Transnational flows are not just tourist flows: there is a lot more work that needs to be done on business networks—something Gordon Pirie has started looking at—as well as nomadic flows, forced migration and so forth. There is also far too little work on the historical movement of things, wastes, goods,
intermediates, and raw materials. We have almost forgotten about freight, and here the older generation of transport historians had a better-balanced research agenda.

What really keeps me enthusiastic about doing history, though, is the prospect of researching and writing what I have not very imaginatively called “a useable past.” In other words, finding a way in which history can contribute to debates and interventions about how we move ourselves and things in the future, which for me is the real imperative now. Thanks to the work of John Urry and others we have a much clearer understanding of how central mobility is to the globalizing world. We are also much more aware of the kinds of social inequities and the huge ecological damage that is being caused by those kinds of flows; and for me the priority is to find ways in which history can contribute to helping reverse some of those inequalities and some of that ecological damage. This is not easy. It involves us as historians, and as scholars in general, thinking hard about how we engage with power; whether that is governments, state bureaucracy, or corporations. This is not something we can opt out of. History is already used to promote the goals and objectives of the powerful, whether we like it or not. So I am saying that we should become much more self-aware about how history is used, and try to come up with ways which are potentially subversive or counter-hegemonic. We need to negotiate a political turn that maintains the integrity of historical research whilst trying to ensure that its insights are used in the service of those who are disadvantaged by present ways of moving or staying still.

For the last two years I’ve been working on a U.K. Arts and Humanities Research Council funded network, bringing together academics from transport studies, people from the policy world, and people from industry. The Dutch have been doing this as well, very successfully. But experience has taught me that this is not an easy process, and you have got to be in it for the long haul. There is a high level of enthusiasm for developing a useable past amongst historians at all stages of their careers, including those who are just starting, which is particularly encouraging. There is also considerable enthusiasm amongst academics in contemporary transport studies; and it is possible to find policy professionals, consultants, and so on who will give a limited amount of time to engage in these kinds of conversations. But, as I have said, you have got to be in it for the long haul, because we are not all starting from the same place: the key thing is that we need to learn each other’s languages. Tim Cresswell has been talking about how sometimes the word “mobility” is just tossed into a conversation and is not necessarily being understood in the same way. It is the same in the conversations between transport studies academics, policy practitioners and historians. But if you have got the same people coming back time and time again, you can begin to learn each others’ languages, develop a
shared understanding, and together find a way forward. Bringing the past to bear upon the challenges of mobility in the twenty-first century is where we have to go in the future.

Gijs Mom

For the Jubilee issue of the *Journal of Transport History*, I wrote a piece about fifty years of the journal. That was nine years ago in 2003, when I more or less concluded from a quantitative analysis of the articles in the journal that most studies were economic histories of railways and shipping, written by British scholars. That was quite a revelation. To contextualize this conclusion I also added a couple of quantitative surveys of the field outside of the *Journal of Transport History*. For instance, I counted contributions to the journal *Technology and Culture*, and to my big surprise the picture here was not so different. It was also dominated quantitatively by an interest in the production of railways and shipping. It might come as a surprise, then, that even our American colleagues, who had already started writing on the automobile and the road, did not diverge much from this pattern, and railways and shipping still dominated.

In 2003, the International Association for the History of Transport, Traffic and Mobility (T²M) was founded, and one of the main results was an enormous expansion in the number of events where historians of transport got together, most notably at an annual conference, as well as publishing a yearbook called *Mobility in History* from 2009. It was in this yearbook that I was in the privileged position—together with Colin Divall and Peter Lyth—to write again about “the state of the art,” including a quantitative analysis of the kinds of scholarship we were dealing with, not only in the Journal of Transport History, but also in six consecutive annual conferences of T²M. The result was more or less predictable. There was a shift going on toward other modes—such as the road, the car—and there was at the same time a shift going on from a long-term perspective to, let us say, the last half of the twentieth century. So there was a kind of anti-historical move and an anti-railway move occurring. At the same time, other journals were being founded, with *Mobilities* in 2006, the *Journal of Tourism History* in 2009, and the *T²M Year Book* in 2009, so other ways of dealing with mobility and transport were also emerging.

What I would like to focus on now is a more personal story. To my surprise and big disappointment, the expansion of the number of scholars that were dedicating their energies to the history of transport did not result in a major shift in scholarship. Of course, there were shifts in modes and periods, but despite the publication of a seminal article by Colin Divall and George Revill on the cultural turn, my impression was that the expansion
of transport history led to a kind of higher conservatism rather than a step forward. Someone probably needs to do a detailed analysis, but for me, as an old-fashioned Marxist, my feeling is that an avant-garde is missing. We need an avant-garde which moves the whole thing forward. And that is how I see this new journal Transfers, which is clearly intended to be a kind of break with the past. In the programmatic editorial in the first issue this break was defined in a negative way, as about decentering Europe, decentering the car, decentering the vehicle, and decentering history by taking an interdisciplinary focus. Meanwhile this weekend we were in the lucky position where we could have our first editorial team meeting, and I think we have made a major step in reformulating this programmatic ambition in a positive way. In particular, we would like to encourage submissions of papers which enable readers to rethink mobility, including studies which are trans-national, trans-modal, counter-hegemonic, and non-Eurocentric.

I also wonder whether Transfers could be a platform for mobility politics, maybe even mobility activism. One example would be the bicycle movement. Now, you can criticize the bicycle movement and the products of this movement for being very partisan. The movement does not really produce the neutral type of scholarship which one is used to seeing in, for instance, the Journal of Transport History. On the other hand, the style of some of this scholarship reminds me of the women’s movement, or other emancipatory movements that have used scholarship, and often historical scholarship, to instrumentalize a kind of political activism. So I think that could take us one step further than discussions of the “useable past” or the work I have undertaken with the Dutch Ministry of Transport about the role of history in policy making.

Mimi Sheller

What I am going to say is not a review of the field, as we have already had a great set of discussions about the different pasts that have led to this present moment. Rather I want to talk about the future directions of the field in a way which dovetails with what has already been said about “useable history” and the politics of mobility. In particular, I want to emphasize the need for mobilities research to pick up on two themes that are implicit in a lot of work. These are, firstly, sustainable mobility and the automobility system, and transitions toward other forms of mobility—bicycles, pedestrianism, and so on. This has been a key urban policy issue, and I want to talk about how that mobility transition might happen. Secondly, alongside that, I want to focus on what I call “mobility
“Mobility justice,” which has already been brought up, which really has to do with social inequalities, and the uneven distribution of mobility. “Mobility justice” also links to the idea of “motility”—as a sort of potential mobility—and different forms of mobility capital, or what John Urry calls “network capital,” that are unevenly distributed. In other words, some people have much greater capacities to move than others, and Tim Cresswell has referred to them as the “mobility poor.”

So a lot of people have been touching upon ideas of inequality and sustainability across different branches of mobilities research, and I feel we really need to work on integrating those approaches. Any sort of transition needs to look at how sustainability and mobility justice can be intertwined. Secondly, that kind of dual examination cannot happen just at the urban scale or even at the national scale. It is important to think about the transnational and multi-scalar aspects of both sustainability and inequalities, and I think that mobilities research is really well-positioned right now to tackle these things, because it looks at embodied movement but also things like migration and the movement of objects and representations, and all of these things cut across different scales and can be brought together in a unique way in a mobilities research focus.

The strengths of the field have been the way it looks at uneven mobilities and the way in which things like gender, age, class, and race cut across these distributions of mobility or network capital. And that does intersect with research that comes out of other fields like history and transport history on equitable transportation. For example, some of Cotten Seiler’s work on automobility in the U.S. certainly picks up on the class and racial elements.

So we need the social scientists to read the historians, and for mobilities research in general to be historicized. Of course, much of it is historicized, but there is this caricature floating around that mobilities research is concerned with the contemporary moment, “the now,” suggesting that we all live in a mobile world now. But mobilities researchers are also very much concerned with understanding the historical basis of mobility, and where different patterns of mobility have come from, so I think history is an important part of that. I am particularly interested in emphasizing transnational approaches and multimodal studies of objects and non-objects that are mobile, integrating air, road, and sea mobilities, and understanding how they might connect human and non-human objects, commodities, and representations. I also want to draw on Tim Cresswell’s notion of “constellations of mobility,” because I think that although the concept of “assemblage” works, I prefer “constellations,” and I want to unpack one example of a constellation of mobility that would be transnational, historical, multimodal, and so on.
So I was imagining a scene on Highway Number 2 in Haiti, between Léogâne and Port au Prince. There is a heavy goods vehicle and in the back of it there are about fifty people, on the flat bed, as the vehicle trundles along this very dusty, very hot road, with the sun beating down on them—maybe they are farmers, carrying things to the market and city. Alongside them on the same road there is a motorbike taxi carrying a family of five plus the driver. So there are a number of people on a motorbike, next to the heavy goods vehicle with fifty people. Then there is a UN armored vehicle with troops from, let us say, Nepal, in a vehicle, with guns, uniforms and helmets on, looking out at the road. And alongside that there is an SUV [off-road vehicle] with NGO staff who might be from Belgium, Canada, France, and Brazil. And next to that, on the side of the road, there are pedestrians walking along, people doing their local business, and there may be an ox cart carrying sugar cane.

This would be a very typical scene on Highway Number 2. So you could think that there are many mobilities on that road and they interweave with each other in the road space itself. They are all passing each other, cutting each other off, slowing down, speeding up, going in and out around each other. It is extremely dangerous, and many people lose their lives on these roads, whether on motorbikes, trucks, or buses. But there is also an entanglement of broader mobility systems that inform what is happening on that road. And for me it is about history and transnational connections, and I’ll just briefly say what some of those connections are. The people taking their produce to the market are from the rural area of Léogâne. They used to own family land, collectively owned land that they farmed in this area. They were fairly prosperous toward the start of the twentieth century, but their land was taken over by the Haitian American Sugar Company, a transnational American corporation which in essence bought up or leased all of the sugar cane growing land of Léogâne to feed their sugar processing plant so that they could make sugar and rum to sell to the United States. So many of the former peasants lost their land and were forced into the informal economy. That is part of why their mobilities look the way they do.

The UN troops from Nepal have been flown in and are unknowingly carrying cholera. It will flow with sewage into Haitian rivers where it will infect 700,000 people with cholera, with about 7,000 or more deaths caused. There is a transnational mobility which is about military mobilities and troops but also about diseases and disease vectors and how these move about the world. And then there are the NGO staff who have been able to fly into Haiti, and that is because of their network capital. They possess passports, vaccinations, internet connections to make bookings, smart phones to keep in touch and organize meetings while they are there. So they come with a lot of network capital and they have been able
to connect together certain types of air mobility and rented vehicles with air conditioning and tinted windows shutting out all the dust and the heat. So that gives them a certain kind of mobility but it rests on these transnational networks. At the same time they have access to things which local people do not have access to. For example, because the locals do not have passports, they cannot leave the country, they cannot go through the airport, and the airport itself has been secured by the U.S. military. So this is a way of thinking about a particular road scene, and looking at it both as a constellation of particular embodied, racial, class, and gendered mobilities, but also as a constellation of very transnational, multinational movements of different kinds that are all flowing through this space, determining this space, shaping it in certain ways, with the agency of all the different actors involved, both the human and the non-human actors that are involved in that moment, that constellation, that meeting.

So I am trying to envision a kind of mobility studies that would allow us to do work like that, that is political, about social inequities, and is also ultimately about sustainability. This is because it is the capitalist industries that support certain kinds of vehicular mobility or air mobility that rely upon certain kinds of mining, and upon getting resources from other parts of the world, generating electricity (say hydro-electric power in other parts of the world), that are partly driving the underlying processes of where migration is taking place. Who is moving? What are the capitalist patterns of production and labor in different parts of the world and how are they connected to the various mobilities that we then see manifested in this kind of constellation of mobility?

John Urry

I want to say a little bit about the 1990s, because it seems to me that most of the new thinking about mobilities occurred in the early 2000s, such as the developments that have already been referred to from 2003, the year that Mimi and I set up the Centre for Mobilities Research at Lancaster University. Some of those were reflections upon and responses to what Joseph Stiglitz calls “the roaring nineties” which was made up of a whole variety of transformations in socio-economic-political relations. Things like the disappearance of the Soviet system, the development of 24-hour news reporting, the development of online financial markets operating around the clock, seven days a week, the development of the World Wide Web and so on, and the spread during the 1990s of very cheap oil. This is a very interesting period of cheap oil and cheap resources. In a way, having won the Cold War, the West set out to make the rest of the world in its own global consumerist borderless image, which relates to some of the things
we have been hearing about. The world was open if one lived, worked, and consumed near the centre of this borderless world full of apparent opportunities and choice, including the possibilities of moving around that world, moving around and consuming many consumer goods. There are very important connections between the movement of consumer goods and services and the movement of people. This is a very interesting and important context, but two particular things are hugely problematic in that development. One of these is the development of the significance of energy resources, and the second is what I want to call the significance of offshoring.

So the first of these is energy resources. There is something absolutely peculiar about the twentieth century which came to be organized around fast machines; fast machines which overwhelmingly used one particular resource, namely oil, which accounts for over 95 percent of transportation energy. To be so dependent on one resource is a kind of dangerous thing to do, but it is also dangerous to be dependent on a resource which would appear not to be—at least in the cheap and plentiful way it existed in the twentieth century since the first oil gusher in Spindletop in 1901—expanding in supply. The period of peak oil discovery was in the 1960s, when many of the big fields were discovered. Currently, everyday, 85 million barrels of oil are used. I just think that is an absolutely stunning figure. Everyday that oil is piped and moved by tankers from the relatively limited number of places where oil is found and extracted to places where it is used. It is not of course found everywhere—only in some places—and that, I think, is particularly significant. I have just finished a book in which one of the things I try to argue is that the financial crash of 2007–8 was in fact partly produced by rapidly changing oil prices across the world, but especially in the U.S. suburbs, in the mid-2000s; enhanced by the shortages of oil produced by Hurricane Katrina. Various writers have now suggested that that was as much an oil crunch as a financial crunch. So I think we ain’t seen anything yet as to the degree to which various kinds of oil crises will impact upon the world economy. Of course, relatedly, some people say that China’s demand for oil will, within a decade or so, use all the world’s current exports of oil. Full stop. So that is one absolutely massive situation that will be absolutely crucial to thinking in the future. I don’t really like the term sustainability, and I do not think it has much to do with sustainability. Rather, it is to do with energy resources, supply, and alternative energy resources.

The second issue I want to refer to is secrecy. Although the 1990s was full of people talking about openness—the open economy, open society, “the borderless world”32—actually what it was was a world of increasing seccries. New borders, new secrets. Borderlessness in a way generates borders and vice versa. New borders are regularly being created, policed,
and surveyed. So a borderless world is not simply an open world but one of secrets. I have become really interested and written little bits about the role of secrecy jurisdictions in the Caribbean. Many studies now show the huge amounts of money, a quarter to a third of the total supplies of money, moving in and through so-called tax havens. There is an extensive offshoring of income and wealth to evade taxation that might fund public or social infrastructures and services and that seems to be utterly crucial to the feasibility of sustainable responses. There are probably about seventy tax havens, including of course, Delaware, Wall Street, London, Switzerland, Hong Kong, and Singapore. In fact, there are relatively few places you can go as a holiday-maker and not find you are in a tax haven! There are some astonishing places. There is a building in Delaware that houses 217,000 companies. In some ways I think that is the largest building in the world, but of course it is not. It is a tiny building, with all these plaques on the door. But that is where the accounts of many major capitalist countries and companies are housed. This is an extensive process of offshoring, which may not literally be offshore. Almost all major companies in the world have accounts in one or more secrecy jurisdictions, and almost all our favorite computer companies are basically tax avoiders on a fairly extensive scale.

So there are many processes which escape, are concealed, and made secret. There is a general “offshore world” that reaches into most societies. And this restructures power and domination. In fact many of those things Mimi was describing in Haiti would be partly secret, and that needs you and others to reveal them because they are deliberately secret or in effect secret. So I think borderlessness and secrecy are umbilically linked in the contemporary world. There is a movement of resources, practices, peoples, monies from one national territory to another. Hiding them within secrecy jurisdictions, moving them through routes which are partly or wholly hidden from view. This involves evading rules, taxes, laws, regulations or norms. It is about rule-breaking. Getting around rules in ways that are legal or illegal, go against the spirit of one law, or use laws in one jurisdiction to undermine laws in another. And I think many of the things that we have been discussing today have been made possible by aspects of container-based cargo shipping, travel, the internet, extensive amounts of car and lorry travel, new electronic money transfer systems, the growth of taxation, and legal and financial expertise which is oriented to avoid national systems of regulation. It is not an accidental or incidental feature of the contemporary world. It is dynamic. It is pervasive. And it is restructuring economic, social, political, and material relations between and within societies as more and more resources, practices, peoples, and monies are made or kept secret.
There are many processes to do with the environment, to do with the offshoring of CO₂ emissions, to do with the offshoring of illicit leisure and pleasure activities, and so on. Each society is thus transformed, both where things escape from and where they arrive. In a way everywhere is made and remade through these offshoring relations. We might say the global order is the very opposite of the open world which all those 1990s writers were energetically describing and seeking to promote. So I think researching secrecy should be the new terrain for mobility studies, which raises very interesting questions as to how you get an ethics committee to approve it!

**Notes**

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30. Cresswell, “Towards a Politics of Mobility.”
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In 1946, the municipal council of Saint-Denis, a Parisian suburb, first called attention to the “serious crisis” of living conditions for Algerian migrants in the region and subsequently voted to transform an old barracks into housing for two hundred North African workers.*1 This effort ushered in twenty-five years of municipal activism to promote the rights and welfare of migrant workers in Saint-Denis. Elected officials in nearby Asnières-sur-Seine also worried about the North Africans clustering in northern neighborhoods, though their attention was not caught before the late-1950s and lasted only through a twelve-year period of construction and relocation. Both cities launched massive urban renovation projects to rid their cities of bidonvilles, the shanty-towns that housed large numbers of North African migrant workers and their families,² managing to tear down the last of these “insalubrious zones” by the mid-1970s.

Geographically less than five kilometers apart, the two cities ranked among the most populous in the Seine department in the 1950s.³ Communist Saint-Denis was one of the brightest stars in the Paris Red Belt, a working-class stronghold with a tradition of welcoming migrant workers and fighting for their social welfare and political rights. Asnières, known less for heavy industry than for the atelier of Louis Vuitton,⁴ still housed a number of migrants who worked in its factories and in those of neighboring towns. Its politicians consistently leaned towards the right and largely ignored the city’s North African population, supporting this position with the argument that immigration issues fell to the purview of national, not local, government. In the
early 1950s, Asnières’s population included around 1,000 North Africans, while Saint-Denis counted more than 5,000.5 

The two cities’ policies toward North Africans in their communities reflected these fundamental differences. Asnières’s urban renovations were billed as a project to “liberate” the bidonvilles, to reclaim the land the city had lost to the North African migrant masses. Officials in Saint-Denis spoke instead of “absorbing,” with a focus on eliminating human suffering and public health hazards. These attitudes found expression in the cities’ re-housing strategies: whereas Saint-Denis officials demanded expanded public housing facilities for all workers, Asnières leaders outlined separate relocation schemes for North African and “French” families. Thus, while the two urbanization projects had similar aims, they differed significantly in the tone of their discussions and in their treatment of the bidonvilles’ inhabitants.

These divergences demonstrate that the French reaction to North African migrants was far from monolithic. The field of French immigration studies is predominantly national in its focus, given that policies on citizenship, migration, and social services are mostly set at the national level.6 Examining migration from a local perspective, however, offers both depth and complexity to our understanding of how multiple French actors received migrants in their communities.7 The experience of Saint-Denis, in particular, offers an alternative to accounts of national migration policy (even as Asniérois activity closely parallels national developments). Saint-Denis’s policies through the 1960s contradicted not only national trends, but also the traditional narrative about the French Left’s insufficient support for migrants. Histories of French communism’s relations with immigrant workers have rarely taken into consideration actions outside the communist or socialist municipal governments of the Parisian “Red Belt.” This focus on left-leaning communes has swayed conclusions about the levels of municipal engagement with migrants, leading to accusations of purposeful inaction, hypocrisy, and abject failure to address immigration issues adequately, without due consideration of the contemporary context in which few other municipalities even considered the impact they might have on migrants’ lives.8 Placing Saint-Denis in direct comparison with the Gaullist municipality of Asnières thus makes its minor accomplishments seem more significant. The Dionysien municipality was deeply concerned by the needs of the local North African population. Municipal officials were active in asserting North African rights, providing their own city programs, appealing to departmental and national bodies on a wide variety of issues, and even supporting Algerian nationalism before the outbreak of the Algerian War (1954–1962).

Not only were alternative positions and policies adopted by city leaders, but we also find local deviations from the national chronology and even terminology. As I will develop below, anti-bidonville programs in Saint-Denis and Asnières did not directly track national developments. The municipalities seized on national initiatives when they found them to be advantageous and ignored other policies that did not suit their purposes. Moreover, linguistic
(and legal) distinctions that were clear and binding at the national level proved muddier, and were even ignored, at the local level—especially in the frequent local use of the category “North African.”

Though the vast majority of the North Africans I discuss in this article were Algerian, both Moroccans and Tunisians were also present in the two cities. Officials at the time regularly used the term “North African” as a synonym for Algerian; “Maghrebin,” “Muslim,” “Arab,” even “immigrant,” were used equally interchangeably. Given the pervasive confusion in the sources, I have found it less troublesome to err on the side of broader terminology (allowing for differences where possible) than to perpetuate the conflation of North Africans and Algerians by relying upon the more specific name.9 Furthermore, using the term “North African” allows me to discuss policies that affected all three populations. This is especially useful in considering urbanization projects in Asnières, where Tunisians and Moroccans made up a significant portion of the city’s bidonville population but were not listed separately in the rehousing plans. Despite the important differences in the legal status of the three North African groups (at least through 1962), the local officials whom I consider here rarely distinguished between them: from the perspective of these actors, “North Africans” were evicted and rehoused as a single group.10

Discovering the Bidonvilles

The national government took official notice of the bidonvilles in the mid-1950s, roughly following the heightened public profile of the general housing crisis.11 In 1954, a police memo warned that the North African migrant population “has been concentrated in the most abandoned neighborhoods ... at the very gates of Paris, veritable ‘Bidonvilles’ have been constituted and progressively this pacific invasion, coming closer and closer, has conquered the near totality of the Parisian agglomeration.”12 State officials worried about the dangers posed by these marginal communities to public health, hygiene, and, above all, security. 1954 was, of course, the opening of the Algerian War, and thus the development of substantial social housing initiatives to benefit North Africans derived primarily from a logic of surveillance and control.13 Both the police and the Ministry of the Interior demanded government intervention in the bidonvilles, on the basis that these neighborhoods would soon serve as a second front for Algerian nationalists.14 In response to these concerns, the state created myriad social assistance programs that offered Algerians real improvements to their often deplorable living conditions.15 The most important of these was SONACOTRAL (the Société nationale de construction pour les travailleurs originaires d’Algérie), a joint public-private venture, founded in 1956 to coordinate and implement construction projects for Algerian workers’ housing. SONACOTRAL’s work to eliminate the bidonvilles eventually drew much of its funding from the Fonds d’action sociale (FAS), which was established in
1958 (within the rubric of de Gaulle’s Constantine Plan) to finance social projects for Algerian workers and their families residing in the metropole.

Despite this high level of state involvement and state funding, local authorities were hardly without influence. Departmental officials in the Seine Prefecture were particularly active in overseeing the destruction of the bidonvilles and other unsanitary habitats throughout the Paris region. Construction carried out by SONACOTRAL, its successor SONACOTRA, and other associations was often run through local administrations. Before any work could be done, these organizations needed to acquire both land rights and building permits from city officials. Local officials received significant legislative support for launching their own initiatives with the passage of the Debré Law in 1964, which gave cities and other public actors the right to claim bidonville land, so long as they intended to build upon it or otherwise use it for urbanization projects. Finally, every city had its own public housing office, which made the majority of decisions about where to build and whom to house.

Asnières-sur-Seine: Renovation and Removal

Asnières showed little interest in its North African population before the end of the 1950s, when the municipality enthusiastically embraced the anti-bidonville spirit. While local officials would drive the process—and local conditions would color some of the outcomes—overall, Asnières’s municipality followed national policies more than it challenged or reshaped them. The city’s alignment with national developments was strengthened greatly by the participation of its long-serving mayor, Michel Maurice-Bokanowski (1959–1994), in various Fifth Republic governments. Indeed, the city’s decision to tackle its bidonville problem corresponded exactly with Bokanowski’s entry into office. The major renovation project for the city’s northern zone was both one of France’s earliest such endeavors and one of the most efficient.

Though some of Asnières’s North African bidonville dwellers would benefit from this program, the majority of families would be moved to cités de transit (transitional housing centers), while single male laborers would be shuttled to foyers (dormitory-style accommodations) elsewhere in the Paris region.

Asnières’s municipality adopted a markedly negative tone towards local North African bidonville residents, whom officials described as an obstacle to urban development. Construction projects clearly took precedence over the individuals and families to be relocated, and descriptions of these building initiatives almost always preceded mentions of the resident population. One meeting introduced the subject of North African “expulsions” by declaring, “It is these families that impede [the chief engineer] in the execution of his storm drain.” The deputy-mayor in charge of the city’s renovation project later clarified that the “displacement” of the families should in no way “hinder future construction.” Many reports on the progress of the renova-
tion project dropped all allusions to the presence of North Africans in the area. The disregard for these residents underscored their forced removal from the neighborhood.

Throughout France, discussion of the bidonvilles developed a fairly standard vocabulary. Authorities worked to “eliminate” bidonvilles, to “liquidate” them, often to “resorb” them. One word employed frequently in Asnières was “liberate”; the liberation, that is, of land. The idea of liberation, particularly after 1945, connoted reclaiming land that had been occupied by foreign elements. Overt military references may not have been conscious on the part of those who employed them to speak of migration, but they were pervasive (as in the previously cited police memo warning of “invasion”). In Asnières, the deputy-mayor in charge of housing was dubbed “Chief of Staff of the anti-bidonville army.” He himself spoke in terms of battles and operations, noting that two deaths occurred during survey projects, and that municipal officials found that they “had to fight with” the bidonville residents. Asniérois officials did not equate North African workers with Nazi occupiers; however, their terminology reflected a definite distinction between belonging—in the sense that the land in the northern zone belonged to the city—and not belonging—referring to the migrants and their families who illegally occupied that land.

When the time came to consider re-housing options, Asnières’s municipal agenda outlined two processes: offering new opportunities in town to metropolitan French families and re-settling North Africans, preferably far away. Mayor Bokanowski described the renovation of the northern zone as a renewal effort: the neighborhood overrun by slums and bidonvilles was to be transformed into a residential paradise, with cultural, social, and commercial services spread out among green parks and brand-new buildings. A key component of this proposed transformation was demographic: “A new population, composed essentially of young households, will enrich [the neighborhood’s] dynamic potential.” Bokanowski declared that re-housing would be a priority and that families would soon take residence in new apartment complexes built after the removal of the bidonvilles from the land. He did not explicitly link these two resettlements, however. As the use of the phrase “new population” suggests, those who were re-housed in the northern zone’s bold new HLM29 high-rises were not the same people who had inhabited the bidonvilles. City officials planned “the expulsion of North Africans” along-side the destruction of shanties and dilapidated buildings; young metropolitan families were slated to settle in their place. Thus, the renovation project sought to give the neighborhood not just a face-lift, but a full transfusion.

Despite early statements that North African families would be re-housed “in the same manner as metropolitan families,” Asnières’s municipality detailed separate re-housing schemes for French and North African residents, with further distinctions between North African families and single men, and maintained this dual policy throughout the renovation period. The very wording of this policy demonstrated officials’ reticence to place North Africans in
the same category as “metropolitans” (even those Algerians who, at least ini-
tially, should have been received as French citizens). When Asnières’s munici-
pal construction body (the Société d’économie mixte d’équipement et de re-
novation d’Asnières, SEMERA) outlined re-housing projects for northern 
zone residents in 1964, it divided its report into separate sections on French 
and North African families.33 This process was still evident in the late-1960s, 
when the commission that oversaw housing attribution throughout the city 
explicitly gave priority to families it assumed to have “French nationality.”34

When possible, city authorities in Asnières avoided direct participation in 
re-housing the North Africans displaced by the city’s renovation projects. Sin-
gle workers were shuffled out of the municipal system, sent to foyers and 
hotels—most of which were in other cities—and left to the care of the depart-
mental prefectures and other associations. The municipality received families 
more favorably than they did individual workers—a preference not limited to 
Asnières. As the secretary of state for immigrant workers acknowledged, across 
France, “acting to house single foreigners meets with little support, even with 
hostility, from the French population.”35 Municipal officials deemed some of 
the northern zone’s North African families able to move directly from the 
bidonvilles into the new apartments built in their wake. Most, however, were 
believed to require additional education and socialization.36 City authorities 
assigned these families to the Cité du Stade, a transitional housing center built 
by SONACOTRAL and administered by SEMERA. There, under close supervi-
sion and bounded by tight regulations (forbidding messiness, unorthodox 
parking, additional residents, and animal-raising),37 the migrants were pre-
pared for their full transition into metropolitan life (symbolized by their acces-
sion to regular social housing in HLMs).

In 1970, the municipality hosted a celebration for the inauguration of the 
renovated northern zone, attended by the prime minister, Jacques Chaban-
Delmas. The brochure for the event framed a series of “before” and “after” 
photographs: the new towers in orderly rows, named for various flowers, stood 
atop scenes of run-down, empty streets, dilapidated buildings and shanties, 
with construction cranes hovering overhead. Nearly all of the captions to the 
“before” pictures indicated which building had taken their place. Only the last 
picture invoked the term “bidonville,” describing its destruction, and none 
made reference to the people portrayed.38

Asniérois officials’ priorities suggested a modernizing mindset: a 1963 
description of the HLM les Courtilles declared the complex to be “inscribed in 
the general context of the renovation of and restoring of order to the ban-
lieue.”39 Mayor Bokanowski called the SEMERA project Asnières’s “contribution 
to the important evolution of the Paris region.” The renovation of the 
northern zone was declared to be conceived in “a new spirit,” “in the light of 
the principal tendencies of modern life.”40 The bidonvilles had nearly always 
appeared in city documents within quotation marks, holding them apart from 
city affairs. They and their inhabitants were not only foreign, but also stood in
opposition to the image of a renovated and rationalized city that the Asniérois (and the French Republic) sought to project.

**Saint-Denis: From Inclusion to Inundation**

Whereas the Asniérois municipality viewed North African bidonville occupants as an impediment, officials in Saint-Denis highlighted the difficulties North Africans themselves faced, described their residence in slums and bidonvilles as a last resort, and emphasized the need to improve these migrants’ social situation in order to overcome the bidonville problem. From the outset, the resorption of Saint-Denis’s bidonvilles was billed as a humanitarian project more than a land reclamation process. Though the Asniérois debates over the bidonvilles made frequent use of the term “liberation,” this word rarely appeared in similar discussions in Saint-Denis. Dionysien officials were no less concerned with getting rid of the bidonvilles, speaking of “making them disappear” or “liquidating” them. However, they typically described a process of “absorption” or “resorption.” The land and people of the bidonvilles were to be brought into—or even brought back into—the local or national body in a manner that did not imply re-conquest so much as reintegration. Reconstruction in Saint-Denis, while certainly tied to a desire to rebuild the city, may be best understood in the context of re-housing the migrant populations of the slums, the dilapidated hotels and foyers, and the bidonvilles. This difference in focus was evident even in the names the two cities chose for their construction bodies. Where the Asnières municipality founded SEMERA, whose name referred only to infrastructure and renovation, Saint-Denis created Logement Dionysien, invoking the people of the city and their needs for suitable housing.

Saint-Denis’s communist municipality had cultivated a particularly close and supportive relationship with the North African migrants living in their community. Dionysien officials not only devoted a surprising amount of energy (and funding) to the problems faced by local North Africans in terms of housing, employment, and social welfare, but they also vehemently denounced French imperialism and publicly embraced the Algerian nationalist cause. As mentioned above, the municipality of Saint-Denis took up the issue of North African migration directly after the Second World War. By 1949, Mayor Auguste Gillot (serving from 1944 to 1971) and the Dionysien municipal council were agitating for a nationwide expansion of Algerians’ social rights, especially with regard to housing, employment, education, and welfare benefits. They demanded, for instance, that Algerian workers be included on unemployment rolls, noting that the existing regulations (especially the requirement for six months’ residence in a single commune) meant that many of these workers slipped through the safety net. The municipal council also issued an official demand to the Ministry of Labor calling for, among other
things, a center for vocational training to be established in the city. Later, Saint-Denis struck a deal with the Ministry of Education, agreeing to host evening classes for North African workers. Where existing national regulations did not make specific provisions for aid to North African workers, the city sometimes stepped in to fill the gap: the municipal budget for 1950 included 53 million FF for aiding local North Africans.

Officials in Saint-Denis not only concerned themselves with material aid to migrants, but also took some small steps towards making North Africans feel more welcome in the community. In June 1950, Gillot and the local communists hosted an honorary tea, open to all North Africans in Saint-Denis, in honor of the Muslim holy month of Ramadan, “in order that the North Africans feel ‘at home’ and to signify as well that the Party respects the traditions and morals of the peoples from the overseas departments.” In 1952, the municipality announced it would hire a North African interpreter to work at city hall three mornings a week and “devote himself especially to questions concerning North African workers.” Over the next decade, Dionysien officials sought to provide services they believed vital to Algerian workers, and condemned national and departmental policies that they perceived as insufficient to address North African needs or even as harmful to Algerians. While many of the municipality’s actions displayed a degree of paternalism (the intention to speak on behalf of people who couldn’t—or perhaps shouldn’t—speak for themselves; the pursuit of goals determined by the municipality’s own priorities), the fact that North Africans were consulted at all, indeed that discussions of these issues even occurred, speaks to a much higher level of direct involvement with these migrants than in Asnières and elsewhere.

The close ties between Saint-Denis’s municipality and its North African population were most vividly illustrated by the city’s policies throughout the Algerian struggle for independence. From the earliest moments of Algerian nationalist rumblings, Dionysien officials stood solidly in opposition to French policies in Algeria, and often explicitly linked migrants’ social ills in the metropole to French colonial conduct in North Africa. As early as 1951, the mayor gave an address that decried “racist colonial oppression” and affirmed Algeria’s right to national independence. Gillot and his colleagues further advocated for the rights of individual Algerians who were detained or otherwise discriminated against over the course of the war. Officials in Saint-Denis were especially concerned with the actions of the French police, whom they accused of belligerence and repressive action against North African residents in the city. It is notable that in both rhetoric and action, the Dionysien municipality proved a stauncher ally to the Algerian nationalist cause than did the French Communist Party (PCF) as a whole. The divide between Dionysien municipal policy and the PCF’s position on the Algerian War often appeared nearly as wide as that between Saint-Denis and Asnières. There is little indication, however, that this induced friction between local communists and the national party; in fact, Gillot sat on the PCF’s Central Committee.
throughout this period. Saint-Denis’s experience thus highlights the differences that existed even within the PCF as much as it does the multiple approaches to migration within France, yet again calling to attention to the importance of allowing for variance at the local level.

Saint-Denis’s approach to the bidonvilles reflected this closer relationship between the city and its migrants. Dionysien municipal officials first invoked the term “bidonville” in a 1953 report. Officials feared the public health contagions emanating from these areas, noting in particular that the lack of plumbing and the presence of sick individuals risked further “contamination.” The municipal council issued its first call for the “resorption of the bidonvilles” in November 1957. While this chronology demonstrates that Dionysiens were aware of migrant housing problems and the emergence of the bidonvilles well before their Asniérois counterparts—indeed, they organized municipal resources and founded a building society ahead of Asnières—construction in Saint-Denis proceeded at a much slower pace. The program to rid the city of its bidonvilles started in earnest only in the mid-1960s, when Asnières had all but finished the renovation of the northern zone, and it was not completed until 1973. Exacerbating this delay, Dionysien officials were reluctant to involve government offices—and particularly SONACOTRA/L—in their projects, fearing that this would subject local North Africans to police surveillance. The city first cooperated with SONACOTRA in 1965, well after the end of the Algerian War, once local officials’ distrust of state motivations had ebbed. This meant that not only did government resources arrive late to the city, but that these post-war reconstruction efforts, no longer linked to immediate security concerns, were also much slower and less efficient than work undergone before 1962.

Dionysien re-housing policy did not follow the explicitly bifurcated, French vs. North African, path taken in Asnières. In the first place, Saint-Denis’s bidonvilles housed a more complex mix of national groups, including many Portuguese and Spanish families. Second, the municipality had long professed a doctrine of inclusion and the promotion of rights for all workers, regardless of their origin. Unlike Asnières, Saint-Denis did not set out to use re-housing operations to redistribute its migrant population throughout the Paris region. Instead, the majority of single men and large numbers of families were given new accommodation within the city. For example, in May 1967 the municipality oversaw four relocations, transferring all of the residents to foyers and “familial transit centers” in town.

While Asnières demonstrated a preference for offering housing to North African families over single men, in Saint-Denis the proliferation of families proved more difficult for the municipality to handle than the flows of single male workers. In 1970, for example, the municipality struck an agreement with SONACOTRA to re-house within Saint-Denis all of the single male migrants from one of the city’s bidonvilles, but only one-third of the families. Lone workers were easier to house; foyers could be built for large num-
bers of occupants and, more importantly, were administered and financed by outside associations. By 1973, Saint-Denis could accommodate 1,600 migrant workers in five foyers and construction had begun for a sixth.\textsuperscript{57} Family social housing, on the other hand, drew directly from the municipal housing budget. The allocation of HLM units pitted migrant families against autochthonous ones, who had long been waiting for re-housing opportunities.

The municipality repeatedly called upon national ministries and departmental programs to shoulder the financial responsibility for migrants and their families. As the municipal budget bore ever larger outlays from projects related to the bidonvilles, demands issued from city hall for government agencies and employers to provide for the re-housing of migrants.\textsuperscript{58} Again and again, the municipality sought to place the blame for the emergence of the bidonvilles, and all the problems that ensued, on the state (for its irresponsible migration policies) and on employers (for using migrants for their labor but failing to provide for their basic welfare). They reprimanded the government for its sluggishness in dealing with the bidonvilles, emphasizing the city’s own advocacy and action over the past years. It was time, in other words, for someone else to take care of the local migrant population. This contrasts starkly with the Asniérois’s cordial relationship with the state—a coziness derived not only from shared political alignment, but also from Mayor Bokanowski’s close ties to the national government.\textsuperscript{59}

Eventually, Dionysien municipal officials did demand a more even distribution of bidonville residents throughout the region, asserting that Saint-Denis had been doing more than its fair share for long enough. By the early-1970s, under a new mayor,\textsuperscript{60} growing migrant-fatigue made Saint-Denis reticent to accept responsibility for still more migrant workers. First, city officials demanded that the national government further restrict immigration flows. Then, in 1970, the municipality insisted that a \textit{seuil de tolérance}, a “tolerated” limit of 10 percent, be maintained as migrants were rehoused within the city’s HLM projects.\textsuperscript{61} Finally, in 1974, Saint-Denis joined with six other cities to petition the Prefect for Seine-Saint-Denis to block new migrants’ entry into their communities.\textsuperscript{62} A new policy forbade the entry of new migrant families into any of the seven cities and explicitly banned re-housing foreign families from elsewhere in the region in those cities.\textsuperscript{63} This marked a decidedly different approach to Saint-Denis’s migrants from that of previous decades. The rapid growth of the migrant population, the increase in foreign families, the proliferation of the bidonvilles, and the strain on the municipal budget all contributed to the municipality’s shift away from its commitment to inclusion.

\textbf{Lessons from the Local Level}

Over the course of their renovation and reconstruction projects, Saint-Denis and Asnières-sur-Seine dealt with their North African populations in manners
consistent with their earlier attitudes. The Asniérois rid their city of a blight; the Dionysiens clamored for state intervention and financing to fix a problem whose humane solutions they promoted but did not wish to fund. To evaluate these programs in terms of their success, one must take into account the differing goals of the two cities. Asnières, for example, set out to “liberate” the bidonvilles from their North African inhabitants and construct a modern urban neighborhood in its stead—a project in which they succeeded. Saint-Denis, in contrast, aimed at “absorbing” the bidonvilles, aiding and integrating local North Africans—goals which they were less successful in achieving. Though, in the end, neither city offered an ideal solution to the problems faced by North African migrants, their different approaches reveal an underlying divergence in their attitudes towards these arrivals and their broader notions of community belonging.

In Asnières, the migrant population had been all but ignored until the city took on the massive project to renovate the northern zone. The presence of migrants and bidonvilles was believed to hinder progress and modernization. The bidonvilles were torn down, most single male migrants were relocated throughout the Paris region, and North African families were sent to the cités de transit, where they were expected to undergo their own transformation to conform to modern lifestyles. By 1970, the city had achieved its goal of transforming a dilapidated, haphazardly settled area into a meticulously planned urban space. City officials’ attitudes towards the bidonville residents they evacuated demonstrated their lack of desire to engage with this—predominantly North African—section of their population. Over the decades, Asnières’s actions—or lack thereof—revealed a belief that migrant populations were the responsibility of the state, not the city. That this marginalized population simply did not belong, in the eyes of city officials, was further illustrated by the separate (and unequal) re-housing policies pursued by the municipality.

Dionysien municipal officials’ relationship with the city’s North African residents was more complicated. First, the municipality had been heavily involved with its North African population since the 1940s. Their interactions spanned a broad spectrum of issues beyond housing: health, education, labor, social and political rights, and anti-imperialism. Second, the diverse makeup of Saint-Denis’s bidonvilles required officials to balance greater numbers of more varied groups than officials in Asnières faced. In Saint-Denis, nearly every declaration of migrant mistreatment in the metropole or appeal for the extension of rights and services was coupled with the demand that the French state, not the Dionysien budget, bear the cost. The resorption of Saint-Denis’s bidonvilles, and the re-housing of thousands of migrants and their families, was no exception. Dionysien communists, especially Mayor Gillot, operated within a unique set of assumptions about North African workers. From an ideological standpoint, these migrants were fellow members of a unified, global working-class, allies in the struggle against capitalism and imperialism. Gillot and his colleagues used the fact of Algerian citizenship in particular as a means
of challenging the state’s ability—or desire—to care for all of its members, and used broader North African welfare issues as a clear means of differentiating their agenda from the state’s.65

Yet, having admirably talked the talk of inclusion and community integration, Saint-Denis stumbled in its attempt to walk the walk: high-minded declarations culminated with a ban on migrant entry. By the early-1970s, with an economic crisis looming, Saint-Denis was simply overwhelmed by the sheer number of migrant workers seeking residence and aid. The burden of accommodating this population was compounded by regional developments; foyers and HLMs that had been available to Asnières, Nanterre, and other cities in the early-1960s were overflowing by the time Saint-Denis set out to clear its bidonvilles. The process of resorbing bidonvilles and re-housing residents was therefore slower, less efficient, and more frustrating to Dionysien authorities than it had been in Asnières. With a foreign population nearing 20 percent, the municipality shut the city gates to new migrants at the same time as the French state was closing its own borders. It is important to note, however, that this closure to new migrants was not accompanied by a chilling of relations with those already in town. The city maintained closer ties to North Africans and other migrants than other cities in the region, and continues even today to advocate for migrant rights and protections.66

Taken together, the experiences of these two cities demonstrate the multiplicity of local reactions to North African migrants and shows that a homogenous migration policy did not in fact exist throughout the hexagon. Though Saint-Denis appeared to falter in later years, progress made within the city should not be understated and one must recognize the continued expressions of community inclusion even as implementation was frustrated. Dionysien officials went above and beyond the work of their Asniérois counterparts in engaging local North Africans, welcoming these migrants into the city, and expending considerable energy and political capital to support their rights and needs. These practices set Saint-Denis apart not only from the path of national policy, but also from the presumed failings of leftist politicians. However, Saint-Denis also stands as a cautionary tale, in which a migrant-friendly environment induced further migration, leading to a sense of overload and a strong backlash that resulted in the exclusionary policies of the early-1970s.

The city’s experience indicates that pro-migrant rhetoric did not necessarily entail efficient action. To understand Saint-Denis’s eventual difficulties, one must consider the effect the Algerian War itself had on French migrant policy, and particularly housing programs (not only for Algerians). In an odd twist, Dionysien municipal reactions to migrants after 1962 followed a similar trajectory to national developments, though the logic was reversed. The impetus for the national government to provide social welfare programs to Algerians was intimately linked with the Algerian War; the state coupled its welfare initiatives with its security efforts. Programs created within this environment of mixed social and security motivations were highly efficient (and had sig-
nificant moral and monetary support) and did result in a distinct rise in migrant welfare. Asnières adeptly capitalized on this environment, which proved conducive to rapid reconstruction and smooth re-housing operations, including the ability to move many North Africans out of their city into others in the region. The birth of an independent Algeria in 1962, however, had profound ramifications for Algerian migrants: at the same time that Algerian nationalists became much less of a security threat, all Algerians lost their automatic right to French citizenship. These changes curbed the state’s motivations for social engagement with these migrants and thus led to a loss of urgency and of focus, especially as the welfare programs expanded their mandates to include all migrants.

Saint-Denis, which was late in marshalling national resources for its rehousing programs, was frustrated by this fizzling of state interest and city officials were unable to take advantage of the same dedication and resources available to Asnières before 1962. Moreover, the end of the Algerian War forced a change in the city’s relationship with its North African residents that mirrored the changes occurring nationally. Where the state had been invested in the Algerian question for security purposes, the Saint-Denis municipality engaged with local migrants for ideological and communal reasons. Agitating on behalf of North African workers’ rights in France—and Algerians’ right to independence—aligned with the municipality’s long-standing anti-imperialism and offered municipal officials yet another front for their combative opposition politics. These motivations for engagement dwindled with Algerian independence. First, it was no longer necessary—or possible—for municipal officials to rally with local Algerians around anti-imperialist opposition to the French state. Second, just as the French state expanded its programs to other migrants, Saint-Denis’s migrant population was diversifying. Without a single group to champion, the municipality’s attention was diffused among a variety of populations who had different—occasionally conflicting—needs, which made it difficult to articulate a clear and unified platform for local action. Finally, this growing migrant population was slowly overwhelming Saint-Denis and city officials realized that they might not be able—or willing—to live up to the internationalist ideas that communist officials had long espoused. In short, the political context of the 1950s raised interest in the North African (and particularly Algerian) population for both state and local actors, who for various reasons saw benefit in promoting migrant welfare. However, by the 1970s, this context had changed dramatically and the onset of economic crisis made the presence of migrant workers more—and more broadly—problematic.

The variance between Saint-Denis and Asnières further demonstrates that the contemporary, contentious, immigration situation in France was not predetermined. Migration policy was contested throughout the second half of the twentieth century and alternative views of belonging were articulated even through the 1970s. Asnières, for one, adopted a traditional French Republican
model with a smaller and selected group of North Africans (those they did not send to other cities), relying on transitional centers, education, and close contact with French society and culture in the hopes of producing model Asniérois. Yet, in Saint-Denis, a Dionysien identity rooted in local connections took precedence over purely national or citizenship identifications, allowing for greater participation of North African migrants and encouraging Dionysien activism on issues important to migrants’ lives (whether providing better housing or opposing police repression). At the same time, though Saint-Denis and Asnières-sur-Seine had entered the reconstruction and re-housing process from opposite positions, developments over the late-1960s and the 1970s brought both cities closer to prevailing currents in French immigration policy. The North African migrant workers who had fueled the post-war economic boom were wearing out their welcome, especially as their families’ presence increased and the national economy slowed. Mechanisms conceived to facilitate integration became tools for exclusion, and even those cities that had fought long for North Africans’ rights and welcomed these migrants as important members of their communities found that their tolerance had its limits.

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Notes

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1. This particular effort was unsuccessful, as the War Ministry claimed the barracks to house German POWs, a policy the municipality would fight vigorously for the next five years. “Rapport à M. le Maire sur l’activité de la Municipalité et du Conseil Municipal en faveur des Nord-Africains,” 26 May 1950, Archives municipales de Saint-Denis (AMSD), 37 AC 16; see also memos and correspondence on
“Hébergement Nord-africain,” AMSD, 37 AC 17. All translations from French are the author’s.

2. Though bidonville residents were as likely to be Portuguese as Algerian—and included Spaniards, Yugoslavs, some Italians, and even French natives—the North African residents received the most attention.


9. While narrowing the study to “Algerians” might seem to offer a solution, both legal and practical considerations make “Algerian” far from simple. “Algerian” poses difficulties in reading historical documents as the European settlers had laid claim to the name in the early twentieth century (although here, I employ “Algerian” only to refer to the non-European residents of the territory). Similarly, though some scholars have used “French Muslim,” “Algerian Muslim,” or “FMA” for Algerian migrants, I am reluctant to ascribe faith to individuals whose religious practices I cannot know.

10. I certainly do not intend to imply that Algerian developments had the same impact on Moroccans and Tunisians as they did on Algerians (indeed, one cannot claim that all Algerians experienced the same effects). Yet, Moroccans and Tunisians unfortunately fell victim to prejudices derived from the Algerian conflict—and even found themselves caught up in surveillance operations intended for Algerians.

11. For a discussion of the post-war housing crisis in the context of the banlieues, see Annie Fourcaut, “Qu’elle était belle la banlieue,” L’Histoire 315 (December 2006); for more of an emphasis on the relationship of migrants to the housing crisis, see Marie-Claude Blanc-Chaléard, “Les immigrés et le logement en France depuis le XIXe siècle: Une histoire paradoxale,” Hommes et Migrations 1264 (November-December 2006).


14. Police suspicions did not derive from unfounded paranoia. Benjamin Stora, in particular, has demonstrated the strength of the FLN in France, the extent of its operations, the effects of the “civil war” among nationalists on Algerians in the metropole, and the significance of the funding for nationalist groups drawn from Algerian emigrants. On the FLN’s work in France see Stora, Ils venaient d’Algérie, pages 159–69 and numerous annexes; on the broader intra-Algerian conflict, see
Chapters 9, 10, and 12.

15. The Paris police force both oversaw surveillance operations in Algerian neighborhoods and managed employment, housing, and health services (which gave them access to Algerian individuals, and provided a powerful propaganda tool to cultivate sympathy for the French state, not Algerian nationalists). This pattern was reminiscent of interwar policy; see Rosenberg, *Policing Paris: The Origins of Modern Immigration Control Between the Wars* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2006), Part II.

16. The loss of the “L” indicated the expansion of its mandate after Algerian independence to include all other migrants.


19. 1959 was also the moment when SONACOTRAL was mobilized to deal with the bidonvilles in nearby Nanterre. For an overview of Nanterre’s experience, which became emblematic of the early anti-bidonville movements, see Sayad and Dupuy, *Un Nanterre algérien* and Bernadot, “Une politique de logement,” 71–72.

20. This northern zone jutted away from the center of town—forming, in essence, a micro-banlieue. The neighborhoods were both historically and spatially peripheral, once famous for rag-pickers and vagabonds, later associated with industrial laborers. Jouan, *Asnières-sur-Seine et son histoire*, 40.


22. Ibid.


24. *Résorber* can mean to reduce or to absorb, but also shares the medical sense of the English “resorb.”

25. For example, a municipal council meeting in 1963 opened with a list of the bidonvilles already “liberated,” and outlined the coming “re-housing operations with a view to the liberation of grounds.” “Compte-rendu de la réunion du 1er octobre 1963,” AMASS, 2 I 63.


27. Ibid.


29. HLMs (*habitations à loyer modéré*) were subsidized low-rent housing units, typically built in massive towers and complexes.


31. This resettlement process should not be viewed simply as a blunt form of population selection. Over the decades, Asnières’s actions—or lack thereof—demonstrated their belief that migrant populations were the responsibility of the state, not the city. The common practice of separating bidonville residents administratively by listing those poorly-off on prefectural, not municipal, files (Bernadot, “Une politique du logement,” 71–72) reflected the notion that cities were responsible for their citizens, while working migrant residents (who did not vote, but whose claims...
to welfare benefits still drained city coffers) belonged to someone else. Electoral and budgetary concerns mingled with social and cultural preferences.


33. SEMERA Conseil d’Administration, “Note sur les opérations de relogement,” 5 February 1964, AMASS, 3 Durb 39.

34. The commission noted in 1968 that only “French” families were listed in its data files, since they “had always desired to give priority” to these families. It is unclear how they defined French nationality; but the overall tone suggests that they intended to benefit metropolitan families, not merely those with French citizenship (which could include Algerians). Commission municipale chargée de l’attribution des logements mis à la disposition de la ville d’Asnières, 12 January 1968, AMASS, 3 Durb 72.

35. Notes pour la visite de M. le Secrétaire d’État chargé des travailleurs immigrés, “Les Obstacles à surmonter pour la réalisation de nouveaux programmes pour isolés,” October 1974, Centre des archives contemporaines (CAC), 19870056 – 12, “SONACOTRA Correspondance.” The Secretary affirmed that this ill will could be addressed by educating the population and issuing stronger government statements of support for the projects. Marc Roberrini—Chargé de mission for the Service de liaison et promotion des migrants (SPLM) in the Prefecture for the Paris region—likewise elaborated in one of his annual reports that “an exclusively male immigration poses psychological problems, creates social imbalances, and does not facilitate the insertion of the individual into society. Roberrini, “Rapport à M. le Préfet de la Région Parisienne sur la résorption des bidonvilles et les problèmes des migrants,” 21 February 1970, 50.

36. Amelia Lyons’s work describes the French state’s involvement with Algerian households at length. Lyons, “Invisible Immigrants.”

37. Letter from Etring (SEMER) to Cité residents, 22 May 1970; letter from Etring to Lazarus, 5 January 1971; Correspondence between Deputé Lavergne and Etring, 5 and 19 October 1970, AMASS, 2 S 2 – 30.


44. Most of this aid was allocated to various centers and organizations working in the city, with only 500,000 FF reserved for “emergency support.” This last amount was intended to allow the municipality to offer small contributions to individuals in dire circumstances; in the period of one year (including the winter 1949–1950), the municipal office treated fifty requests for such support. “Rapport à M. le Maire sur l’activité de la Municipalité et du Conseil Municipal en faveur des Nord-Africains,” 26 May 1950, AMSD, 37 AC 16.
45. Invitations for the event were printed in French on one side and Arabic on the other, advertising “hispano-oriental music” and “expressions of fraternity.” “Plan de travail concernant les travailleurs Nord-Africains de Saint-Denis,” 31 May 1950, AMSD, 37 AC 16.

46. Note from Barron to chefs et responsables de service, 18 February 1952, AMSD, 37 AC 17.


48. AMSD, 37 AC 17.

49. Opposition to police practices brought Gillot and two other city officials literally to blows with local police officers (which, in France, are directly administered by the Interior Ministry, and not run by the city). On 2 October 1961, Gillot and his colleagues marched to the local police commissariat at the head of a demonstration protesting the actions of the “Auxiliary Police Force” (officers of Algerian origin recruited by the Parisian police to aid in the fight against Algerian nationalists). The officer who met them in front of the building refused to recognize the municipal officials and gave orders to disperse the crowd, which were carried out violently. By Gillot’s estimation, at least three city officials were physically attacked; in the aftermath, the Paris Police Prefect sought (but did not secure) the mayor’s suspension. Letter from Jean Benedetti, Préfet de la Seine, to Gillot, 7 October 1961, AMSD, 10 S 121 and Letter from the Ministry of the Interior (Cabinet) to Benedetti, 16 November 1961, AP, PEROTIN 101/78/1.


51. He served from 1945 to 1964.


54. This is not to say that the municipality provided places for all of the migrants displaced by resorption efforts; some single workers were sent to foyers in other cities, but their numbers were relatively small. For example, in 1969, during the resorption of Francs-Moisins, a small group of North Africans was among the population affected. Of these, three Algerians were sent to the foyer run by the Paris Prefecture in Nanterre, nineteen were sent to the SONACOTRA foyer in Pierrefitte, and two were sent to the Centre d’accueil gratuit in the 20th arrondissement of Paris. Out of an expected 230 residents, only sixty-three appeared for re-housing (twenty-nine were Portuguese); the majority were presumed to have sought shelter with friends and family elsewhere in the bidonville. Police Memo, 24 September 1969, “Opération de résorption d’un bidonville à Saint-Denis,” AHPP, GA S12.


58. For example, “Projet de Convention avec la SONACOTRA pour la résorption des bidonvilles,” 7 July 1966, AMSD, 50 ACW 37.

59. Asniérois correspondence with various departmental and national bodies was significantly more congenial than that in Saint-Denis. Bokanowski received letters from other Ministries addressed to “Mon cher Michel,” whereas Auguste Gillot was
“dear” only to other communists. SEMERA renovation and construction files likewise gave no indication of the sort of heated debates over the purpose or implementation of projects that are plentiful in Saint-Denis’s archives. Asniérois correspondence typically included espousals of common interest, requests based on mutual understandings, and expressions of gratitude for aid in any given matter. See, for example, Letter from Bokanowski to Seine Prefect Benedetti, 1 August 1963, AP, PEROTIN 101/78/1 – 11.

60. Auguste Gillot was succeeded by Marcellin Berthelot (1971–1991), a National Deputy and Gillot’s former deputy-mayor.


62. Four of these were under PCF mandate (Aubervilliers, Aulnay-sous-Bois, La Courneuve, and Montreuil), the other two were led by the socialist party (Neuilly-sur-Marne and Sevran). Aubervilliers was added after the other six cities.

63. Préfecture de la Seine-Saint-Denis, Note de service, no. 74-100, “Stabilisation de la population étrangère dans six communes du département,” 9 December 1974, ADSSD, 1801 W 223.

64. Here, one must be careful not to fall back on the “analytic of failure” Gary Wilder has diagnosed within the field of colonial studies. Wilder, French Imperial Nation-State: Negritude and Colonial Humanism Between the Two World Wars (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2005), 76–81.

65. Their political motivations blended this opposition with the attempt to entice enfranchised Algerian migrants, whose votes they energetically pursued through the 1950s. See Byrnes, “French Like Us?” 233–65.


67. This is not to discount the harm that was also done to migrants in this period: massive internment, violence, torture, and even death, as in the harsh repression of the October 1961 demonstration in Paris. Indeed, I do not intend to weigh the benefits of state activism against the injuries perpetrated against Algerians, but rather to raise the troubling links that exist between these two state agendas and emphasize that this tension lies at the foundation of French migrant policy.
Traveling “Back” to India: Globalization as Imperialism in Pico Iyer’s Video Night in Kathmandu

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Abstract

This article teases out the complex intersections between Pico Iyer’s Video Night in Kathmandu as an Orientalist travel narrative and as a treatise on the cultural flows of globalization by analyzing the politics of Iyer’s adoption of a migrant, cosmopolitan persona as well as his conscious attempt to rewrite the gendered hierarchies of imperialism. It examines the unspoken privileges of whiteness and Westernness in Iyer’s adoption of a decentered persona that struggles to overcome (particularly in his chapter on India) being interpellated as “Indian.” The larger purpose of the essay is to interrogate the rhetoric of cultural globalization as beyond the hierarchies of imperialism.

Keywords: cosmopolitanism, globalization, imperialism, India, Pico Iyer, travel

Ever since the mid 1980s, and increasingly since the collapse of the Communist Bloc in the 1990s, globalization has been accepted as an explanatory mode for understanding not simply economic, but also political and cultural realities. Most theorists of globalization accept that globalization is a historical turning point that has displaced outdated mod-
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els of center and periphery, of domination and subjection. While launching the journal *Public Culture* in 1988 for instance, the editors explicitly positioned themselves as critics of outmoded forms of analysis such as neocolonialism or Third Worldism. Global cultural flows, they argued, “raise the theoretical problem of conceptualizing modernity as a multi-directional, open-ended process, in which the Euro-American experience is significant, but neither singular nor always the exemplary center” (Editor’s Comments 1988: 1).

These ideas were further developed by Arjun Appadurai in his well-cited 1990 essay, “Disjuncture and Difference in the Global Cultural Economy,” in which he postulated a decentered global cultural economy, operating through complex disjunctures between economy, culture, and politics (Appadurai 1996: 32-33). A key text that Appadurai used as testimony to a new global culture was Pico Iyer’s travel narrative, *Video Night in Kathmandu*. Appadurai writes, “Iyer’s own impressions are testimony to the fact that, if a global cultural system is emerging, it is filled with ironies and resistances, sometimes camouflaged as passivity and a bottomless appetite in the Asian world for things Western. Iyer’s own account of the uncanny Philippine affinity for American popular music is rich testimony to the global culture of the hyperreal” (1996: 29). *Video Night*, Appadurai contends, gives lie to the notion that the globalization of culture is simply Americanization (29). Appadurai’s acclamation of *Video Night* no doubt heightened its standing as an exemplary text on globalization. The book has been taught in a variety of college courses on globalization such as “Global Change,” “Culture and Globalization,” and “Asia in Motion,” and Iyer’s stature as the guru of global culture has been further established with the publication of another journalistic memoir, *The Global Soul* (2000) and his most recent publication, *Abandon*, a novel whose action spans the globe from Syria to Spain to Iran to India.¹ As a recent reviewer put it, Iyer is “a global soul and an apt symbol of multiculturalism” (Austo 2003: n.p.).

In this article, I want to tease out the complex intersections between *Video Night* as an Orientalist travel narrative and as a treatise on the cultural flows of globalization by analyzing the politics of Iyer’s adoption of a migrant, cosmopolitan persona as well as his conscious attempt to rewrite the gendered hierarchies of imperialism. In particular, I want to examine the unspoken privileges of whiteness and Westernness in Iyer’s adoption of a decentered persona that struggles to overcome (particularly in his chap-
ter on India) being interpellated as “Indian.” My larger purpose is to interrogate the rhetoric of cultural globalization as beyond the hierarchies of imperialism. *Video Night* as a key text of travel and globalization works as a particularly apt site for these questions. My purpose in focusing on the racial and neocolonial aspects of *Video Night* is not to question the importance of theories of travel writing that have proposed alternatives to models of domination or movements resistant to the pull of the metropole (Clark 1999: 2-3). Neither is it to straitjacket the text out of the myriad genres of travel writing, for instance, “the comic, the analytical, the wilderness, the spiritual, and the experimental” identified by Peter Hulme as the broad categories of the last twenty-five years (Hulme 2002: 93). (Indeed, in its self-consciousness, *Video Night* is experimental and could be said to belong to a genre of theoretical travel writing.) Rather, my purpose is to interrogate Iyer’s attempt as a travel writer to position himself beyond race and location and thus to question the imperatives of globalization in *Video Night*. Such an inquiry is particularly urgent at present when theories of cosmopolitanism, supposedly beyond race and imperialism, are being mobilized to alleviate racial-cultural anxieties at the very moment when U.S. imperialism and racism are operating in powerful synergy.2

Iyer’s writings, which we might consider as heralding cultural globalization, deploy the idea of a supremely unlocated self. He is a mobile subject, a “global village on two legs,” unmoored from nation or place (Austo 2003: n.p.). Similarly, *Video Night* insistently presents itself as a text articulated from a perspective of constant displacement. Iyer writes:

What results, then, is just a casual traveler’s casual observations, a series of first impressions. . . . The only special qualification I can bring to my subject, perhaps, is a boyhood that schooled me in expatriation. . . . I spent eight months a year at a boarding school in England and four months at home in California – in an Indian household. As a British subject, an American resident and an Indian citizen, I quickly became accustomed to cross-cultural anomalies and the mixed feelings of exile. Nowhere was home, and everywhere. (Iyer 1989 24, author’s emphasis)

Travel, expatriation, exile, home. Iyer’s prefatory remarks encapsulate what have become the dominant tropes of contemporary globalization and, as Caren Kaplan has noted, the dominant tropes of critical theory as well
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(Kaplan 1996: 2-5). Instead of travel and displacement being widely different, though, if not oppositional registers of movement, the one denoting privilege and leisure and the other marking colonial and imperial histories, the two are brought together in a cosmopolitan, postmodern diasporic space where questions of power, of center and periphery, and of racial difference are suspended if not outmoded. The narrator’s access to British and American subjecthood seems problematically unfractured by the racial politics of the two nations, a nonraced subjectivity that has arguably proven useful in Iyer’s position as an essayist for *Time* and writer for other mainstream magazines. Like Hardt and Negri’s postulation of a non-dichotomous realm of empire, Iyer in *The Global Soul* suggests that an international empire has replaced the erstwhile empires of colonialism (Iyer 2000: 18). Himself a child of the age of globalization, Iyer is a “nowhereian.”

In the course of his travels through Asia, Iyer discovers a similar subversion of imperial dichotomies in the realm of culture. At the outset of *Video Night*, Iyer outlines the agenda of his travels to Asia:

I was interested to find out how America’s pop-cultural imperialism spread through the world’s most ancient civilizations. I wanted to see what kind of resistance had been put up against the Coca-Colonizing forces and what kinds of counter-strategies were planned. (1989: 3)

By the end of his journeys in Asia he finds cultural imperialism repudiated:

Yet the discovery I made most consistently throughout my travels was that every one of my discoveries had to be rejected or, at best, refined. And as I got ready to leave the East, I began to suspect that none of the countries I had seen, except perhaps the long-colonized Philippines, would ever, or could ever, be fully transformed by the West. Madonna and Rambo might rule the streets, and hearts might be occupied with secondhand dreams of Cadillacs and Californians; but every Asian culture I had visited seemed, in its way, too deep, too canny or too self-possessed to be turned by passing trade winds from the west. (1989: 355)

Indeed, Iyer argues, “the East was increasingly moving in on the West” (1989: 359). With his last chapter titled, “The Empire Strikes Back,” which details the culinary as well as literary inroads of Asians in the United
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States, Iyer seems to exemplify the kind of postcolonial writing back embodied in works such as Coetzee’s *Foe* and Achebe’s *Things Fall Apart*, and that Rushdie immortalized in his phrase, “the Empire writes back to the Centre.”

Is *Video Night* simply a writing back, however? In her superb analysis of the politics of travel writing in *Imperial Eyes*, Mary Louise Pratt describes the genre as apt vehicle for Eurocentered forms of planetary consciousness manifested in narrative conventions such as the “monarch-of-all-I-survey” scene, a convention that continues undisturbed from the sixteenth century to Anglo-American travel writers like Paul Theroux, even in sentimental anticonquest travel narratives. Iyer’s treatise on globalization and resistance seems to consciously resist this imperial trajectory. As mentioned earlier, Iyer’s stated purpose is to track the vectors of Coca-cola-izing forces and find arenas of cultural resistance, the latter of which are overwhelmingly in evidence at the conclusion of the text. In fact, Iyer turns the conventions of Western travel writing around in the final chapter by offering, in the genre of Oriental travel letters, the observations of a Chinese traveler who finds in New York not signs of wealth, progress, and presentness, but rather an old history and Third World despair. Joe, whom Iyer had met in Guangzhou and to whom he had given $25 to take the TOEFL, delightfully reports to Iyer his excitement about having seen really old buildings, beggars, prostitutes, and filth in New York City. The very titles of the chapters also reveal Iyer’s intent to consciously postulate an oppositional postcolonialism. The chapter on Bali, for instance, is subtitled “On Prospero’s Isle;” Hong Kong is labeled “The Empire’s New Clothes,” and the concluding chapter is titled “The Empire Strikes Back.”

*Video Night*, in other words, is consciously structured as a travel narrative that registers how globalization’s increasing proximity of cultural interactions has made possible a new and energetic critique of imperialism. Traveling to Asia is to witness Asia speaking back to the West. Nonetheless, how do we read Iyer’s mapping of cultural encounters as gendered encounters? Of cultures in gendered terms? How do gender categories that have traditionally functioned as matrices of power in narratives of empire function in Iyer’s narrative of globalization? In *Video Night* Iyer offers two different gendered narratives – one for East Asia and one for India – both of which he postulates as outside of imperial dichotomies. While East Asia is mapped through a heterosexual lens as feminized, India
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resists gender dichotomies and presents itself as a hermaphroditic embodiment of gender contradiction and confusion. Both narratives attempt to rewrite the gendered dynamics of empire.

The introductory chapter, “Love Match,” sets up the gendered parameters of West and East in a manner that Edward Said described as latent Orientalism: the Orient as woman – sensual, willing, eager, supine, representing backwardness and the past, apotheosized in Flaubert’s picture of Kuchuk Hanem (Said 1978: 207-208). Yet Iyer argues that his use of heterosexual romance undermines its power as a metaphor for conquest. Presenting cultural encounters through the trope of heterosexual romance as a means of individualizing dichotomies of power, Iyer suggests that personal encounters between people challenge systemic inequalities. Rambo’s falling in love with a Vietnamese girl is evidence that the cultural encounter resembles a “mating dance.”6 “Whenever a Westerner meets an Easterner,” Iyer writes, “each is to some extent confronted with the unknown. And the unknown is at once an enticement and a challenge” (1989: 21). Using The Tempest to map the experience of the Westerner in Bali, Iyer writes:

And almost every foreign writer on the island...had, sooner or later, found himself playing Ferdinand to some enchanted nine-year-old Miranda, recording his worship in flowery prose and sunstruck diction. On my very first night in Bali...an Indonesian girl came up, and sat down beside me, and said, not glibly, but with an eerie, penetrating intensity, “I had a dream last night. I found two flowers and put one of them in my hair. That flower was you.” (1989: 36)

In Thailand, where the narrator is continually propositioned by pimps, he also discovers that the standard couple of Bangkok – “the pudgy foreigner with the exquisite girleen” – might well subvert the power dynamics of buyer and seller, subject and object (Iyer 1989: 300). Some couples stayed together for months, the Western suitor being “the mature and sophisticated companion she had always lacked” and the woman being the “demure and sumptuously compliant goddess of his dreams” (Iyer 1989: 301). Often, however, a real exchange of emotions would prompt a marriage. Thus, Iyer argues, “my tidy paradigm of West exploiting East began to crumble. Bangkok wasn’t dealing only in the clear-cut trade of bodies, it
was trafficking also in the altogether murkier exchange of hearts” (Iyer 1989: 301). Such a strategic retrieval of sentiment is simultaneously a counterweight to colonial relations and a continuity of the tradition of transracial love stories naturalizing exploitation.7

Iyer as travel writer-cum theorist is painfully conscious of using the trope of male penetrating East/woman as used in male Western travel writing and literature about the East. The trope, although most powerfully crystallized in the discourse of Orientalism, had been widely used by male travel writers from Columbus to H. Rider Haggard in what Anne McClintock has aptly termed “an erotics of ravishment” (McClintock 1995: 22). Iyer continues to use the gendered parameters of Western-male and Asian-female, but attempts to imbue them with a difference. No longer will the Eastern woman simply be the pliant object of Western fantasy, a Madame Butterfly whose suicide was made desirable and beautiful by Puccini. Instead, Iyer’s Eastern woman is the active agent who turns the narrator into a dream object; she is the woman who demands an exchange of hearts and the permanence of marriage; her actions critique imperial power relations and render ideological borders murky. Perhaps, most importantly, she is the well versed seductress, the courtesan who choreographs the moves of her Western lover.

On the other hand, how does attributing agency to the trope of East as woman affect the ideological structures of imperialism? Perhaps it denaturalizes these structures through the very act of attempting to refashion them, but does it fundamentally undermine them? The answer to that cannot simply be affirmative, even though Iyer would wish it so, because although Iyer vigorously attempts to contend against the subjugation that the gendered trope implies, his efforts are problematically individualistic and grounded in a wholehearted acceptance of the permanence of the mind-body logic of imperialism’s heterosexual, gendered dichotomies. As he writes in The Lady and the Monk, published three years after Video Night, “the pairing of Western men and Eastern women was as natural as the partnership of sun and moon. Everyone falls in love with what he cannot begin to understand” (Iyer 1991: 79). In the chapters on China, Bali, and Thailand in Video Night, the West is figured as male, the East as female; the male is stable and permanent, the female is fickle and changing; the Westerner wishes to sample the mysteries of the Orient-woman and pry into her seclusion; the Westerner, incarnated as American-Rambo,
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is the good imperialist who is rewarded with the love of the good (read: nationalist hating) Vietnamese woman. The American as male might be enraptured or confused, but he is still active, exploring, scopic, the agent of history.

Yet the problem with accepting these hierarchical gendered constructions is evident even to scholars that have attempted to attribute agency to the Eastern woman’s fetish of the white man as representative of a liberated lifestyle. Karen Kelsky, for instance, views Japanese women’s use of white men as agents of liberation as a demonstration of agency, but also acknowledges the problems, thus, of confirming imperialism’s race and gender dynamics (Kelsky 2001). Iyer’s attempt to change the power hierarchy of gendered categories of empire also raises the question whether a figure like the courtesan can pose an effective challenge. I am not, of course, interested in making any essentialist claims for or against this figure, but rather on its usefulness in the particular context of U.S. imperialism and Orientalist critique. If Iyer’s reworking of East as woman via the courtesan questions, to an extent, stereotypes of Eastern passivity and thus challenges imperialism, it nevertheless problematically rests upon a sexualization of power that has been the basis of male dominance.8 As Ann Laura Stoler has argued, sexual control was more than a metaphor for colonial dominance; the very categories of colonizer and colonized were defined through forms of sexual control (Stoler 2002: 42, 45).

Iyer’s courtesan beckons the intrepid American possibly to bend to her wishes, but only while she promises sexual fulfillment, or, the American wills the courtesan into performance. Current American fascination with geishas, as evidenced by the stupendous sales of Arthur Golden’s Memoirs of a Geisha, followed by the film version and an accompanying motley of geisha cosmetics, feeds into this power fantasy. Either construction affirms Anglo-American privilege and the ubiquity of gender categories and power hierarchies rather than confusing the categories altogether. The brilliance of David Henry Hwang’s rewriting of Madame Butterfly, for instance, is not simply that Renee Gallimard/Pinkerton becomes manipulated as butterfly, thus reversing the power dynamics of Orientalism, but that throughout the play gender categories are so ambiguous (Song is at once man, woman, crossdresser) that it becomes impossible to reroute the trajectories of power.

India, on the other hand, seems to present a challenge to the gendered mapping of Asia. Gargantuan, omnivorous, boisterous, a heady mix of
languages and religions, the site of the narrator’s putative homeland and of unhomeliness, India seems to produce in the narrator a sense of semiotic confusion. It is the land where “all opposites are flung together into the same helter-skelter confusion and dichotomies are, if not united, at least encountered simultaneously” (Iyer 1989: 272). Eliding the binaries of material/spiritual, worldly/otherworldly, corporeal/divine, it seems to defy the easy gendered and spatial cognitive mapping of other Asian countries and thus the binaries on which the power of traditional imperialist discourse depends. Indeed for Iyer, India is best represented through a figure of gender confusion. Iyer writes, “if the West often struck me as a masculine culture, dedicated to assertion, virility and power, while Southeast Asia seemed feminine in its texture, all softness, delicacy and grace, India was both, and neither, as grotesque and fascinating as a hermaphrodite” (1989: 261). It is a place where “all boundaries collapsed; everything was thrown together in the streets” (1989: 261).

Iyer’s characterization of India as a space of animated contradiction seems at one level to recall postmodern gender theorizing such as Haraway’s cyborgian pleasure in boundary confusion or Deleuze and Guattari’s schizophrenic who ruptures wholeness and puts disjunctions to affirmative use (Haraway 1991: 57; Deleuze and Guattari 1983: 76). It shares with postcolonialists such as Homi Bhabha, the valorization of border spaces as sites for solidarity and his celebration of hybridity as a metaphor for colonized identities (Bhabha 1994: 11). In other words, instead of the ontological certainty of the contemporary flaneur that is possible for Iyer in his chapters on Southeast Asia, India presents him with uncertainty and unpredictability. Instead of a Saidian Other that can, to an extent, be frozen in a moment of Orientalist representation and recognition, India resists restricted recognition. Because it is Other to the narrator as cultural analyst who has traveled from America on an assignment to assess globalization’s impact on Asian cultures – and hence necessarily on a binary grid of America versus Asia – and yet not Other to the narrator marked as putatively Indian, India blurs the boundaries between the traveler and the culture that he analyzes. The travel writer as cultural anthropologist, as it were, loses his vantage point and reproduces in his narrative uncertainty and dislocatedness. As Iyer notes, there is a peculiar irony in the fact that his Indian tourist guide, Arvind, sees in him an “image of the West” even though he is “completely Indian” (1989: 276).
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Of course what Iyer is suggesting is not that he is completely Indian, either in India or in his travels around Asia, but that he is not an embodiment of the West either. Given Iyer’s own wariness about ethnic identification and his wonder at the contradictions of India, Iyer’s comment needs to be taken with a certain skepticism. If there is a narrative of blurred boundaries and gender confusion, there is also a narrative of masculinity as well as a neocolonial representation of the natives. Iyer chooses to manage the Other-yet-not-quite-Other relationship that he has with India by analyzing the country through the lens of what has arguably been seen as its most ubiquitous entertainment as well as its source of cultural identification: Bollywood. As critics such as Ashis Nandy have pointed out, it is in fact popular Bollywood that embodies the desires and anxieties of the Indian populace (Nandy 1995: 202-203). Interestingly, despite his use of the hermaphrodite as a metaphor for India, the movie he focuses on for most of the chapter is Mard (male), which Iyer translates as He-Man, and which he sees as quintessential of the masses. In this nationalist movie set during India’s freedom struggle, the eponymous hero, Amitabh Bachchan, son of a king and who grows up poor, vows to free his kingdom from the British. On his tonga (poor man’s chariot) with his wonder dog, Moti, beside him, he breaks into segregated British enclaves and wreaks havoc on the whites. Bachchan is, as Iyer perspicaciously notes, a superman, “Clint Eastwood, Robert Redford and Sylvester Stallone all rolled into one” (1989: 243) and a thoroughly popular hero. Yet this display of masculinity and bravado in Bollywood is, as is most of Indian culture, an imitation of American popular culture. Bachchan is a second hand imitation of Hollywood masculinity and Mard is Rambo-like in its attempt to “reverse history, to redress the past” (Iyer 1989: 244).

Here it is useful to analyze the strategic function of imitation in Iyer’s representation of India. Bollywood, as Iyer explains, “takes its cues from Hollywood; what goes down well in America goes up quickly on the screens of India” (1989: 252). From Hollywood, Indian movies borrow specific scenes, a plot development or often the entire movie, churning it to local tastes by making it bigger and louder. Homi Bhabha famously valorized colonial mimicry as a means of destabilizing colonial power. Colonial mimicry is different from an exact copy or imitation because it is “almost the same but not quite,” and through its difference from colonial discourse, it questions the latter’s originality and power. “The menace of
mimicry is its double vision which in disclosing the ambivalence of colo-
nial discourse also disrupts its authority” (Bhabha 1994: 88). Mimicry in its
difference can parody, mock, and marginalize the original. Iyer represents
Bollywood as an exaggerated mimicry of Hollywood – almost the same but
double, one might say – but the relationship of this mimicry to the icons of
Hollywood is not clear. Amitabh Bachchan, the hero of Mard, might have
twice the power of Sylvester Stallone, but Bachchan’s heroics do not mock
Stallone, and Mard’s mission of reversing history by ridding India of the
shame of its colonial rulers is the same as Rambo: First Blood’s of freeing
America of the shame over the failure of Vietnam.

Indeed as Paul Smethurst notes, there is little awareness in Video Night
of the compensatory imperialism waged by films like Rambo: First Blood
in the aftermath of Vietnam (Smethurst 2004: 185). On the other hand, if
India seems to have simply accepted American soft power through films
like Rambo: First Blood, its own pop culture industry has recycled Rambo’s
redemptive masculinity to its own ends.10 It can use the imperial mas-
culinity of America, a country with no direct colonial history in India, to
challenge British colonial history in India. The wholesale acceptance of
the Rambo figure in order to articulate a native resistance against the British
suggests that the circulation of Rambo follows global circuits far more com-
plicated than that of a simple binaristic imperialism with its models of
West-East, center-periphery. The further proliferation of Bollywood in other
parts of Asia suggests the importance of circulations within the Third
World, outside of and beyond metropoles and former colonies.

Yet, Bollywood’s recycling of Hollywood, Mard’s recycling of Rambo, is
resistant only to a point. In Iyer’s rendition, Bollywood is “Hollywood
turned back thirty years,” replete with the star system of 1950s Hollywood,
its musical spectaculars and its love triangles (1989: 256-57). Indeed Hol-
lywood turned back thirty years becomes for Iyer a metonym for India as
illustrated in title of the chapter on India, which simply reads “India: Hol-
lywood in the Fifties.” If India is one giant performance, it is not, to riff off
of Judith Butler, a performance without an original that deftly questions
the idea of defined nation and proliferates its meanings. It is a performance
of an American original turned back a generation. Even India’s dreams of
the outside world are dated (Iyer 1989: 279). If the central problem of
anthropology was, as Johannes Fabian pointed out, the problem of co-eval-
ness, making anthropology the “science of other men in another Time,”
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Orientalist travel narratives in their lay anthropology have also participated in this disjuncture of time (Fabian 1983: 143). That this distancing of the time of the observer/travel writer from the time of the observed, a standard colonial trope, seems necessary to Iyer even as he writes an ostensible globalized travel narrative is not an exercise in bad faith as it is an exemplification of the contradictions of globalization in which power hierarchies cannot simply be wished away. If cultural globalization is not simply about domination, it still is about developmentalism because it privileges the material technologies of modernity and the linear narrative in which the entire world, in this case India, is “catching up” with the one-way story of modernity and progress, and the rejection of tradition. Synchronically, the turning back of Bollywood reads similar to narratives of imperialist nostalgia in which, as Caren Kaplan puts it, the Euro-American past is perceived as another country (Kaplan 1996: 34). If Hindi cinema in contemporary parlance (and the authority of the Oxford English Dictionary) has been rechristened, it is as many critics have argued, an appellation of a second-order imitation – Bollywood echoing Hollywood.

Unlike Southeast Asia, which confirms the gender binaries of latent Orientalism and stands in conflictual relationship to Iyer’s narrative of globalization, India’s disruption of boundaries, as stated earlier, seems to question the power dynamics of imperial discourse. Iyer as travel writer experiences a semiotic confusion that blurs boundaries between self and Other. How is this self epistemologically located, though? Is the confusion registered by the narrator a personal, privatized one, inevitably resulting from the narrator’s multiply hyphenated identity, his circulation in India as a South-Asian American, even though Iyer never uses the hyphenated term to refer to himself? Or, is it the confusion commonly experienced by Western travel writers to Asia?11 In other words, despite the narrator’s overt interpellation of himself as decentered, does the free indirect discourse of the narrative present itself as voiced from a diasporic South Asian or a Westerner? I would argue that there is no need to settle this question because any such position would miss the dialectical connection between the two. What is apparent in Iyer’s representation of the confusion and disruption of India is the deployment of familiar colonial dichotomies that compensatorily preserve the Westerner’s sense of outsideness and serve Iyer well, too.

Iyer’s sense of separation from the disorder of India is signaled to him in the Bombay-bound Cathay pacific flight, even before he steps into India:
No sooner had I stepped into a Bombay-bound Cathay Pacific flight than whole mobs of Indian families began crashing into the cabin behind me. . . . And no sooner had any of them sat down than they began shouting across the aisles at their children or calling out to relatives or standing up to order the mostly Chinese cabin attendants. . . . The kids started slithering over seats, their mothers raced to the bathrooms. . . . The attendants tried to restore order and send people back to their seats, and the scheming and screaming only mounted. . . . The demands grew louder, the attendants told them to be quiet. The passengers bawled, the attendants snapped. Shouting matches broke out, and all the while, tens of families kept trundling inexorably through the aisles, transporting curries, heirlooms, squalling kids, more pieces of luggage, and then some more (1989: 259-260).

Written in the style of gritty naturalism that recalls the classic opening of Michael Gold’s *Jews Without Money*, the passage conveys the pandemonium of urban space turned jungle. The difference, of course, is that the families Iyer is describing are not the impoverished ones of Lower East Side Manhattan, but (presumably since the flight is originating from California rather than the Persian Gulf, home to Indian laborers) mobile middle-class Indians. These Indians are animalistic savages, wreaking havoc on the civilized space of the airplane. That the airline is a Chinese rather than a Western one is not an issue because the airplane is conceived of as a space created by the technologies of modernity, hence not inherently Asian. Families come “crashing” into the airplane, kids slither reptilian-like into their seats, passengers bawl like children, and children squall. All the passengers are a mass of seething humanity bursting at its seams.

In Iyer’s representation, unlike Southeast Asia, India is Othered through a different set of binaries, but those that still belong to an Orientalist repertoire: order/chaos, reason/emotion, individual/mass. It is the India of Adela Quested’s asphyxiation, crowding, and terror, immortalized by the likes of E. M. Foster in *Passage to India* that Iyer, in his position as travel-writer-as-cultural-anthropologist, apart from the observed and different from the native, represents. Interestingly, in moments such as these, Iyer’s own earlier paeansto the complexities of diasporic identity seem forgotten. Presumably many of the “Indians” getting on to the Cathay Pacific flight are diasporics like himself, hyphenated Indians with multiple homelands and
diverse ethnic ties. They could well be “Indians” born in Uganda, British citizens like himself who have lived in Britain and then, like Iyer, migrated to the United States, where they are permanent residents. Their children are arguably American-born U.S. citizens, of some “Indian” origin. Within the binaristic narrative of developmentalist Othering, however, all people with connections to India are simply an undifferentiated mass of Indians. In contrast is Iyer, not simply the “nowhereian” whose sense of movement through the multiple routes is weighted through history, but rather Iyer as observer and intellectual apart from the natives.12

The different strategies of Othering in Video Night prompt urgent questions about the geopolitical and psychosexual location of the narrator. Given the gendered racial narrative set up by Iyer (Western: male; Southeast Asia: female; India: hermaphroditic, chaos or second-order masculinity), it is not surprising that the narrator’s own sexuality is one that affords privilege in the United States: that of the heterosexual male. It is a privilege that the Iyer is loath to relinquish, even as he momentarily reveals his uncertain sexual identity to a young man in Bali, and which also extends itself through a privileged racial-cultural identification.13 I use the term racial here not to signify some unchanging biological essence, but to point to the material, social, and intellectual valences attributed to longstanding racial typologies. While the nineteenth century Orientalist, as Said points out, would have found support for his observations about Asian degeneracy in popular theories of racial classification, the twentieth- and twenty-first-century expert relies on accepted cultural categorizations to reach similar conclusions: Asians who have excelled in technology are said to have Westernized or Americanized well (Said 1978: 206). Of course, focused on Europeans and white Americans writing about the Arab world, Said is dealing largely with the coincidence of the cultural and racial: Europe and the United States are collectively defined as Western and presumed to be white.

Within the contemporary United States, however, questions of the coincidence of racial, cultural, and national identification are more complex. Whites are usually interpellated as non-hyphenated, Western, American, and the norm; blacks are hyphenated, quasi-Western, quasi-African, American, and Other; Latina/os are hyphenated, largely seen as Mexican, illegal immigrant, and neighboring Other; Asians are hyphenated, Eastern, foreign, and another Other. One might argue, as with the case of Iyer, that a
person’s sense of racial-cultural identification can be different from that of a larger social interpellation. On the other hand, can one write or will oneself out of racial interpellation in the United States where the State continues to oppress racial minorities? Clearly, phenotypical interpellation cannot be willed away (although Iyer comes close to claiming that in *The Global Soul*), but can the racial-cultural? What, for instance, is at stake when a South Asian-American like Iyer denies racial interpellation and identifies himself largely as Anglo-American? At one level, this identification is a powerful critique of a culture that has denied its own impurities and mixtures, that has sought to resist the fracture between phenotype and cultural identity. At another level, however, the identification also seeks to deny the violence with which an idea of the West (white as norm) has been maintained in the United States at the expense of non-whites.

All these complex questions need to be brought to bear on Iyer’s own identifications in *Video Night*. Despite the migrant, homeless, global identity that Iyer overtly charts as his qualification, presumably for a decentered perspective, the “I” of the text presumes a Westernness and whiteness that is geopolitically located, but does not need to specifically mark itself as such. It is a privileged cosmopolitanism that can position itself as unmarked. When Iyer writes, for instance, about the possibility of us not simply being comically deluded Titaniads abroad, but also Mirandas with faith in the new world, the subject “we” can include non-white travelers, but only if we suspend the racialization of Miranda (1989: 23). Through most of the text Iyer continues to presume an identification with a Western perspective: “Why did she not like Indonesian boys, I asked Wayan when I met her the following day. To Western eyes they seemed the very picture of gentleness and beauty” (1989: 55). When Indian producer Romesh Sippy talks exasperatedly of the lowbrow tastes of Indians, Iyer writes, “But in the West we also have E.T. And Jaws. And R2D2” (1989: 250). The connection between “the west” and the narrator (and the power accruant to Westernness) is seamless though unspoken. The “we” of the narrative is simply Western. It is this Westernness as norm that allows Iyer to filter all Indian pop culture through an American lens and translate all pop cultural icons into American ones. As with Western travel writers to whom Indians are all masses, Indians generally appear in hordes, and when movie stars are individualized, it is through American translation. All male movie stars are Burt Reynolds look-alikes, all heroines spitting images of Cher, and even art
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film makers take their cues from European directors so well known to the American art scene (Iyer 1989: 248, 282). Finally, close to the end of the text, the narrator describes himself upon return to New York as a “Rip Van Winkle awakening to the lineaments of a new order” signified by the eruption of Koreatown, Little India, and Japanese and Thai restaurants (Iyer 1989: 359). Like Washington Irving’s Van Winkle, who had so identified himself with the British colonial order that the Revolutionary War passed him by in his sleep, Iyer, perhaps unwittingly associates himself with the smug, provincial white American except that unlike Van Winkle, the narrator is not the object of satire.

Interestingly, the text reveals that although Iyer as tourist had constantly been interpellated as Indian in Asia and barraged with queries about Bollywood stars, Iyer as narrator limits his discussion of this interpellation to two sentences, one describing his awareness of the power of the family in the Indian context and the other, as discussed earlier, his curious position as a symbol of the West to an Indian guide. Unlike in the other chapters where cultural analysis and personal interactions are intermingled, Iyer formally separates and circumscribes his personal experience in India by stripping it down to a series of short italicized vignettes interspersed in a chapter largely taken up with an analysis of Bollywood films. Thus, the Western identity of the narrator, like his heterosexual identity, is only temporarily destabilized, not fractured by his interpellation as Indian; and it is ultimately this privileged Western identity that enables the narrator, in turn, to draw upon Orientalism to structure his text. As Traise Yamamoto argues in her analysis of Iyer’s Lady and the Monk, “Iyer’s own positioning in relation to British and American culture is rendered invisible, particularly the extent that he can identify himself as the arbiter of Western cultural values” (Yamamoto 1996: 329). In addition, the seemingly unraced nature of the narrator in much of the text also implicitly uses what has been recognized in the context of the United States as a white prerogative, that of assuming white as a norm that does not have to be recognized as raced (Dyer 1988: 44).

I started this article by questioning the premises of globalization theory and registering my skepticism of the decentered perspective that Iyer putatively proffers. I will end by offering a provisional analysis of a contemporary labor practice predicated on flexible accumulation and cultural globalization in which identities ostensibly “travel.” At the start of the new
Malini Johar Schueller

century, a few U.S. companies decided to accomplish the downsizing of their call centers by seizing upon a cheaply found major asset in India – college education and the English language. The United States could now reap the benefits of British colonialism. Realizing that they could hire college graduates with fluent English to man call centers at a tenth of the salaries of their U.S. counterparts, executives came up with a brilliant strategy. Capitalizing on cut rate phone costs, Indians’ command of the language and the skills of the college graduates, executives concluded that with very little cost Indians could be “made” Americans and be equipped to handle the company’s local call centers. A quick training program gave the Indians suitably generic American names such as Andy or Susie; employees were trained to cater to local callers by familiarizing themselves with essential apolitical cultural know-how such as the status of Andy’s football team in Tampa or the weather in Susie’s Cleveland. Above all, they were trained to speak with an “American” accent, and on no account were they to reveal that they were speaking from India.17

Now a globalization-enamored perspective such as Iyer’s would tout this practice as evidence of cultural mobility, the ability of people to partake of unrestricted identities, especially since locals “willingly” train in call center colleges and Indian companies happily participate in the system both in franchising and training. Identities, it would seem, are mobile not simply for the Western male, but for the subaltern as well. Some postmodern versions of performativity theory would similarly celebrate the ability of Indian phone operators to change identities at will. Perversely enough, editorials for India’s chauvinistic nationalism are touting these jobs as signs of national strength, exemplifications of India’s ability to beat America at its own game.18 The above scenario no doubt engenders all these perspectives. However, what this giddy excitement about such a transnational change of identities neglects are the restrictions and lack of access upon which the scenario depends. Most obviously, Indians cannot hope to enter the ranks of U.S. phone operators speaking Indian-inflected English and must therefore pass the non-Indian cultural proficiency test. Virtual immigrants, they must be assimilated and “Americanized” to gain acceptance. They must change names as well as points of cultural reference, indeed undertake racial erasure, in order to be “recognized” by U.S. callers who demand this restricted recognition. Further, what they must be assimilated to is not multicultural, immigrant America (in which case accents would
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not be a problem), but white America, because the English taught to the operators is not black English or calo, but what is perceived as bland, white Midwestern English.

Global cultural space is thus both restricted and controlled by imperialism and racism at the same time as it partakes of mobilities and technologies that challenge earlier forms of colonialism. To simply delight in the “mixing” of identities is therefore to forget the caution of perspective. As R. Radhakrishnan so memorably puts it, “it matters from whose perspective the world is being realized as One” (Radhakrishnan 2003: 103). In a stark demonstration of the racism directed at the virtually unassimilated, Troi Terrain, Philadelphia radio show host of “Star and Buc Wild,” phoned an Indian call center, pretending to order hair beads for his daughter and proceeded to heap invectives on the operator: “You’re a filthy rat eater. I’m calling about my American 6-year-old white girl. How dare you outsource my call?” The host then encouraged his viewers to make at least one abusive call a day to Indian operators (McPhate 2005). The raced dimensions of Terrain’s vituperations, the likes of which are routinely received by Indian call center operators, could not be clearer.

I want to hold on to the term postcolonial, in its guise as a critique of neocolonial and imperial domination in reading travel narratives such as Iyer’s, because like Rey Chow, I believe that the “colonial” in the term “postcolonial” is operative within global capitalism and global culture (Chow 1992: 157). Like U.S. narratives of freedom, mobility, and fluidity that operate by eliding state sanctioned systemic racism, post-1965 South Asian American narratives of globalization and migrancy such as Iyer’s often rest upon, even as they vigorously deny, racial hierarchies as well as the power dynamics of imperialism of which Orientalism still remains a major ideological tool. Iyer might use the Emersonian oversoul as a figure for globalism, a condition beyond nation and State as he does in The Global Soul, but the privileges of nation, state, and race inevitably undergird narratives of globalization (Smethurst 2004: 188).
Notes


4. This quote, in turn, was the epigraph to the academic bestseller of postcolonial studies, *The Empire Writes Back* (1989).

5. Mary Louise Pratt, *Imperial Eyes: Travel Writing and Transculturation* (1992), 5, 216-217. Pratt analyzes the mystique of reciprocity in works like Mungo Park’s *Travels in the Interior of Africa* (1860) and analyzes the continuity of the “monarch-of-all-I-survey” scene in texts such as Alberto Moravia’s *Which Tribe Do You Belong To?* (1972) and Paul Theroux’s *The Old Patagonian Express* (1978).

6. There have been numerous readings of the *Rambo* films, especially *Rambo II*, as recuperations of masculinity and U.S. imperialism. The best one is Susan Jeffords’ chapter, “‘Do We Get to Win This Time?’: Reviving the Masculine” in her book *The Remasculinization of America: Gender and the Vietnam War* (1989: 116-143).

7. Mary Louise Pratt discusses Peter Hulme’s classic analysis of transracial love plots to articulate a “mystique of reciprocity” (1992: 96-97).

8. Although it has been criticized by many, Catharine Mackinnon’s “Toward a Feminist Theory of the State” still remains an important analysis of the sexualization of hierarchy and the saturation of sexuality with dominance. See “Toward a Feminist Theory of the State” in Sandra Kemp and Judith Squires ed. *Feminisms* (1997: 354).

9. Iyer does not actually use this term, which was coined only in the 1990s.


13. In Bali, paradise island and testing ground of the dynamics of the colonial encounter, the narrator, woken by a native while sleeping on a railway bench, describes his exchange with the native as follows:

I now, so it seemed, had not only a roommate, but also a benchmate. Eyes flashing, my slim-hipped new friend asked me where I came from. New York. His ardor noticeably dimmed. “AIDS!” he pronounced, and moved back a little. Firmly believing that this might not be the ideal time for a tete-a-tete, I nodded.
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vigorously. But my potential companion was not so easily deterred. Did I like men? In certain contexts. And women? Sometimes. Ah, he said, snatching up his own word as if it were a prompt, there are two kinds of woman, the soft and the hard. And so...I was treated to a most persuasive treatise on the two kinds of woman. . . . (44-45).

Here in the midst of a chapter rife with descriptions of Balinese sensuality embodied by women, the narrator, in response to being propositioned by an attractive native male, reveals his own shifting and uncertain sexuality. The native’s brilliant eyes and slim body arouse sexual energies in him. Possibly bisexual, he is attracted to both men and women. No sooner does this sexual confusion interrupt the narrative of heterosexuality, however, it is (unconvincingly) rerouted as heterosexuality and the gendered hierarchies of Orientalism continue.

14. Iyer writes about being able to choose selves: “The tradition denoted by my face was something I could erase (mostly) with my voice, or pick up whenever the conversation turned to the Maharishi or patchouli oil” (21).

15. This would include attributing qualities of blackness to whites considered undesirable. I am also not arguing that the West is, in fact, unified. Rather, like Radhakrishnan, I believe that “the West as a global political effect on the non-West has indeed been the result of colonialist-imperialist orchestration, that is, it has spoken with one voice.” See Diasporic Mediations: Between Home and Location (1996: 178).


17. For Arundhati Roy’s scathing criticism of this practice, see Power Politics (2001: 83-84).


References


Traveling “Back” to India

Linking social policy, migration, and development in a regional context  
*The case of sub-Saharan Africa*

Katja Hujo

**Abstract:** International migration is driven by development processes and, at the same time, it impacts development through labor market effects, remittance flows, knowledge transfers, social change in households and communities and responses at the policy and institutional levels. Although the development potential of migration is now widely recognized, we still observe that migration, and in particular, the free movement of people and the access of migrants to sociopolitical rights, remains a highly contested and sensitive political issue. This is not only the case with regard to migration from developing countries to industrialized countries in the North, but also for migration at a regional level and within regional integration projects such as common markets or political and monetary unions. This article discusses the linkages between migration, development, social policy and regional integration. The focus is on migration in sub-Saharan Africa, its impact on development and migrants’ rights and implications for public policies including new forms of migration governance.

**Keywords:** brain drain, development, migrants’ rights, regional integration, remittances, social policy, South–South migration

**Introduction**

The impact of labor migration on development has been a subject of research and policy debates for a long time. However, such research—which started off with analyzing rural-urban migration (Todaro, 1976)—has increasingly focused on international flows from the South to the North and less so on a systematic analysis of cross-border movements and intraregional migration. 

1 At present, South–South migration (defined as international migration between developing countries) is as important as movements from South to North. For some regions, in particular where average poverty levels are high and migrants’ resources limited, it is the
dominant migration pattern. This is the case in sub-Saharan Africa (SSA), where approximately two thirds of international migrants move within the region or subregions (Ratha & Shaw, 2007; United Nations, 2006; World Bank, 2006).²

Apart from the quantitative relevance of intraregional migration and the dearth of research and reliable data on these flows, there are several other reasons why a focus on regional migration and its developmental effects is warranted: one is the relationship between migration and processes of economic and political integration. Most regional integration projects envisage the free circulation of production factors, including capital, goods, services, and labor.³ Secondly, deepening regional integration requires the development of regional governance mechanisms for migration and related policy areas, for example labor market policies and social protection.

This links to a third issue, which draws our attention towards intraregional or South–South migration flows: the implications of migration for social development and social protection. Social policy is increasingly recognized as a powerful tool for poverty reduction and social development, with positive spillover effects for growth and state–citizen relations.⁴ Social policy is usually pitched at the national level and global social policy initiatives have only recently gained more traction, for example through the Copenhagen Declaration (1995), the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), and the ILO recommendation (No. 202) to establish National Social Protection Floors (ILO, 2012).⁵ However, given the slow progress thus far in establishing global standards and harmonizing social rights across very different contexts, it has been argued that the regional level is more promising and appropriate in dealing with social protection concerns, especially with regard to economic and social processes that are cross-boundary in nature (financial and trade flows, labor migration, emergency situations, and humanitarian aid), which cannot be dealt with at the national level alone (Deacon et al., 2010).

Against this backdrop, this article⁶ focuses on three related issues in the context of sub-Saharan Africa: the development challenges associated with migration flows; the links between migration, social policy, and development; and finally, the implications for policy and migration governance at national and regional levels. The article posits that migration is a policy field where regional cooperation and a deepening of the social dimensions of integration can contribute to development, social cohesion, and human rights. Nonetheless, this requires the full adoption of principles such as equal treatment and nondiscrimination, thereby expanding the notion of social cohesion and social contracts beyond national borders, which in turn has implications for institutions, policy processes, and fund-
ing sources. It represents a challenge in contexts such as SSA where a) efforts at consolidation of nation-building processes are still marked by episodes of ruptures and backlashes, b) actual practices and funding commitments lag behind legal rights and standards, and c) the “social question” has not emerged as a key concern of social partners and political actors nor has it been incorporated sufficiently into policy agendas and national development strategies.7

The migration–development nexus: What is the role of social policy?

Scholars have analyzed both the push and pull factors driving migration and developed different theoretical approaches explaining the causes and effects of migration on development. These approaches have generally reflected the different theoretical paradigms en vogue at a specific time such as modernization theories, theories of labor market dualism, dependency or world systems theories, or more recently neoclassical (for example New Household Economics) or agency-oriented approaches (for overviews, see de Haas, 2007; Mafukidze, 2006; Massey et al., 1993).

At the policy level, a positive view has come to dominate global debates in line with international human rights standards and the development of a globalized and integrated world economy. Migration is deemed a fundamental human right with benefits not only for migrants seeking to improve their livelihoods, but also for host countries and countries of origin. Nevertheless, despite the fact that migration’s contribution to development is increasingly acknowledged and supported by numerous international organizations and civil society groups, there is still a huge mismatch between rhetoric and practice, between international conventions and the politics on the ground. At a national level, migration, in particular that of low-skilled workers, is often interpreted as a threat to security, a challenge for poverty-reduction efforts, and a burden for local labor markets and public services, especially in cases where national unemployment and poverty rates are significant. Governments can be overwhelmed by numbers of refugees and asylum seekers entering their borders as a consequence of violent conflicts, civil wars, or natural disasters in the region. Scapegoating by politicians, xenophobia, and discrimination are frequent (Cross & Omoluabi, 2006).

Despite these conflicting views on migrants, there is a tendency in much of the literature to treat migration as a technical issue that can be “managed” by policy makers and bureaucrats. The fact that migration is a highly political issue touching upon fundamental questions of entitle-
ments and obligations (hence involving matters such as redistribution, access to rights and services, and social bargaining) is often neglected or downplayed (Geiger & Pécoud, 2012, p. 7). This is problematic, as it does not facilitate the shedding of light on the complex questions of power, interests, identities, and individual–state relations. Who benefits from and who is negatively affected by migration? What type of social contract is established with migrants? What are the entitlements and obligations within this contract? How does the access of different categories of migrants to citizenship rights or political organizations (or the lack of voting rights and political voice) affect the representation of migrants’ interests in the political system? And how do decision makers respond to these problems?

**Linking social policy and migration**

If we consider migration to be a fundamental human right and beneficial for development, issues such as social protection, redistributive policies, labor market access, and the political representation and participation (including access to legal residence and citizenship) of migrants and their families should take center stage. However, the linkages between migration and politics (for example democratization or political participation) are not extensively researched, especially in SSA, and the same holds true with regard to the social protection of migrants and the implications of migration flows for social protection regimes and social policies (Hujo & Piper, 2010; Sabates-Wheeler & Feldman, 2011). Many migrant-receiving countries in the South are already struggling with the provision of social services to and protection of their own populations. And all too often social policies are used as policy tools for the exclusion of certain types of migrants (in particular temporary or irregular migrants) rather than as inclusion instruments, thereby defining different migration regimes and instrumentalizing welfare policies as immigration-control policies—a practice that is indeed widespread in host countries in the North (Bolderston, 2011; Sainsbury, 2006).

Hujo and Piper (2010) have developed a conceptual framework for studying the linkages between social policy, development, and migration (see table 1). The first column describes the functions of social policy in the development process: social policy impacts on economic production, reproduction, protection, redistribution, and finally on social inclusion and equity. The second column shows how migration impacts these same areas, making it indispensable to conceptualize social and migration policies in an integrated manner.

As table 1 shows, the linkages between migration processes and social policies are multidimensional. They can be approached in different ways:
by looking at migration as a social protection and livelihood strategy in contexts where other protective or redistributive mechanisms are absent or insufficient; by analyzing the impact of migration on development processes where social policy has a role to play, such as those related to labor

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**Table 1 • Migration and the roles of social policy**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Role of social policy for</th>
<th>Impact of migration on</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Production</strong></td>
<td><strong>Production</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Enhancing productive potential of people through investment in health and education, decent work conditions, and labor standards</td>
<td>• Human capital</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Smoothing business cycles through automatic stabilizers</td>
<td>• Allocation of labor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Stabilizing consumption and demand of low-income groups</td>
<td>• Remittances</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Enhancing productive potential of people through investment in health and education, decent work conditions, and labor standards</td>
<td>• Investment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Smoothing business cycles through automatic stabilizers</td>
<td>• Consumption</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Stabilizing consumption and demand of low-income groups</td>
<td>• Balance of payments</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Enhancing productive potential of people through investment in health and education, decent work conditions, and labor standards</td>
<td>• Financial sector</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Smoothing business cycles through automatic stabilizers</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Stabilizing consumption and demand of low-income groups</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Reproduction</strong></td>
<td><strong>Reproduction</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>• Sharing the burden of social reproduction and care among members of society</td>
<td>• Migration of care providers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Creating gender-sensitive institutions and programs supporting reproductive and care-related tasks</td>
<td>• Care needs of migrants and those left behind</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Household income level</td>
<td>• Remittances</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Migration of care providers</td>
<td>• Gendered nature of migration</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Protection</strong></td>
<td><strong>Protection</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Protecting people from unstable and inequitable effects of markets</td>
<td>• Migration as social protection</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Protecting people from changes in circumstances of life (maternity, disability, sickness, survivorship, aging)</td>
<td>• Protection needs of migrants</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Household income level</td>
<td>• Social protection entitlements of migrants</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Redistribution</strong></td>
<td><strong>Redistribution</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Enhancing equity and equality</td>
<td>• Between countries/regions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Broadening domestic markets and strengthening demand</td>
<td>• Between migrants and nonmigrants in countries of origin and destination</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Increasing stability and legitimacy of the political system</td>
<td>• Within migrant households, between different groups of migrants</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Equity, inclusion, cohesion, and rights</strong></td>
<td><strong>Equity, inclusion, cohesion, and rights</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Fostering equitable and inclusive societies</td>
<td>• Migrants’ rights (decent work, refugees, etc.)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Strengthening social cohesion, a notion of citizenship and democratization</td>
<td>• Inclusion</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Enhancing human &amp; socioeconomic rights</td>
<td>• Equitable treatment</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Source: Hujo & Piper (2010).*
markets and human capital, income and distribution, gender relations and care regimes, cultural and social transformation, and social integration and participation; by studying the impact of social policy on migration as a push and pull factor (unmet demands in sending country, better supply and access in host country); and, finally, by researching the impact of migration on social sectors and programs that are directly relevant for social provisioning, such as the care, health, and education sectors (for example through brain drain or migrant care workers). While these issues have been discussed extensively in relation to institutionalized welfare states, they have not received much attention as they apply to the developing world.  

From a social policy perspective, migrants are usually classified as a group with specific protection needs. Migrants hold a vulnerable status due to the fact that they live in and between different social, political, and economic systems, with other layers of vulnerability (such as a poverty or refugee status, being a poor woman or a child, or belonging to discriminated racial or ethnic groups) adding to this. Newly arrived migrants are especially vulnerable as they cannot rely on informal networks in their home country and usually have no immediate access to protection and services in the host country (Sabates-Wheeler & Waite, 2003). In this situation, migrants are exposed to considerable risk and social exclusion, both because of their distance from and/or the loss of certain citizenship rights (for example voting) at home, and because of the lack of rights and entitlements and discrimination in the host country.  

In addition, the fact that important parts of the citizenry in developing countries lack affordable access to social services and insurance makes it even more difficult for migrants to get access, especially as they work primarily in sectors with low or no coverage from formal schemes such as the rural sector, domestic work, construction, or petty trade. The marginalized position of migrants with regard to welfare schemes in developing host countries is also reflected in the dearth of broader studies on this subject. Existing studies show that with respect to access to social services, immigrants usually experience difficulties as a result of cultural problems and discriminatory policies and practices in host countries. Often, immigrants are unaware of their rights in these regards, are afraid to claim them, have language barriers, or lack information. Migrants and refugees who are not considered citizens or residents with full rights may be denied access (Adepoju, 2008; McConnell, 2009). Whereas migrants’ access to tax-financed social assistance benefits is much more limited (even in the case of the EU), migrants with formal employment tend to have access to contributory schemes where they exist. However, the portability of social rights such as long-term occupational benefits based on contribu-
tion payments (for example pensions) is quite demanding on the administrative capacities of the countries involved (especially when it comes to the exportability of entitlements). Where exportability rights are lacking, migrants incur substantial financial losses upon returning to their home country, which can in turn motivate them to evade contribution payments or to stay in the host country to avoid these losses, resulting in forgone opportunities for both countries (Holzmann et al., 2005; Sabates-Wheeler et al., 2011).

With regard to the impact of social protection systems on emigration, conventional thinking suggests that migration would be lower in contexts where coverage with social protection programs is higher. Although this is actually true for some cases, the opposite is equally true: just as increasing incomes are associated with higher emigration rates, because the very poor often lack the financial means to migrate, access to social protection can be used to finance migration. In a literature review, Hagen-Zanker and Leon Himmelstine (2012) discuss five studies that show that access to the public, noncontributory, old-age grant in South Africa has resulted in increased migration, as increased household income seems to have facilitated the financing of some of the costs related to out-migration of a family member. Interestingly, Sienaert finds that when women receive pensions, other household members are more likely to migrate (as cited in Hagen-Zanker & Leon Himmelstine, 2012).

**Social policy regimes in SSA**

Social policy regimes in SSA are diverse and have experienced significant changes over time; they have been shaped by colonial heritage, postindependence development strategies and political coalitions, and influences of multilateral agencies and donors. Whereas postindependence social policy was mainly seen as an instrument for nation building and to address some of the injustices of the colonial order, international actors in a context of recurrent global crises have pushed structural adjustment policies, macroeconomic stabilization, and a residual model of social policy.11

At present, social protection systems and social services in SSA are fragmented or of a residual nature, and social insurance tends to be limited to the formal economy.12 In low-income countries in SSA, pensions and health insurance cover only between 5% and 10% of the workforce (ILO, 2011), whereas noncontributory programs such as family allowances/child benefits or social pensions are often targeted to the poorest, externally funded, provided on a small-scale basis or as pilots, and usually not accessible for migrants, especially not for undocumented workers. In upper-middle-income countries and former settler economies, coverage of
the population with social services and cash transfers tends to be higher. This has led to better social outcomes and a more significant contribution to wider development goals in countries such as Botswana, Mauritius, Namibia, and South Africa. Former cash-crop economies in West Africa and poorer labor reserve economies in East and Southern Africa have been less successful in creating more comprehensive social policy regimes. Even in the more advanced countries, however, challenges persist with regard to incorporating excluded groups (such as migrants and informal workers), providing adequate benefits and quality services, and improving the developmental role of social policy as well as its contribution to democratization and participation (Mkandawire, 2004).

Migration and development in Africa

Patterns and drivers of regional migration in SSA

SSA has the highest rate of South–South migration in the world: The majority (69%) of migratory movements, which amount in total to approximately 21.9 million migrants or 2.5% of the population (Ratha et al., 2011, p. 16), takes place within the region. The dominance of intraregional flows is partly explained by high poverty rates and low income levels in many SSA countries. Regional flows are more likely to involve poorer, less educated migrants as costs are considerably cheaper compared to migrating to remote destinations in developed countries. South–South or cross-border migration is also the traditional context for temporary or circular migration movements of seasonal workers in agriculture or mining, which are common in West and Southern Africa (Burawoy, 1976; Crush et al., 1991; Kayenze, 2004). Other traditional determinants for internal and cross-border migration include education and marriage, precolonial structures linked to trade and livelihoods, and processes of democratic transition and economic development (Bakewell et al., 2009). The end of apartheid in South Africa, for example, resulted in increased migration flows from various parts of SSA, including Kenya, Nigeria, Senegal, Sierra Leone, Uganda, and Zaire (Adepoju, 2008).

Intraregional migration within SSA has become more diversified over time in terms of destination, length of stay, and skill level of migrants (Adepoju, 2008). In addition, migration patterns in SSA have been shaped by the highly volatile economic and political situation in the region, for example postcolonial independence struggles, civil wars, ethnic-religious conflicts, and livelihood crises as a consequence of natural disasters and structural adjustment policies (Mafukidze, 2006). Economic crises and high youth unemployment rates (for example 51% for young men and 69% for young
women in Mauritania) push young workers to seek job opportunities in urban agglomerations or abroad (ILO, 2010). Former receiving countries, such as Côte d’Ivoire, Ghana, and Nigeria, have expelled large numbers of migrants during periods of conflict and crisis, and often turned from net immigration countries into net emigration countries (Bakewell et al., 2009). Nonetheless, Côte d’Ivoire, South Africa, Burkina Faso, and Nigeria continue featuring as the major regional destination countries for African emigrants, as shown in figure 1.

**The migration–development nexus in SSA**

The development impact of migration is usually analyzed in a framework of voluntary labor migration, although in regions such as SSA mixed migration motives (migration for economic and political/emergency reasons) are common and development impacts related to different migration flows are difficult to distinguish (Black et al., 2006; Landau & Kazadi Wa Kabwe-Segatti, 2009). Most literature analyzes economic effects of migration on labor markets, for example the effects of brain drain on the sending country; the effects on productivity or wages in the host country; and the effects produced by remittances, for example balance of payments effects or poverty-reduction impacts. Remittances receive by far the greatest attention as they represent a relatively stable and growing type of capital inflow for many developing countries. Looking at Africa (including Northern Africa), remittances have exceeded private capital flows and official aid, while in the case of SSA official aid is still the most important flow, followed by foreign direct investment (FDI). In 2010, total

![Figure 1](image-url) **Figure 1** • Major Destination Countries for Emigrants from Sub-Saharan Africa, 2010 (share of total SSA emigrants)

*Source: Own calculations based on the Bilateral Migration Matrix 2010 (World Bank), accessed on 4 Sep 2013.*
remittances in SSA amounted to 2.4% of GDP (US$ 40 billion) (Ratha et al., 2011) (see figure 2).

Positive macroeconomic effects of remittances have been observed with regard to balance of payments stabilization, in particular in times of economic or political crisis, macroeconomic shocks, or natural disasters. Whereas most types of private capital flows react in pro-cyclical ways, as figure 2 clearly shows with regard to the most recent financial crisis in 2008, this does not hold true for remittances, at least when countries of origin and destination are not affected by covariant shocks. Another positive effect consists in improving the sovereign creditworthiness of countries that receive significant remittances, which can lead to improved and lower cost access to external finance, also through the securitization of future remittances (Ratha et al., 2011). On the other hand, there are potentially adverse effects such as currency overvaluation (the so-called Dutch disease effect), although this might only be relevant for smaller countries with high shares of capital inflows in relation to GDP.

With regard to social development effects, there is evidence that remittances reduce poverty (Adams & Page, 2005; de Haan & Yaqub, 2010), smooth household consumption patterns, act as an insurance mechanism (Sabates-Wheeler & Waite, 2003), and lead to higher investments in education and health (Ratha et al., 2011; de Haas, 2007). It is usually more difficult to quantify negative effects such as remittance dependency at the household level, or to balance the positive effects of remittance sending with negative migration effects, such as care deficits and emotional strain, increased vulnerability for migrants and families left behind, labor shortages in communities of origin, and lack of meaningful integration and
participation of migrants in the host country (Dugbazah, 2012; Kofman & Raghuram, 2012). In this regard there is still a considerable dearth of evidence on broader developmental effects of migration and remittances, in particular with regard to impacts on local production, labor markets, and social development.

How important are intraregional remittances in SSA? The World Bank (Ratha et al., 2011) estimates that remittances originating from other SSA countries constitute only around 13% of total remittances received in SSA, despite the fact that two thirds of migration flows are intraregional. This is explained by the low incomes of regional migrants if compared to migrants in high-income destination countries in Europe, the US, or the Gulf countries (Ratha et al., 2011, p. 52). It could further be explained by a) patterns of regional migration, as temporary and seasonal migration is more common than long-distance migration, leading to interrupted remittance sending, and b) the fact that remittances are sent in kind.

With regard to brain drain, defined as the emigration of the skilled labor force, SSA remains the region with the highest average emigration rate for persons with tertiary education, in particular educated women, as table 2 shows.

Although the numbers in the table refer to rates of emigration towards OECD countries, brain drain at the regional level remains an issue of concern. Migration poles such as Nigeria and South Africa have for a long time attracted skilled migrants and professionals and continue to do so (Adepoju, 2008; McDonald & Crush, 2002). According to Landau and Kazadi Wa Kabwe-Segatti (2009, p. 28), attracting skilled migrants from within the region does not always lead to successful labor market integration in countries such as South Africa, but can actually result in downgrading of skills or “brain waste.” This is due to national and regional regulations and policies, for example the SADC prohibition on recruiting skilled medical personnel from within the region or the black empowerment policy that does not allow companies to recruit African non-nationals to meet their targets (Landau & Kazadi Wa Kabwe-Segatti, 2009).

<table>
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<th>Region</th>
<th>Male</th>
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<td>Asia</td>
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<td>Latin America</td>
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<tr>
<td>Africa</td>
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Source: Meyer 2010.
Beyond remittances and brain drain, development impacts of migration in Africa are still not fully understood due to either lack of data, in particular on undocumented and irregular migrants as well as on the informal economy and informal social protection schemes that are linked to migration processes, or due to lack of studies on the social dimensions of intraregional migration, for example with regard to gender and care issues, health and education, or sociocultural aspects such as integration of migrants, political activism, or xenophobia.¹⁸

**Intraregional migration in SSA: Implications for national social policy**

In order to determine the implications of intraregional migration in SSA for social policy in countries of origin and destination it is necessary to be better informed about the:

- drivers of migration, migration patterns, and characteristics of migrants in specific contexts;
- impact of migration on and access of migrants to labor markets, social protection systems (formal and informal), and social services, such as health, education, and housing, in host countries;
- impact of migration on social protection and provision in countries of origin;
- impact of migration on the wellbeing of individual migrants and their families, intrahousehold relations (including impacts on gender relations and care work), and community relations; and
- political implications of migration in sending and host countries and at the regional level, including the political participation of migrants, xenophobia, political scapegoating, and free movement policies.

Once a clearer understanding and more robust evidence are available on the above-mentioned questions in the region, it will, firstly, be easier to advocate for migrants’ rights and secondly, lead to more appropriate policy frameworks adapted to national and regional realities. This is particularly important because evidence of the determinants and impacts of migration is to some degree context-specific and cannot easily be compared or generalized.

What are the challenges for developing host countries in SSA from a social policy perspective? Several authors warn against a simple adoption of Northern problem definitions and corresponding policy agendas towards the South given that realities are different and diverse, as the previous section on social policy in SSA has demonstrated. Sabates-Wheeler et al. (2011) discuss policy challenges with regard to the portability of social
rights and entitlements. They argue that “given the limited provisions and the low overall coverage by social security of the labor force in low-income regions, it seems that concerns about the lack of portability of benefits are premature” (Sabates-Wheeler et al., 2011, p. 109). Instead they recommend (a) ensuring the portability of occupational benefits that are available to migrants, (b) ensuring basic human and social rights to all migrants regardless of status, (c) supporting migrant networks and associations, and (d) developing a migration policy framework, especially with regard to undocumented regional migrants.

Gagnon and Khoudour-Castéras (2012) take up the issue of the integration of migrants into host societies. They posit that, as a consequence of long-established economic, social, and cultural ties that span across borders and guide migration flows in the region, integration—in the Western interpretation of the term, meaning either multiculturalism or assimilation—is less of a priority for social policy. Regional migrants frequently belong to the same ethnic or religious groups, speak the same language, and share a common history. The authors argue further that because migration is often circular and migrants work in the informal economy with little difference in their deprivation status compared to nationals, approaches towards integration need to be different from those in the North. The challenge is not to copy Northern integration concepts, but rather to eliminate existing discriminative policies or practices, and not to exclude migrants from policy reforms aiming at extending social services, social protection, and decent work opportunities for the local population.

Here it seems justified to add that although similarities in terms of social class or cultural-ethnic bonds are significant in many instances and might facilitate integration, the fact that migration patterns have diversified more recently and that important host countries like South Africa and Côte d’Ivoire experience problems of xenophobia and antimigration attitudes makes a proactive policy stance important.

Finally, it is important to analyze the impact of immigration on public services such as health, education, care services, and housing, both in terms of access to services and with regard to migrant labor supply for these services.

As to the social policy implications of regional migration patterns for sending countries, it is necessary to conduct more research on any investment in social services of remittances by families left behind; their impact on social outcomes and poverty; the effects of migration on care systems, social reproduction, and family/community relations; and the impact of skilled labor migration on sectors such as health, education, and other important economic sectors that cannot retain local skilled labor due to the competition of better wages and working conditions abroad. While
some studies exist (Sabates-Wheeler, 2011; Landau & Kazadi Wa Kabwe-Segatti, 2009; Ratha et al., 2011), few analyze these questions for both sending and receiving countries, or from both a national and regional policy perspective.

Migration governance: National, regional, and global regimes and their limitations

Several scholars point out that a lack of coherent governance in the field of migration has led to fragmented policy approaches and argue that this could be one of the main reasons why protection and development initiatives related to migrants are ineffective or incomplete at national levels (Grugel & Piper, 2007). In addition, notwithstanding increased regional cooperation on migration and development, access to basic rights and social policies are still limited, especially in developing countries. A reason for this might be the nonbinding or informal character of some of these rights and programmes, but also lack of cooperation between core institutions. It has been noticed that although regional governance in the form of unions, protocols, and intergovernmental arrangements has come a long way in creating policies, agreements, and legal protections, the implementation, follow-up, and monitoring of these have been rather weak (Adepoju & Appleyard, 1996).

In its world migration report from 2008, the International Organization for Migration (IOM, 2008) explains the lack of support for an international regime establishing freer movement of workers by highlighting issues such as “the perceived asymmetries of supply and demand, the lack of reciprocity in potential gains and the social and political implications that remain to be addressed” (IOM, 2008a, p. 44). Betts explains these differences in interest (related to the nature of externalities of different migration flows) by linking the various types of migration with the corresponding governance level using a framework from public finance theory. Whereas the migration of skilled migrants constitutes a private good, negotiated between states and public institutions such as social security agencies, irregular migrants constitute a (regional) club good, and refugees a (global) public good (Betts 2010, 2011). In this framework, issues regarding the social protection of migrants will be treated at different governance levels depending on the type of migrant—skilled, irregular, or refugee; for example, with social protection of refugees becoming a global public good issue, it will be governed at a multilateral level and therefore require clear (treaty-based) rules and financing from general taxes or international aid.
The strongest push toward a global framework for labor migration, including issues of social protection, comes from the International Labor Organization’s (ILO) “Decent Work Agenda.” Adding to the existing ILO conventions for foreign workers, the ILO adopted its Multilateral Framework of nonbinding principles and guidelines for a rights-based approach to labor migration (ILO, 2006) as a follow-up to the General Discussion on Migrant Workers at the 2004 International Labor Congress, where a resolution was adopted calling for a Plan of Action. As of 31 May 2012, 46 countries have ratified the International Convention on the Protection of the Rights of Migrants and Members of Their Families. Although gradually rising, this constitutes a comparatively low number of ratifications and, what is more striking, the Convention has not been ratified by any developed countries or by any important Southern host countries such as South Africa. Furthermore, even when countries ratify international conventions, this does not guarantee that such measures are actually implemented (Iredale et al., 2005).

In view of the shortcomings of global migration governance regimes, Nita (in this issue) outlines the advantages and shortcomings of regional migration governance. She argues that the need for regional governance follows naturally from the fact that regional migration flows are the dominant mobility regime in regions such as SSA. Furthermore, regional cooperation might be easier to achieve than binding global frameworks while it has some advantages vis-à-vis bilateral agreements, for example safeguarding interests of weaker actors such as countries of origin. Nita also emphasizes the need to combine regional governance mechanisms with higher level governance, not only because migration continues to be a global phenomenon and not all migration is regional, but also in order to avoid new migration barriers related to bloc building (the “Fortress Europe” phenomenon) or to deal with problems of overlapping membership of countries.

To sum up, and to cite the conclusion of Kathleen Newland (2010, p. 342):

the debate about international governance should be framed not in terms of ceding sovereignty, but rather in terms of reclaiming it and exercising it collectively in a manner consistent with the needs of labor markets, the integrative capacity of the host societies, the development potential of migration for the countries of origin, and the humanitarian norms and the obligation to protect the fundamental rights of migrants.

Newland considers states as one among a number of important actors for migration governance and questions their ability to impose the conditions under which migration takes place. Nevertheless, it is important to recog-
nize that although states might not exercise full control over their borders, they still determine migrants’ access to social protection programmes and social services. As long as social policy is used for migration control and not for objectives of development and inclusion, national governance mechanisms will not be sufficient to protect migrants’ rights.

Migration and social development in a regional context: Implications for sub-Saharan Africa

High expectations with regard to the potential of regional actors to push for free movement of people and a deepening of integration processes through universal access of nationals and migrants to social rights have so far not been met in SSA. While each case is different, this has been explained by a combination of institutional weaknesses of regional bodies and governance frameworks, a lack of political will and funding sources, and the fact that a large part of intraregional migration is of an informal and irregular nature. As happens in other world regions, diverging development levels and different social policy systems of member countries within regional integration communities present further obstacles in terms of harmonizing living and working conditions and equalizing rights for migrants. In SSA, three particular experiences have received considerable attention by researchers and policy actors: the Southern African Development Community (SADC), regional integration in Eastern Africa (East African Community EAC), and the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS).

SADC was founded in 1992 to promote development and poverty reduction through regional integration and cooperation. Since 2005, the Draft Protocol on the Facilitation of Movement of Persons has been signed by nine member states and ratified by four. In addition, a Charter of Fundamental Social Rights in SADC was agreed upon in 2003. However, rights for migrants within the SADC region are still subject to domestic legislation or bilateral agreements (Williams & Carr, 2006). In the case of the most important host country, South Africa, this means that despite the fundamental right to social security for everyone, as stated in the South African constitution, social assistance continues to exclude noncitizens, and a significant proportion of migrants are excluded from basic social services (McConnell, 2009).

EAC member states ratified a Common Market Protocol in 2010 that aims at free movement of persons, goods, labor, services, and capital. The process is characterized by a slow ratification and implementation process and problems caused by overlapping membership of countries in different regional integration projects. Access to social rights for migrants does not seem to be a priority at the current stage.
ECOWAS signed a Free Movement Protocol as early as 1979 and all ECOWAS states have abolished visa and entry requirements for members for a 90-day stay. The community is currently working on a third phase focused on the “Right of Establishment,” which grants the right to engage in economic activities and to set up businesses (see Nita in this issue). As in the case of the EAC, the issue of access to social rights has not been a priority thus far.

Against this backdrop, it remains to be seen whether regional free movement protocols will evolve towards granting greater access to social and political rights for migrants from member states in the near future and what implications this has.

Conclusions

This article has given a brief overview of the conceptual linkages between social policy, migration, and development with reference to the case of SSA. I argue that to improve migration policies with a view to protect migrants and to increase the positive effect of migration for development and livelihoods, national social contracts have to be extended to include migrants with regard to both entitlements and obligations. I have further argued that greater inclusion of migrants, with more economic, social, and political rights, might be easier to achieve at a regional level and within regional integration projects. While this seems reasonable based on experiences in other regions, several obstacles have been identified, such as lack of effective cooperation, weakness of regional institutions, scarce financial resources, and low coverage levels of national populations with regard to social protection and services. Although it has not been a subject of this article, it seems further relevant to evaluate current migration policies and regional integration projects with regard to the historical context of pre- and postcolonial migrant labor systems and related social policies.

Another explanation for the reluctance of extending social rights to migrants is the general belief that social policy is a luxury for low-income countries and cannot be implemented before a certain level of development has been achieved. This view ignores the experience of several European late-industrializing and developing countries that have been successful in catching up over the last decades, combining structural change with transformative social policies (UNRISD, 2010; Mkandawire, 2004). Only if the developmental potential of social policy is fully acknowledged will policy makers be willing to expand social investments in parallel and as a part of growth strategies, and to include migration as a key crosscutting variable in these strategies (Hujo & Piper, 2010).
It is now the task of researchers and international agencies to provide more evidence of the patterns and impacts of regional migration and the role that social policy can play in reducing vulnerabilities and harnessing positive contributions to development.

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**NOTES**

1. An exception is the literature on the Southern African migrant labor system, see Arrighi (1973), Burawoy (1976), Crush, Jeeves, and Yudelman (1992), Cooper (1989), and Kayenze (2004).

2. When we talk about regions in this article, we mean supranational regions such as sub-Saharan Africa (SSA); subregions refer for instance to Western Africa, East Africa, or the southern cone of SSA.

3. Among the regional economic integration processes are: the European Union (EU), the Andean Pact, the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN), the Caribbean Community and Common Market (CARICOM), the Communauté Economique et Monétaire de l’Afrique Centrale (CEMAC), the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS), the Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa (COMESA), the East African Community (EAC), the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), the Mercado Común del Sur (MERCOSUR), and the South African Development Community (SADC). SADC actually opted out of free movement in 2005 by way of introducing the Protocol on the Facilitation of Movement.

4. *Social policy* is state intervention that directly affects social welfare, social relations, and social institutions. It aims at preventing people from suffering a decline in their incomes and life chances, while actively promoting decent living and working conditions for all. In general, the provision of basic social services like health and education, social protection regarding lifecycle or work-related risks (sickness, work accidents, invalidity, old age, maternity, survivorship, and unemployment), as well as labor market policies and policies for the poor and other vulnerable groups are all key concerns of social policy. It can unleash synergies between the economic and the social systems with regard to productivity (investment in human capital) and macroeconomic stabilization, but also smooth social conflict and undue hardship caused by processes of growth and structural change, of which migration, both internal
and international movements, is a key feature. Social policy is of instrumental and of intrinsic value. The right to social security is universally recognized as a human right for all, citizens and workers, nationals and migrants, regardless of age, gender, ethnicity or status (for example, regular or irregular worker or resident), see UNRISD (2006, 2010), Mkandawire (2004), Townsend (2007).

5. Recommendation No. 202 adopted at the International Labor Conference in June 2012 calls for countries to establish and maintain national social protection floors, which constitute a set of nationally defined basic social security guarantees, including effective access to essential health care and basic income security throughout the life course.

6. The author would like to thank two anonymous referees for their pertinent and useful comments. All remaining errors and omissions are my own responsibility.

7. The idea that African societies should move from the national question to the social question is discussed in Mkandawire (2009).


9. During the colonial period, migrant labor in key economic sectors such as mining (and to a lesser extent plantation agriculture) were provided with some social services, for example housing, sanitation, education, health, and allowances, with mining companies given considerable leeway with regard to developing their own approach towards social provision in mining towns. Development of national systems of social services progressed after independence, but systems remained fragmented, with new providers such as international donors and NGOs gaining relevance in the period of state retrenchment following structural adjustment; for the case of Zambia see Mhone (2004).


11. On social policy in SSA see the volume edited by Adésinà (2007); the example of South Africa is analyzed by Lund (2009), and Mhone (2004) studies historical trajectories of social policy in postcolonial Africa for the case of Zambia.

12. On social protection in a development context see UNRISD (2010), chapters 5 and 6. The privileged group of covered workers has been termed “labor aristocracy” (Arrighi, 1973); later on, the argument of stratified welfare regimes was instrumentalized in the discourse promoting state retrenchment and private social insurance.

13. These figures are even higher within subregions, such as West Africa (76%) and Southern Africa (72%) (Ratha et al., 2011, p. 22).

14. Ratha et al. (2011, p. 27) show with regard to migration from Burkina Faso, Ghana, Nigeria, and Senegal, that migrants’ characteristics differ according to destination: migrants to OECD countries tend to be older, better educated, and predominantly male (70%). See Sabates-Wheeler (2011) for the case of Malawian migrants to the UK versus South Africa.

15. The following section considers the contemporary context only; it does not refer to the important role migration played historically for the economic base of the colonial state; as Kayenze (2004, p. 2) states: “The history of migrant labor in Southern Africa is intricately tied to the uneven development of the
capitalist mode of production at the onset of colonialization. Because capitalist production started around plantation (agriculture) and mining concerns, it is these two sectors (...) that played a dominant role in the evolution of migrant labor within the region.” See also Cooper (1989), Crush et al. (1991), and Burawoy (1976).

16. The exceptions are refugees grouped in refugee camps (for example those managed by UNHCR) without access to national labor markets or income-generating opportunities. Here the only impact would be any subsidy for camps by national governments in the region and demand effects for services and goods supplied to the camp population with potential effects on prices.

17. These figures based on IMF balance of payments statistics are likely to be below actual flows; Ratha et al. (2011) find that national figures reported for Ghana are 10 times higher than IMF figures and that Ethiopian figures double IMF figures. Many African countries do not report remittances at all, for example Central African Republic, Democratic Republic of Congo, Somalia, and Zimbabwe.

18. On xenophobia in South Africa see McConnell (2009). Gender issues linked to migration in SSA have regained some interest recently, see for example Dodson (2008) for the case of South Africa and Dugbazah (2012) for gender impacts of rural-urban migration. See also the Gender Symposium organized by CODESRIA on the topic of “Gender, migration and socioeconomic development in Africa,” held in Cairo, Egypt, 2010 (papers available at http://www.codesria.org/spip.php?article980). From a historical perspective, women supported the migrant labor scheme and cheap wages in mines and factories by shouldering the bulk of social reproduction in the Bantustan areas (Bond, 2007, p. 201; Burawoy, 1976; Kayenze, 2004).

19. This section draws on Hujo and Piper (2010).


21. This concerns the ILO Convention No. 97 on Migration for Employment from 1952, and the ILO Convention No. 143 on Migrant Workers (Supplementary Provisions) from 1975. Relevant international labor standards, as well as the Declaration on Fundamental Principles and Rights at Work (1998), are equally applicable for migrants regardless of status. For a brief description of ILO and other standards, their historical context and so forth, see ILO (2004, chapter 4).

22. For a regular update on the ratification record, please see http://www.december18.net.

23. Member states of the SADC are Angola, Botswana, Democratic Republic of Congo, Lesotho, Madagascar, Malawi, Mauritius, Mozambique, Namibia, Seychelles, South Africa, Swaziland, Tanzania, Zambia, and Zimbabwe.

24. Member states of the EAC are Burundi, Kenya, Rwanda, Tanzania, and Uganda.

25. Member states of the ECOWAS are Benin, Burkina Faso, Cape Verde, Ivory Coast, Gambia, Ghana, Guinea, Guinea-Bissau, Liberia, Mali, Niger, Nigeria, Senegal, Sierra Leone, and Togo.
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Liens entre politique sociale, migrations et développement dans un contexte régional : le cas de l’Afrique subsaharienne

Katja Hujo

**Résumé**: La migration internationale est pilotée par les processus de développement et, dans un même temps, impacte sur le développement à travers ses effets sur le marché du travail, les transferts de fonds des migrants, les transferts de connaissances, le changement social dans les ménages et les communautés, ainsi que les réponses qu’elle occasionne au niveau politique et institutionnel. Bien que le potentiel de développement des migrations soit désormais largement reconnu, nous observons encore que la migration, et en particulier la libre circulation des personnes et l’accès des migrants aux droits socio-politiques, reste une question politique très controversée et sensible. Cela ne concerne pas seulement le cas des flux migratoires des pays en développement vers les pays industrialisés du Nord, mais également les flux migratoires générés au niveau régional et dans les contextes d’intégration régionale tels que les marchés communs ou les unions politiques et monétaires. Cet article examine les liens entre la migration, le développement, la politique sociale
et l’intégration régionale. L’accent est mis sur la migration en Afrique sub-saharienne, son impact sur le développement et les droits des migrants, ainsi que leurs impacts sur les politiques publiques, y compris les nouvelles formes de gouvernance migratoires.

**Mots-clés:** Afrique subsaharienne, développement, droits des migrants, fuite des cerveaux, intégration régionale, migration, migrations Sud-Sud, transferts de fonds

**Vinculación de la política social, la migración y el desarrollo en un contexto regional - el caso de África Subsahariana**

Katja Hujo

**Resumen:** La migración internacional es impulsada por los procesos de desarrollo y, al mismo tiempo, tiene un impacto en el desarrollo a través de sus efectos en el mercado de trabajo, los flujos de remesas, las transferencias de conocimientos, el cambio social en los hogares y en las comunidades, así como las respuestas a nivel político e institucional. Aunque actualmente el potencial de desarrollo de la migración es ampliamente reconocido, todavía observamos que la migración y, en particular, la libre circulación de personas y el acceso de los migrantes a más derechos sociopolíticos, sigue siendo una cuestión política muy controvertida y sensible. Este no es sólo el caso con respecto a la migración de los países en desarrollo a los países industrializados del Norte, también ocurre en la migración a nivel regional y en los proyectos de integración regional tales como los mercados comunes o uniones políticas y monetarias. Este artículo analiza los vínculos entre la migración, el desarrollo, la política social y la integración regional. La atención se centra en la migración en el África Subsahariana, su impacto sobre el desarrollo y los derechos de los migrantes, así como sus implicaciones en las políticas públicas, incluyendo nuevas formas de gobernanza de la migración.

**Palabras clave:** África Subsahariana, desarrollo, fuga de cerebros, integración regional, política social, migración, migración Sur-Sur, remesas, derechos de los migrantes
Civic Integration at Issue
An Essay on the Political Condition of Migrants
José María Rosales

Abstract: This article deals with the civic integration of migrants, focusing on the process immigrants undergo to become nationals of new states. Discussing some recent advances in immigration policies in European Union countries, it questions the gap that separates their normative principles from institutional practices. Many existing citizens would not meet the administrative requirements imposed on migrants to gain legal residence and nationality. Furthermore, the experience of non-nationals living in Europe suggests that integration challenges remain, well after naturalisation is achieved, as new citizens face ongoing discriminatory burdens at various levels, including the labour market and politics. Part of an ongoing study on the civic condition of migrants, the article argues that a liberal approach to immigrant integration should not cease with the granting of citizenship. It should address the urgent task of protecting new citizens from discrimination that impairs their rights in practice.

Keywords: accommodation, citizenship, immigration, integration, politics, rights

Over the past two decades international migrations to Western countries have had a determinant impact on political debates, featuring prominently in electoral moments. These have raised new questions regarding legal conditions for immigrants’ access to host societies, most saliently to welfare programmes, although political participation has proved a hotly contested issue as well (Bloemraad, Korteweg and Yurdakul 2008; Saunders 2011). At the end of the 1990s rich countries relied heavily on foreign manpower and issued host schemes accordingly but, only a decade later, the world economic crisis has put these immigration policies to severe test.

As a consequence, the withdrawal of such schemes may result in even further quandaries. One of its afteraths, return migration, as a response to the crisis, benefits neither host nor home countries, further challenging the cathartic effect of the policy’s discouraging measures. Indeed, of the series of aspirations immigrants harbour, civic integration, namely membership in the political community as fully fledged citizens, is not an immediate one. By and large, concerns of integration are oriented towards questions of access to labour markets. Civic integration denotes the process migrants experience to
acquire a new nationality, their rights aiming to match the rights of citizens. Given the innumerable obstacles facing migration paths, civic integration is rarely achieved.

At best, immigrants become citizens only after fulfilling stringent conditions, many of which nationals of host countries would seldom meet (Kraler 2006). Take the administrative requirements to grant legal residence and citizenship. On average they have grown to the point, as I will demonstrate, that their side-effects outweigh their alleged benefits, with consequences that undermine the rights of migrants, as a recent statement of the United Nations Special Rapporteur on the Human Rights of Migrants perspicuously admits (Crépeau 2011). For many migrants, citizens from wealthy societies embody the ideal of a worthwhile life and hence citizenship status would mean a near accomplishment of this ideal by all appearances. Yet migrants’ search for ‘life chances’ does not end in civic integration, laborious as it proves in reality. Given the persistence of discriminatory practices (see e.g. De Schutter 2009), it proves an endless search for equal rights and opportunities.

The article’s first section examines a number of representative features of immigration challenges, in order to highlight their civic significance. The second section deals with the strenuous administrative processes immigrants endure to become citizens of new states. Drawing on various current examples, it critically discusses the lack of reasonable proportionality between standard legal restrictions on migrants and their expected consequence, namely integration. To broaden the analytical perspective, the third section reviews some basic immigrant integration patterns, namely assimilationist and multicultural policies. Elaborating in particular on the two-way accommodation between citizens and immigrants, which the European Union suggests as a policy guideline, the article argues for a liberal, rights-based, exploratory response to the challenge of civic integration. By way of theoretical analysis of a selection of relevant literature, it aims to underpin the argument with relevant empirical evidence. The response considers recent policy changes which add to ambivalent outcomes in the adoption of immigrant integration programmes by many European states, and suggests that these outcomes are due to such poor processes of civic integration. The experience of non-nationals and naturalised citizens living in Europe illustrates how civic integration does not properly end with naturalisation. Concluding remarks recapitulate the argument that migrants’ rights should be extended after civic integration. A liberal approach to civic integration, the article claims, should focus policy on the protection of the rights of both migrants and naturalised citizens.

**Immigration’s Civic Question**

Two causes epitomise migration: the escape from poverty, or the lack of freedoms, and the search for opportunities. Neither leads to a secure end, open as
immigration chances are. Yet the image of a desperate escape obscures a crucial feature of migration, namely that it responds to rational prospects and describes, at least in part, rational patterns of behaviour. Only the most pressing cases barely rest on rational prospects, reliable or otherwise, for migration is usually a rational move, even if its estimates reveal the imperfect rationality of choices informed by tremendous fear, desire and uncertainty.

Migration proceeds by expectation. Its outcome in the short, mid and long terms incurs costs, and generates profits too, for migrants and the families they leave behind in their home countries, for immigrants and their incoming relatives, for migrant and host societies, including economic, demographic, social and civic benefits (Goldin, Cameron and Balarajan 2011: 162–209). International migrations create new opportunities which, on the whole, tend to surpass their cumulative costs over time (Ruhs 2010). For labour-exporting countries, a rewarding balance should exist between the loss of human labour and their chance to advance both economically and socially through trade links and other forms of international cooperation. Otherwise, migration becomes synonymous simply with brain drain. In this sense, as such cases as Morocco and the Philippines demonstrate, claims Nora Dudwick, massive migration produces decapitalising effects that are not always balanced by migrant remittances. As a consequence, their home countries remain in an even weaker position to undertake domestic reforms (Dudwick 2011; updated data in World Bank 2012). Although the economic impact of migration can be interpreted in terms of long-term economic investments, by analogy, their civic impact can be spelt out in civic investment terms. Regulating migration flows is then both an economic and a political challenge, indeed a policy priority, showing how transient balances prove among labour markets, policing measures and welfare demands.

As argued below, immigration policies, particularly in the European Union, have achieved a remarkable degree of theoretical refinement by strengthening their rights-based approaches. Policy recommendations inform the legislations of member states with the capacity to implement policy changes. Yet outcomes either refute or downgrade their normative sources, as is the case with European Union nationality laws: though they have been reshaped over the past few years partly towards more liberal approaches, in practice immigrants’ chances for integration have changed little (Huddleston et al. 2011: 22–3).

Migration flows from North African countries to Europe are a case in question. Through its commercial links with the Maghreb, the European Union has traditionally promoted an odd mixture of liberal and protectionist policies. Still, nowadays, such tension remains, and hinders the development of these African economies, even if the European Union’s foreign policy has been gradually recast (Baldwin-Edwards 2006). A partnership for democracy in the region is underway, whose ambitious realisation in 2011 acknowledges the pressing need to revise migration policies in response to such economic and political costs (European Commission 2011). Yet change proceeds awkwardly and economic assistance outpaces political cooperation (European Commis-
tion 2012), though a credible attempt, in financial and diplomatic terms, is made through the Support to Partnership, Reform and Inclusive Growth initiative – the SPRING programme.

However, a case remains to be made to consider integration (as referred to permanent migration) alongside other alternatives, such as transit and return migration. As for the former, which affects both asylum-seekers and labour migrants, uncertainty is not mitigated concerning the requirements for legal residence of migrants in host countries, which in fact reduces choices for safe mobility. Recent data from the World Bank on OECD countries provides evidence of temporary labour migration’s mobility options: they are caused by labour demands but, even though economic crises primarily affect skilled workers, non-skilled foreign workers often either lose their jobs or are forced to return home in a crisis (Page and Plaza 2006; OECD 2012: 27–56). The latter alternative, when it is not a result of forced migration, is easier said than done, especially as regards current generations, but in any case, the return of qualified professionals to their home countries can only be a selective choice. As the experience from the Maghreb countries makes clear, weak economies cannot absorb return migration (Hunt 2005: 212–16). The European example further shows the dilemmatic nature of immigrant integration at present. With each state individually responsible for policy implementation, it is no wonder that the European Union’s advanced ‘vision’ is poorly represented in practice (Echagüe, Michou and Mikail 2011), but this mismatch also raises persistent questions concerning migrations flows.

With an official estimate of seventy million international migrants in 2010, Europe, in particular the European Union, has become the world’s main destination for international migrations, followed by Asia, harbouring some sixty-one million, North America with some fifty million, and Africa with an estimate of more than nineteen million international migrants (United Nations 2012a). Three groups of reasons help to explain such increase. Firstly, Europe’s labour markets need manpower at a time when the population is ageing and a rise in life expectancy follows a consolidated trend predicted to shape deeper demographic change by 2050 (OECD 2012: 123–56; see the prospects in United Nations 2012b). Secondly, Europe’s welfare states supply an array of unparalleled universal social services. These are both a magnet for migrations and also an outcome of their financial contribution to host economies. The debate on capacity to accommodate immigrants largely originates in the 1990s, afterwards becoming a cyclic issue (Bommes and Geddes 2000), pivotally related to the economic performance of host countries (Wilkes, Guppy and Farris 2008). Thirdly, both independently considered and as a whole, the European Union countries have built an advanced legal system securing the protection of basic rights. To immigrants, this compensates for the growth of restrictive immigration policies. Disquietingly, by 2008 between 1.9 million and 3.8 million unauthorised migrants were estimated to reside in the European Union, that is, between 0.39 per cent and 0.77 per cent of a total
population of about 500 million. The ‘detected scope’, based on data regarding border control from its twenty-seven member states, has since declined, only reversed temporarily by spikes in entry from North African countries after the 2011 ‘Arab Spring’ (Morehouse and Blomfield 2011: 6–14).

To fix shortcomings regarding supervision of migration flows, a state competence greatly dependent on international cooperation, the European Commission has refocused its policy guidelines since the early 2000s onto the so-called ‘managing migration’ area (Taylor 2005). The aim of rationalising interstate cooperation has lifted the fight against trafficking in migrants to the top of the agenda, something that explains the weight of policing measures to address immigration flows (European Commission 2006; a critical, alternative view is McCreight 2006). Next, the Commission contends that overly restrictive labour market regulations make it difficult to hire immigrant workers legally, such that migrants are compelled to find ready-made offers through the informal economy. As a result, the Commission claims, Europe’s labour markets cope inefficiently with job demands, on the one hand, while on the other hand, its welfare systems prove unfit to handle adequately the needs of illegal migrant populations without substantial financial restructuring and policy changes.

Beneath the policy’s managerial jargon there remains the central issue of integration, which for decades has been the object of ceaseless policy trials. If, traditionally, integration meant a guided route to accommodate immigrants, since the 1990s, in view of persistent flaws, notably Germany, the Netherlands and the Nordic countries have begun to grant immigrants a more active role in their own integration. Subsequently, other countries have introduced similar changes with the aim of achieving ‘active inclusion’ of immigrants.3 The whole process has been remapped as a two-way approach involving citizens and immigrants. Drawing on previous single-country accomplishments, in 2005 the European Commission officially adopted a Common Agenda for Integration, acknowledging the need to explore more fruitful ways to facilitate immigrant integration (European Commission 2005).

Following the lead of national policy changes, the Agenda takes integration as a ‘dynamic, two-way process of mutual accommodation by all immigrants and residents of Member States’. The language of integration regarding the responsibility of both citizens and immigrants is almost contractual. Immigrants, the Commission argues, have ‘to acquire basic knowledge of the host society’s language, history and institutions’, but such learning is also to be enabled proactively by host societies. Though crisis has led the debate to this more realistic site of engagement, the full implications of the new approach are hard to anticipate, since these changes target key issues regarding distribution of public resources, showing how every new improvement at integration is also open to reversion.

In practice, immigration policies and naturalisation procedures still fall short of the liberal normative assumptions of national legislators (Clarence
By tightening administrative requirements for legal residence and naturalisation, the distance between immigrants and nationals is widened (Bauböck, Perchining and Sievers 2009). A consequence of this has been a revaluation of civic rights, at the expense of protracting immigrants’ precarious living conditions, as proved by the existence of several million undocumented immigrants across the European Union, who are not legally integrated into its host societies but are drawn into the mostly unprotected informal economy by labour demands. The 2010 world economic crisis delays solutions even further, making every step forward more transient than before.

Politically, the path migrations describe is one of a search for the universal right to a hospitable territory, as we see in Kant’s evocative image of cosmopolitanism. Yet the Kantian *ius cosmopoliticum* was not just an ethical ideal but also a definite ‘principle of right’, as Waldron remarks (2000: 242), as such aimed at inspiring positive law. The search for a hospitable territory, not necessarily for lifelong settlement (Nyamnjoh 2007: 75–9), becomes a search for equal rights. Hence it is precisely the realm of law that reveals migration’s political significance. Migration and immigration *policies* are but the other side of migration and immigration *politics*. The lack of correspondence between migration, a right, and immigration, which is not, is justified in legal terms. Migration is a right enshrined in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (art. 13), whereas immigration is a human aspiration that at best is legally acknowledged by liberal states, allowing only gradual access to rights. Most such rights are initially granted on humanitarian grounds and later under administrative conditions. Political rights are situated at the end of that route. In view of the stringent requirements to reach integration’s last stage, the question persists of whether a more liberal granting of citizenship to immigrants would devalue or enhance the status of nationals.

### Immigrants into Citizens

This article claims immigration offers much-needed contributions to host economies and argues for a more liberal understanding of immigration laws and policies, in line with a series of normative discussions (Rigo 2008; Bauböck, Perchining and Sievers 2009; Clarence 2009; Guild, Groenendijk and Carrera 2009; Joppke 2010; Ruhs 2010) and empirical concerns (Castles and Kosack 2010; Goldin, Cameron and Balarajan 2011; Huddleston et al. 2011; Liebig and von Haaren 2011), highlighting the need to refocus policy attention towards protection of the rights of both migrants and naturalised citizens. Before proceeding, however, a brief conceptual remark is needed regarding the uses of nationality and citizenship.

A polysemous concept, *citizenship* has two basic meanings, respectively legal and political, each relating to the other in theory and in institutional prac-
tice. As a legal concept, citizenship is synonymous with nationality, denoting an individual’s membership in a state. The relation establishes mutual legal obligations on the part of citizens, regarding observance of laws, and on the part of states, regarding the protection of rights. This is so in most liberal constitutions, in constitutional states, in theory (though not always in practice) whereas it is rarely the case in non-liberal polities. As a political concept, citizenship refers specifically to political rights derived from the status of nationality, namely rights to political association and participation (passive and active suffrage).

It is not infrequent in academic debates to see both terms taken as perfectly coterminous when in fact they are only partially equivalent to each other. Some, if not many, claims to revise the liberal concept of citizenship fail to deal with issues pertaining to nationality status under the direct jurisdiction of states. Therefore, they tend to be inapplicable in practice, even though they can be theoretically discussed. An egregious example of this ambivalent use can be found in Will Kymlicka’s book *Multicultural Citizenship*. When in its first chapter Kymlicka discusses immigration policies, he mostly refers to nationality issues, but when in the ninth chapter he claims to reassess the liberal model of citizenship, he reviews the political concept of citizenship to include cultural aspects of political membership, though he is implicitly advocating a change in the legal status of nationality (Kymlicka 1995: 10–33 and 173–92, respectively).

Another example has to do with the discussion of legal implications introduced by the concept of European Union citizenship. As noted by some scholars, it would be misleading to think that Union citizenship creates *de iure* a sort of cosmopolitan legal status, since nationality falls under the jurisdiction of the member states, not the Union (Closa 1995; for a recent assessment, see Bellamy 2008). In ordinary language, but also frequently in the language of the media, the expression ‘European citizenship’ is used as if corresponding to a legal status of nationality. Actually, that is not the case and such inaccuracy is presumably owed to the high expectations projected onto the idea of a European citizenship, particularly by the nationals of new member states since it was introduced by the 1992 Maastricht Treaty. But it also reveals the many pending tasks in the long-term ‘Europe for Citizens’ project.

Taken as a two-way process, mutual accommodation of immigrants and citizens is a challenging formula. There is no single roadmap to follow, as every host society relies on different antecedents and facilitating conditions, but there is a basic blueprint underlying the idea of mutual accommodation. It views integration as a process of gradual rapprochement that may end up changing the civic life of host societies. A two-way process means a bi-directional move that engages immigrants and citizens in learning new civic attitudes. Most importantly, it engages the exploration of changing conditions of political life whose new horizon in liberal societies is shaped by immigrants’ search for equal rights.
Integration thus involves a gradual access to rights, usually from social and economic to civil, cultural and political. For individuals, political rights represent the highest level of legal protection and civic empowerment. So, in view of immigrants’ contribution to host societies, why not grant them on the same liberal grounds as which the social contract of liberal democracies is based? Arguably, one reason can be the burden of racial prejudice influencing citizenship policies (Dummett 2001: 58–78). More often we see the effects of ‘hidden agendas’ in ‘policies which purport to follow certain objectives, while actually doing the opposite’ (Castles 2004: 214). That is usually the case of governments addressing interest conflicts as regards immigration, Castles explains, and so, while their official rhetoric may seem to agree with nationalist demands to ‘stem the tide’, actual practice tends to favour immigration in response to national economic needs. This ambivalence reinforces the uncertain status of immigrants, as proven by the fact that conditions have hardly changed despite the substantial rise of immigration flows since the 1990s. Naturalisation numbers are unequivocal: in 2009 some 776,000 non-nationals acquired the citizenship of a European Union state, as compared with about 580,000 in 1999 (Eurostat 2012). Yet the whole process remains mired in political indecisiveness.

A concomitant reason is the diffuse hunch, taken to extremes in xenophobic discourses, that redistributing public resources available in host societies weakens the status of existing citizens. Again, the impression is mistaken, with experience teaching that the reverse is usually the case, with the distribution of benefits clearly proceeding the other way, from the fiscal contribution of immigration to host societies that is needed to maintain welfare standards. Compared to 47 per cent in the United States, ‘immigrants represented 70 per cent of the increase in the labour force’ in Europe over the 2000–2010 decade (OECD 2012: 125). Germany’s economic recovery since the 2010s provides an intriguing case: after reducing the unemployment rate to under 6 per cent, by the end of August 2012 the Federal Employment Agency reported almost half a million job vacancies (Federal Employment Agency 2012).

In response to the related question of whether nationality should be granted unconditionally, it is reasonable to argue that immigrants contract certain civic obligations. Legal residence, accordingly, only arrives after certain conditions are met, entailing various legal effects. Yet administrative requirements of legal residence and nationality so out of proportion to citizens’ legal obligations cannot serve any reasonable purpose.

Let us further examine this point through an example, which sadly is not exceptional. According to Spanish law, legal residence can be obtained either after five years of steady residence on a permanent job contract, or after six years of previous and ceaseless authorised residence. In the former case, a series of temporal contracts totalling five years would not qualify, whereas in the latter, a break in the mandatory five-year stay would invalidate the attempt. So applying for legal residence has become a very tricky contest. Furthermore,
the number of administrative procedures given by royal decree is a sombre
indication of how bureaucratised the process has become and how arduous is
the process for immigrants to acquire legal residence.6

Concerning the next step of civic integration, it is only after ten years of
continuous legal residence that residents can apply for Spanish nationality.
Exceptions refer to citizens from Latin America, Portugal, Equatorial Guinea,
the Philippines, Andorra and Sephardim (two years), as well as refugees (five
years),7 but the main legal requirement of ten-year legal residence gives a fair
idea of its disproportionate difficulty compared with a five-year period in
many other European countries (Hammar 2010; Joppke 2010: 44–6) and the
United States.

Such formidable conditions seem to be subject to a law of supply and
demand, attributing liberal-democratic citizenship a value so high that it can
only be acquired over a huge amount of time, consuming precious resources –
a constraint that seriously undermines the status of immigrants. The practice
suggests immigrants are not treated fairly regarding their naturalisation
chances. They are forced into contractual conditions no liberal citizen would
accept (for a defence of naturalisation based on the ‘respect’ citizens ‘owe’ to
immigrants see Seglow 2009: 797–802). For example, mandatory courses and
language tests for would-be citizens, which vary from country to country, may
require of immigrants a kind of linguistic competence unlikely matched by
the average citizen, arguably conflicting with migrants’ rights (McNamara and
Shohamy 2008).

Why should conditions be enforced upon immigrants in forms and degrees
that citizens of liberal democracies seldom meet? Why require of immigrants
to be better citizens than nationals themselves, indeed ‘perfect citizens’ (Car-
rera 2009: 423–58)? What is the point of this lengthy test period if the same
can reasonably be attested in much less time? What makes the real civic dif-
fERENCE between an immigrant who, say, has different jobs, with alternating
periods of unemployment, which is what happens to many national workers,
and an immigrant who keeps the same job for six years in a row? By adopting
such policies, the biggest obstacle to civic integration is not on the migrants’
side. It lies on the citizens’ side.

Approaching Civic Integration

Most integration models combine assimilation measures with limited segre-
gation, that is multicultural integration. Assimilationist public policies empha-
sise a kind of weakly differentiated inclusion of immigrants in host societies.
In comparative terms, they facilitate naturalisation, though, understandably,
they do not secure, intrinsically, equal rights and opportunities for new citi-
zens. Multicultural policies, instead, provide a kind of differentiated inclusion
that turns host societies into conglomerates of immigrant sub-societies. The
United States and, more extremely, South Africa, are examples of both paths’ historical crossways.

In the U.S., from the end of the eighteenth century and up to the first half of the twentieth century, immigrants became citizens simply by acquiring the new nationality replacing their original citizenship (though, in practice, national unity was circumscribed by cultural issues). Gradually, however, the priority for immigration reversed, affected by new international migrations at the end of the Second World War. Integration was then conceived as a type of differentiated inclusion that retained a double identity for migrants, regarding home and destination countries (Lee 2006). This was a time of recognition of Asian-American and Hispanic identities and also, curiously, of the Afro-American identity (with special irony, its origins antedating the constitutional creation of the United States). Particularly in the case of African Americans, the proposed models of integration reveal all kinds of flaws, measurable in steadily high poverty rates over centuries. Access to education, housing, health care and jobs only of late reveal any meaningful changes (Wilson 2009: 25–61).

In many respects, Europe’s experience is not much different, as the history of non-integrated minorities, notably from the Roma to North African to Latin American communities, profusely illustrates. In either case, divides along gender, social and ethnic lines reveal the complex and contested politics of citizenship (Vogel and Moran 1991). Decades of integration programmes in Europe have produced ambivalent results, since the politics of citizenship essentially sets the boundaries of the political community: who are ‘we’ is unavoidably understood and explained against those who are excluded from membership (Benhabib 2002: 147–77). Drawing of civic territories implicitly acknowledges the political significance of non-citizens (Beckman and Erman 2012).

The real effects of accommodation policies need to be examined, accordingly, beyond mere shifts towards more progressive rhetoric, yet the loan from the social sciences vocabulary in migration policy may also be justified. Aimed at addressing endemic failings in integration plans, the discourse of accommodation entails a strategic recasting of immigration policies that combines treatments from a number of related policy areas. Usually, the term ‘accommodation’ is used in the context of tolerance debates, referring to arrangements or settlements among individuals and groups bearing opposing ways of life, ideas or religious beliefs (Parekh 2000: 196–238); or in the case of multi-ethnic and multinational societies struggling to cope with the conflicting rights of different peoples (Hannum 1990: 50–73). Early on, in the political science literature, ‘accommodation’ has described consociational models of democracy or strategies of coalition governments integrating representatives from opposite parties (Lijphart 1968: 103ff.).

Advancing a ‘two-way process of mutual accommodation’ means to reconceptualise the idea of integration by assuming it should engage immigrants and citizens in a process of cooperation. A recent policy document about the idea of accommodating cultural and religious practices in pluralist societies,
the 2008 so-called Bouchard-Taylor Report, gathers instructive insights. The report, whose context is Quebec, distinguishes between the practices of ‘reasonable accommodation’ and ‘concerted adjustment’. The former option, also named the ‘legal route’, implies recourse to legal norms and procedures to solve cultural conflicts. The latter option, the ‘citizen route’, means the search for solutions negotiated by both individuals and groups or communities (see Bouchard and Taylor 2008: 19 and 61–75, elaborating on the distinction between the legal and the citizen routes; and 268, regarding the co-chairs’ advice on immigrant integration).

Interestingly, even though their use of terms and problem areas are markedly different, the Bouchard-Taylor Report shares with the European Common Agenda for Integration a preference for negotiated procedures over legal regulations, which indicates a significant shift in the way of approaching civic conflicts. As the report argues, reasonable accommodation, concerted adjustment and the related option of ‘informal agreement’, are all parts of a sequence of combined ‘harmonization practices’ involving both citizens and immigrants.

The report understands ‘accommodation’ in a very different sense to the Common Agenda, namely as a one-way route mostly claimed by immigrants and religious minorities, but on the matter of concerted adjustment, it is much closer to the Common Agenda. The practices, indeed, are not separate: concerted adjustments may sometimes respond to legal obligations and not only to voluntarily self-imposed responsibilities by individuals and groups, whereas reasonable accommodation produced either by law enforcement or by court rulings usually brings forth imperfect settlements that need further legitimation through new negotiations and agreements. This is a salient lesson from the experience the report surveys, which can be helpful in recasting integration policies.

As it happens, adopting a two-way accommodation approach represents a qualitative change experimenting with different forms of immigrant integration. The idea that host societies have to address immigrants’ needs responds to humanitarian concerns as well as the moral, civic acknowledgment that social circumstances are contingent and, so, can be modified, in order to protect immigrants’ rights. This basic feature of civic solidarity, or in other words civic responsibility, is, doubtless, the noblest aspect of the accommodation approach. The world economic crisis has made the task even more urgent, hitting immigrants hard and accentuating their precarious working and welfare conditions (OECD 2012: 69–80).

Official indicators suggest prospects for immigrants are gloomier than ever before in past decades. As a consequence, former integration achievements are at risk, as demands for immigrant labour have become more selective, and entry and residence conditions more stringent, whereas immigration policies continue to prioritise policing and security measures over humanitarian and economic factors, entrenching a previously tentative policy pattern (Sasse
Citizens are acutely affected by the crisis, though not as severely as immigrants. However, their perception of losing welfare to immigrants, no longer confined to xenophobic discourses, is pervasive.

As surveyed by Eurobarometer, concern about immigration was on the increase by the autumn of 2010 (12%, three percentage points over the previous spring 2010 report; see Eurobarometer 2011: 20). After more than a year, at the spring 2012 report, immigration featured prominently in the fifth place (9%) of Europeans’ main concerns (Eurobarometer 2012: 11). The symptom of a deeper unease, it seriously undermines integration chances. Even if the belief proves misleading, the preoccupation is real, affecting its core challenge, the need to distribute, fairly, common, public resources between citizens and immigrants.

This is a tricky issue, since facts, even if stubborn, are not enough to countervail the mistaken assumption and its consequences. Western citizens’ wealth and welfare rely heavily on international migrants’ fiscal contribution, whereas the growth of welfare states, especially after the Second World War, is much owed to their successive waves (Castles and Kosack 2010: 25–30). Perceiving immigration as a problem, indeed, has social and political effects, which may explain why, to some extent, in practice, immigrants are treated kindly but, preferably, as permanent non-citizens. To try to spell out this belief, and its underlying bias, I shall resort to Andrew Oldenquist’s 1997 article ‘Who Are the “Rightful Owners of the State”?’ relating it to John Rawls’s sketchy but revealing comments on immigration. Independently of Oldenquist’s response to the question, which is relevant to nationalism debates, the query aids to understand the legal and political status of citizenship as built on a binding relation between individuals and the state.

To begin, the state has the legal obligation to protect the rights of citizens, while, in exchange for protection, citizens take on a number of legal obligations, and moral duties, towards the state. Unlike non-citizens, nationals have a preferential, contractual relation with the state, which furthermore implies civic responsibilities and legal obligations regarding the state’s public resources and services. Yet the performance of legal obligations and moral duties towards the state does not turn citizens into their private owners.

The language of ownership rights can express that singular relation, namely that ‘citizens are the rightful owners of the state’, but only figuratively, not in a legal, performative sense, for it presents in terms of private law what is really a matter of public law. A similar, more nuanced interpretation, suggested by Will Kymlicka, is criticised by Seyla Benhabib (2006: 165–9) for implicitly assuming an illiberal, ethnic notion of ‘political community’. A loss in status and welfare is no trivial issue but its underlying belief, which attributes the cause of such loss to immigrants, proceeds in an irrational mode that takes the relation between immigrants and citizens as a zero-sum game, dismissing immigrants’ real, vital, contribution to host societies.

The biggest problem, however, is not theoretical but practical, since immigration policies and laws, to some extent, at least, respond to public opinion.
As mentioned, surveys detect consistent, albeit cyclical, perception of immigration as a social problem. Arguably, one reason for this stems from citizens’ belief that losing status and welfare entails a loss of rights, specifically caused by the presence of immigrants. The claim is wrong but it influences policy-making.

To spell out its biased assumption, Enrica Rigo’s analysis of the ‘right to territory’, applied to citizenship, can be of help. Rigo (2008) cogently distinguishes between rights ‘to territory’ and rights ‘over territory’. Discrimination happens when the latter (which is, for citizens, a kind of exclusive endowment) extinguishes the possibility for immigrants to exercise the universal right to a territory.

In his essay, ‘The Law of Peoples’, John Rawls intriguingly argued that state boundaries are relevant to the understanding of the principles of justice. More precisely, he argues, ‘a people has, at least, a qualified right to limit immigration’ (Rawls 1999: § 4.3, 39, n. 48). This is a crucial point. Rawls further elaborates it by discussing the idea of a world ‘Society of well-ordered Peoples’, justifying the duty of liberal societies ‘to assist burdened societies’ (Rawls 1999: § 15.1, 106). A right that limits immigration is what usually motivates immigration and naturalisation laws and policies. The decisive balance from a liberal point of view, which would still justify it as a ‘qualified right’, lies at the discrimination test, which provides that the effects of immigration laws and policies do not trump the rights of migrants.

As for Rawls’s claim, according to which liberal societies have a duty ‘to assist burdened societies’, this is not just a cosmopolitan aim but an action principle adopted by international law whose developments bear on immigration. Indeed, over time, immigration policies have been considered a matter of international politics, and so have been accordingly devised in the domain of international cooperation. Challenges of global migrations have led to the development of various schemes of international assistance, alongside traditional state-centred, citizenship-based policies. It has been within this context, along with other reasons, that the rights of migrants have been partially recast in light of the international law of human rights. States are obliged not only to protect the rights of their citizens but they are also positively obliged, not only in terms of a moral duty (Hovdal-Moan 2012), to protect the rights of non-nationals who happen to be in their territories, regardless of legal status (see the various case studies derived from such acknowledgment in Lillich and Hannum 1995: 14–88).

States provide public resources and services that, by definition, unless they are privatised, individuals can use but cannot own. A rather imperfect analogy of ownership rights applicable to this case could be the Roman law-inspired usufructuary right to a state’s public resources, which is not a right to own them privately but to a share in their use. Hence a much qualified notion of ‘ownership’ would mean a state, and by extension its public resources, cannot be exclusively owned by its citizens, even if nationals bear a ‘qualified right’
to them and, thus, to regulating immigration (otherwise, all immigration policies would be illegitimate).

From a liberal perspective, this qualified right should then be open to shared, distributive ownership by citizens and immigrants. Citizenship is a frontier-generating, and frontier-laden, concept: the politics of citizenship not only sets the boundaries of the political community, and, hence, the distance between immigrants and citizens, but, it also creates new divisions along social, gender and ethnic lines, which, in turn, generate new forms of discrimination. Admitting degrees of civic membership, the relevant point is how the civic gradation from non-citizens to citizens is legally regulated and, especially, how it passes the discrimination test, meaning how it respects the rights of migrants when they cross the territorial boundaries and when they live within the other inner boundaries of the political community.

Concluding Remarks

This article, on aspects of migrants’ civic conditions, critically examines the consequences of recent immigration laws and policies in the European Union regarding integration. It questions the lack of proportionality existing between administrative conditions, for legal residence and nationality, and their expected outcome, namely integration, claiming that such requirements impose an unfair burden on migrants that retards this intended effect. Moreover, experience of non-nationals living in Europe suggests that integration challenges remain well after naturalisation is achieved. The article has argued for a more liberal policy that aims to refocus attention towards protection of the rights of migrants and naturalised citizens.

A distressing proof of unequal granting of rights to legal residents and, then, to naturalised citizens is that in both cases such rights are reversible. It is the reversibility of immigrants’ rights that, doubtless, most explicitly reveals their ‘inherent vulnerability’ (Joppke 2010: 73–110), accentuated by effects of successive restrictive immigration policies; and, in no lesser degree, as the case of North-African countries attests, by the mismatch between the European Union immigration policy guidelines and its member states’ implementation strategies. Such obstacles persist, nonetheless, despite evidence from Western countries showing that facilitating naturalisation vastly improves prospects of integration (Liebig and von Haaren 2011).

Furthermore, the unequal treatment also reveals a disputable understanding of immigrants’ moral condition. Their freedom is inconsistently assessed when they are treated as legally responsible agents, but as ‘would-be’ citizens in politics, or second-class citizens after naturalisation. The fact is, in most European countries, immigrants’ political participation is reduced to consultative bodies in the best of the cases, while chances only improve for long-term residents in local politics (Huddleston et al. 2011: 18–19). This is no spontaneous
fact as it can presumably be a reaction to civic integration’s scant prospects, only adding, in many cases, to policies’ discriminatory effects. In this sense, the article has argued that protection given to immigrants springs from simple humanitarian motives but should also eventually encourage a rights-based acknowledgment of their civic condition.8

It might seem, all in all, that, at this moment, the long road that immigrants travel in their search for improved life chances ends only when they become, the few fortunate of them, citizens of new states. Ironically, that is not the general case. Even though citizenship means for immigrants the highest imaginable legal protection that individuals can reach, it also levels their constitutional rights with those of citizens, forsaking many real opportunities. Integration officially succeeds at this stage (Huddleston et al. 2011: 24–5) but, the article has claimed, it should still face the discrimination test, concerning effects of immigration policies and laws. It is no lesser irony that immigrants’ longing for citizenship should end precisely where citizens’ cosmopolitan aspirations begin.

True, nationality means for immigrants an enabling status, since it grants access to rights and this happens under almost non-reversible conditions. Yet, even after immigrants become citizens, the full exercise of political rights is still a challenge. New citizens usually access just part of the full range of civic options to which they are entitled. Elocuently, in advanced societies they explore the territory citizens leave upon their arrival. Adapting from Reinhart Koselleck’s metahistorical categories (Koselleck 1979: 352–59), immigrants’ newly granted ‘space of experience’ (Erfahrungsraum) is in a substantial way the space of rights that citizens take for granted. Conversely, if citizenship prospects outline immigrants’ ‘horizon of expectation’ (Erwartungshorizont), for citizens, their horizon also extends in the direction of cosmopolitan citizenship. Between them, however, there is no clear continuity.

Should there be doubts around this hypothesis, suffice it to bear in mind how, for most naturalised citizens, the stigma of their origins, be they revealed by their skin colour or language accent, remains a permanent discriminatory burden, well after naturalisation, especially visible in the labour market, but, also, in politics and at the global space of cosmopolitan mobility. A liberal approach to immigrant integration should not cease with the granting of citizenship. It should face afterward the urgent task of protecting new citizens from the kinds of discrimination that impair their rights in practice, to overcome the last frontier separating immigrants from citizens.

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Notes

1. A most useful resource is the Migration Integration Policy Index, which measures migrant integration policies in thirty-one countries in Europe and North America, covering 148 indicators from seven policy areas (labour market mobility, family reunion, education, political participation, long-term residence, access to nationality and anti-discrimination). First launched in 2005, every new edition revises the methodology and widens the chronological, comparative perspective. For outcomes from its third edition (MIPEX III), see Huddleston et al. (2011).

2. I assume the meaning of ‘chance’ in the Weberian sense, that is as stakes open both to success and failure. See Dahrendorf (1979: 124–7); and Palonen (2010: 71–93).


4. These account for roughly half of the two hundred states of the world, inhabited by about three quarters of the world population.


References


Migrant Care Workers in Israel
• • • Between Family, Market, and State

Hila Shamir

ABSTRACT: In the early 1990s, Israel opened its gates to migrant guest workers who were invited to work, on a temporary basis, in the agriculture, construction, and in-home care sectors. The in-home care sector developed quickly during those years due to the introduction of migrant workers coupled with the creation of a new welfare state benefit: a long-term care benefit that subsidized the employment of in-home care workers to assist dependent elderly and disabled Israelis. This article examines the legal and public policy ramifications of the transformation of Israeli families caused by the influx of migrant care workers into Israeli homes. Exploring the relationship between welfare, immigration, and employment laws, on the one hand, and marketized and non-marketized care relationships, on the other, it reveals the intimate links between public policy, ‘private’ families, and defamilialization processes.

KEYWORDS: care work, defamilialization, elderly, employment law, family, immigration, transnational families, welfare state

In the late 1980s and early 1990s, a series of policy decisions and legal reforms changed the face of care provision for the dependent elderly in Israel. The change began with the introduction of a Long-Term Care Benefit (Gimlat Siuud, hereinafter Care Benefit) into Israel’s social security system. It continued with a policy decision to issue guest worker visas to migrant workers to serve as in-home care workers for the elderly and disabled,¹ and with the regulation of migrant workers’ working conditions and life in Israel. The result has deeply affected the Israeli family: familial relations have changed due to the new availability of affordable, round-the-clock in-home care provision for the elderly, as have expectations in regard to caregiving for the elderly, intergenerational living arrangements,
and the gendered division of care work in the Israeli household. These policy choices and legal changes have also changed the interaction between the institutions of the state, the family, and the market in Israel, as well as the role of each institution in the provision of individual care. This article analyzes the ways in which legal mechanisms took part in shaping these changes in the Israeli family and in care provision.

The article examines three areas of law that have been pivotal to the reform of care for the elderly in Israel: welfare, employment, and immigration. These fields are the essential building blocks of care-related policies in globalizing economies.\(^2\) It is also these areas in the regulatory framework where reform can occur so as to alter meaningfully distributional inequalities in care markets. Welfare law shapes the basic institutional divisions of labor and determines whether the bulk of care will be provided by the state, the market, the family, or a mix of the three. Employment law defines central factors in the design of the care services market. It regulates the distribution of the costs of care between employers and employees, thereby shaping families’ considerations in turning to the market to purchase care services. It also influences the employment conditions, vulnerability, and bargaining power of the care workers themselves. Finally, immigration law affects migrant worker vulnerability as well as the cost of care services.

The Israeli case shows that central aspects of decisions about familial care provision are structured by these three regulatory fields and, moreover, that distributive outcomes in one area of law cannot be understood without reference to the bargaining endowment structure created by the other two areas of law. Each of the following three sections of this article brings to the fore one of these legal fields while exposing how the distributive outcomes are determined by the confluence of one set of legal rules with ‘background rules’ (Hale 1923). The final part discusses the overall effect of this legal regime, focusing on traditional familial relationships (mostly parent-child) and adding to the picture the in-home care worker as a main actor. The care worker is discussed as an important figure who straddles family and market and is pivotal for understanding household structure and familial or familial-like care dynamics in Israel today.

This article therefore offers a cross-sectional view of the legal system that brings together the different norms regulating care-related practices and exposes how legal regulation—in combination with social and economic forces—shapes care markets and distributes goods among the many stakeholders that participate in them. The unfolding cross-section of the various fields of law that are implicated presents a complex grid of legal regulation that is shaping and transforming families, which are often perceived as un-, de-, or under-regulated.
The forces of globalization and privatization, as well as social changes regarding individualization, have all played a part in Israel’s changing policy in relation to old-age care and in the creation and implementation of Israel’s Care Benefit. The Care Benefit, which was added to Israel’s Social Security Act in the late 1980s (Shtasman 2001), was uncharacteristic of welfare developments in Israel at the time. During the 1980s, Israel began a partial transformation from a social-democratic to a liberal welfare state, a process characterized by waves of privatization and welfare state retrenchment (Doron 2003). The expansion of welfare to include a Care Benefit was a response to the rapid aging of the Israeli population, expressing a clear preference for care of the elderly in the community rather than in an institutional setting. This welfare state expansion and recalibration was not, however, wholly an anomaly, since its design incorporated elements of privatization that limited state responsibility for the services provided and the employment of care workers.

After vigorous policy debates, it was decided that the National Insurance Institute (NII) would introduce a new Care Benefit that would provide ‘in kind’ services to those found eligible (Shtasman 2001). Eligibility is determined by a triple test: age (whereby a recipient must be of mandatory retirement age), income (relatively generously assessed), and dependency level. An applicant who is found eligible receives ‘in kind’ provision of care, chosen from a package of services that includes, for example, in-home care, adult diapers, or laundry services.

The main service provided by the Care Benefit is in-home care (Natan 2011). Depending on the level of financial and physical needs identified by the eligibility tests, a recipient can be found to qualify for between 5 and 18 hours of in-home care per week. Once eligibility is determined, the state does not itself provide the service. Because the government was reluctant to employ the caregivers or publicly administer the provision of care workers, it encouraged the establishment of a quasi-market, in which care-providing agencies are chosen by means of a tender and from which the elderly can obtain the care hours that they are entitled to (Ajzenstadt and Rosenhek 2000).

The dependency test serves another purpose besides determining Care Benefit eligibility. Both a Care Benefit recipient and an applicant who passes the dependency test—regardless of his or her income—are eligible to apply for a permit to employ a migrant care worker. Once the application is approved, the recipient must apply to the Ministry of Internal Affairs, which regulates immigration matters, and to a private placement agency for care workers (a care providing agency), which processes the
request for a migrant care worker and supplies the service. If the person in need of care passes the dependency test but not the income test, she or he has to pay the full cost of employing a care worker, but the option of hiring a migrant worker significantly reduces her costs. If a person in need of care is found eligible for the benefit, part of the care worker’s wage is paid with the Care Benefit. The benefit, however, does not come directly to either the worker or the benefit recipient; rather, it is paid to the care-providing agency, which then pays the worker’s wage.

If a live-in worker is employed full-time by the elderly, thus exceeding the care hour allocation of the Care Benefit, the benefit’s recipient pays the care-providing agency for the extra service hours. However, employing a live-in migrant care worker, under the current system, does not require increasing the worker’s wage by a comparable ratio to the increase in work hours. Although employers are obliged to comply with almost all protective employment legislation (except overtime compensation, as will be discussed below), including minimum wage, they often end up paying less because they can legally deduct up to 25 percent of the worker’s wages to cover costs such as housing, health insurance, and other expenses (Kav LaOved 2010; Natan 2011). As a result, the wage paid to a migrant care worker employed full-time in an elderly person’s home, above the Care Benefit, is an amount that even upper-tier low-income households can afford when they are assisted by the Care Benefit.

In 2009, 17.7 percent of people over the age of 70 in Israel received the Care Benefit, compared to only 5.5 percent in 1990, and practically all of them used it to purchase live-in care (Brodsky et al. 2004; Natan 2011). The new reliance on in-home care by a care worker rather than by a family member both reflects and induces profound changes in intergenerational relationships in Israel. It has transformed options, expectations, and care preferences in relation to old-age care, thus reshaping familial relationships.

**Employment Law**

Employment law also plays an important role in shaping familial care provision decisions. Through family leave legislation, hours of work laws, anti-discrimination law, wage regulation, and the regulation of part-time work, employment law shapes income level, as well as the time a working adult can spare for familial care without risking his or her job. For example, in Israel workers are entitled to take sick leave for their own illness as well as that of a spouse, a child, or a parent. Familial leave days are subtracted from the worker’s overall sick leave days, and there is a cap of six to eight days for each type of family leave. Such leave
therefore offers some relief to workers with familial care obligations, but it cannot substitute for round-the-clock care when needed for elderly and other dependents.

Another, often less emphasized way in which employment law shapes care markets is through its regulation of care work itself. This discussion will focus on the way that the exclusion of care workers from some employment protections makes care work more affordable to households purchasing care services (ILO 2010; Mundlak 2011).

In-home care workers in Israel, whether residents or migrants, are covered by every article of protective employment legislation except one: overtime compensation (Mundlak and Shamir 2011). The partial exclusion from overtime compensation in Israel is the result of the Labor Court interpretation and application of Article 30 of the 1951 Hours of Work and Rest Law (HWR), as affirmed by the High Court of Justice (HCJ).

Court opinions dealing with live-in care workers’ entitlement to overtime pay have revolved mostly around whether live-in care workers fall under one of the general exceptions included in Article 30 of the HWR: the personal confidence exception or the supervision exception. After several years of shifts in the case law on the question of the application of the HWR Law to care workers, the matter reached an enlarged nine-justice panel of the HCJ. While the interpretation of Article 30 of the HWR may appear to be a technical problem, its underlying concern is anything but technical: it affects the cost of care services and requires the resolution of a conflict between two vulnerable groups. Recognizing the rights of migrant care workers to full compensation may end up harming another vulnerable group—namely, the elderly, the disabled, and their families who are in desperate need of affordable care (Mundlak and Shamir 2008).

The HCJ decided (by majority vote) not to resolve the conflicts in Labor Court rulings on the subject; instead, it deferred to an earlier three-justice decision that excluded in-home care workers from overtime pay. The court did urge the legislature to create a suitable legislative framework for the regulation of care workers’ working hours. However, given migrant care workers’ lack of electoral power, the grave need of the elderly and disabled for care solutions (as well as their ability to lobby effectively in pursuit of their interests), and the private care-providing agencies’ interest in maintaining the status quo, it seems unlikely that the Knesset will indeed intervene to limit the working hours or increase compensation for care work.

Due to the exclusion of care workers from overtime pay, a migrant care workers’ current wage does not substantially exceed the rates of the Care Benefit, thus ensuring that live-in care remains affordable to Israelis across most income levels.
Migrant Care Workers in Israel

Immigration Law

Another aspect of the Israeli legal system that is partly responsible for the increasing affordability and popularity of in-home care work by migrant workers is the regulation of the migrants’ work and life in Israel through immigration law.

Labor migration was introduced into Israel in 1993. Following the outbreak in 1987 of the first Palestinian uprising in the Occupied Territories (the First Intifada) and the Oslo Accord signed in 1993, Palestinians were no longer permitted to enter Israel for work purposes. The ‘sealing off’ of the Occupied Territories, which was justified by security considerations, created a shortage in the Israeli secondary labor market (Farsakh 2005). Permits to employ migrant workers are limited to certain industries, namely, construction, agriculture, and care work.

While the demand for workers in construction and agriculture was the direct result of the sealing off of the Occupied Territories, the same was not true of care work. Palestinians were not previously employed as in-home care workers, nor was there, in fact, a thriving care market (Semyonov et al. 2002). The guest worker regime in the care sector advanced in tandem with the developments in the Israeli welfare state described earlier, namely, the introduction of the Care Benefit (Schmid 2005). To ensure coordination between immigration and welfare policy, it was determined that there will be no administrative cap on the number of migrant care workers entering Israel. Rather, the entrance of workers is to be dictated by the need for care.

The growth in the number of migrant care workers coming into Israel is significant. Data are imprecise, but it is estimated that in 2010 there were approximately 54,000 migrant care workers, more than seven times their number in 1996 (Kav LaOved 2010). A governmental committee estimates that migrant workers account for 50 percent of the workforce in the care sector (Ministry of Finance 2007). Migrant care workers arrive mostly from the Philippines, Nepal, India, Sri Lanka, and Eastern Europe.

The employment of migrant workers is regulated by the Foreign Workers (Prohibition on Unlawful Employment and Assurance of Fair Conditions) Law 1991, which foresaw the mass entry of migrant workers and was enacted shortly before it. The law was concerned with the problem of avoiding undocumented (illegal) work and securing the state’s control over the presence of migrant workers. The law was initially confined to sanctions against employers who employ undocumented workers, but it was amended in 2000 to include a list of employers’ obligations to the migrant workers, granting workers the right to decent accommodations, health insurance, and a written employment contract in the worker’s native language.
This regulation allows for minimal direct involvement of the state in the workers’ living and working conditions by assigning employers the responsibility for providing these social services. In the face of very weak enforcement of their obligations, employers who seek to reduce costs often do not comply with the requirements. Accordingly, in reality, few migrant workers enjoy the full range of the rights theoretically extended to them by law (Kav LaOved 2006).

Despite the formally equal applicability of employment rights to care workers, the main obstacle to realizing these rights has emerged in the seam between labor law and migration law. The most glaring example is the ‘binding arrangement’ imposed on all migrant workers (Kemp 2010), according to which a worker’s visa is granted only for working with a particular employer. Hence, termination of the employment relationship—for whatever reason—entails a violation of the terms of the visa, driving the worker into an undocumented (illegal) status. Although migrant workers are often considered weak in terms of labor market power, they are in large demand, and this is particularly true with regard to care workers. The binding arrangement provision sought to inhibit labor market mobility and to suppress the migrant workers’ market power, making them reluctant to resist employers’ exploitative behavior for fear of losing their visas (Ellman and Laacher 2003). Its unintended result was the creation of an incentive to work in an undocumented fashion, thus avoiding the restrictions imposed by the legal regime (Shamir 2011).

In 2006, the HCJ responded to a constitutional challenge to the binding arrangement, deeming it void as a violation of human rights, and directed the legislative and executive branches to identify alternative measures. Since then, the state has gradually replaced the binding arrangement in some sectors. In the care sector, it was determined that migrant workers can be employed only through licensed private employment bureaus (hereinafter PEBs). Both the care worker and the person holding the permit to employ a care worker must register with one of a few dozen PEBs. The worker may choose to move from one PEB to another. In other words, the binding system of the past has been abolished and replaced with a more flexible type of sectoral binding (Kemp 2010).

After the move to a sectoral binding arrangement, organizations for the elderly lobbied for a stricter binding arrangement, arguing that the labor mobility facilitated by the new arrangement leads to high employee turnover and the abandonment of people in need of care by their caregivers. As a result, in 2011 the Entry into Israel Law was amended to limit care workers’ labor market mobility. The amendment permits the passage of regulation limiting the number of employer changes a care worker can request during his or her visa period, as well as regulation limiting changes
to employers within a certain geographical area. At the time of writing, the regulation had not yet been introduced.

While in other industries the guest worker visa is limited to five years, after which the employer is responsible for the worker’s departure from Israel, care workers can apply for almost unlimited extensions of their visas. An extension can be given if a social worker has determined that the worker’s departure will cause severe harm to the person in her or his care. As a result, some migrant care workers, especially those taking care of disabled children, can remain in Israel legally for decades yet not gain any legal rights toward residency or citizenship. Nevertheless, measures are taken to ensure that their stay in Israel is temporary. One such action is the adoption of a ‘no family’ policy toward migrant guest workers (Ben-Yisrael and Feller 2006). Migrant workers can enter the country on a guest worker visa only if they do not have a close family member (spouse, parent, or child) who is also a guest worker in Israel. Similarly, if two migrant workers get married in Israel, one of them is required to leave the country, and, until recently, if a female migrant worker gave birth to a child, she had to leave the country with the newborn within 12 weeks of the birth and was allowed to return to Israel for the remaining period of her visa only if she returned alone. Furthermore, since 2010, new regulations stipulate that all migrant care workers must work in a live-in arrangement. These policies are intended to ensure that migrant workers do not settle in Israel and aim to minimize the social services that the population of documented migrant workers requires (Shamir 2011).

Another important characteristic of the Israeli guest worker arrangement is that most workers incur considerable debt in order to travel to Israel. Israeli PEBs use recruiters in the countries of origin that often promise workers high wages and, in return, demand high fees for their services while providing high-interest loans to cover workers’ travel expenses (Raijman and Kushnirovich 2012). A survey conducted by the Israeli NGO Kav LaOved showed that migrant care workers pay their recruiters an average fee of approximately $6,000, which is equivalent to seven months of the average salary they will earn in Israel and is seven times the amount permitted by Israeli law (Kav LaOved 2010). Due to the excessive recruitment fees, even when workers are paid their full wage, repayment of their debt may take several months, putting them in a situation akin to debt bondage and reducing their ability to leave their employer without harsh economic consequences.

The combination of all these policies creates plenty of incentives for migrant workers to violate the conditions of their visa and remain in Israel illegally. When they become undocumented, migrant workers free themselves from the state’s regulatory mechanism, thereby gaining access to an increased labor market and greater social mobility, but they also become
more vulnerable to exploitation (Rosenhek 2000). Accordingly, an inadvertent result of the care worker visa regime has been the creation of another flourishing care market in Israel, consisting of low-wage, undocumented nannies and domestic workers who serve the Israeli middle class.

Discussion: Care Work, Families, and Defamilialization

The combined effect of the welfare, employment, and immigration laws has significantly contributed to the change in the nature of intergenerational care expectations and solidarity in Israeli society. A 2010 report suggests that if current trends and policies persist, by 2025 every fifth elderly person in Israel will be aided by a migrant care worker (Eckstein et al. 2010). Indeed, currently many dependent elderly people in Israel, across all income levels, can expect to be cared for by a migrant worker who lives with them in their own home rather than be taken in by their children or moved to a formal care institution (Mazuz 2008). However, research suggests that this does not reduce intergenerational solidarity or weaken family ties (Lowenstein and Katz 2010). Family members of elderly people in need of care continue to play an important (and time-consuming) role in their parents’ care.

What has changed dramatically is the type of care provided by family members. After employing a care worker, family members no longer engage in menial tasks that mainly involve the elderly person’s physical needs. Rather, theirs has become a more administrative as well as spiritual role (Roberts 1997), providing social and emotional support and handling bureaucratic aspects of the elderly person’s life (Iecovitch 2011). While this phenomenon is significantly more prevalent among the Jewish population in Israel, it is becoming increasingly evident among Israel’s Arab citizens as well (Khalaila 2008).

The intimate involvement in every physical aspect of an elderly person’s life in some cases makes care workers much more than ‘mere’ workers and allows them to develop a quasi-familial relationship with their employers (Ayalon 2009; Mazuz 2008), a phenomenon known as ‘false kinship’ (Cox and Narula 2003). Seeing the worker as ‘one of the family’ at times leads to close and loving relationships. But it may also entrench unequal power relations and disarm contractual and legal claims made by the worker (Lutz 2008a; Parreñas 2001).

Israel’s policies have affected the level of care that families can provide (i.e., buy) for dependent family members, as well as the level of direct one-on-one care that they can now avoid. While it is impossible to show a direct causal relation, it can generally be speculated that with the entrance of cheap unskilled labor into the country, Israeli women’s level of (full-time) market participation has increased, as well as, presumably, their
leisure time. This regime, however, does not necessarily imply greater gender equality (Shamir 2010). The gendered division of labor remains largely intact, given the fact that the majority of migrant care workers are women and that women in Israeli families are still regarded as responsible for managing dependent family members’ care (Ron 2009).

While the Israeli Care Benefit increased women’s ‘defamilialization’—that is, it decreased their responsibility for direct care provision to family members as well as their dependency on the family for economic survival (Esping-Andersen 1999)—it had an unintended consequence of particular significance to the middle class. An inadvertent result of the care worker visa regime was the creation of another flourishing care market in Israel, consisting of low-wage, undocumented nannies and domestic workers. Due to the lowered costs of domestic labor, many middle-class families can now afford to pay a migrant worker to do domestic work or care for their children. As for the migrant workers, such employment opportunities often provide them a better income and greater flexibility than working legally as in-home aides. The unpredicted consequence of the migrant care worker visa policy, then, has been an intensified defamilialization of the middle class through the emergence of a supply of cheap labor for the provision of commodified forms of family and household care.

In addition to its possible gender equality effects, the Israeli case includes significant class implications as well, since the cost of care has been lowered for families across income levels. The cost of care to low-income families is directly subsidized by the Care Benefit, which often ends up paying for more than half the wage of a full-time migrant care worker. The cost of care work is also indirectly ‘subsidized’ for those who do not pass the income test but nevertheless receive an employment permit for a migrant worker after passing the dependency test. These high-income and middle-income families are subsidized, in effect, due to the availability of cheap labor. As a result, families across most income levels benefit from the reliance on migrant labor, which is cheaper than Israeli labor due to, among other factors, the exclusion of migrant workers from overtime pay. Even though the poorest families still cannot afford such care (Iecovitch 2011), it is clear that live-in care is affordable to lower-income families. One indication of its affordability is the widespread presence of care workers even in poor neighborhoods and in the economically underdeveloped periphery of Israel (Mazuz 2013). The result is greater equality among the Israeli citizenry.

While the increased defamilialization of Israeli women can be seen as an achievement of Israel’s care policy, the effect on care workers seems to be a case in which defamilialization has run amok. As discussed above, Israel maintains an official defamilializing approach as part of its guest worker regime. Workers enter Israel on the condition that they leave their
families behind, and they are not allowed to establish families while living in Israel. Thus, the immigration policy attempts to prevent the possibility of the settlement of migrant workers. Furthermore, unlike migrant workers in other labor sectors whose migration to Israel is truly temporary, migrant care workers can potentially stay in Israel legally for decades. During these long years, the family lives of many migrant workers become transnational. A ‘global care chain’ develops in which women migrate to the receiving countries, leaving their own children and dependents in the care of unpaid family members or paid care workers in the sending countries (Hochschild 2000). The research of sociologist Rhacel Salazar Parreñas (2005) shows that many transnational families suffer great difficulties and pay a harsh price as a result of these defamilializing policies.12

Undocumented migrant workers, on the other hand, are ‘under the radar’ and therefore not controllable in the same way as documented migrants. Despite Israel’s vigorous attempts to prevent the settlement of migrant workers, small migrant communities have been established, introducing new needs related to education, health care, and other social services (Raijman et al. 2006; Rosenhek 2000). While the state generally refuses to acknowledge these families (a child born in Israel receives his parents’ status), the reality in the field has led some municipalities (most notably Tel Aviv) and NGOs to recognize them and provide social services, including schooling, health care, and family services (Kemp and Raijman 2008). Thus, undocumented migrants experience weaker defamilialization than their documented counterparts.

Furthermore, in 2006 and 2009, as part of sweeping campaigns to deport undocumented migrant workers, Israel operated amnesty programs for children of migrant workers who had been born in Israel and their families (Mundlak and Shamir 2013). Although limited in scope and highly restrictive, the amnesty programs led to the naturalization of approximately 1,300 children and their families. Thus, some migrant workers entered into an unprecedented process of full inclusion as permanent residents—and eventually citizens—of Israel.

According to Israeli employment law, migrant care workers in Israel theoretically enjoy working conditions on a par with those of Israeli workers. The main formal difference between a migrant and a domestic care worker would appear to be the freedom to switch occupations and employers, which is limited for migrants. However, this single difference is crucial in determining migrant care workers’ opportunities in the Israeli labor market, their level of dependence on employers, and, as a result, their bargaining power and ability to improve their working conditions. Both documented and undocumented workers share this vulnerability: documented workers experience it due to binding arrangements and debt, while
undocumented workers experience it due to the threat of deportation that looms over their relationships, including those with their employers. As a result, both groups are in a weak position to bargain for better conditions and rarely take action to enforce their rights (Garcia 2012).

In addition, the employment structure of migrant workers in Israel makes the enforcement of such rights difficult. The protections that are granted to migrant workers are structured in a ‘privatized’ way. The state itself is neither a party to the employment nor directly responsible for seeing that the rights of migrant workers are guaranteed. Instead, the regulation, supervision, and provision are delegated to the employers and to the PEBs and care-providing agencies. Thus, the state avoids direct accountability by distancing itself from the employment relationship via the use of PEBs and care agencies, by positioning the elderly person as the employer, and by structuring the provision of social services, such as housing and health insurance, as the employer’s exclusive responsibility (Rosenhek 2000).

This employment structure also makes any unionization efforts almost impossible due to the difficulty of designating an employer that might be a viable counterpart in collective bargaining. Furthermore, the workers themselves express resistance to taking action against the person they care for (e.g., striking for a day) because of their sense of responsibility, dependency, or close familial-like relationship with the person in their care (Mundlak and Shamir, forthcoming).

Finally, the exclusion of migrant care workers from overtime compensation puts them at the additional risk of exploitative working conditions because the employer can expect their availability to work around the clock. Care workers are legally entitled to one day of rest a week, but other than that there is no limit on their hours of work. A survey of migrant care workers found that they are employed on average 12.7 hours per day, and that most of them remain on call throughout the night (Kav LaOved 2010). The reluctance to limit the care workers’ working hours may also be explained by their family-like role and by a ‘commodification anxiety’ in relation to marketizing and regulating in-home care activities fully, even when undertaken by paid workers (Mundlak and Shamir 2011).

The Israeli case is an example of a state policy that has managed, through a combination of welfare law, employment law, and immigration law, to create a relatively egalitarian apparatus for insiders (residents and citizens), whereby the middle class, as well as some low-income citizens, can purchase in-home care, but at the cost of employing a non-resident and therefore more vulnerable, unorganized, and often illegal workforce. It seems that those who bear the main cost of (or provide the subsidy for) equality are the ‘outsiders’ who provide the services and whose interests are rarely taken into account in the design of social policy.
Conclusion

Whether migrant care workers benefit from or overpay for the Israeli citizenry’s equality with regard to old-age care may be debatable, but what is clear is the effect of the availability of migrant care workers on Israeli families and its deep defamilializing effect on care workers and their families. The policy decisions in these three areas of law have reached deep into families and relationships and have shaped them in new ways: changing the patterns and roles of familial caregivers, transforming expectations about old-age care and intergenerational living, reducing expectations of menial care by spouses and children of frail partners or parents, and freeing family members (mostly women) who previously provided menial care to participate more fully in the labor market. This care arrangement, which combines state responsibility for care with private market actors and familial caregiving, leads to the creation of close and intimate—perhaps even familial—relationships between men and women from the developing world who work in Israel and the aged Israeli citizenry. Yet these policies also create a work environment in which the worker is dependent and vulnerable, thus facilitating unequal bargaining positions that lead to some abuse and exploitation.

The combined analysis of the three areas of law shows the vital connection between legal policy and familial care. It is impossible to understand familial intergenerational expectations, dependencies, and practices in Israel without recognizing the effects of welfare, employment, and immigration law on family structures, relationships, and living arrangements. Law turns out not only to arrange state power vis-à-vis its subjects, but also to facilitate the redefinition of individual and community spaces and commitments, with diverse and often unexpected distributive results along axes of gender, class, age, and status.

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NOTES

1. Migrant care workers can be issued a visa to work in Israel to take care of elderly or disabled people. In this article, I will focus on their role in relation to elder care alone because the case of elder care best exemplifies the confluence of the three legal areas—migration, welfare, and employment—in shaping familial care practices.

2. A fourth relevant area of law that is not covered in this article is family law. Family law is important in determining levels of familialization because it governs the entitlements and obligations of the parties within a marriage or marriage-like relationship.

3. Employing a live-in care worker is affordable for many Israeli families, even when the elderly person in need does not pass the income test and is therefore not eligible for the Care Benefit, as well as in cases where the Care Benefit on its own may not cover the full cost of round-the-clock employment. This is due to the widespread availability of privately purchased Long-Term Care Insurance, which covers the additional cost. Over 60 percent of the population is covered by such privately purchased insurance policies, which are common because they are sold via the main public health insurance providers (Natan 2011).

4. As of this writing, the monthly minimum wage is NIS 4,300/month. For a recipient who is eligible for 18 hours of weekly care, the NII transfers to the care agencies NIS 3,469. Accordingly, even if the worker is paid minimum wage without deductions, the elderly or her family has to pay only an additional NIS 600 per month (approximately $150 at current rates), a sum that many Israeli families can afford.


9. See Ministry of Interior, Procedure for Treatment of a Pregnant Migrant Worker and a Migrant Worker That Gave Birth in Israel, Procedure No. 5.3.0023 (1 August 2009). This procedure was found to be unconstitutional in a recent HCJ decision. See HCJ 11437/05 Kav LaOved v. Minister of the Interior, IsrSC [in Hebrew] (2011). The court ordered the government to establish a new and constitutional procedure, and a new procedure has since been introduced. See Ministry of Interior, Procedure for Treatment of a Pregnant Migrant Worker and a Migrant That Gave Birth in Israel, Procedure No. 5.3.0023 (20 May 2013). The procedure permits the migrant worker and her child to remain in Israel until the end of her visa, if she can continue to work as she did prior to her pregnancy. The procedure emphasizes that this permission does not grant the migrant worker or her baby any additional rights beyond those attached to the worker’s temporary status.

10. See the Ministry of Interior’s Population, Immigration, and Border Authority, Criteria for Eligibility for Employing Foreign Workers (January 2013), available at

11. In 2011, 73 percent of women aged 25–54 participated in the labor market, a distinct increase from the low 60 percent rates of the 1980s (see CBS 2012). Naturally, migrant care work is not the sole reason for the increase, but it can definitely be seen as a contributing factor.

12. Parreñas (2005) also shows that despite, or due to, these challenges, transnational families develop alternative perceptions of good motherhood that include providing for their families and offering them a better economic future. Parreñas further suggest that, notwithstanding the difficulties, the emotional bond between mothers and their children can remain strong, even if transformed, after migration.

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En-Gendering Insecurities: The Case of the Migration Policy Regime in Thailand

Philippe Doneys

Abstract

The paper examines the migration policy regime in Thailand using a human security lens. It suggests that insecurities experienced by migrants are partly caused or exacerbated by a migration policy regime, consisting of migration laws and regulations and non-migration related policies and programs, that pushes migrants into irregular forms of mobility and insecure employment options. These effects are worse for women migrants who have fewer resources to access legal channels while they are relegated to insecure employment in the reproductive or informal sectors. Using a gender and human security analysis, therefore, reveals how the migration policy regime, often informed by a restrictive national security approach, can clash with the human security needs of migrants by creating a large pool of unprotected irregular migrants with women occupying the most vulnerable forms of employment. In conclusion, it is suggested that this ‘en-gendering’ of human insecurities could be overcome if gender equality was designed into policies and guided their implementation.

Keywords: migration policies; human security; gender; human trafficking; domestic work; informal work; Thailand

Introduction

Migration policies in Southeast Asia have often been described as shaped by narrow national security interests (Kaur and Metcalfe 2006; Thongyou 2009; Wongboonsin 2003). This point of view holds that migration management is essentially reduced to a process of control and monitoring that does not properly ensure or protect the socio-economic needs of migrants. The concept of human security expands upon an approach purely based on national security by switching the focus from the State to the people, and is therefore an adequate concept to discern how vulnerabilities experienced by migrants, and in particular women migrants, lead to further insecurity. Much of the literature on gender, migration, and human security has established this link between vulnerability and insecurity (Hoogensen 2005; Summerfield 2007), or focused more specifically on trafficking of women as a human security issue (Clark 2003; Piper 2005).

Insecurities in this literature are often described as being caused by environmental or socio-economic conditions during mobility or at destination (unsafe transportation,
poor sanitation or work conditions, etc.) or by direct abuse by non-state or law enforcement agencies (unscrupulous employers, corrupt law enforcement officers, and traffickers). One of the dimensions missing from the literature is how insecurities are generated by the migration policy regime, consisting of both policies to manage and control migrant flows and non-migration policies that have particular impacts on migrants by restricting their application or excluding migrants either expressly, by failure of implementation, or by preclusion (labor and privacy laws, health and education policies, etc.). This policy arrangement in Thailand can contribute to increasing vulnerabilities by pushing migrants into unsafe forms of mobility or work, providing better control to those in positions of power over them, and restricting their capacity for resilience and to enjoy or act on available opportunities. This has particular gender significance because this process further stratifies a gender division of labor that assigns women the most insecure forms of labor while affording them a lower level of protection. This suggests that national security-based policies may not only appear to trump the human security needs of people, and in this case migrants, they may also contribute to undermining these needs in unexpected ways.

The paper is structured in the following manner. We will first discuss how the concept of human security is particularly appropriate to an understanding of the gender dimensions of vulnerabilities created by both migration and non-migration policies. Trends regarding gender and migration into Thailand will then be examined, with a particular focus on recent decades and the feminization of in-migration. The policy framework and experience of migration into the country that creates additional vulnerabilities, particularly for certain types of female and male workers, will be examined, with a specific look at such categories of workers as domestic labor and trafficked workers (including both labor and sex trafficking). The particular burdens and risks placed on women migrants are then taken up—risks that have serious repercussions for their wellbeing and security.

This paper is based on secondary data, drawing from government statistics and policy reports, research findings and literature on labor migration in Thailand, to show a pattern of gendered insecurities induced by existing policies. It should be noted that although we will not cover refugees in this paper, a large portion of migrant workers from Myanmar meet the criteria for refugee status, but are not recognized as such by the Thai government, which has not ratified the Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees or its 1967 Protocol. The paper also does not cover Thai internal migrants. The term ‘migrants’ is thus used here to refer strictly to cross-border migrants.

**Gender, Migration, and Human Security**

How the gender issue is addressed in human security research tends to depend on whether one adopts the Canadian/Norwegian or the Japanese approach to human security. The Canadian/Norwegian approach highlights the different forms of violence, in particular the breach of personal safety, that usually accompanies conflicts and wars but which are unaddressed by traditional national security concerns that dominate such periods (Boyd 2005; McKay 2004). A particular thread is the increase in violence...
committed against women, not only because civilians are increasingly affected by war, but because women have become targets by parties in newer forms of conflicts such as civil strife, guerilla warfare, and terrorism, as well as by more organized paramilitary and State military forces (Reardon and Hans 2010). Women are maimed, killed, or raped in a war of intimidation, retaliation, ethnic cleansing, or genocide, which has led some to describe rape as a weapon of war.

The Japanese approach is broader and incorporates both the ‘fear’ and ‘want’ aspects of security, thus adding forms of vulnerabilities created by poverty, discrimination, and marginalization, which ultimately lead to further harm. The gender focus here should be clear, although it is not often highlighted in this literature: since women have fewer resources, fewer opportunities, and, in many cases, less freedom, they are also more vulnerable to risks such as HIV infection (Toyota 2006; Hayes 2010), disasters (Oswald-Spring 2008), and both direct and indirect forms of violence, whether there is armed conflict or not (Summerfield 2007; Hoogensen and Stuvøy 2006).

What both of these approaches share, however, is a view that national security has often created insecurities for women. Yet gender has not been a main topic of discussion in human security debates, in some ways mimicking the sidelining of feminist approaches in security studies and international relations (Blanchard 2003). We would agree with Hoogensen and Stuvøy (2006), however, that gender theory has a strong contribution to make, both in conceptualizing human security, but more importantly, in operationalizing it.

One contribution from feminist theory, borrowing from the work of Galtung and Bourdieu, regards the role of structural violence to be best understood through patriarchy. We are here not only referring to violence perpetrated beyond any particular agent, though clearly this is also part of the approaches mentioned above. We are instead referring to Galtung’s concept of structural violence (Galtung 1969), updated more recently through his concept of cultural violence (Galtung 1990), and Bourdieu’s concept of symbolic violence through which masculine domination operates (Bourdieu 1998). These two frameworks help to understand how violence is not only structural, but accepted (Bourdieu would say ‘mis-recognized) through norms that legitimize a hierarchy of power and dependence (Stuvøy 2007). This originally non-physical form of violence, such as gender power relations, predetermines the existence or lack of socio-economic status and benefits which eventually affect an individual’s capacity for resilience. Paul Farmer, for instance, applies this structural violence approach to infectious diseases such as AIDS, Ebola, and tuberculosis to argue that a study of inequalities can help explain the rate of advance of an infectious disease (Farmer 1996).

A related contribution of feminist theory to our understanding of human security, looking instead at the household level, has been a critique of the public/private divide and the ways in which this divide creates a sphere of male authority that is unconstrained by public intervention. These writings highlight the importance of the domestic sphere as a fundamental space for the development of insecurities (Bunch 2004; Hoogensen and Stuvøy 2006). For example, feminist scholars such as Susan Okin have long contended that the private sphere of domesticity has been removed in a large part from State intervention (Okin 1989). This, we know, has had particular
perverse effects: the lack of protection against domestic violence and the impunity enjoyed by the perpetrator of violence. Yet many proponents of human security who are attracted by a broader understanding of security beyond traditional State security are entirely silent regarding risks and insecurities incurred within the domestic and private spheres (Bunch 2004). One could argue that not only should the domestic sphere be included in our examination of human security, but also that it remains one of the few areas where violence and intimidation are usually overlooked and where public control is lacking. Violence, abuse, or neglect occurring within the domestic sphere epitomize the need to redefine security beyond what is called ‘national security.’ This, we will argue, has special significance for migrants, and in particular for women domestic migrant workers and others who are confined to non-public spaces.

Another contribution from feminist theory concerns the gender division of labor, which often tends to support stereotypical forms of segregation with women assigned to more vulnerable work. This is especially true in the division of labor created between the formal economy (which tends to be male dominated), and the informal economy, especially domestic work done within other people’s homes (largely by women workers). The informal economy tends to be both riskier in terms of occupational health and safety and not covered by labor protections, while domestic work is particularly insulated from any form of monitoring or external protection.

The ways States deal with these boundaries (domestic/public spheres, formal and informal economy) has a particular effect on migrants, especially irregular women migrants, by pushing them into unprotected employment. This acquires special significance in the context of a feminization of migration that follows a strict gender division of labor. These de facto forms of discrimination and vulnerability need to be examined using a gender lens in a context where human rights and general government policies have stopped, for the most part in Southeast Asia, discriminating openly against women. The paper will use this gender analysis to understand how women migrants face particular forms of insecurities, as well as to highlight ways current policies and laws may, often unintentionally or because of flawed design, contribute further to these insecurities.

**Gender and In-Migration in Thailand**

Although cross-border migration in Thailand is not recent, it has changed dramatically in the past twenty years, particularly since the country has become a major net importer of foreign migrants. Earlier statistics are sketchy, especially as Thailand did not recognize or register unskilled migrants until the mid-1990s. In 2009 1,314,382 migrants were classified as registered illegal migrants, meaning that they were undocumented or had illegally entered the country, yet received a work permit (OFWA 2010). In March 2010, 1,093,237 foreign workers were registered as having a work permit. Of those however, only 17 percent had entered Thailand through regular channels (UNFPA 2011: 21). Yet estimates of migrants, including irregular migrants without any form of registration, vary between two and three million.
Two main factors explain the rapid growth in cross-border migration. Thailand’s economy grew rapidly in the 1980s, thanks in part to a stable political system (albeit a semi-authoritarian regime) and liberalization of trade accompanied by heavy infrastructural investment from the public sector. This resulted in a growing gap in GDP per capita with surrounding countries that were still either state-controlled military oligarchies (Myanmar) or state socialist regimes (Laos, Cambodia, and Vietnam). Cambodia, for instance, was very unstable after the Khmer Rouge leadership and continued dealing with Khmer Rouge resistance until the early 1990s. Another reason was a rapid increase in the number of migrants from Myanmar in the last two decades, partly as a result of the growing repression following the elections of 1990 won by Aung San Suu Kyi’s National League for Democracy party, whose victory was nullified by the ruling junta. The rapid growth of cross-border migration in the 1990s was also accompanied by a feminization of migrant labor flows in Thailand and, to a lesser extent, Cambodia (Piper 2004). Women migrants made up 29 percent of all registered international migrants in Thailand in 1998; this increased to 45 percent by 2005, and it is notable in that year that 55 percent of all Lao migrants to Thailand were women (Archavanitkul 2005: 140).

Reasons for this trend toward increasing numbers of women migrants range from cultural change in both the place of origin and place of destination, changes in gender relations that allow more women to leave the domestic sphere and engage in wage labor, a preference for female migrants on the part of Thai employers (particularly manufacturers who consider women as more disciplined, less troublesome, and quicker for certain tasks (“nimble fingers”)), and because they are paid at a lower rate than their male counterparts (Kaur and Metcalfe 2006). However, some sectors remain male-dominated, especially work on fishing boats (although not fish processing, which is female-dominated), the construction industry (though it is increasingly hiring female workers), and agriculture (though the gap is again closing). Women dominate in some sectors such as domestic work, fish processing, and certain manufacturing sectors (electronics, garments), as well as the entertainment and sex industry. Some formal sectors such as factories associated with the garment and electronics industries are dominated by young women migrant workers and in areas such as Mae Sot, a town at the border with Myanmar, women make up above 70 percent of the migrant workers (Arnold and Hewison 2005).

The Policy Framework and Gendered Insecurities

In many ways laws and policies on migration and labor are gender-neutral on paper. Yet feminist scholars have long claimed that seemingly neutral policies reflect men’s interests and experiences and are not gender-blind in their outcome, and therefore are essentially patriarchal. When Catharine MacKinnon wrote that “When [law] is most ruthlessly neutral, it is most male” (MacKinnon 1989: 248, in Calavita 2006: 106), it was to some extent to counter the notion that gender-neutral policies are gender-friendly. The policies are clearly the outcome of a gender-unequal society, as seen by their areas of application, the boundaries of policy frameworks, and what they leave
Dependency-based social protection systems (where welfare is allocated through the male breadwinner), the legal void that is the domestic sphere, and openly policy-saturated sectors (the “security” sector easily comes to mind) all reflect in their own way a gendered experience, interests, and position of power.

The same can be said of migration policies. These reflect a political establishment dominated by men and a continuing perception—incorrect nowadays—that migration is essentially a man’s business. Yet the policy environment (including related non-migration policies) affects migrants’ security in many ways, with often clear gendered outcomes (Piper 2004). Perhaps most deleterious are restrictive policies, based on a politics of control derived from a State’s sovereignty and its responsibility with regard to national security (Hollifield 2008). In that narrative, the State restricts migrants’ entry, mobility, status, or benefits, based on the belief that migrants can undermine national security or economic interests. The narrative typically combines different claims such as supposed destabilizing impacts on the labor market, spread of contagious diseases, increased burden on State resources, or a higher crime rate.

The State agency in Thailand most responsible for this politics of control is the Ministry of Interior, which has authority over law enforcement agencies including border and immigration patrols. In most cases restrictive measures are not explicitly gendered (though some are, as will be discussed below), but have gender implications, by making legal channels more difficult to reach or use (higher costs, delays, language requirements, need to travel, etc.), or by supporting men or women migrants in different contexts.

**Registration Hurdles and Migrants’ Security**

Although the Thai government has increasingly shown a willingness to legalize migrant workers, the process of legalization has become increasingly costly over the years, involving major time and travel costs, so that many migration experts argue that it discourages registration (Huguet 2008). The highest cost option for migrants is to go through a process set by the Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) which requires going through a recruitment agency and registration before traveling to Thailand. As opposed to migrants who have registered while in Thailand, the MoUs with Cambodia and Laos allow Thailand to keep 15 percent of the migrant workers’ wages, to be returned when the migrant goes back to her/his country of origin. Moreover, recruitment agencies usually charge a fee plus a percentage of the migrant’s income (around 15%) that is paid by the employer and then deducted from the migrant’s wage. Thongyou argues that going through regular channels would cost migrants five months’ wages, whereas paying smugglers would be the equivalent of only a month’s wages (Thongyou 2009). Another and cheaper option is for migrants to pay for a daily pass at the border (10 baht) and then remain in the country illegally.

The shares of males and females amongst immigrants who go through registration are usually around 55 and 45 percent, respectively. As noted above, in the case of Laos the percentages are inverted, with 55 percent female migrants. However, the percentages of female and male migrants who have used regular channels through
the MoU are quite different. In 2008, 2,437 female migrants were registered out of a total of 6,374 new migrants from Laos (or 38%), while 2,247 female migrants out of a total 8,173 new migrants from Cambodia (or 27%) registered through the MoU process (OFWA 2008), proportions that were much lower than for registrations not going through the MoU (which is cheaper). No registrations of Myanmar migrants were made through the MoU until 2008, though a small number have registered since that time.

This suggests, although other factors could be involved, that the barriers to obtaining legal status are particularly burdensome for women migrants, and that a majority of them remain undocumented or irregular migrants. The lower cost of going through a smuggler increases women’s dependence on illegal third parties and exposes them to the risk of being trafficked through debt bondage. For this reason, restricting entry and increasing deportation and raids on workplaces with irregular workers tend to increase the costs of migration and the dependency on smugglers and traffickers (Piper 2004). The restrictive migration policies and mass deportation of early 2001, for instance, led to a sharp increase in smuggler fees (Martin 2004: 26), perhaps reflecting both an increase in demand and an increase in the costs involved in their services. If we take the numbers above to develop the hypothesis that the greater the cost of migration, the lower the percentage of legal female migrants, we could argue that, in all likelihood, the estimates of irregular migrants in Thailand understate the percentage of female migrants, since these estimates are usually extrapolations of numbers derived from subsequent registration drives, and female irregular migrants are less likely to register.

Pushed into Illegality…

Thailand’s immigration laws do not support importing unskilled migrants. One of the main concerns was that migrant labor could undermine the work prospects or the pay scale of unskilled Thai workers. However, in the past fifteen years the Thai government has at times registered unskilled workers, with the provision that they would leave after a short postponement of their deportation. In effect, those registered migrants are not fully legal in the way that skilled migrants are in Thailand, which explains why Chalamwong and Amornthum, in their study of irregular labor migration, refer throughout their paper to “registered illegal migrants” (Chalamwong and Amornthum 2002). If we use Schuck’s terms (1998), these migrants fall somewhere between “strangers” (illegal migrants) and “in-betweens” (legal migrants); neither fully illegal nor fully resident migrants. Effectively the Thai government has found a temporary measure by using Article 17 of the Immigration Act of 1979, which provides a waiver used by the Ministry of the Interior to delay the deportation of illegal migrants. This status is always precarious and never offers the same protection that skilled migrants receive. Migrants must remain within their province of work, are bound for deportation as soon as their employment ends, and remain constantly at risk of arrest by immigration officers for having incomplete documentation. That being said, certain government policies do not discriminate against migrants, whether legal
or illegal (Yang 2007). Labor, health, and education laws do not explicitly exclude migrants, yet access to these services is often denied, costly, or beyond reach (for instance, labor laws may not be used by an irregular migrant afraid of deportation).

The demand for imported unskilled labor started at least two decades ago and is predicted to continue unabated for another decade or two (Martin 2004). When the government tried to restrict migrant labor and encourage Thai replacements, especially after the 1997 economic crisis, some of those initiatives involving the rice mill industries, sugarcane, and rubber plantations completely failed as Thai workers were unwilling to tolerate either the work conditions (lifting bags of rice of up to 100 kg, for instance) or the low pay (Martin 2004: 21). Moreover, the demand for unskilled workers has never been fully met. In 2004, the demand for unskilled workers was about 1.6 million from Thai employers (Mekong Sub-regional Project to Combat Trafficking in Children and Women 2006). The government had made registration free for the first step (also waiving deportation in that process), and because of that, about 1.28 million migrants registered (Huguet 2008: 10). The subsequent steps required fees and passing a health exam, so that in the end only 50 percent of the demand (814,000 out of 1.6 million) was met (ibid.: 11).

In Thailand, in much the same way that Calavita (2006) has argued regarding the case of Spain and Italy, we find that the restrictive immigration laws and policies, combined with fast economic growth, have provided a perfect ground for the employment of irregular migrants. In effect, restrictive policies and economic growth are interdependent. The demand for migrant labor from Thai employers has never been met, yet meeting all the conditions to be a fully legal migrant is a tortuous path, to say nothing of the high costs involved and the low probability of finding formal work. If we take that argument further, one could suggest that insecurities faced by migrants are basically the outcome of migration policies that channel migrants into informal work that is not covered by labor protections. Calavita concluded that “Spanish and Italian immigration laws, anchored by temporary and contingent permit systems, thus build in illegality.” (Calavita 2006: 118) The same could be said of the Thai immigration system.

...and into Informal Work

Close to 60 percent of workers in Thailand are found in the informal economy, either as own-account or unpaid family workers (Pholphirul and Rukumnuaykit 2010: 180). Yet the share of own-account workers has remained consistent, while the share of unpaid family workers has dropped dramatically. Pholphirul and Rukumnuaykit suggest that this is caused by a Thai labor force that is leaving unpaid family work for the formal sector, especially small and medium enterprises, as well as increased rates of higher schooling for children and young people. Much of this departing labor force is replaced by migrant workers, especially in the agricultural sector and domestic work. Neither of these sectors is covered by labor laws, and they tend to present the most insecure work environment.
An important source of vulnerability for women workers is the lack of recognition, decent pay, and social protection for reproductive and domestic work. Estimates of migrant domestic workers in Thailand are not based on clear evidence, although the number is probably above 200,000 workers since 130,000 migrant domestic workers registered in 2009 (Boontinand 2010). Domestic work is considered informal work by the government (ibid.) and is generally regarded as ‘housework’ (Look Jang Tam Ngan Ban), although much of it also includes care work—with children and, owing to an aging population, increasingly with the elderly. The sources of vulnerability are diverse, but the most important is a lack of coverage by the Thai labor law due to a cabinet decree that waives the application of important provisions in the law for domestic workers. The implications are quite far reaching. There is no minimum wage, in fact payment in kind (accommodation and food) is fairly common; employers do not have to follow labor laws regarding national holidays or work hours (it is quite common for domestic workers to work seven days a week, and to be available at any hour, with little or no vacation time); and privacy laws usually constrain any intervention by law enforcement agencies (Boontinand 2010; Punpuing 2006; Panam et al. 2004).

The vulnerability of foreign migrant workers becomes clear when data on Thai and migrant domestic workers are compared. Some studies (Boontinand 2010) acknowledge that Thai domestic workers take vacations or take days off on national holidays and suggest that, in general, employers agree to their requests, even though the labor provisions on national holidays do not apply to domestic workers (domestic workers are allowed however to take six days vacation per year, but only after one year of work). The few studies conducted on foreign migrant domestic workers in Thailand reveal working conditions that are much worse (Panam et al. 2004; Punpuing 2006; Mekong Sub-regional Project to Combat Trafficking in Children and Women 2006; Boontinand 2010). In a Mahidol University study, almost 70 percent of migrant domestic workers in Mae Sot and 54 percent in Chiang Mai never have any days off (Panam et al. 2004: 105). In the same study, the vast majority experienced abuses from their employers, with pay on average only half of what Thai workers get for the same job.

Another area where migrant domestic workers are more vulnerable than Thai domestic workers is health. Although registered migrants can now enjoy access to health care under the thirty-baht scheme, the combination of isolation and invisibility, abuses, lack of proper documentation, and being out of reach of health service providers has serious impacts on the migrant domestic workers’ health, particularly their vulnerability to HIV/AIDS (Toyota 2006). Several studies have shown that even when they are registered, migrants rarely use health care facilities because they may not be given the time off from work (especially domestic workers), or language is a barrier, or the cost of medicine and treatment is prohibitive (PHR 2004; Toyota 2006; Yang 2007; Aung et al. 2009). Moreover, unregistered migrants cannot benefit from the thirty-baht scheme, and therefore rely on expensive private hospitals (Aung et al. 2009). A Physician for Human Rights (PHR) study identified immigration restrictions and difficulty for migrants to register as factors that increase their vulnerabilities, with knock-on effects for their level of health (PHR 2004). Women migrants face particular hurdles in this regard. Women migrants from Myanmar tend
to have fewer Thai language skills than their male counterparts. They may also have fewer resources to tap into. In that same PHR study, such barriers meant that when migrant women who were HIV-positive finally went to get health care “the disease is typically diagnosed when patients are already too ill or weak to work” (ibid.: 39).

The legal void regarding domestic work is particularly worrying in emerging economies like Thailand where we can expect reproductive labor to grow along with the fast expansion of the productive economy. Moreover, the rapid growth of a middle class is taking place in a context of a diminishing pool of unskilled Thai workers, and an increasingly accessible pool of foreign unskilled workers. This is also accompanied by social norms that set hiring of domestic workers as evidence of higher socio-economic status.

These characteristics are, on their own, not particularly different from other emerging economies. However, Thailand is in a specific geo-economic situation whereby three countries—Myanmar, Laos, and Cambodia—which share a land border with Thailand (the fourth is Malaysia) are also three of the poorest countries in Asia. The gap in GDP per capita is wide and has grown rapidly in the past twenty years, making ‘pull’ factors one of the clear reasons for the increase in cross-border migration (although migration from Myanmar can be also explained by ‘push’ factors such as the lack of human rights and political persecution). These factors fuel the demand for low-paid domestic workers as the costs associated with Thai workers rises and a pool of unskilled migrant workers becomes increasingly available.

Another explanation for the growth in demand for domestic labor is linked to the Thai government’s policies, or lack thereof, on welfare and social protection. Whereas families provided much of the welfare and social protection in the past, the entry of Thai women into the labor force, combined with limited welfare provisions, required that families hire domestic and care workers. What Calavita argues with regard to Spain and Italy can again easily be applied to Thailand: “the state (en)genders migration indirectly through its labor and welfare policies that on one hand increasingly incorporate women into the paid workforce and on the other provide few family services, thereby triggering the need for low-paid domestic help.” (Calavita 2006: 119)

Policies Restricting Migrants’ Freedoms

Previous sections discuss the link between registration hurdles and vulnerable work. However, many policies restrict migrants’ freedoms, including several provincial rules and decrees. They have also contributed to increasing vulnerability, and especially undermine migrants’ security and health (Terrasse 2007). In several provinces, including Phuket, Phang Na, and Ranong, decrees have forbidden the use of mobile phones by migrants (HRW 2010). In all these decrees, authorities claim that they act to safeguard national security; one decree states that a mobile phone is not a “tool for work but instead is a tool that can convey information easily and quickly, which can impact national security” (ibid.: 32). In Phuket, the decree states that migrant workers “…are not allowed to own mobile phones, may not use motorised transport and must remain confined to their dormitories from 8 pm to 6 am.” (Sutthida 2007)
These decrees have had an adverse effect on migrants’ mobility and communication, and they often have a particularly acute effect on women migrants. Health officers have warned that the decrees are severely impeding migrants’ health, in particular of pregnant women who may not get prenatal care or access reproductive health services (ibid.). Moreover, as a coordinator for Yaung Chi Oo (a migrant workers’ association for migrants from Myanmar) remarked, mobile phones have often become the only means of communication for domestic workers, who usually have little access to the outside world and may not be able to report abuses in any other way (ibid.). Fortunately, after a Human Rights Watch report was published in 2010, the Abhisit government revoked those decrees, which had been in place since 2006 and 2007 (Adams 2010). Those restrictive policies and decrees suggest that migrants are often seen as weakening national security in Thailand, and the response often penalizes migrants and increases their vulnerability.

This paper highlights the unintended gendered effects of policies, but there remain laws and policies that openly discriminate, often based on the perception of women’s reproductive role. Some migration policies directly target women migrants, and as a result undermine their security. For instance, in August 2000 the Thai Labor Ministry passed a regulation that required female migrant workers to pass a health exam, and prescribed that women who were pregnant or HIV-positive be deported. On that basis, in 2004, after requiring a medical check-up for migrant registrations, the government announced the deportation of 9,300 women who were found to be pregnant; the government claimed that it wanted to prevent children from becoming stateless (Amnesty International 2005). Considering that a majority of migrant women are from Myanmar, deportation could have serious consequences on their health and security. Again, in 2008, when it appeared that Thailand would feel the impact of the economic crisis that originated in the US, the deputy Prime Minister stated that in order to deal with the problem of migrant children the government would arrange for the deportation of all pregnant migrant women, which according to Human Rights Watch had a “chilling effect on pregnant migrant women’s willingness to seek medical assistance” (HRW 2010: 24).

It comes as no surprise therefore that, in the case of migrants, the government is not enforcing a labor law that protects pregnant workers from being fired and ensures their access to maternity leave and benefits. It is often the norm for migrant women to be fired when they become pregnant, and in that process they would lose their legal status, since registration is only valid with the current employer (US Department of State 2005). Women in this situation may also find it difficult to return to their families. Hence, women migrants often pay steeper prices in times of economic hardship or rising nationalism. They are blamed for their reproductive role and seen as a national security threat for that very reason.

From Irregular Migration to Human Trafficking

The impact of migration and trafficking policies tends to differ from a gender perspective. Strict migration controls, as we have seen, tend to push more women
into an irregular status. And as irregular migrants are more vulnerable to abuse and less resilient to harm, they tend to also be more vulnerable to being trafficked. Being illegal or without proper documentation, migrants may use informal agents or brokers to look for employment, creating dependencies that can facilitate trafficking (Piper 2004; ADB 2009). Similarly, migrants who are smuggled into the country often owe a debt to the smugglers to repay part or all of the smuggling fees. One study, using a debt-finance theory of migration in Europe, suggests that the high cost of becoming a legal migrant actually decreases the number of migrants defaulting on debt, and thus increases the willingness of intermediaries to finance illegal migration (Friebel and Guriev 2006). In effect, strict immigration policies in the context of a large pool of migrants looking for work institutionalize illegal migration channels and services and therefore perpetuate irregular migrant flows.

Women are particularly vulnerable because of the demand for sex services and their lower access to resources, which increases dependence on third-party agents. Traffickers who rely on unequal power relations or debt bondage are helped in their task by draconian migration policies that regard irregularity as a crime and justification for deportation. Hence, one could argue that restrictive migration policies can contribute to human trafficking by increasing the pool of vulnerable migrants while offering opportunities to potential or existing traffickers.

On the other hand, trafficking policies have been gendered in different ways. Although early anti-trafficking laws were focused on punishing traffickers, they would not protect trafficked persons, often treating victims, usually women, purely as illegal migrants to be deported. Since then, several laws have been adopted or amended in Southeast Asia which specify that women and girls (in some contexts children) who meet the conditions to be identified as trafficked victims are entitled to state protection and should not be deported. Many of these laws specifically identified trafficked victims as female, and define trafficking mostly in the context of the sex trade. However, even if the law is clear regarding the protection of women who are trafficked, the reality on the ground is quite different, with a failure of law enforcement agencies to protect victims of trafficking. A study by Physicians for Human Rights concludes that the law enforcement agencies in Thailand mandated to protect migrants are often found to abuse women migrants as well as women who have been trafficked (PHR 2004).

However, many institutional responses designed initially to protect trafficked persons left trafficked male workers entirely unprotected. Indeed, even in clear cases of trafficking where people were kept in confinement, when the Thai government conducted raids in which both women and men trafficked victims were involved, women might be protected under the Act but men would be considered illegal migrants and deported (Reungpoj 2010). Eventually the government changed the law to cover labor trafficking and expanded the definition of victim to cover any sex.

This was an important development, particularly because of the importance of labor trafficking in the Thai economy. Feingold argues that labor trafficking is underestimated, in reality being more important than sex trafficking (Feingold 2005). One study conducted in Mae Sot seems to support this view, as the vast majority of the victims were trafficked for domestic work, begging, or selling flowers (PHR 2004: 35). Echoing this view, Agustín argues that a whole ‘rescue industry’ was built around the
mistaken premises that trafficking was strictly for sexual purposes and that any form of sex work should be considered trafficking (Agustín 2007). This made her conclude that men were only seen as abusers and never as abused victims. Although the law was amended, a recent study by Reungpoj demonstrates that the law enforcement agencies continue to see victims of trafficking as only female, so that men who are trafficked are, at best, unprotected and, at worst, further marginalized and potentially put in insecure situations, especially through deportation (Reungpoj 2010).

Clearly the law is used in extreme forms of trafficking, easily identified by the existence of people held in captivity. However, trafficking may instead happen by means such as deception, fraud, and abuse of power, often in the context of debt bondage, which the police rarely identifies as trafficking, therefore putting both women and men at risk of abuse and of being trafficked again (ibid.). If one is to accept Feingold’s hypothesis that labor trafficking is more important despite being ignored, we could argue that both men and women who are trafficked for labor do not get the protection they need, and that the lack of formal protection could have serious human security implications that are presently condoned by the State.

Conclusion

The fact that migrants, especially women migrants, face particular challenges and vulnerability is not new. Literature on gender and migration is abundant. This paper argues that what is missing is an understanding of how policy frameworks are partly responsible for pushing migrants, especially women, into unsafe and unprotected work. This is particularly deplorable considering that better designed policies would substantially decrease insecurities while improving migrants’ resilience in the face of other challenges such as losing a job or getting sick. Applying a gender approach to human security is particularly useful to unravel the negative impacts of policies on migrants by looking at security from the perspective of the individual, and not only the State. Although many argue for the potentially complementary nature of national and human security, a gender lens suggests that human security in practice has also been undermined by the way the State pursues national security. It also reveals the domestic sphere as a largely unregulated space where violence is condoned by decree or neglect, and where insecurities and abuses remain unmonitored and undetected. Similarly, restrictive migration policies, in particular the difficulty (especially women) migrants face in getting proper registration, mean that they have little choice but to join the informal economy, especially domestic work, facing poor working conditions without social protections. These restrictions also mean that a large proportion of labor migration occurs through irregular channels, making migrants more vulnerable to trafficking.

One could argue that this policy-induced marginalization is clearly gendered and further promotes unequal gender relations and an unfair division of labor. Yet these policies are for the most part gender-neutral, and as such accepted. In the case discussed here, using a gender lens to understand human security in the context of migration reveals how insecurity is the outcome of poorly conceived policies, including many that aim to manage and even protect migrants. In a sense, this paper proposes that we
should better understand how policies in practice have unintended human security implications. Human security is best understood through human experience, and it is this experience, such as that of migrants, which suggests that insecurities induced by the migration policy regime run counter to human security and development. It is also this experience which shows that gender equality is one of human security’s primary determinants, and therefore a precondition to an effective migration policy regime respectful of migrants’ wellbeing and rights.

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POLITICIZING THE TRANSNATIONAL
On Implications for Migrants, Refugees, and Scholarship

Riina Isotalo

Abstract: This article discusses the politicization of the transnational paradigm in terms of development and security, refugee and migrant regimes, and transnational practices. The analysis makes two principal arguments. The first is that diasporas and mobility in general have been both securitized and developmentalized. These two processes are intertwined but also contradictory. While migration is seen as a development resource, ‘uncontrolled’ population flows—particularly of refugees—are looked upon as security threats by states and policy makers. This duo-faceted approach is at the root of the politicization of the transnational paradigm. The second argument of this text is that this politicization and the neo-liberal mega-trend are also entwined, despite the fact that the scholars who introduced transnationalism to migration research saw it as reflecting a process of globalization ‘from below’.

Keywords: development, migrants, mobility, politicization, refugees, remittances, securitization, transnational paradigm

Development, politics, migration, and refugeeess are integrally linked. Economic disparities between developing and developed countries have long been seen as key determinants of migration (Sørensen 2004). However, assessments of the impact of migration on the dynamics of development have varied over time and have not been conducted systematically (ibid.). My viewpoint is that, within transnational studies, security-related disparities between developing and developed countries that serve as determinants of migration have been studied even less systematically.

This article is concerned with the development and security policy implications of transnationality. However, I am not addressing this topic from within development, by way of looking at how migrants’ transnational practices can be utilized to further development. Several analysts have explored that area (see, e.g., Levitt and Sørensen 2004, as well as the articles in this special section)
and, while doing so, have identified wide gaps in research. Moreover, my interest in transnationality extends beyond the topics of transnational politics and political transnationalism (Østergaard-Nielsen 2003; Piper 2006), which address long-distance nationalism, migrants’ engagement in homeland politics, and a diaspora’s role in resolving or perpetuating conflicts. Instead, I approach the development-politics-migration-refugeeness nexus through an examination of the multi-dimensional phenomenon that I refer to as the ‘politicization of the transnational paradigm’.

The number of people on the move has risen considerably during the last three decades. Today, the estimated number of international migrants is approximately 190,600,000, but the de facto figures are probably much higher. Accurate numbers are difficult to estimate or document statistically because of the illegality of many people’s move from the perspective of the receiving countries’ entrance rules and regulations. This concerns particularly Europe, North America, Oceania, and certain oil-rich emirates in the Gulf, but also conflict-ridden countries’ neighboring areas in Africa, Asia, and the Middle East. Despite the fact that mobility is always gendered, women and men migrate in approximately equal numbers.

Transnationalism and Its Parallel yet Contradictory Elements

The present article has two main arguments. The first is that in discussing diasporas and mobility in general, it is important to acknowledge the ways in which they have been both securitized and developmentalized. These two phenomena are actually a two-faceted process with parallel and intertwining but also contradictory strands. While migration is seen as a development resource, ‘uncontrolled’ population flows—particularly refugees—are looked upon as security threats by states and policy makers, particularly after the events of September 11, 2001. Together, these two strands have politicized the transnational paradigm.

Although the focus of this article is on phenomena encompassed in the term ‘transnationality’ (living across borders), it is important to remember that transnationality and diaspora are not mutually exclusive concepts for understanding the mobility-development nexus. The general criteria for a diaspora can be said to be forcible or voluntary dispersal, settlement in multiple locations, and the idea of a homeland. At least in public parlance, the term ‘diaspora’ homogenizes and essentializes disparate populations through its projection of primordial identities. The very ambiguity as to who is encompassed by the term and the cultural content that constitutes its frame of reference contribute to its political potency. The term itself, however, has no administrative or legal connotations. At the same time, researchers have given the term ‘diaspora’ multiple interpretations. Since its resurgence in the early 1990s, it has been characterized as a sociological ideal type, as a mode of consciousness or of cultural reproduction, and as a form of social organization. In its broadest definition, the term includes “expatriates, expellees, political refugees, alien
residents, immigrants, and ethnic and racial minorities” (Safran 1991: 83). Diasporas can be very heterogeneous along class, ethnic, and gender lines.

In the early 1900s, the term ‘transnational’ was first used to describe migration (Bourne 1916). An entire literature on transnational business corporations began to appear in the 1970s, at about the same time that scholars of international relations began to use the term (Nye 1976). The term ‘transnational’ appeared in migration studies in the early 1990s, at approximately the same time that the term ‘diaspora’ reappeared in scholarship as an analytical category. The transnational paradigm provided an alternative to assimilationist and multiculturalist paradigms to make visible historical and political processes that previous migration paradigms had sometimes obscured. Following the modernization theory, earlier mainstream migration theories assumed migration to be mostly one-directional and determined by push-and-pull factors that migrants were supposed to calculate on a rational, *homo economicus* basis. The transnational migration paradigm does not overlook migrants’ economic calculations. Instead, it argues that, rather than push and pull, choices are made in terms of more than one state at the same time and that factors such as nationalism and racism in more than one state also contribute to migrants’ multiple, simultaneous connections.

As an analytic lens applied to migrants’ lives, transnationality sheds light on simultaneity and bifocality: sending and receiving societies are understood as constituting a single field of analysis. The ‘transnational approach’ to migration was intended to be a move away from ‘methodological nationalism’ (Glick Schiller 2003, 2005). The term points to the hegemonic usage of the nation-state as a unit of analysis so that the nation-state is seen as a natural—or at least taken for granted—container of social life (Wimmer and Glick Schiller 2002). Particularly, political science research on migration has been dominated by approaches that place the state at the center of analysis and thus focus on macro-level issues (Piper 2006). Across disciplinary divisions, researchers with a transnational analytical lens have studied identity formation; the economic, political, religious, and socio-cultural practices that migrants engage in; and the impact of these practices on both the sending and receiving country or community. They have suggested typologies to capture variations in the dimensions of transnational migration and have explored the relationship between transnational engagement and assimilation. Whether transnational migration is qualitatively a new phenomenon or whether it shares similarities with its earlier incarnations has been debated extensively.

Transnational studies today have numerous subfields; for example, the topic of transnational families and kinship has developed a trajectory of its own. Most subfields are separated analytically between the ‘ways of being’ and the ‘ways of belonging’ and approach society as a border-crossing social field (Glick Schiller 2003). In the writings of Nina Glick Schiller and her co-authors, the idea of social fields is based more on the Manchester School’s view of anthropology than on Pierre Bourdieu’s work: in a transnational approach to migration, this concept refers to an egocentric ‘network of networks’ (Levitt and Glick Schiller 2004). Transnational social fields are a set of multiple interlocking
networks of social relationships through which ideas, practices, and resources are unequally exchanged, organized, and transformed (ibid.). However, Glick Schiller (this issue) points out that the migration scholars who have theorized transnational social fields have seen them as linking mechanisms through which migrants become incorporated in two or more nation-states. Thus, the critique of methodological nationalism did not lead most migration scholars who have theorized transnational social fields to an advocacy of ‘methodological individualism’ in a similar vein as in the parallel trend of network analysis. The state and social institutions are not erased from the domain of analysis.

The second main argument of this text is that the politicization of the transnational paradigm and the neo-liberal mega-trend are in practice entwined, despite the fact that when transnationalism was introduced to migration research, it was part of a critique of uneven development and capitalist exploitation of labor. In fact, Basch, Glick Schiller, and Blanc (1994) warned in Nations Unbound of the likelihood that the concept would be utilized for neo-liberal political purposes. Transnational studies have achieved considerable, yet contested and partially indirect, paradigmatic power. Development and security have been brought together and separated by major international actors, such as the United Nations and the European Union, in discourses and practices that concern migration and refugees. This article discusses these trends from the viewpoint of transnationality in order to bring the increased role of security concerns and its implications for a transnational paradigm to the attention of migration scholars.

Interest in transnational migration grows steadily among international development stakeholders and actors. The European Commission’s Official Consensus on Development in March 2006 devoted approximately three sentences to mobility, two sentences to migrant remittances, and one sentence to ‘brain drain’. In the summer of 2007, the European Commission announced its intention to establish a European Migration Network that would produce up-to-date information about migration and refugees and would aim to bring together key persons, experts, and decision makers. In addition to its principal documents, the World Bank has started to publish Migration and Development Briefs. Migration is the theme of the most recent report of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNDP 2009).

I suggest that this developmentalization of mobility is not merely a consequence of the contemporary forces of capitalist restructuring but is as much related to the securitization of mobility. Neither the connection between development and international migration nor that between security (approached in this article primarily through the topics of conflicts and wars) and people’s mobility is novel. On the one hand, early migration researchers who followed modernization theory regarded economic reasons—with regard to both migrants and receiving countries—as the driving force behind migration. On the other hand, huge refugee movements were also a familiar phenomenon in Europe in the aftermath of World War II. This led to the 1951 United Nations Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees, which agreed upon three preferred solutions for such situations: return at the earliest possible stage, compensation, and resettlement in a new country (which could be a third country, rather than the country
of first asylum). These three options can be regarded as the ‘international refugee regime’. Whereas the two latter options are not mutually exclusive, the last provides access to new citizenship and the termination of refugee status.

Development, security, and mobility have thus been interrelated for a long time but what is novel for the scholarship of transnational mobility is the changed relationship of meanings of these terms. Securitization does not always, or only, mean militarization. The hierarchy between development and security in the context of migrant and refugee mobility changed in the post–Cold War context, at least in receiving countries’ considerations. The contemporary restrictive trend toward refugee mobility, which I will elaborate on throughout this article in its relation to ‘new humanitarianism’, became visible in Europe in the late 1990s, when the ‘threat’ of a massive flight of ethnic Albanian refugees from Kosovo was seen as justification for the NATO air war toward Serbia and Kosovo on humanitarian terms. This change regarding the ways in which migration is understood in relationship to development and security cannot be separated from economics. However, the fact that migration is now a part of security policies rather than development practices, or that development practices that touch upon mobility are drafted primarily in security conditions, is striking.

Based on analyses of security understandings of the United Nations (Hammerstad 2000; Owen 2008; Slim 2001), of European Union migration policies (Ceccorulli 2009; Peltonen 2007; Piper 2006), and of the European security strategy (Ceccorulli 2009; Kaldor 2007), I suggest that the promotion of development ‘back home’ in the developing world—and also in acute conflict areas—is now being used as a pretext to justify security practices in the context of mobility. Put bluntly, in terms of development assistance and humanitarian aid (including humanitarian interventions), the promotion of practices that restrict migrant and refugee mobility is, from the rich migrant-receiving countries’ viewpoint, regarded as a kind of ‘pre-emptive self-defense’. This approach characterized the Bush administration’s rhetoric on and practices of a ‘global war on terror’. Thus, a ‘global approach on migration’, as the term is used in EU policy (Ceccorulli 2009), and a ‘new humanitarianism’ (Slim 2001) are intertwined in relation to migration and refugeeessence. Migrants (along with the remittances that they are expected to send) and refugees are at the center of the relationship between development and security. Conceptually, this interdependency is operationalized in terms such as ‘human security’ and ‘mixed migratory flows’.

Interpretations among political actors, including the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) and its Development Assistance Committee (DAC), the European Union Commission, and international financial institutions such as the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund (IMF), about how and what kind of border-crossing lifestyles benefit the developing countries while preventing secondary movements of refugees and illegal migration to the West have incorporated a transnational paradigm into neo-liberal development strategies and policies. One could mention assistance in the region of origin, development through local integration for refugee populations, and the acceptance, even promotion, of transnational relations as an enduring,
if not durable, solution for refugee problems (see, e.g., Ceccorulli 2009; Stepputat 2004; Van Hear 2002). These assistance modes, which aim to improve refugees’ self-reliance and move away from reactive ‘care and concern’, are not negative as such. The problem is, however, that the above-mentioned models are applied in top-down frameworks, with the additional goal of curtailing migrants’ and refugees’ freedom of movement. Hence, ‘mobile livelihoods’ are increasingly instrumentalized and forged from ‘above’. Transnational practices that do not fit the political projects promoted within the ‘accepted’ transnational relations are in danger of becoming either forbidden or very vulnerable.

Transnationality and ‘New Wars’: Mobility and Security with Reference to the Individual

Transnationalism as a theoretical entry point to mobility emerged parallel to other theories that aimed to build on networks in the post–Cold War political context in which major changes in security understandings were underway. In this section, I discuss the meaning of concepts such as ‘human security’ and ‘new wars’ as they apply to policies toward refugees and migrants. I start by briefly reviewing the history of the political associations between security and refugee mobility. Then I discuss how refugees and security have been brought together in the United Nations, which is the most important international organization responsible for refugee security. The aim of this section is to demonstrate how conflict-generated mobility has become the most important indicator of the lack of security. Because what policy makers call mixed migratory flows accompany the global restructuring of capitalist production, the view on refugee mobility as an indicator of insecurity has boiled down to restrictive politics toward migration in general.

Mobility and Security Considerations: A Brief Overview

For a period longer than migration as such, states have viewed refugee mobility as a political and security issue that requires international agreements. According to Loescher and Milner (2005: 23), international political concern for the fate of refugees first emerged after World War I, when massive refugee flows resulting from the break-up of the Habsburg, Hohenzollern, Ottoman, and Romanov empires in Europe, Turkey, the Middle East, and Russia and from the Russian Civil War, the Polish-Soviet War, and the Russian famine of 1921 heightened inter-state tensions and threatened the security of European countries. Consequently, an international framework of institutions and agreements was created in 1921 within the League of Nations. Following World War II, the current international refugee regime, which was described at the outset of this article, emerged in reaction to the security threat posed by some 12 million displaced persons, mainly from Eastern and Central Europe and the Soviet Union. While millions were repatriated or resettled in the aftermath of the war, nearly 500,000 remained in camps in Western Europe until the mid-1960s (ibid.).
During the Cold War, the political and security perspective on refugees was universal: they were seen as part of the struggle between the East and the West. In regions of intense superpower conflict and competition, refugees were armed, and their military struggles were supported materially and ideologically. Throughout the Cold War, refugees and the safety problems they raised were considered to be part of a wider set of geo-political considerations, including an understanding that most threats to a state’s security were military, arising from outside its borders, and required a political or military response. Thus, while specific refugee groups were perceived as assets or liabilities during times of crisis, the security logic was bound by a highly constrained notion of security that did not see migration as a central issue (Loescher and Milner 2005: 24).

The view on migration and its importance in safety considerations changed in the post–Cold War era when the security implications of forced migration gained more salience (Loescher and Milner 2005). The United Nations became the central arena for voicing these altered security understandings: in a changed political situation, the most powerful member countries felt free to declare that they did not want refugees and considered them a burden (Hammerstad 2000; Slim 2001). Moreover, the large-scale displacement of civilian populations became a deliberate conflict strategy in places such as, for example, the Balkans, sub-Saharan Africa, and East Timor. There was a common recognition among the states (particularly in Europe and North America) that refugee movements not only were a consequence of insecurity but also could be a cause of instability for host states, countries of origin, and regions in conflict—and could even pose a threat to wider international peace and security. As a result of intra-state conflicts in the Middle East, the Balkans, the Caucasus, Africa, and elsewhere, the security implications of refugee movements began to dominate political developments at the United Nations Security Council, NATO, and other security organizations (Loescher and Milner 2005: 24).

In the late 1980s and the 1990s, a dramatic change took place in international norms on state sovereignty and non-intervention as a consequence of ‘new wars’, which produced massive refugee flows and internal displacement. Resulting from the emergence of the so-called global humanitarian regime that I elaborate on below in the context of security understandings in the United Nations, the 1990s is also known as the decade of humanitarian interventions. Mary Kaldor (2007: 3–4; italics added) defines ‘new wars’ as network wars in a way that demonstrates the link between the politicization of the transnational paradigm and the current thinking on security:

‘[N]ew wars’ … take place in the context of the disintegration of states (typically authoritarian states under the impact of globalization). They are fought by networks of state and non-state actors … most violence is directed against civilians … taxation is falling and war finance consists of loot and pillage, illegal trading and other war-generated revenue … the distinctions between combatant and non-combatant, legitimate violence and criminality are all breaking down … Above all, they construct new sectarian identities (religious, ethnic or tribal) that undermine the sense of a shared political community. Indeed, this could be considered
The purpose of these wars. They recreate the sense of political community along new divisive lines through the manufacture of fear and hate... Moreover, these sectarian political identities are often inextricably tied to criminalized networks that provide a basis for a global shadow economy... ‘new wars’ are very difficult to end... they tend to spread through refugees and displaced persons, criminalized networks, and the sectarian ideologies they manufacture.

Loescher and Milner, who aim to “bring into the mainstream of international relations and security studies an understanding of strategic roots and consequences of refugee movements” (Loescher 1992: 3), suggest that, from the mid-1990s up to the present day, writings on migration and security in security studies, political science, and sociology have focused on the securitization of asylum in the European context (Loescher and Milner 2005: 25). Debates about asylum, immigration, social identity, and cohesion have been translated into state action against asylum seekers and migrants. The main discourses of this discussion have been integration and assimilation rather than transnationality.

Security concerns have heightened since the events of September 11 and the subsequent US-led ‘global war on terror’. The new security agenda has sharpened the association for many Western security and policy analysts—but also for some social scientists—between refugees, asylum seekers, and illegal migrants, on the one hand, and the issue of insecurity, on the other. During the current decade, there has been an emphasis on the potential links between migration and asylum in the West and transnational crime, terrorism (see, e.g., Brouwer, Catz, and Guild 2003; EUPOL 2009; European Union 2003), national identity, and societal security. In the European Union, improving the border management of adjoining states and regions and controlling illegal migration and trafficking have become top priorities for policy makers and, as a result, have led to a politics of regionalism (Ceccorulli 2009). Western policy makers increasingly believe that the potential security threats of refugee movements can be contained in regions of refugee origin. The implications of this approach produce a binary opposition between human rights and security ideology, a paradox that is embedded in the ways that the United Nations talks about refugees and deals with their issues.

**Humanitarian Interventions: Preventing and Containing Refugee Movements**

Humanitarianism is not inherently a pacifist ideology (see, e.g., Slim 2001). In the late 1990s, B. S. Chimini (2000: 2), a specialist on international legislation concerning refugees, argued that “humanitarianism is the ideology of hegemonic states in the era of globalization [and this] ideology of humanitarianism mobilises a large range of meanings and practices to establish and sustain global relations of domination.” Hugo Slim (2001: 331–332) explains that “humanitarian action can extend from infant-feeding and water supply through economic sanctions and peace-keeping to the use of force, and then beyond to peace-building activities, state repair and democratization.” He talks about the construction of what he refers to as ‘violent humanitarianism’ in the 1990s and
traces the foundation of a new form of interventionist and militarized agenda in the United Nations to a report, titled *An Agenda for Peace*, of then UN Secretary-General Boutros-Ghali (1992). The report reflected the emergence of the issue of security in the United Nations debates and the inclusion of refugees into the security discourse. It renewed the right and the intention of the United Nations to use force (referred to as ‘preventive deployment’) if all other means failed (as per Article 42 of Chapter VII of the United Nations Charter). The paragraphs below and the argumentation of this article in general show that humanitarian interventions have often been conducted primarily to prevent refugee crises or at least to contain them in the areas of conflict and have thereby contributed to the politicization of the transnational paradigm.

*The United Nations, Refugees, and Security*

States have been prompted for reasons of national and regional security to tackle the problem of human displacement in a more preventive manner, addressing the conditions which force people to abandon their homes. (UNHCR 1996–1997)

The United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) was founded by the United Nations General Assembly in 1950 with the statutory responsibility to provide international protection to refugees and to seek permanent solutions to their problems. During the Cold War, its activities were two-fold: in the developed world, it worked to ensure that states hosting refugees from communist countries adhered to their international legal obligations according to the 1951 refugees convention; in the developing world, it maintained refugee camps in the borders adjoining protracted superpower proxy wars, such as those in Afghanistan and Angola. Presently, its primary focus has shifted from providing international protection for refugees to managing large-scale humanitarian operations that assist war-affected populations in the midst of conflicts (Goodwin-Gill 1999; Hammerstad 2000). According to Anne Hammerstad (2000), this operational transformation was accompanied by a significant conceptual change in the 1990s that involved a re-evaluation of the nature of refugee emergencies and of the UNHCR’s own role in dealing with them.

As described in the previous section, changes took place in the late 1980s and the 1990s in the operational environment as the political stance on refugees changed in the West. Rich countries, especially those in Europe, wanted increasingly to deter refugees and asylum seekers from crossing their borders. The reasons were many: migrants, including refugees, were no longer welcomed as workers due to a decrease in demand and an increase in supply; xenophobic right-wing parties with anti-immigration policies became more popular; and refugees were no longer ideological trump cards in the global struggle between the East and the West. During this same period, the number of refugees rose sharply as a result of conflicts in the Balkans and East Timor and due to the Rwandan genocide. In this changed political context, Western states began to employ policies that mirrored their interest in restricting refugee flows. They
undertook humanitarian actions and military humanitarian interventions to contain potential refugees within their countries or regions of origin. Moreover, both the states and the UNHCR have, to an increasing extent, sought to repatriate refugees at the earliest possible stage, which has sometimes led to forced repatriation (Hammerstad 2000: 393).

The operational change of the UNHCR that reflected the altered policies of its donor countries was the development of a security discourse within the refugee agency in the 1990s. According to Hammerstad (2000: 395), the traditional focus of the UNHCR on the legal and human rights and humanitarian needs of refugee individuals and on the corresponding international legal obligations of the states was not entirely replaced but rather became gradually subsumed within the security discourse. In a keynote speech at a ministerial meeting on human security issues in Bergen, Norway, the then UN High Commissioner for Refugees, Sadako Ogata (1999), claimed that the first aim of the United Nations Charter is to maintain “international peace and security” with the goal of achieving “human security” and named refugees as a “significant symptom” of the insecurities of the post–Cold War world (cf. Hammerstad 2000: 396). Hence, the UNHCR’s discourse on refugees legitimizes the new security paradigm by explaining that refugee flows must be prevented, contained, and reversed because of the security threats that they create for the social cohesion, political integrity, and economic welfare of host states, for regional and international stability, for humanitarian workers, and for the refugees themselves (ibid.).

The term ‘human security’ is an ambiguous and broad concept that is employed extensively to conceptualize the security discourse in the United Nations and some other international organizations, such as the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE). Yet its future in the United Nations as well as among other international actors is far from certain. For instance, in his report, *In Larger Freedom*, then UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan (2005) uses the term only once, speaking more often of a concept of ‘collective security’ (see also Owen 2008: 119). In the United Nations, the notion of human security was first promulgated by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP 1993): “Security should be interpreted as security for people, not security for land … The concept of security must change—from an exclusive stress on national security to much greater stress on people’s security, from security through armaments, to security through human development, from territorial security to food, employment and environmental security.” The UNDP’s (1994) *Human Development Report* identified core elements that together made up the idea of human security: economic security, food security, health security, personal security, community security, and political security. The human security approach has since developed in two main directions, one emphasizing security in the face of political violence (freedom from fear and freedom from want), the other emphasizing the interrelatedness of different types of security and the particular importance of development as a security strategy.

Taylor Owen (2008: 120) argues that the Secretary-General and many member states are reluctant to endorse fully the concept of human security because of the United Nations’ conflation of state security and human development and
the overlap between human security and human rights. Even if some United Nations’ documents, such as *Human Security Now* (Ogata and Sen 2003), stress that human security is a complementary rather than a competing paradigm to national security (see Owen 2008: 118), the obvious reason for many member states’ reluctance to endorse human security is that they acknowledge the potential conflicts between the security of the individual, the political community, and state borders. Especially in matters of strategic importance, states are unwilling to be exposed to challenges to their own sovereignty, although they may challenge other states that are considered ‘fragile’, ‘rogue’, or ‘failed’. A “certain reluctance at supranationalization” with regard to migration as a security threat is evident even in the European Union (Ceccorulli 2009: 7).

For Owen (2008), human security is a precondition for human development, but not vice versa: human security looks directly at the threat outcomes, such as violence or economic downturns, while development looks at the empowerment process. Human development is more concerned with long-term institution building, whereas human security addresses emergency relief. The focus on emergencies is linked to the ‘responsibility to protect’ slogan that is used to justify ‘humanitarian interventions’ in the sense that links human security to the protection of human rights: if the state is dysfunctional, then international organizations must step in, not just to pressure the state to respect human rights, but to assume the state’s duty to protect (ibid.: 121). A neo-liberal vein became visible in the report of the Trade and Development Board of the United Nations (2005: 4), which separates development from peace and security in relation to the international community’s obligations, stating that “each country must take primary responsibility for its own development and that the role of national policies and development strategies cannot be overemphasized in the achievement of sustainable development” (cf. Owen 2008: 120).

**Human Security in EU Policies: Security-Centered Mobility Awareness and Its Implications for Development**

While the European Union is trying to build ‘Fortress Europe’, the OSCE has been adopting the phrase ‘human security’ in its vocabulary. This became evident in the European Union’s (2003) security strategy report, *A Secure Europe in a Better World*. Mary Kaldor (2007: 182–183), who is the principal academic voice of the new security doctrine of the OSCE, suggests that human security potentially offers a new approach to both security and development. While this strategy is new in comparison to the narrowly state-centered, violence-based approaches, associations between peace and development are not solely contemporary; rather, they can be traced, scholarly and philosophically, to the work of Immanuel Kant, preceding the concept of human security by centuries. The essence of the so-called liberal peace theory is that democracies do not go to war with each other (e.g., Turner 2006).

From methodological and theoretical angles, it is the emphasis on individuals that seems to form the continuum between different peace development
associations. For instance, Adam Curle (1971: 174) identified development as a possibility of individual capacity building to be one of the key components of peace building through the restructuring of conflicting relationships from below. The empowerment of an individual and her or his capabilities are also at the center of Nobel-awarded economist Amartya Sen’s thinking on human security, which constitutes the foundation of the UNDP core understanding of human security. The fact that the human security concept has been brought to the UNHCR security thinking from the United Nations Development Programme shows again the close interrelation among development, security, and migration.

With regard to an understanding of ‘new wars’, human security, and the transnational paradigm, what is common among them is that they all move away from methodological nationalism. Thus, methodological individualism, a conceptual if not operational focus on people rather than on borders, is perhaps the prevailing factor that led policy makers to use transnationality as an entry point to mobility in the context of ‘global governance’ and ‘global humanitarian regime’. One implication of human security policy is the intertwining of humanitarian and development assistance (Kaldor 2007: 193). In the context of ‘new wars’, underdevelopment is seen as a security threat and as a source of social unrest.

When the human security approach is operationalized in terms of the West and of security organizations such as OSCE, NATO, and the United Nations Security Council, its human rights potential is ambivalent. When state security and individual or community security are in real or alleged contradiction, the dispute is also political. When it comes to controlling mobility, the protection of state borders may become one of the primary components of maintaining the human security of some populations or individuals. In most developed countries, refugees and immigrants do not threaten state security but are increasingly considered as threats to different aspects of their citizens’ human security. Thus, the relationship between human security and human rights is not straightforward.

Underdevelopment, as a source of social unrest and conflict, and natural catastrophes produce ‘uncontrolled’ mobility, which is unwanted in terms of Western immigration and refugee policies. The association between migration and security has upgraded migration management to a strategic matter of top priority in the European Union. The interest in controlling unwanted inflows of migrants has an impact on the European Union’s external relations and mingles with its other core policy fields (Ceccorulli 2009: 2). For policy makers, the fact that people live their lives through different categories such as ‘displaced’, ‘refugee’, and ‘economic migrant’ and that countries seldom produce only one kind of movers has produced the problem of mixed migratory flows. In essence, policy makers confront problems of governance and center their concerns on what they see as the potential danger of abuse to a system that is, in principle, based on human rights and international legislation on refugees. In 2003, the European Commission noted that the “[a]buse of asylum procedures is on the rise, as are mixed migratory flows, often maintained by smuggling practices involving both people with a legitimate need for international protection and migrants using asylum procedures to gain access to the member states to improve their
living conditions.” This rhetoric, which on the surface compartmentalizes different kinds of mobility, highlights interestingly how policy makers label mobility selectively in an era of security-centered, development-oriented, and, in its aspirations, rights-based humanitarianism. Following this trend, the current UNHCR documents (see, e.g., UNHCR 2009) have added ‘mixed migration populations’ to their vocabulary and use the expression matter-of-factly.

The term ‘asylum migrant’ is used negatively in the context of migrants who enter Europe and other Western countries illegally. In practice, it points to a mobility that fits well in ‘guest worker’ regimes that are re-emerging in the West in the guise of ‘circular migration’ (see Glick Schiller, this issue; Piper 2006). Asylum migrants are people who will most likely fail to achieve asylum but will, in the meantime, send remittances to their families while working in the economy’s exploitative gray sector. Thus, different regimes and categories that are discussed in terms of humanitarian and security concerns cannot be separated from an analysis of the fluctuating needs of the labor market and the current preference for short-term temporary workers who have no rights with regard to entitlements, settlement, or family reunification.

The fear of abuse to the system is slightly ironic in the face of the fact that there seem to be processes under way that burden migrants and refugees with responsibilities that used to belong to states and the international community in terms of post-conflict reconstruction, assistance toward refugees, and development. Some attempts to replace political solutions to the refugee crisis with a technical ‘hands on’ approach and aspects of moving from relief assistance to a development mode of assistance have a potential of working either toward ‘transnationalism from above’ or ‘transnationalism from below’. There is potential for the former in the promotion of transnational relations that are restricted by the rich countries to the refugees’ region of origin. It suggests that refugees are seen as integrated diasporas that enhance positive development in the conflict area while remaining in its immediate vicinity, instead of moving to the European Union or other rich countries.

Hence, globally, state officials’ consciousness of mobility is kept on permanent alert. ‘Comprehensive border awareness’ packages are sold to states (including, recently, Qatar and Estonia) by private security companies, such as the European Aeronautic Defence and Space Company (EADS), and the fences and high-tech surveillance equipment outside Ceuta and Melilla are intended to block sub-Saharan and West African migrants and asylum seekers from entering the Schengen Area. Countries such as Senegal, Mali, Mauritania, and Morocco receive substantial amounts of development assistance from the European Union and from Spain on the condition that they commit themselves to restricting the border crossing of their populations (Peltonen 2007). These extreme preventive policies and measures have unintentionally increased illegal mobility to the Canary Islands, continental Spain, and Italy (ibid.). The methodological individualism of human security as applied to mobility does not in effect lessen the emphasis on borders.

Controlling mixed migration populations takes many forms. For example, the European Union has a Strategic Committee on Immigration, Frontiers and
Asylum (SCIFA) that also works in cooperation with external partners. The United States expects the European Union’s cooperation with border control in transit areas, border information exchange, return of inadmissible persons, and so forth. The focus is on individuals who cross borders with the goal being “to obtain information about those crossing frontiers and ensure maximum security” (van Selm and Tsolakis 2004: 8; cf. Ceccorulli 2009: 11). The strategic security emphasis on mobility that is illegal in the face of EU rules and regulations is a continuous trend. The renewed focus on illegal immigration can be found in the European Union’s (2008) Report on the Implementation of the European Security Strategy: Providing Security in a Changing World (cf. Ceccorulli 2009: 10).

In general, the official criteria for current development assistance (e.g., that of the European Union) are needs and performance. The latter indicates that the aid is conditional: it is linked to the human rights regime. In the context of wars and conflicts, as well as post-conflict reconstruction, some analysts suggest that such aid seeks a complete transformation of a society’s values and behavioral patterns (see, e.g., Duffield 2001). This development intervention, which is sometimes preceded by and combined with military intervention that is justified in humanitarian terms, can be explained by the donor community’s belief in the liberal peace theory that I elaborated on earlier. Such an aid regime is characterized by institution building, a rights-based approach, and what Dezalay and Garth (2002) refer to as ‘legal globalization’—that is, the transnationalization of legal models, frameworks, and ideas. However, despite the fact that such aid makes reference to human rights and democracy, the transnational dimensions of these aid relations (even outside the military context) are not necessarily democratic. For example, in many aid-receiving developing countries, democratic elections do not take place until after structural adjustment programs initiated by the IMF and the World Bank have been implemented (Duffield 2001). This implementation is often conducted by so-called contractor states, with much of the multi-level aid surpassing Third World governments or embryonic state structures due to the central role given to both non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and international non-governmental organizations (INGOs). These organizations are sub-contracted aid distributors, as well as important aid recipients.

Migrant remittances and diaspora investments are important survival instruments in societies undergoing structural adjustment programs, while the same programs produce migration flows linked to specific First World labor needs, such as care work in an aging Europe. Remittance-migration formations also appear in areas of conflict and high levels of internal violence. Consider, for example, female migration from Central and South American states such as Bolivia and Colombia to Spain and Italy, which is triggered by high levels of internal violence and, more often than not, the dissolution of conjugal ties (Sørensen 2005). Sometimes family dissolution happens as a consequence of structural adjustment programs that cause gendered unemployment, preventing men from providing for their families—an important notion of masculinity in several societies. As a result, many women are abandoned, and some of
them migrate. Migration and refugeeness are at the center of the development-security nexus, and many variations of the transnationality theme are manifestations of this connection. Paradoxically, while the centrality of transnational mobility for the development-security nexus is visible, it is not ‘seen’ in the writings of most anthropologists working within the transnational paradigm. Perhaps this is because this connection allegedly belongs to the realm of development, the “evil twin” of anthropology (Ferguson 1997).

A Transnational Approach to Migration Policies: Remittances

Bilateral and multilateral development agencies have increasingly stressed that remittances play an important role in the survival of poor individuals, families, and communities around the world. Policy discussions on migration have undergone some changes during the last two decades or so. Throughout the 1990s, the European Commission and other policy interlocutors in international thinking and at state levels promoted the idea that migration and refugee flows should be reduced by generating local development, preventing and resolving local conflicts, and retaining refugees in neighboring or first countries of asylum. This approach, commonly labeled ‘combating the root causes of migration’ (see Ceccorulli 2009; Sørensen 2004), achieved its structural limits during the late 1990s, when research demonstrated that an increase in economic productivity may simultaneously increase mobility, at least in the short term. This was referred to as the ‘migration hump’. The term pointed to the paradox that the same economic policies that can reduce migration in the long term can increase it in the short term (Pastore 2003; cf. Sørensen 2004). It is important to note that because of the general securitization trend and the current economic downturn, the strategy of combating the root causes of migration has not disappeared: it is the principal policy guideline of most United Nations and European Union documents on migration.

The transnational approach was explicitly brought to the development policy arena at the turn of the millennium. This method sees internal, regional, and international mobility as an intrinsic dimension of development and views mobility as an essential condition for economic and social development (Sørensen 2004). For example, the World Bank and the DAC began to encourage diasporas to become engaged in positive development roles in their countries of origin. In 2003, the World Bank’s Global Development Finance Report took formal notice of remittances as a source of external development finance for the first time, and UN Secretary-General Annan identified migration as a priority issue for the international community. Estimated at around US $283 billion in 2008 (Ratha, Mohapatra, and Xu 2008), registered remittances to developing countries represent a large proportion of global financial flows, and there is reason to believe that substantial amounts remain unregistered. Based on available evidence, various reports estimate that remittances amount to more than double the official assistance, which is more than capital market flows and more than half of foreign direct investment flows to development.
countries, despite the fact that in real terms remittances were expected to fall from 2 percent of GDP in 2007 to 1.8 in 2008 (ibid.).

According to Ninna Nyberg Sørensen (2004), what underlies the development dimension of migrant transfers is that remittances are said to have the potential of being more stable than private capital flows and to be less vulnerable to changing economic cycles—an aspect that has been emphasized in the migration and development literature. While it is true that remittances have some degree of regularity because of the ongoing family and kinship ties that motivate them, migrants are not immune to changes in the economy. On the contrary, they are primarily positioned in economic niches that are the most vulnerable to market changes. Almost all migrants—from highly educated and well-paid professionals to workers in the construction industry, care work, and service work—share this vulnerability to economic downturns. Sometimes remitting persons do not have work permits, which means that they do not pay taxes. But it also means that they are not covered by legislation that protects workers in the workplace and cannot take advantage of membership in trade unions. Nor do they not have the safety net of unemployment benefits in times of economic decline.

The discourse on remittances and development not only neglects the vulnerability of migrant workers in the workplace, but also fails to examine the effect of violent conflict on transnational relations and remittance flows. In the context of violence, the importance of mobility as a resource increases. Yet increasingly conflict-generated diaspora members in the West and their transnational connections are not screened through international legislation on refugees. Instead, they are examined through the lens of the ‘global war on terror’ (for operational measures, see, e.g., Ceccorulli 2009: 11) and accused of spreading ‘new wars’ to the cities of the West by replicating confrontational bifurcations in the new settings, committing terrorist acts, and perpetuating conflicts ‘back home’ through ‘long-distance nationalism’, that is, different kinds of remittances. ‘Home-grown’ terrorism by second-generation immigrants is a growing concern in Europe (EUPOL 2009), and security-oriented literature, policy papers, and journalistic writings on this subject are abundant. As much as the slogan ‘responsibility to protect’ has become a constituent of humanitarian interventions and peace enforcement, the First World countries’ popular attitude is that politicians and lawmakers should protect citizens from refugees and, to a lesser extent, migrants. Perhaps that is why, instead of transnationality, multiculturalism and integration remain the main discourses concerning the migrant and refugee presence in the West within the larger question of security. Multiculturalism and integration are used both as analytical frameworks and as policy guidelines. Keeping in mind the earlier cited definition of ‘new wars’, I would argue that multiculturalism and integration can be seen more as manifestations of the deep politicization and securitization of transnational mobility than as adequate theoretical tools for social science and migration studies.

Migration studies have examined the different ways that migrants remit and how remittances influence community development, economic structures, and relations between genders and family members. This literature has drawn
attention to migrants’ economic contributions and has probably increased policy makers’ interest in migrants’ role in the development of the sending countries. Several migrant-sending countries have taken formal notice of the importance of remittances, introducing laws and other channels to facilitate remitting and to support migrant investments. To maintain their loyalty, sending countries treat migrants as important constituents of the nation and give them special rights, such as an expatriate vote and dual citizenship. While states are simultaneously forging and institutionalizing transnational relations and lifestyles, the migrants’ transnational activities can threaten the stability of migrant- and refugee-sending countries when members of diasporas engage in political lobbying, opposition politics, and separatist and terrorist movements.

The self-help component of remittances can also be destabilizing on an individual level. Because remittances are often sent to individuals, they can be a source of conflict and friction within transnational families and communities. Migration and transnationality can—and in many cases do—increase inequality. Sometimes they contribute to hierarchical gender relations and other inequalities among those who stayed behind. In this regard, migrant remittances reflect the neo-liberal order of the day, which is built on competitive and consumption-oriented individualism. Policies cannot be divorced from politics. Put together with the promotion of the role of transnational relations in enhancing development ‘back home’, this is one of the points where the transnational paradigm meets neo-liberal economics.

Sedentary Regimes and Transnational Solutions?

In the 1950s, the United Nations forged an international refugee regime, based on three ‘durable’ solutions for refugee crises: integration in the first country of asylum, resettlement in a third country, or repatriation (i.e., return to the home country) at the earliest possible date. The last continues to be seen as the best and most ‘natural’ option. However, since the 1990s (note the timing), it has been increasingly admitted that return is not an easy or simple ‘optimal solution’ (see, e.g., Koser and Black 1999). Anthropologists such as Liisa Malkki and Laura Hammond have criticized this international refugee regime for its sedentary thinking, in the sense that people were being conceptualized as naturally rooted in the soil. This critique is also part of the UNHCR’s (1995) effort to move from a “reactive, exile-oriented and refugee-specific” approach toward one that is “proactive, homeland-oriented and holistic” and, according to Van Hear (2002), includes acknowledging refugee crises as transnational phenomena.

But what does this recognition actually mean? In essence, it means that policy makers recognize that refugee crises are transnational problems and act accordingly in line with their own security, development, and economic considerations. According to Hammerstad (2000: 396), the UNHCR’s approach “emphasizes the prevention and containment of refugee flows and advocates conflict resolution, reconstruction and refugee repatriation.” Heterogeneous types of mobility are inherently seen as people out of place. This is signaled...
by the use of sedentary concepts such as displaced persons and IDP (internally displaced people). In her agenda for human security, Kaldor (2007: 183) asserts: “Perhaps the indicator that comes closest to a measure of human security is displaced persons. Displaced persons are a typical feature of contemporary crises, both natural disasters and wars. There has been a steady increase in the number of displaced persons per conflict over the last decades ... Displaced persons are the victims of both physical and material insecurity.”

The above citation ties mobility and human security tightly together, making mobility an indicator of a lack of security, the idea being that people do not leave their homes and communities unless they are faced with a serious threat (see, e.g., UNHCR 1997). Moreover, reflecting the conceptual transformation among international organizations and states on security, mobility, and the obligations stated in international refugee legislation, it shows clearly that the discourse on crisis-generated mobility is increasingly that of displaced persons rather than refugees. The reasons for this shift are several. While the contemporary numbers of IDP are higher than refugee figures, my estimation is that the balance would shift if the crossing of international borders, which is the main legal condition of the definition ‘refugee’, was less restricted. Besides, while the concept ‘refugee’ implies legal rights and protection provided by the international community and individual states alike, ‘displaced person’ is merely a descriptive term that does not denote any rights or entitlements.

Development assistance for refugees (DAR) programs have been reinvented to revitalize local integration as a durable solution for refugee problems in order to limit the secondary movement of refugees from countries of first asylum and mixed flows of refugees and migrants toward the European Union and other rich regions (Stepputat 2004: 18). Whether these programs have actually been successful in the conflict areas and have improved refugees’ lives varies case by case. What is more relevant here is how these programs forge mobility precisely because they acknowledge the refugee crisis as a transnational phenomenon: their aim is to restrict refugees from moving and to advocate support for refugee-hosting areas. DAR aims to strengthen the self-reliance of refugees and thereby increase their contribution to local development, decrease the need for long-term care and maintenance programs, reduce the potential for host-refugee conflicts, and better prepare refugees for durable solutions ‘through development’ (ibid.). Behind these models seems also to be evidence of the so-called windmill effect. The term suggests that after the initial crisis, the refugee presence boosts the local economy by increasing the capacity to utilize natural resources and by creating new niches in the labor market (see, for example, Van Hear 1998).

Although many refugees are desperate to return home as soon as possible and, sometimes more importantly, regain access to farmable land and their property, not all people who flee are willing to return to the place of departure. Past experiences can be extremely traumatic, and donor-driven ‘truth and reconciliation’ processes or former fighters’ reintegration programs often fail to address the unresolved atrocities (see, e.g., Rosen 2007). This is particularly evident in the so-called minority returns. Post-conflict circumstances are sometimes characterized by a tradition of impunity.
Development and Post-conflict Return

In the following paragraphs, I will reflect on the discussion of Sørensen, Van Hear, and Engberg-Pedersen (2003) regarding post-conflict return and development. The empirical cue for this analysis draws from my own ethnographic data about Palestinian return migrants. In terms of development, Sørensen, Van Hear, and Engberg-Pedersen suggest that migrants’ return to the home country after a short period abroad is not likely to contribute to development, especially if the movement is abrupt. They also suggest that the return after a longer stay abroad has much greater development potential.

My ethnographic case data among Palestinian returnees provide some evidence of this trend, but also suggest that the degree to which returnees contribute to development reflects on where and in what conditions they have spent their time abroad. Whether or not they were refugees by legal status did not much matter. Perhaps more importantly for the present argument, my material suggests that sometimes people returned because of the development potential of a place that had been defined as a post-conflict site by the international donor community. For example, migrants who returned to the West Bank and Gaza Strip in the optimistic ‘days of Oslo’ had no idea that post-conflict reconstruction assistance programs and investments are usually short-term. Some had returned in an optimistic vein without considerable economic resources of their own, while some had no choice except to return. As often happens in post-conflict situations where the root causes of the hostilities have not been resolved, the Palestine-Israel conflict re-escalated, and thus development in the occupied Palestinian territory turned to de-development and arrested state building.

Moreover, Sørensen, Van Hear, and Engberg-Pedersen (2003) note that states with a history of violent conflict are more willing to encourage refugees to contribute resources from abroad rather than to return and participate directly in the post-conflict nation-state building process. The argument of the authors that a state in-the-making or recovering from a conflict may prefer that at least certain segments of diaspora remain abroad is valid also in light of my ethnographic material. Rather than encouraging migrants or refugees to return, which would burden the fragile infrastructure and peace, the state leadership often hopes that they will invest from abroad. These states may not welcome returnees if their move to the former home country is intended to be one-directional and if they arrive with expectations of a welfare state or long-term international assistance after their return. Thus, in contrast to the expectations of the international refugee regime, the preferences of those who stayed in the home country and the policies of post-conflict societies may discourage migrants’ and refugees’ permanent return to the homeland.

The forces that encourage remittances and investments from abroad but discourage return engender a further set of questions about remittances and the security of both individuals and states. My point here is that wherever we find ‘evidence’ of the preference for transnational lifestyles as compared to return, the situation should be examined carefully. We should always ask which groups
are being encouraged to do what and by whom. Who prefers for migrants or refugees to remain abroad and why? Are the reasons primarily economical, or are they related to the home country’s internal political power balance? What are the differences between refugees who are seen as potential troublemakers and/or economic burdens, whose state of origin prefers for them to stay abroad, and displaced people, who are vulnerable victims needing to return to their proper place as soon as possible through humanitarian interventions in the name of human security, whose goal is to protect people rather than state borders? In the case of Palestinian return migration to the West Bank and the Gaza Strip in the aftermath of the Gulf War of 1990–1991 and again shortly after the Oslo Accords of 1993, most returnees were not refugees because the Oslo Accords did not allow Palestinian refugees the right of return.

Conclusions

In terms of both Western entrance policies and development-oriented aid, refugees and asylum seekers are increasingly treated either as security threats or as economic migrants. The terms ‘refugee’ and ‘economic migrant’ are thus interpreted contextually. With regard to the European Union entrance policy, the association between the two terms points to potential system abuse. The mobility of refugees is being controlled, yet, simultaneously, refugees are expected to carry much of the responsibility for the post-conflict reconstruction of their home communities, through investments and remittances to the most vulnerable—those who stayed behind. Obviously, taking advantage of transnational connections and linking diaspora populations to post-conflict reconstruction often benefits all parties concerned. However, involving refugees and migrants in ‘reconstruction’ and development should not happen through guest worker types of migration regimes that are currently re-emerging in the West. These exploitative systems are being legitimated as development tools and as a solution to refugee problems by using security concerns to restrict migrants’ and refugees’ freedom of movement and their right to seek asylum.

The transnational approach, as applied to development policies, has not taken over at the expense of the strategy of combating the root causes of migration. Rather, the promotion of transnational relations as a development tool and as a lasting solution to the refugee crisis shows signs of taking place within the framework of this strategy through the links made between development and security. The politicization of transnationality seems to mean that new security conceptualizations that emphasize methodological individualism, whereby the individual is the reference point of security, are increasingly operationalized on behalf of state security at the expense of refugee and migrant security. Even if the new security understandings allegedly give up narrow state-centeredness, they indicate the promotion of regionalism, in which refugee crises are contained and solved in conflict regions. Thus, while methodological individualism is a conceptual feature of human security, policies and practices that involve refugees and migration reflect the concern of containing refugees in conflict.
regions where transnational mobility would mainly be confined and secondary movement strictly regulated. Consequently, despite conceptual overlapping with human rights, human security, at least on an operational level, indicates particularism and relativism when applied to refugees and migrants.

It is striking that migration scholars—specialists on the motivations, considerations, hopes, and constraints that refugees and migrants experience—have left the analysis of the strategic relations of security and migration mainly to security and political analysts, whose methodological and theoretical tools are not necessarily as appropriate for the subject area. I suggest that migration researchers should go beyond analyzing how societal and security concerns of receiving states translate into state action against asylum seekers and migrants, and then trying to prove how well the migrants actually adapt and integrate. These scholars need to do much more than demonstrate how much migrants contribute to the development in both sending and host countries. Such approaches are understandable because many scholars who work with the transnational paradigm have adopted the migrants’ perspective—subconsciously or explicitly—and are concerned about their rights and security. However, this has resulted in their accommodation to the politicized approach to transnationality without having addressed this politicization and its reasons analytically. Migration scholars should analyze securitization seriously and bring it to their scholarship without letting that trend guide their research through state policies. This indicates accepting neither methodological nationalism nor methodological individualism and addressing the global reach of a set of powerful states and related institutional structures. A scholarship is needed that examines refugees and migrants as subjects of security, not simply as indicators of a lack of security. Only then will it be possible to bring different units of analysis, such as states and international organizations, into a single analytical perspective.

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Notes

1. On a macro-economic level, Orozco (2003) characterizes the development impact of migration by ‘five Ts’: transfers (of remittances and grants), transportation, tourism, telecommunication, and trade (cf. Levitt and Sørensen 2004).
2. The figure of 190,600,000 total international migrants is obtained from the Migration Policy Institute’s Web site. See http://www.migrationinformation.org/DataHub/remittances/World.pdf.
3. Examples of this viewpoint are many. See, for example, the International Organization for Migration’s special edition titled Reaping the Fruits of Migration and Development (IOM 2007), in which articles organized along policy lines, such as ‘migrant training’, ‘economic sustainability’, ‘remittances’, ‘labor migration’, etc., approach migrants as agents of development mainly ‘back home’. Several articles concern return migration (e.g., to Afghanistan) and refugee repatriation, phenomena that I will reflect on throughout this text.
4. It is important to note that neo-liberalism is not a homogeneous phenomenon, but it works differently in different contexts, also development and mobility.
5. ‘Mobile livelihoods’ is a term introduced by Karen Fog Olwig and Ninna Nyberg Sørensen (2002). It refers to making a living in a way that depends on multiple locations and border-crossing ties.
6. This, of course, does not suggest a break away from nationalism as an ideology. Scholars such as Wimmer and Glick Schiller (2002) who critique methodological nationalism do not advocate methodological individualism.
7. Individual terrorists of immigrant origin who do pose a threat to state security cannot be considered as representative of groups or categories such as refugees or migrants.
9. EADS took part in the 2nd International Conference on European Emergency Management, “Civil Protection—Resilience to Terrorism and Natural Disasters,” which was held in Helsinki on 12–14 November 2008. The event was organized by the CIVPRO Civil Protection Network, Aleksanteri Institute, University of Helsinki, and was sponsored by the prime minister’s office of Finland, the US embassy in Helsinki, and the EU Commission. Other corporate partners included Elisa Corporation, Siemens, Hedman Partners, Jalasvirta Group, and Ourex.
10. ‘Contractor states’ and ‘caretaker governments’ also appear in post-conflict contexts. For example, since the mid-1990s, this approach toward aid implementation has been critiqued by Palestinian laypeople and academics who are concerned by the relationships among the Palestinian National Authority, Israel, the United States, and the international donor community (see Isotalo 2009).
11. The ethnographic material about Palestinian return migrants that I discuss here was collected in the occupied Palestinian territory and Israel during more than two years of fieldwork between 1996 and 2003.

References


From Kreuzberg to Marzahn
New Migrant Communities in Berlin

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Berlin is transforming from the “special zone” of the Cold War that it once was into a multicultural metropolis more typical of the twenty-first century. The city’s social diversity already began increasing before the fall of the Wall, but greatly increased after unification in 1990. Today, the 13.3 percent foreign-born population share of Berlin is among the highest of all European capitals.

Yet, immigrants in the city suffer from social exclusion. The gap between the unemployment rates of Germans and non-Germans in Berlin remains on the order of two to one. In 2003, 18.4 percent of Germans on average were unemployed compared to 38.8 percent of non-Germans (up from 33.5 percent in 1998). Furthermore, in every age group but especially among older people, foreigners today are twice or more as likely as Germans to be social assistance recipients. In 2003, 12.6 percent of working-age non-Germans living in Berlin received social assistance, compared to 5 percent of German residents twenty-five to sixty-four years old.

The city-state long has attempted to accommodate its newcomers and fight social exclusion. As early as 1981, the (West) Berlin Senate instituted Germany’s first Commission for Foreign Affairs (now the Commission for Migration and Integration), spending some €500,000 a year on integration projects during the 1980s. This Ausländerbeauftragte des Senats coordinates a wide range of policies targeted at disadvantaged populations and mediates between the local government and ethnic organizations. It provides important
information on the city’s ethnic groups and promotes intercultural coexistence through billboard campaigns and other programs. In contrast, it was not until 1 January 2005 that the federal government passed a new national immigration law that included explicit integration measures. An “Integration Summit” held in July 2006 launched a national discussion about the issue for the first time.\(^5\)

What does successful incorporation of migrants entail? In Berlin, it is possible to look to the examples of Kreuzberg, Neukölln, and Wedding where migrants have lived for decades. Despite continuing ethnic inequalities and tensions, old West Berlin had many positive experiences with its earlier immigrant communities, especially the Turks, Kurds, Poles and Southern Europeans. There are signs that these groups are slowly incorporating into the larger city. Since unification, Berlin now faces an additional challenge of integrating its newest immigrants, particularly those from Russia, Kazakhstan, Vietnam, Africa, and the Arab world. Can one draw any lessons from the experience of West Berlin immigrants for those in the east of the city?

To be sure, federal social measures helped the Jews and ethnic German *Spätäussiedler* (late ethnic German settlers) from Russia, Ukraine, and Kazakhstan to organize their communities. However, there was far less social support for the Vietnamese, Africans, and other former contract workers in the German Democratic Republic (*GDR*) who must largely fend for themselves.\(^6\) Will official neglect and self-help as a last resort largely shape the experience of these groups? Or will Berlin develop a new multiculturalism that can offer a positive signal about Germany’s ability to integrate newcomers? This article aims to assess this question.

**Kreuzberg**

In earlier decades, multiculturalism seemed to flourish precisely in those parts of town most excluded from local mainstream society. This was the fate of Kreuzberg, which became the legendary island of the foreign, the “Other,” and the poor. Turkish “guestworkers” settled in the area’s Old Berlin *Hinterhäuser*—rental buildings with inner courtyards dating from the *Gründerzeit* of the late 19th century—and the modernist high-rise social housing estates around Kottbusser Tor.
This neighborhood came to symbolize “the ghetto” of West Berlin and still dominates popular thinking about ethnic spaces and cultural difference in Germany.\textsuperscript{7}

Kreuzberg has always been a working-class migrant area, even since the 17th century arrival of the Protestant Huguenot refugees from France and East European immigrants laboring in its workshops and factories since the 19th century. After the Berlin Wall was built in 1961, the city faced severe labor shortages,\textsuperscript{8} so the German government recruited guestworkers from Southern Europe and Turkey to West Berlin. In 1962, about two-thirds of the new guestworkers resided in municipal or privately owned hostels.\textsuperscript{9} Because Kreuzberg was adjacent to the Berlin Wall and much of the housing was dilapidated and lacked modern conveniences, rent was cheap. There was less competition from Germans and less discrimination by landlords. All this attracted many of the city’s 180,000 Turks (as of 2003) and other immigrant workers to make their home there.\textsuperscript{10}

In the mid 1970s, urban renewal and housing rehabilitation caused rents to rise. Some Turkish tenants were displaced to other neighborhoods, while more affluent “alternative” Germans were attracted to the area. Some older housing was cleared to make way for a new public housing project at Kottbusser Tor. But, after a large scale urban renewal and highway plan that would have rid the area of densely populated nineteenth-century housing was ultimately abandoned, the “alternative scene” of activists, students and artists formed a squatter movement that took over the vacant buildings in the area. By the late 1970s, these countercultural youth who had occupied and restored the older houses protested large-scale renewal plans, resulting in a new policy of “careful renovation.”\textsuperscript{11} This policy established neighborhood planning committees, but few immigrants participated and the authorities rejected the committees’ recommendations in any case. After five years of conflict, the city legalized the squats and encouraged self-help and sweat equity to restore the older buildings. During the next decade, the orientation of the Berlin state government shifted from new construction to renovation and preservation, and from top-down to participatory planning. The draft-dodgers and other nonconformists who settled in the area helped to gentrify parts of Kreuzberg, making the neighborhood a world-renowned hot spot of sub-cultural innovation and multicultural
success. While some of the alternative scene moved to central eastern districts after unification, the “music scene” has recently returned to the neighborhood.

In the meantime, with continuing immigration, Berlin became the largest Turkish city outside Turkey. In the Kottbusser Tor area of Kreuzberg, non-German citizens comprise 55.2 percent of the population. Turkish residents of Kreuzberg, even second and third generation Germans of Turkish background, feel comfortable and secure in their neighborhood—some even feel anxious when they leave it for other areas of Berlin. At the same time, they maintain transnational identities, creatively blending the cultures of Berlin and their imaginary homelands. This has made Kreuzberg into a “diasporic space” with its own web of social institutions, norms, values, and even language. Turkish internet cafes, television stations, newspapers, travel agencies, and other “transnational intermediaries” are among the flourishing ethnic businesses in the neighborhood, helping to knit dense social ties across space. Political organizations, social service agencies, mosques, and other institutions round out the community. Even Turkish women have organized. For example, one citizens initiative, “Mothers without Borders,” founded by a Turkish-German social worker frustrated by police inaction, campaigns against drug dealing in Kreuzberg. AKARSU, founded in 1984, provides job preparation and training for migrant women in medical care and health advising for migrants. In fact, Berlin has some 121 Turkish organizations and over forty organizations serving immigrants in Kreuzberg alone.

Diversity in Kreuzberg is not limited to Germans and Turks. There are differences among foreigners of various nationalities, and among Turks themselves. Individuals from the same villages in Turkey cluster spatially. The Turkish population is also divided by sect (Sunni-Alevi), ethnicity (Turk-Kurd), politics (secular-religious), and other cleavages which are reflected in the community’s internal organizational diversity. Some argue that these ethnic organizations hinder migrant integration and constitute the rise of a “parallel society,” but this misses the evidence of successful incorporation.

Indeed, whether ethnic organizations impede or promote immigrant integration depends upon the organization’s orientation toward the host country. For example, outsiders meet the ethnics of
Kreuzberg through “multicultural intermediaries.” There are restaurants, cafes, markets, museums, festivals, the Werkstatt der Kulturen (a public social and artistic venue) in neighboring Neukölln and even a Radio Multikulti where Germans and Turks exchange and meld their cultural values and practices. There are also bars and clubs in the center of town, rather than in Kreuzberg, that appeal to middle-class Turkish youth in Berlin who identify with the city as a whole more than with their neighborhoods.20

There are other indicators of integration. Politically speaking, over 50,000 Turks and Kurds have naturalized (4,000 to 5,000 a year since 1990),21 and a dozen have been elected to the Berlin Senate. Socially, the most frequent form of interethnic marriage in Berlin is between Germans and Turks (477 in 2004), followed by Germans and Poles (320).22 Turkish household size began to decline in the 1990s, and like consumption habits, has shifted towards German standards.23 Since 2000, special adult German language programs targeted at migrant mothers were established in Mitte, Schöneberg, Kreuzberg, and Neukölln and demand now exceeds supply. Economically, Kreuzberg is also benefiting from new investment in ethnic businesses. There were about 5,000 to 6,000 Turkish enterprises in Berlin in 1998, employing some 20,000 people, out of 22,000 to 24,000 non-German enterprises in the city.24 Self-employment among Turks burgeoned, converging on the German rate, before recently leveling off.25 In Kreuzberg, one-third of the local enterprises were run by people of Turkish background, many employing family members, and serving both Germans and Turks.26 The Soziale Stadt program has established a business association, IG Kottbusser Tor, to provide advice and services to start-up firms and local entrepreneurs.

It is becoming harder to talk about a Turkish economic “enclave.” To be sure, a majority of Turkish entrepreneurs in Berlin still work in food (24 percent) and groceries (36 percent). But Döner Kebap snack (imbiss) stands are being sold for the next generation of immigrants’ fast food cuisine.27 Turkish business people are moving out of traditional businesses catering to migrants’ specific needs and into services and other sectors.28 Turkish businesses are exporting as well as importing, and few rely solely on Turkish customers. There is a great deal of mobility out of the informal ethnic economy, with female Turkish entrepreneurs especially moving away
from the Turkish community, hiring fewer ethnic family members, using fewer ethnic suppliers, serving fewer ethnic customers, and becoming German citizens.\textsuperscript{29} The Turkish business elite has organized to represent its interests to the government. Thus, to some extent, integration into the primary or formal segments of the market is gradually occurring.

To be sure, one should not exaggerate these signs of integration. Turks founded most ethnic businesses after unemployment spiked. For many, self-employment was a response to joblessness, discrimination, and government neglect, a reflection of social exclusion rather than a vehicle of integration. Nor are things necessarily improving for the next generation. The local schools have few immigrant teachers, and many Turkish-origin students drop out. In Berlin, 26.9 percent of foreigners leave school without a certificate, compared to 12.4 percent overall, and the trend among younger-generation migrants is worsening. There was even a May Day riot in 1987 in which youth of diverse backgrounds looted stores and smashed cars in Kreuzberg. Most Turks in Berlin do not participate in the celebrated multicultural events and may even distrust them. As Germans have moved increasingly to the Brandenburg suburbs in the 1990s, migrants have replaced them in the public housing estates on the western periphery so that segregation persists.\textsuperscript{30} Turkish and other immigrant households are largely not participating in the Quartiersmanagement (QM) of the area and when Turkish organizations have sought public funds, the QM has rejected them.\textsuperscript{31} There continue to be disputes over the construction of new mosques and their architecture.\textsuperscript{32} Racist incidents and everyday discrimination add to Turkish resentment and suspicion of Germans. After unification, many Germans left Kreuzberg and those Germans who remain often complain that they feel like a minority.\textsuperscript{33} The neighborhood remains a zone of concentrated ethnic poverty.

\textbf{Marzahn}

Not unlike the social exclusion of Kreuzberg and its Turkish population twenty years ago, the northeastern outskirts of the city—Marzahn and Hohenschönhausen—became the object of contempt
after unification. More than half East Berlin’s population had lived in the belt of Plattenbauten, the prefabricated high-rise apartment blocks assembled from precast concrete slabs or “panels.” For many years, East Berliners preferred these new buildings over the decaying, unmodernized worker housing in older central neighborhoods like Prenzlauer Berg. During the lifetime of the GDR, favored residents received spaces in high-quality high-rises towards the center, rather than in distant Marzahn (current population 150,000) and Hellersdorf (population 100,000) where there was more of a socio-economic mix. Some of these vast expanses of Plattenbauten were not even completed when the Wall fell. In the early 1990s, residents with means moved to single family houses in the suburbs of Brandenburg or to older historical neighborhoods. In the last half of the 1990s, as housing vouchers were introduced and private construction was favored over social housing, the social mix of older eastern neighborhoods declined.

Marzahn Northwest has lost one-fifth of its population since 1995. The area consists of 140 six- and ten-story buildings with 13,200 units and 25,000 inhabitants. Almost half of the units are currently owned by a public housing company, 30 percent by a housing cooperative and the rest by private housing companies. These companies face falling revenues, given vacancy rates of 15 percent on average. In Marzahn Northwest, however, some buildings have vacancies of 60 percent or more. Newcomers tended to be disadvantaged and those with little choice in the housing market. Social problems and unemployment abound—especially among youth. Thus, Marzahn Northwest is participating in both the Socially Integrative City program (see Peter Marcuse, Hartmut Häußer mann, and Janice Bockmeyer in this issue) and since 2003 the Urban Regeneration East program. To attract a younger, more affluent population, the poorly constructed, uniform housing was rehabilitated and given a face lift. Land uses were diversified, and landscaping and communal facilities provided. Some buildings were selectively demolished, while others were upgraded, so that today, there is much demand for the converted small-scale blocks in the neighborhood. A recent survey found that about one-third of the residents are satisfied with their housing, while another third hopes to move. As in Kreuzberg, most residents do not participate in housing or neighborhood management.
Despite the population loss in peripheral eastern housing estates, the new vacancies opened up opportunities for those in search of cheap rent. Like Kreuzberg in the 1960s, Marzahn and Hohenschönhausen became ports of entry to the city for the newest wave of immigrants. Despite their high unemployment rates and bad reputation as high-rise “Plattenbau Ghettos,” there is the hope that these neighborhoods will have a career similar to Kreuzberg’s, becoming ethnic economic enclaves, encouraging new multicultural forms and signifying the potential for social integration in the new Berlin.

For a glimpse of this new Berlin multicultural society, take the S-Bahn train northeast to Ahrensfelde. Do not leave the train until you reach the final stations. On the way, you will see giant modern shopping malls bathed in neon at night. When you arrive at the end of the line, there will be row upon row of high-rise apartment houses, six to ten stories in the air, forming a contemporary variant on an ancient city wall separating Berlin—more than twenty miles from Alexanderplatz or the Brandenburg Gate—from the endless fields and meadows of Brandenburg. Some of the buildings are now fields of rubble, having been demolished. But, others have been refurbished and individually decorated. The public spaces are now filled with diverse activities and gardens.

As you leave the Marzahn line at its final station and cross the broad avenue via the pedestrian bridge, you enter the Havemann-Passagen, a small shopping arcade. It was built in the early nineties just after unification and therefore, helpfully prepared by the architects of the last housing projects. It contains smaller shops and individual enterprises that moved right in during the mid 1990s. Very suddenly, these tiny business facilities were occupied by Vietnamese and Russian shopkeepers, who were prepared to take the risks of a start-up enterprise. Despite public Neighborhood Management efforts at promoting sustainable economic development, neighborhood retail centers like these have suffered from competition with the large commercial centers nearby.

From the start, the new immigrants lived disproportionately in the Eastern outskirts of Lichtenberg-Hohenschönhausen, and Marzahn-Hellersdorf. The newcomers themselves differ in several ways. The “Russians” are composed of two groups—either Jews, whom the last GDR government invited to immigrate, or families of
the *Spätaussiedler*, i.e., very late descendants of German settlers in the Tsarist Russian Empire that German law allowed to “come home” as “Germans” by blood, under the citizenship rule of *jus sanguinis*. The 1.5 million *Spätaussiedler* from the ex-USSR, Poland, and Romania who migrated to Germany from 1950 to 1987 were joined by another 2 million who arrived from 1990 to 1999. It has been estimated that between 25,000 and 35,000 *Aussiedler*, composing 10 to 14 percent of all residents, live in Marzahn-Hellersdorf. With special immigration rights, both groups from the former Soviet Union received apartments in the large housing estates of the eastern outskirts. Unfortunately, no one knows precisely how many such “Russians” live in Berlin (or even in Germany) for a strange, but typically “German” reason: from the very moment that they receive a German passport, they are no longer counted as a special category in official statistics.

Yet, only a short time later, another wave of “German Russian” newcomers settled in the same area completely on their own. These voluntary migrants preferred living among their compatriots in Marzahn and Hellersdorf more than in the anonymous central parts of town. They did not move to these peripheral estates for economic reasons. Although these areas had high vacancy rates and lower rents, there is not much difference in rents city-wide, and vacancies are rising all over Berlin. In 2005, the vacancy rate reached 8 percent (152,000 units), but was highest in Mitte (11.6 percent), not Marzahn-Hellersdorf (10.2 percent). These settlement patterns produced what might be called vertical villages, high-rise buildings completely settled by immigrants of one national origin.

The eastern newcomers have German names on their doors and their papers. In school or at work, however, the cultural differences between native-born Germans and *Aussiedler* are obvious and commonplace. The “Russian” kids use their native language. Like the transnational Turks, they maintain relationships and cultivate familiar connections back home, often during summer vacation. And they have recently created their own Russian youth culture, drawing upon music from Moscow or Petersburg bands. Like many of the Turkish youth, the Russian-born youth are not culturally German. Nevertheless, the Russian immigrants, both parents and children, Jews and Gentiles, enjoy the security of the German social welfare state. In this
sense, they share the fortunes of most Germans in the struggle for education or jobs, or the boredom and frustration of joblessness.

In 2003, excluding the German-Russian migrants in these neighborhoods who are already counted as Germans and the estimated 100,000 undocumented immigrants in Berlin, the non-German-citizen population of the Friedrichshain-Kreuzberg Bezirk (borough) reached 23 percent (just after Mitte with 27 percent), while that in Lichtenberg was only 7.3 percent and in Marzahn-Hellersdorf, a mere 3 percent. Of the 57,600 foreigners in Friedrichshain-Kreuzberg, 23,500 were Turkish, by far the largest nationality group, as noted above. In contrast, of the 18,400 foreigners in Lichtenberg, the largest group were Vietnamese (3,200), followed by ex-Yugoslavians, Russians, and Poles (each around 2,000). Vietnamese were also the largest single nationality group in Marzahn-Hellersdorf (1,600 of 7,800 foreigners).

The Vietnamese way of life looks quite different from that of the Aussiedler. As early as the 1960s, some Vietnamese came temporarily
to both the Federal Republic (FRG) and the GDR for education and training, but after the Socialist Republic of Vietnam was established in 1976, the numbers shot up. The FRG agreed to accept up to 40,000 refugees (“boat people”) and in 1980, the GDR signed a bilateral agreement with Vietnam to train Vietnamese workers in East German enterprises, as it had done with Angola, Cuba, and Mozambique. In 1987, the program was stepped up and another 10,000 to 30,000 Vietnamese a year arrived in the GDR as cheap contract labor.

The workers lived in large groups in communal residences or dormitories (Wohnheim) near the textile and metal factories and construction sites in East Berlin as well as other cities (e.g., Rostock, Dresden). Immigrants recall how immediately after arriving in Germany, they received several months of German classes (insufficient to master the language) and vocational training, but afterwards, did little else but work. They were totally segregated from the German population, and were required to receive permission for and provide details of any travel outside the communal residence. Festivals and

**Figure 2:** Registered Foreigners by Nationality, Berlin 2004

*Source: Statistisches Landesamt*
other leisure activities were celebrated among the Vietnamese workers themselves. East Germans had very little contact with the contract workers until after 1990.

Following the unification process, labor contracts between the GDR and Vietnam were voided, and for a few terrible years, some 59,000 Vietnamese lived in limbo, without residence permits or means to a livelihood. By 1991, East German enterprises fired and deported two-thirds of the Vietnamese in training and work programs.46 At the same time, Vietnamese from all over Eastern Europe and from Vietnam directly, migrated to Germany. From 1990 to 1993, 10,000 Vietnamese a year entered Germany and applied for asylum. In 1993, the law was reformed to return asylum seekers to secure third countries through which they traveled, putting an end to this means of entry. Initially, the German government repatriated many of the contract workers, enticing them with a bonus,47 but from 1993 to 1995, Vietnam sought to prevent them from returning home until economic pressure was used to reach a repatriation agreement.

Ultimately, about 15,000 Vietnamese former GDR contract workers won the right to stay, including 5,500 in Berlin. A new bilateral agreement permitted them to reside and work in Germany until the end of their original contracts. Those who had lived in the GDR for over eight years received long-term visas. These permanent residency permits, established in a 1989 reform of the Foreigners’ Law, required proof of adequate earnings, social security contributions, a place to live, German language competence and no record of arrest. In 1993, right-to-stay regulations allowed former GDR contract workers to extend their stay beyond the original term and to receive special work permits that also required a long-term employment record and proof of adequate earnings, living space and clean criminal record. By 1995, about 40,000 Vietnamese citizens in Germany could not become permanent residents and were repatriated.

It was difficult to obtain these permits. Finding a steady job to qualify for a work permit in an area of the city with very high unemployment was a major obstacle. Some former contract workers were lucky, because they found employment in the west or because the socialist firms they worked in survived after reunification, but most lost their jobs and returned home. Even today, in the Bezirk
Marzahn-Hellersdorf, the unemployment rate is 19.6 percent, but among the small group without German nationality, it is a whopping 46.8 percent (versus 38.8 percent Berlin-wide). Lichtenberg is similar. Unlike the “Russians,” however, the Vietnamese did not become clients of the welfare state. Even in a city with high unemployment, by necessity many turned to entrepreneurship both informal and formal, since a condition of their residency was self-sufficiency.

Thus, in the early-to-mid 1990s, with their status unresolved and squatting without formal leases in the former dormitories, some engaged in black market and informal businesses, and some were inevitably caught, leading to deportation. One major scandal involved illegal cigarette smuggling, and the press stigmatized the Vietnamese as a “Zigarettenmafia.” In the mid 1990s, gangland murders took place in the high-rises of Marzahn, justifying surprise police raids and closing of the buildings where so many Vietnamese resided. At the same time, the Vietnamese faced discrimination, attacks from rightwing extremists, and even violence on the part of the police, giving rise to Vietnamese civil rights associations.

In 1992 and 1993, a wave of antiforeigner violence erupted in Rostock, Mölln, and Solingen, both in the former east and west. During those years, fifty to 100 racist incidents a day were reported in Germany, and at least ten racist attacks a day took place in Marzahn. Massive antiracist demonstrations by Germans and migrants followed, and Amnesty International documented the police abuses.

Most Vietnamese in Berlin still live in the eastern precincts. In 1998, after the repatriations, there were about 1,000 Vietnamese living in each of the districts of Marzahn, Hohenschönhausen, and Lichtenberg, respectively. In 2005, after borough consolidation, there were still about 3,500 registered in Lichtenberg-Hohenschönhausen and 1,600 in Marzahn-Hellersdorf; both areas have about 250,000 inhabitants. This spatial concentration reflects not only historical factors, but also restrictions on the work permits issued in the 1990s. Vietnamese laid off from GDR enterprises were not supposed to work or set up shop in western Berlin. Thus, clothing, produce, and flower stands sprung up in eastern Berlin, filling a niche in a sector of the city where commercial activities were relatively undeveloped. At many transportation hubs in the east, where wide empty plazas front supermarkets and large buildings, impromptu markets
have sprung up with Vietnamese and other immigrant vendors selling clothing, housewares, and “Chinapfanne.” The Vietnamese took over formerly Turkish kebap inbisses, adding Chinapfanne noodles to the menu.

Eventually, as the more precarious of these entrepreneurs returned to Vietnam, the legally secure immigrants moved into more respectable businesses and into western precincts of the city. In 2000, the Vietnamese ran approximately 600 Asian eating-and-drinking places in Berlin.\(^{50}\) In the vacant office buildings and storehouses between Lichtenberg and Marzahn left empty by post 1990 deindustrialization, the Vietnamese established import, wholesale, transport, repair service, and other businesses.

Of course, just as the Turks have moved out of their enclaves, there are Russian and Vietnamese shops in other parts of town, too. For example, in central but still eastern Berlin quarters like Prenzlauer Berg or Friedrichshain, Vietnamese grocers have also succeeded the old Berlin “Tante Emma” shops.\(^{51}\) They function like “normal” shops without any Asian character. Russians and Vietnamese working in the inner city target the tourist market, offering mostly folklore goods or trinkets. Vietnamese names have appeared on well-situated fashion stores in shopping malls and in downtown districts. Thus, a rapidly growing shadow economy very soon became legal. Indeed, while self-employment among Berlin residents in general has been rising, it rose from 12 to 14 percent among non-German nationality groups, compared to 10 to 11 percent among German Berlin residents, between 1999 and 2003.\(^{52}\) In sum, Berlin can now point to the emergence of a well-organized, ethnic economy among the Vietnamese.

Like the Turks, the Vietnamese are internally heterogeneous. The South Vietnamese refugee community consists of middle-class “boat people” who made it to West Berlin in the 1970s and 1980s, integrating quickly into skilled occupations.\(^{53}\) Many are practicing Buddhists and established a temple, the Pagoda or Sociocultural Center Vietnam, and tend to hold events at the Vietnam Haus in West Berlin. They have little contact with the East Berlin Vietnamese, mainly from the North of Vietnam, who came to the German Democratic Republic. There is a persisting cultural equation of East Berlin with foreign workers from communist countries versus West Berlin with foreign workers from democratic countries that is reinforced by the
Ossi-Wessi social boundary, historical memory and contemporary politics in Vietnam. Yet, even this classification misses, for example, a residential enclave of former GDR Vietnamese contract workers who now live in public housing in Kreuzberg and socialize together.54 Given these internal community differences, no umbrella organization for all the Vietnamese yet exists in Berlin.

In the city’s outskirts like Marzahn where ethnic residential concentration is evident, both Russian and Vietnamese businesses serve both the majority German customers or tourists, but also their ethnic fellows. Therefore, in the Russian shops, one finds not only those familiar wooden dolls called “Matrjoshkas” and bottles of vodka, but also wares that appeal to native Russians: dried fish, Shiguli-beer, the latest video tapes from Moscow studios, or music from Siberian underground bands. As in immigrant enclaves around the world, “transnational intermediaries” offer ways to stay in touch with the homeland: cheap phone calls to Chisinau, Almaty or Chabarowsk; eastbound travel offers; the program of the Russian speaking Čechow theatre. Countless handwritten advertisements on pieces of paper in shop windows and on walls offer private lessons in everything from German to violin playing.

The evolving multicultural reality can be found right in the middle of Havemann Passages. There is a twenty-four-hour restaurant and bar called *Truce* where you can meet people of all classes and generations. On Friday and Saturday nights, young Marzahnians meet there for drink and dance. Reflecting the great number of Russian youth among the clientele, heavy spirits can be ordered not only in small glasses (as the Germans do), but in whole bottles (as Russians like it). But in a gesture towards the capitalist West, people accompany the purchase of a liter of vodka or brandy with a can of *Coca-Cola*. There, at the northern edge of Berlin, was a facsimile of the Brighton Beach scene in Brooklyn, New York. But sharing this observation with the locals was not a good idea. The Marzahn dwellers were angered, mistaking *Brooklyn* for *Bronx*. They do not want their home to be labeled as the “Bronx of Berlin.” They are defensive, constantly fearing the stigmatization of their neighborhood. They do not want Marzahn to become the next “Kreuzberg.”

The residents of Marzahn and Hohenschönhausen share a pride in their neighborhood, but they differ in many other respects. Even
today, it is not surprising to hear about occasional hate crimes in East Berlin. Indeed, several Berlin Bezirke, including Marzahn-Hellersdorf, have elected members of the NPD neo-Nazi party or the Republikaner. Despite antiracist demonstrations protesting the extreme Right, many people of color now consider these places “no-go zones,” avoiding them for fear of racist violence at the hand of German youths. Field studies by the Zentrums Demokratische Kultur in Marzahn-Hellersdorf identified the connection between oppositional youth culture, the extreme Right, and antiglobalization sentiment in fostering racist and antiforeigner conduct, ethnicizing social conflicts in the neighborhood. The Russian-origin Aussiedler identify as Germans, not migrants. Their children fear an uncertain economic future and have few opportunities to participate in positive activities to build self-esteem. Thus, they turn on their racially dissimilar immigrant neighbors, even those who have been living in Germany longer than they have, demanding preference over them for jobs and benefits on nationalist grounds and labeling them as criminals and inassimilable. Yet, social exclusion need not turn violent to make newcomers feel unwelcome. In 2006, the first attempt to build a mosque with a minaret in the former East Berlin was met by protests from the residents who suggested that mosques belong in Kreuzberg and Wedding.

In spite of interethnic conflicts, East Berlin neighborhoods have launched numerous multicultural initiatives aimed at fostering understanding across nationalities. For example, Jennifer Jordan’s article in this issue discusses how new markers in the Marzahn cemetery commemorate the area’s past forced laborers, “Gypsy Camp,” and Roma/Sinti deportees, implying a connection to present-day racism. A local citizens’ initiative initially founded to protest violence against the Vietnamese now holds multicultural events in which Africans, Vietnamese, Kazaks, and Germans all contribute music and stories. Its German language classes combine Russians, Bosnians, and Vietnamese, each getting used to the other’s accents. Although the older generation of Vietnamese has poor language skills, the new generation seems to have fewer difficulties in school than the Turkish second and third generations. Instead, the Vietnamese Embassy is supporting a language school in Lichtenberg for children to learn Vietnamese.

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Similarly, in Hohenschönhausen, an intercultural garden was planted as an integration project.\textsuperscript{58} In Marzahn’s intercultural garden, however, the Vietnamese, fearful of being in the minority, have only three of twenty plots and accuse the \textit{Aussiedler} of “taking over.”\textsuperscript{59} The Vereinigung der Vietnamesen in Berlin-Brandenburg e.V. in Lichtenberg translates government documents into Vietnamese, helps migrants with legal matters, including informing them that tax on cigarettes is required, and organizes sports tournaments in the “Culture School” gym where the association is based. In Marzahn, just a few blocks from the Havemann Passages, is a multipurpose association called “Kiek-In” that sponsors an annual “Mondfest,” part of Lichtenberg’s Intercultural Week. At dusk, blond-haired, blue-eyed German children join their Vietnamese classmates in a parade behind the dragons, holding aloft their bright, colorful lanterns and marching through what outsiders might imagine is a drab, monotonous housing project.

There are other signs of gradual integration. Statistics on naturalization and intermarriage are unreliable because, unlike for the larger Turkish community, there are only 11,000 to 15,000 Vietnamese foreigners living in Berlin today. Yet, the community has organized itself institutionally. Ethnic associations such as Vereinigung der Vietnamesen in Berlin und Brandenburg, Club Asiaticus, Reistrommel, Burgerinitiative-Hoehschoenhausen, Keik-In and Vietnam Haus offer both social and cultural support while fostering integration through language, legal, and related instruction. There is also an intercultural friendship society, the Deutsche-Vietnamien Gesellschaft, where native Germans meet with Vietnamese migrants.

To be sure, Marzahn is not Kreuzberg. But to explain the astonishing emergence of an ethnically diverse neighborhood so far from the city center in a zone of the city not known for its multiculturalism, one should recall the public image of the “socialist” housing estates. Since 1990, expert and public opinion unanimously and repeatedly spoke of the Plattenbau in a disparaging manner. These developments supposedly represented inhuman modernism, concretized collectivism, and the ghettos of tomorrow. With aid from the state, there was an exodus out of these buildings, an increasing number of apartments became vacant, their valuation declined, and some of the least desirable were knocked down. In this manner, the history of old-
fashioned housing in inner cities repeated itself in the periphery. Yet cheap housing, whether in the center city or the outskirts, provides an opportunity for the migrant poor to better their lives.

**Discussion**

“Every town that does not have room and work enough for everyone needs a place to get rid of the redundant. Every town concerned about its noble image needs a dump for the intruders, for dysfunctional and inadaptable folks.”

This is how Karl Schlögel so frankly described old Kreuzberg, the previously neglected West Berlin neighborhood symbolizing a dreadful place where you should not allow your children to go. But Schlögel also praised this “dump” as “the first anchor-place for countless immigrants.” Such praise could equally apply to East Berlin’s Prenzlauer Berg. In the 1970s, this neighborhood, like Kreuzberg, was officially condemned as a “slum.” Both areas soon became favorite refuges for “new” Berliners: foreign immigrants to be sure, but also young men evading West German army service or dissidents from East German small towns. On both sides of the Berlin Wall, these nonconformist elements created new ways of life, new urban trends, new ideas of individuality and happiness. They squatted in older houses that they found valuable. The squatters prevented the condemnation of historic, architecturally notable older houses, and planners started to rethink urban renewal policies in residential working-class neighborhoods. And in both inner-city neighborhoods—Kreuzberg in the West as well as Prenzlauer Berg in the East—the “New Berliners” ultimately established the trends for the city’s future. The cycle then turned towards revalorization and gentrification.

Not only older central city housing, but also modernist—i.e., master-planned—townscapes have adapted to new social circumstances quietly and without fanfare before local government intervened. Why are the ill-famed zones on the urban outskirts so surprisingly “elastic”? How did they become the “anchor-places” for immigrants left to their own devices? The reason is, ironically, the general contempt with which they are regarded and their subsequent public
neglect. It is precisely the local disorder and loss of cultural valuation that are creating the conditions for revival. Such disregard opened up spaces and, as Karl Marx said in *The German Ideology*, the “circumstances would come up to dance.” Neomarxist geographers, like David Harvey and Neil Smith, argue that the ever-changing relocation of capitalist production gives rise to corresponding cycles of real estate valuation. The location of land and the built environment is spatially fixed, while financial capital circulates. When industrial capital has a falling rate of return, capital may shift into a “second circuit” of investment in fixed capital like buildings, speculating that their value will rise, but also disinvesting from places where rents are too low. Gentrification is likely where a “rent gap” opens up, i.e., “a disparity between the potential ground rent level and the actual ground rent capitalized under the present land use.”

Thus, the devaluation of real estate in one place ultimately makes it attractive and, often with state help, prepares the ground for its revaluation. However, this traditional gentrification process, we assert, is helped along by the “multicultural” renaissance of devalued districts. What we find in Kreuzberg and nowadays in Marzahn is a fundamental change of urban image that may lead to a new style of life and cultural forms in Berlin. Whether this image gives rise to a rent gap and thus, increasing property values and displacement remains to be seen.

Urban neighborhoods passing through crises and decline are the very places where a city faces its next set of challenges. In the 1980s, Kreuzberg was the locale where Berlin learned to survive the disappearance of industrial work, the beginning of worldwide migrations, and the decline of social welfare systems. In the 1990s, the eastern Bezirke like Lichtenberg and Marzahn-Hellersdorf underwent the transition from socialism to capitalism, a traumatic deindustrialization, and the influx of newcomers. Today, in Lichtenberg and Marzahn-Hellersdorf, one can assess the fundamental changes in Berlin after the fall of the Wall. These quarters incubate a new source of diversity and vitality far from the central city and its traditional immigrant neighborhoods. In these districts, we see Berlin as a “frontier town” on the doorstep of the East. Berlin will not be able to avoid most of the transformation problems that the other East European metropolises have to manage. Although the local government
does not like to be compared in this way, there are many ways in
which Berlin’s problems are closer to those of Warsaw, Vienna or
Budapest than to those of Milan, Brussels or London. Just listen to
the people on the tram or the S-Bahn traveling with you out to the
eastern periphery.

Berlin’s town planners have focused on redeveloping the central
city. The massive construction in the corridor where the Berlin Wall
stood, stretching from Potsdamer Platz to the new government
center and main train station, has overshadowed the improvements
in the social housing projects on the periphery. Similarly, the move-
ment of the global elite to the new capital has received more atten-
tion than the important role that migrant newcomers play in urban
development. Their communities are, in fact, growing economically.
From this point of view, Berlin is experiencing deep changes in the
outskirts as well as downtown.

This is not to neglect the many ways that Marzahn differs from
Kreuzberg, or that Turkish origin migrants differ from the Russians
or Vietnamese. For the present, West and East Berliners continue to
inhabit separate worlds. Kreuzberg is still a left-wing activist dis-
trict, whereas Marzahn supports the former communist party and is
poorly organized internally, with only a few associations by compar-
ison. Furthermore, social integration takes time. Turkish Germans
arrived in Berlin en masse before the Vietnamese, and are a much
larger minority. Though both groups face racial discrimination, Ger-
man hostility towards practicing Muslims has grown while that
towards Asians has declined. Nor should the specific histories of
each neighborhood be forgotten. The high-rises of Kottbusser Tor
were constructed under different conditions than those in Hohen-
schönhausen or Marzahn Northwest. “Each age has its own biogra-
phy,” says Schlögel. “Periods do not repeat themselves.”

Given these differences, can one draw any lessons from the expe-
rience of West Berlin immigrants for those living in the East of the
city? As we have argued, Berlin’s new multiculturalism has its limits.
Migrants still suffer from social exclusion. But the comparison of
Kreuzberg and Marzahn demonstrates how poor, disfavored areas—
whether in the urban center or periphery—can attract ambitious, cre-
avtive, and industrious residents. Neither neighborhood is socially or
economically untroubled, but in each place, a distinctive multicol-
tural stew is simmering, making vibrant, interesting, and hopeful places. If Berlin and indeed Germany can successfully integrate foreigners, the essential test will be precisely in these neighborhoods.

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Notes

1. Parts of this research were funded by the Deutscher Akademischer Austausch Dienst (DAAD).
2. The International Organization for Migration, “The Challenge of Integrating Migrants into Host Societies—A Case Study from Berlin,” in World Migration 2003: Managing Migration—Challenges and Responses for People on the Move, Chapter 4 (Geneva, 2003), 72. Berlin’s total foreign population at the end of 2005 was 460,555 according to the Statistisches Landesamt Berlin. If Berlin has a rela-
tively large population share for a capital, the foreign born population share is much higher in other (western) German cities, such as Munich (21%), Stuttgart (24%) and Frankfurt (28%).


4. Some might say the city also aims to control the foreign population as well. Even multiculturalist policies essentialize and pigeon-hole minority group members into bounded cultural entities.

5. For the national integration plan, see http://www.bundesregierung.de/Webs/Breg/DE/Bundesregierung/BeauftragtefuerIntegration/NationalerIntegrationsplan/nationaler-integrationsplan.html.

6. In 1989, there were 90,000 foreign contract workers, about 60,000 of whom were Vietnamese, in the GDR as a whole. In 1992, there were some 20,000 former contract workers from Vietnam, 3,000 from Mozambique, 1,000 from Cuba, and 250 from China. Pipo Bui, *Envisioning Vietnamese Migrants in Germany: Ethnic Stigma, Immigrant Origin Narratives, and Partial Masking* (Münster and Piscataway, 2003), 116-17. Between 15,000 and 18,000 Vietnamese now remain.


9. Ibid., 79.

10. International Organization for Migration (see note 1), 75. Of the 180,000 people of Turkish origin in Berlin, 128,000 of them hold a Turkish passport as “registered foreigners.”


12. Ingeborg Beer and Reinfried Musch, “Berlin-Kreuzberg–Kottbusser Tor,” in *Socially Integrative City: An initial appraisal of the federal/Länder programme ‘Districts with Special Development Needs–The Socially Integrative City,’* ed., German Institute of Urban Affairs (Berlin, 2002). The area’s public housing now includes other Muslims from Bosnia, Kosovo, Lebanon and other Arab countries.


17. Gerdien Jonker, “The Mevlana Mosque in Berlin-Kreuzberg: An Unsolved Conflict,” *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies* 31, no. 6 (2005): 1067-81. In addition to the four Muslim umbrella organizations, there are two secular umbrella associations in the city, Türkische Gemeinde zu Berlin e.V. and the Türkischer Bund in Berlin-Brandenburg e.V. Although Turks may share a sense of exclusion, they have not united to respond to it.

18. Bockmeyer (see note 16). She argues that the QM staff regards pre-existing ethnic and religious organizations in the neighborhood with suspicion. On the “parallel society” claim, see Caglar (see note 13); Jonker (see note 17); Peter Schneider, “The New Berlin Wall,” *New York Times Magazine*, 4 December 2005.


20. Caglar (see note 13).

21. Between passage of the 1 January 2000 Nationality Act and 2003, 600,000 foreigners naturalized in Germany, compared to less than 100,000 a year in the 1990s. In Berlin, naturalizations of all nationalities doubled in 1990 to over 7,000, and then peaked at 12,278 at the end of the decade. Since 2000, there have been about 6,500 naturalizations a year in the city. Turks, who have lived in Berlin for decades, comprise the majority of these naturalizations because of residency requirements. See http://www.berlin.de/lb/intmig/statistik/integration/einbuergerungen.html.

22. Beauftragte für Integration und Migration in Berlin: http://www.berlin.de/lb/intmig/statistik/integration/eheschliessungen.html. Obviously, the frequency reflects the larger population of Turks, but also the decline in social distance with length of residence in Germany. Nevertheless, there is also some older evidence that Turkish migrants have fewer interethnic friendships than Greek and Italian immigrants to Germany. Schoeneberg (see note 19).

23. Vom Hau (see note 15), 18. Second generation Turks have significantly higher education levels than their parents from Turkey, although compared to ethnic Germans, few have a high school diploma.


25. A study of 2,010 immigrants of Turkish, Greek, and Italian origin by the Institute for Research on Mid-sized Companies at the University of Mannheim for the German Economics Ministry found that 3 to 4 percent of all jobs in the country are created by self-employed non-Germans. Between 1990 and 1995, self-employment by immigrants rose 60 percent. Foreigners started 182 businesses per 10,000 workers versus 122 among Germans. However, foreigners encounter


29. Hillmann (see note 26), 267-82.


31. Bockmeyer (see note 15). In the case of the Kreuzberg Mevlana mosque and social service center, Muslim leaders concluded that they were rejected because of Islamophobic discrimination. The district government felt the group was not trying to integrate into the majority society and may be using foreign or illegal funds to purchase real estate. Gerdien Jonker, “The Mevlana Mosque in Berlin-Kreuzberg: An Unsolved Conflict.” *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies* 31, 6 (November 2005): pp. 1067-81. The QM in Kottbusser Tor assesses itself well, as having stopped the „spiral of decline“ but recognizing that it is „premature to regard these processes and changes as signs of a perceptible ‘upward spiral.’“ Beer and Musch, (see note 11), 13.

32. Bahr (see note 7), 80-84; Jonker (see note 17). Minarets are particularly resisted by the Christian majority.

33. Beer and Musch (see note 12), 3.

34. By 2000, 380,000 prefabricated housing units were vacant in all of the former GDR, causing some cities to demolish them.


36. Knorr-Siedow and Droste (see note 35); Christiane Droste and Thomas Knorr-Siedow, “The German Housing and Urban Policy Environment for Local Initiatives,” in *Housing Policy and Social Exclusion*, ed. Z. Kovacs (Bergen 2001), 162-74. Available at http://wwwnhhnogeoNEHOM/publicationsNEHOM_D2pdf#search= percent22social percent20exclusion percent22.

37. This account is based upon field work in these neighborhoods in the mid-2000s by both authors.

38. On the history of these notions of citizenship, see Rogers Brubaker, *Citizenship and Nationhood in France and Germany* (Cambridge, 1992). The 1999 naturalization reform moved the basis for German citizenship away from *jus sanguinis* towards *jus soli*, as noted by, for example, Pécoud (see note 28) and Caglar (see note 13). Blackshire-Belay refers to Germany’s system as *ius parentum* in that children of foreigners born in the FRG assumed the parents’ citizenship (see note 8), 85.

40. Ohliger and Raiser (see note 35), 49. Knorr-Siedow and Droste estimated that only 3,000 German-Russian migrants live in the Marzahn NorthWest project (see note 35), 14.

41. In 1991, Germany enacted special legislation to facilitate the immigration of Jews from the former USSR. During the 1990s, some 100,000 Jews arrived. The Basic Law restored the rights of “former German citizens” upon their application. The ethnic Germans were housed and received some cash while they learned German in short courses. Since 1993, the number of Aussiedler recognized as ethnic Germans and allowed entry was limited to 220,000 a year. Philip Martin, “Germany: Reluctant Land of Immigration,” http://martin.ucdavis.edu/aredepart/facultydocs/Martin/Germany.php.

42. Senatsverwaltung fur Stadtentwicklung, The Berlin Housing Market: Summary, Report 2005 (Berlin, 2005), 5. The estimate of illegal migrants, most from Russia, Ukraine, and Poland, is from Häussermann, Kapphan, and Gerometta (see note 29).

43. Statistisches Landesamt Berlin.

44. Ohliger and Raiser (see note 35).

45. Prior to these agreements, the GDR had recruited foreign workers from Hungary, Poland, and later, Algeria. However, the foreigners did not get along and the contract with Algeria ended at the end of 1970. Blackshire-Belay (see note 8), 73. Early Vietnamese visitors—about 10,000 students and teachers—returned home too.

46. This account is based upon Hilary Silver’s oral history interviews with Vietnamese immigrants and Professor Wilfried Lulei; and on Bui (see note 6), 11-12, 16-18.

47. Employers often reneged on paying these DM 3,000 bonuses. However, currency restrictions encouraged workers to spend their earnings on German goods and export them to Vietnam. Therefore, the contract workers began buying up scarce goods like bicycles. The GDR placed limits on the goods that could be shipped home to Vietnam (e.g., five bicycles, two motorbikes, two sewing machines, medicines, and so on).

48. Russians are similarly labeled as gangsters. In general, West Berliners still stigmatize East Berliners and the immigrants to the GDR or from communist countries as lawless. For the parallels between the once-divided city of Berlin (and German nation) and the once-divided country of Vietnam, see Bui (see note 6), chapter 4. She also juxtaposes other dualisms of the former boat people and former contract workers, such as difficult versus easy migration, humanitarian versus exploitative relations with government, and integrated versus isolated migrant experiences in the two sides of town.


50. Bui (see note 6), 183. Bui makes much of the “partial masking” of Vietnamese identity in the entrepreneurs’ decision to call their snack bars “Asian” or “Chinese,” as well as the marketing flexibility of such nomenclature. For a few years, authentic Vietnamese cuisine was found only in eateries located near the dormitories on the eastern periphery. More recently, after the success of the chic restaurant “Monsieur Vuong” in the trendiest Mitte-region, original Vietnamese
high cuisine, perhaps mixed with Japanese sushi, rather than the usual Thai
dishes, can be found all over Mitte and Prenzlauer Berg.
51. This is a nonspatial ethnic niche in the market, not unlike the Korean groceries
opened in African-American neighborhoods in the United States. See Roger
Waldinger and Claudia Der-Martirosian, *The Immigrant Niche: Pervasive, Persistent,
Diverse* (Berkeley, 2001), 228-71.
52. Ohliger and Raiser (see note 35). The first generation is not interested in having
their children take over their shops; they would prefer them to move into stable
skilled employment, but the labor market is unobliging.
53. As refugees, the boat people received special settlement assistance, unlike the
GDR contract workers.
Vietnamien in Berlin* (Berlin, 1993).
55. Hellersdorf is especially known as a neo-Nazi area, where an intercultural youth
club was the target of arson. The Berlin Afrika-Rat threatened to list the district
as a no-go area in its advisory material because of racist attacks.
56. Simone Rafael, *Demokratie—Im Berlin Alltag ein Auslaufmodell?* [2004], available at
57. The Pakistani-origin Ahmadiyya Muslim Association won approval in Decem-
ber 2006 to build a new mosque in Heinersdorf, an eastern neighborhood of
Berlin where very few Muslims live. The 70-member strong Pankow-Heiners-
dorf Citizens’ Interest Group demonstrated against the decision. One informa-
tion session in March 2006 had to be cancelled when members of the far Right
showed up. The citizens’ group managed to gather 6,000 signatures on a peti-
tion, close to 90 percent of the residents, but their attempt to ban the mosque
formally failed. Their typical “NIMBY” objections included traffic, falling prop-
erty prices, and concern about “an Islamic-Ahmadiyya parallel society, which
would have the goal of overturning our liberal-democratic order.” The congrega-
tion chose the site, which was once a sauerkraut factory, simply because it was
inexpensive. See Michael Scott Moore and Jochen-Martin Gutsch, “East Berlin’s
First Mosque: The Muslims are Coming!” *Spiegel Online*, 28 December 2006,
available at http://www.spiegel.de/international/0,1518,456751,00.html.
Vietnamese of the 11,000 in Berlin lives in the district of Lichtenberg.
59. Interview with Reistrommel e.V.
60. Karl Schlögel, “Kreuzberg porta orientis,“ *Die Zeit*, 20 September 1985. See also
his “Der Schritt der Landesknechte und die Sehnsucht nach Normalität: Nachdenken
über Kreuzberg,“ *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*, 27 May 1989; and his
Karl Schlögel is best known for his work on Moscow, *Das Laboratorium der Mod-
erne* (Berlin, 1989).
61. David Harvey, “The Urban Process under Capitalism: A Framework for Analy-
Smith, “Toward a Theory of Gentrification: A Back to City Movement by Capi-
tal, not People,” *Journal of the American Planners Association* 45 (1979): 538-48, quo-
tation from 545.
62. “Jeder dritte West-Berliner ohne Kontakt in den Osten,” *Berliner Morgenpost*, 1
October 2006. More generally, almost half of West Germans, and especially
younger people, have not visited the east in the sixteen years since unification,
according to a TNS-EMNID poll, but only 12 percent of East Germans have not visited the West. See “Half of West Germans Haven’t Visited East: Divided Germany,” Spiegel Online, 28 December 2006, available at http://www.spiegel.de/international/0,1518,456865,00.html.

63. See Karl Schlögel, Im Räume lesen wir die Zeit (Berlin, 2003).