

32. Facing Distance and Proximity: Migration, Translocalities and the Nation-State

Convenors:

Sabine Strasser, University of Vienna

sabine.strasser@univie.ac.at

Krystyna Romaniszyn, Jagiellonian University

usromani@cyf-kr.edu.pl

Discussant:

Nadje Al-Ali, University of Exeter

n.s.al-ali@ex.ac.uk

This workshop explores the interrelations between the nation-state on the one hand, and translocalities, transnational social spaces, migrants' connectedness and their loyalties on the other. Emergent translocal and transnational social and political formations have put the sovereignty of the nation-state under threat and thus questioned the dominant spatial organization of modernity. New forms of belonging, new relations between identity and territory, and new interpretations of loyalty confront the identity of the nation-state and call for serious and intense debate. This workshop invites both empirically driven and theoretically informed papers, which address the relations between nation-states and new translocalities. We particularly wish to examine how translocalities challenge the nation-state and what the different responses to this challenge look like. Papers which explore the following themes are especially welcome:

- Conceptualizing translocalities: connectedness, disconnectedness, and the meaning of borders
- Constructing proximity: new forms of deterritorializing state strategies
- Facing distance and proximity: gendered migration to distant households and "forced" transnational spaces
- Working for proximity: the role and impact of transnational politics "from below" and intercultural mediators

Disconnecting place

Yngve Lithman, University of Bergen

Yngve.Lithman@sfu.uib.no

This presentation focuses on a particular dimension of how 'the dominant spatial organization of modernity' is challenged, specifically processes whereby the significance of place is re-defined or even made irrelevant. Two very different examples are presented. One, related to some specific Muslim organizational efforts in Europe, deals with what can be called radical transnationalism. The characteristic here is that modes of belonging are created which have no significant spatial reference in the sense of place. This provides for a social organization literally 'out of place.' The second example deals with how aesthetic forms, especially related to a global construction of the aesthetic of blackness, also can be seen as a vehicle through which the significance of place is disconnected from having significance in the construction of belonging modes.

As opposed to what some authors argue, these two cases suggest that we may indeed note that some forms of transnationalism have a very tenuous relationship to 'place'

in a more general anthropological sense. At a more general analytical level, it is argued that the disconnection of place represents a much more fundamental challenge to nation-state hegemonies than most other features of transnationalism.

Negotiating identities and belonging in a transnational context

Unnur Dís Skaptadóttir, University of Iceland

unnurd@hi.is

Iceland is a small and geographically isolated nation-state that has had very little immigration until the last fifteen years or so. Recently, people have moved there for various reasons in growing numbers, mostly to work as unskilled labourers, but also to join a spouse or other family relations. There are very few refugees among the recent immigrants. This paper will examine how these changes pose challenges not only for the immigrants but also an Icelandic identity that has, until recently, been based on the idea of a homogeneous nation sharing history, language and border. To be able to depict new identities it is essential to go beyond the conception of multiculturalism. The opportunities and obstacles encountered by recent immigrants and new citizens in Iceland are analyzed in a transcultural context. The transformations allowed for by increasing cross-border flows and changes in information and communication technology shape the possibilities and experiences of migrants as well as shaping their identities. Finally the paper examines how new constructions of difference based on gender, race and/or ethnicity are identified and negotiated by both immigrants and Icelanders.

Reflections on forged transnationalism, gendered agency, and loyalty assumptions

Riina Isotalo, University of Helsinki

risotalo@mappi.helsinki.fi

This conceptually oriented paper discusses how place, gender, and return articulate with the specific constraints i.e. national policy-level framings of different, particular transnational axes on the one hand, and culturally specific familial ideologies on the other hand, in the case of ethnographic examples drawn from return migration to Palestine. Locality-tied specificity (common habitat and belonging to a lineage) is a traditional characteristic of Palestinian social structure that also contributes to how people perceive themselves in relation to other members of the society. This feature precedes Palestinians' dispersal and has not disappeared since, and as my paper aims to illustrate, is also of relevance in the context of translocalities, nation-state and return migration. I suggest that issues, which are related to culturally specific familial ideology and its gendered loyalty assumptions, can play a major role in (re)creating connectivity at the face of changing external circumstances. However, it is important to address the question how and why people create and maintain the strategies of continuity, also in relation to place.

"There Once Was an Ant Who Decided to Run Around the World" Sentiments of "betweenness" and joking among the northern Moroccan border crossers

Marko Juntunen, University of Helsinki

markojuntunen@hotmail.com

Since the beginning of 1990s Western Europe the USA and Australia have witnessed a tremendous increase in the number of cases of migrant smuggling. At present, migration to Europe without official documents is a phenomenon, which attracts

thousands of people (mostly young men) from countries of the South, be they those of the old Eastern Bloc countries or the Middle and Central East, North Africa, and Sub Saharan Africa, South East Asia or China.

During the first years of 1990s a particular method of migrant smuggling *harraga* emerged in the Strait of Gibraltar and its social effects became more visible all over Northern and North Central Morocco and in Andalucia, Murcia and Catalonia in Spain.

This paper demonstrates that migrant smuggling and the new black market built around it have constructed a distinctive "transnational cultural space" between Morocco and Spain. It further identifies and dissects some of the major cultural traits in this many ways unbounded, dispersed and complex social setting in terms of notions of identity and community while focusing on the lives of the major participants in *harraga*: the young lower class men. Contradictions concerning notions of home belonging and loyalty leave plenty of room for negotiation, multiple interpretations and absurd juxtapositions. Particular interest in the paper is paid in the verbal plays and joking practices. Men's jokes reveal strong local anchoring of identities yet these identities are simultaneously subject to liminal definitions through transnational and migratory challenges to that localism.

Through joking the men play out ambiguities of the newly emerging social roles in this setting where migration has become a nearly compulsory practice for young men. The life-situations and practical choices of these men demonstrate how marginal groups display their agency in a transnational social context characterized by discriminatory policies, which distribute holders of certain nationalities limitless rights to move over international borders and refuse them to others.

Near and far? Transnational Democratic Values and Welfare in the Post-socialist Transformation of Serbia and Montenegro

Jelena Tosic, Austrian Academy of Sciences

jelena.tosic@oeaw.ac.at

This paper focuses on the role and the impact of transnational socio-political spaces from "above" and perceptions and transformations of transnational influences in both agency and discourses from "below" in the context of the post-socialist transformation of Serbia and Montenegro. In this sense the paper will primarily explore the intertwining of local and transnational concepts of human rights values (as one of the core elements of the democratisation paradigm) by considering state, civil society, media and everyday discourses.

I will contrast the claims of both, the nation state and global instances on the one hand, and the restraints of the present moment of the post-socialist socio-economic transformation to come up to its (predefined) goals, on the other. Consequently the paper will raise the issue of the paradox simultaneity of distance and proximity within imaginations of democracy and welfare in the context of post-socialism.

Finally, the paper will elaborate on how individual and collective identity constructions of the local relate to images of the distant/contiguous "world"/"west", and how these shape the conceptions of individual action. In this context I will focus on three local patterns - political apathy, transnational activism and emigration.

Becoming East European in Denmark. Gender and National Identity of Czech Émigrés.

Lenka Skodova, University of Copenhagen

lenkaskodova@hotmail.com

The paper is based on a multi-sited fieldwork among Czech émigrés who came to Denmark during the 1960s and 1990s and re-emigrants to the Czech Republic. The transitional period of the 90s was characterized by an enhanced gender-specific migrancy of young Czech women within the European space. My analysis of Czech émigrés national identity and corresponding translocal loyalties builds on the concepts of Czech Gemeinschaft and Danish Gesellschaft that manifest themselves in the émigrés narratives as Czech Emotions and Danish Function. I introduce a concept of national time that permeates into the everyday life of the émigrés and is carried by them across the national borders. The paper deals with Danish stereotypic perception of the European space constructed along the East/West division on the one hand and the Czech apprehension of a "return to Europe" on the other. Will the creation of the transnational European space challenge or confirm these perceptions of distance and proximity? How to restore an awareness of regions based on historical heritage such as Central Europe and what role could they play in the architecture of Europe? How will the EU accession affect the émigrés identity and what would it mean in terms of transnational migration?

Changing ethnic and political boundaries: new borderlines in Central Asia

Tsypylma Darieva, Max Planck Institute for Social Anthropology, Halle/Saale

darieva@eth.mpg.de

In this paper I reflect on ideological relationships between emerging nation-states and "diasporized" translocalities in Central Asia. The recent formation and formalization of the national borders between post-Soviet Central Asian republics has led to contradictory reconfiguration of belongings, group solidarities and loyalties. A new visible manifestation of the separated nation states identities and governmental authorities found its expression in public spheres within the national territory as well as on her margins. The new physical borderline between Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan has divided the local population into two separate nations, but many households still maintain different types of connections across borders – kin, ritual, trade, consumes. On example of Uzbek native population in Kazakhstan and new migrants from Uzbekistan I look at changing frames of ethnic and political affiliations and I focus on the issue how the new borderline and border notions are differently defined and negotiated by native ethnic minorities, migrants and nationals.

Labour Migration from East to West: Some Pressing Contradictions

Olga Pyshchulina, The National Institute for Strategic Studies under the President of Ukraine

pishulina@niss.gov.ua

In my paper I argue that the problem of migration from eastern countries has taken new forms and has broadened its scopes. This fact is determined with those considerable changes in the traditional system of state sovereignty and borders that have been taking place during the past decades. International borders have been changed because of disintegration of a number of states and formation of new ones instead. Borders that used to be closed are open now. As their crossing became

possible for many people, the number of those travelling across international borders continues to grow. Consequently, more and more people seek to better themselves via migration. Based on my own research in transitional countries as well other research finding, I show that decline in the standards of living impacts welfare and income of the nation, thus influencing the spread and growth of migratory intents in the transitional country. These processes are stimulated, firstly, with decline in standards and conditions of living, employment, health care and education, secondly, with higher and better social and economic standards that exist in bordering states.

Increase in the number of people who try to escape difficult living condition by migrating leads to introduction of stricter migration policies, control over migration and entrance requirements. In this regard, emigration and temporary employment opportunities shrink in most countries of the world, though there is still some need in certain categories of foreign workers. Thus, the level of illegal migration is invariably growing.

