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**abstract** This article introduces transnationalism as distinct from globalization and diaspora. It first explores transnationalism research from a historical perspective. The next section reviews some of the critiques of transnationalism with regard to its extent, its novelty and theoretical strength. Later it elaborates on transnationalism in a network society, and suggests how the exploration of transnationalism has contributed to social enquiry. Finally it assesses the literature and discusses the possible future directions for social research.

**keywords** migration ♦ nation-states ♦ networks ♦ origin-country perspective ♦ transnationalism

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Transnationalism has gained increasing attention across a wide spectrum of scholarship ranging from social movement studies (see Keck and Sikkink, 1998; Tarrow, 2005) to feminist sexuality scholarship (see Grewal and Kaplan, 2001; Povinelli and Chauncey, 1999). In this entry, my focus is on transnationalism in migration studies. Transnationalism is often likened to globalization processes, and critiqued as a ‘hollow concept’ (Waldinger and Fitzgerald, 2004). However, a growing transnationalism scholarship contends that it provides a new lens to understand the changing dynamics of the contemporary world (Levitt and Jaworsky, 2007). Transnational perspectives, distinct from globalization studies, focus on networks established across different geographies.

In this article I will first outline the difference that transnationalism makes to the study of migration by comparing it to globalization and diaspora studies; second, I will explore the transnational migration research from a historical perspective; and third, review some of the critiques of transnationalism with regard to its extent, its novelty and theoretical strength. Throughout the article, I will use the concept of ‘transnational networks’ in order to explain the links emerging across nation-states in economic, political, religious and/or sociocultural fields. In migration studies, networks include those of migrants who are involved in these fields across borders. I will refer to ‘transnational persons’ in order to define the ones who establish these networks in continuous

terms. The extent of transnationalism may differ depending on its frequency and institutionalization. Later I will elaborate on migrant transnationalism in a network society, followed by suggesting transnationalism’s contributions to social enquiry. Finally, I will assess the literature and discuss the possible future directions for social research.

## Globalization, diaspora and transnationalism

A transnational perspective in studies of migration is distinct from diaspora and globalization studies. Globalization studies concentrate either on economic processes (Held and McGrew, 2007), or on effects of a particular global product over specific locations (Appadurai, 2001). Furthermore, globalization studies assume a dichotomy between ‘the global’ and ‘the local’. ‘The global’ may be either good or bad for ‘the local’, yet the former is always greater than the latter. A globalization perspective in migration studies is concerned with the global scale and effects of migrant flows in various localities. Diaspora studies take a historical account and are concerned with the issues of culture and identity (Clifford, 1994; Cohen, 2008; Van Hear, 1998; Vertovec, 2000) for diasporas creating new communities in places away from their countries of origin and ancestral lands. It is important to note that, in order to qualify as a diaspora, they

should be still involved in those lands in political terms.

Unlike these two fields of enquiry, transnationalism studies focus on the 'flows' themselves. Transnationalism studies explore networks pertinent to individuals across borders (Levitt, 2001; Mazzucato, 2008; Smith and Guarnizo, 1998; Vertovec, 2009). Transnationalism refers less to locality – such as that of 'country of origin' and 'country of destination' – than to the connections established by migrants. This means that migrant transnationalism involves not just networks established between countries of origin and destination, but also connections and flows across other geographies. Networks that migrants establish elsewhere, apart from their country of origin or destination, are also important from a transnational perspective. Whereas in diaspora studies migrants' identity and belongings are 'fixated' into one place and society, transnationalism studies reveal that migrants' attachments are 'flexible' and that their belongings are 'fluid'.

The focus on transnational flows and networks, however, does not suggest that these processes are 'beyond' the nation-state. Inherent in the very concept of 'transnationalism' is the 'nation'. Unlike the assumption that globalization leads to the withering of nation-states, scholars assert that transnational networks, in fact, constitute the nation-state's very existence (Smith, 2001). Researchers of transnationalism argue that citizens increasingly establish and maintain contact with nation-states, and that these forms of relationships are continuously changing. Transnationalism does not imply a debilitating impact on nation-states. Rather, it insists that the relationship between transnational migrants and the nation-state develops in relation to each other and proliferates.

## Transnationalism: A historical perspective

### *Emergence of transnational migration studies*

As early as the 1910s, Rundolph Bourne used the concept of 'Transnational America' to depict immigrants' entry into a new American life (Bourne, 1916: 90–91). Even though research carried out earlier already alluded to transnational connections, transnational migration studies did not develop as a new subdiscipline until the early 1990s, when a cadre of migration specialists began to pay special attention to transnationalism. The research conducted from the early 1990s underlined that migrants could be active in two distinct countries.

Transnational migrants' participation in multiple networks across countries did not pose a problem to their integration in their countries of residence (Basch et al., 1994; Glick Schiller et al., 1992; Portes, 1999; Portes et al., 1999). This goes against the conventional assimilation theory, which argued that as immigrants adapt to their new country of residence, their connections with their country of origin would diminish over time (Alba and Nee, 1997; Gordon, 1964). Although the assimilation literature underwent various revisions and extensions (Alba and Nee, 2003; Portes and Rumbaut, 2001; Portes and Zhou, 1993; Waldinger and Feliciano, 2004), it never addressed migrants' relations with their places of origin with the same analytical focus as transnationalism studies.

### *Later developments: Simultaneity and processes of transformation*

Transnational migration research in the 2000s brought new understandings. While earlier research (Basch et al., 1994) had defined transnationalism as a multidimensional process of social relations established by migrants across countries of origin and of destination, research conducted in the 2000s proved that networks created by migrants were not limited only to their countries of origin, but extended also to communities of the same ethnic or religious backgrounds in other countries.

Furthermore, researchers suggested that transnational networks were taking shape within fluid social spaces and were reproducing and creating 'the being' in two places *simultaneously* (Levitt, 2001; Pries, 2005; Smith, 2005; see also the special issue of *International Migration Review* 37(3)). The transnational migrant, as researchers point out, 'links the different contexts and contributes to changes in both' (Schuerkens, 2005: 534, in Vertovec, 2009). Consequently, non-migrants are also drawn into these processes of change through their interactions with migrants. In other words, even non-migrants are influenced by new ideas and life arrangements acquired and brought by migrants (Levitt, 2001). Therefore, particularly in migration research, transnationalism is not to be limited to immigrant transnationalism, as it encompasses wider processes and other participants as well.

Steven Vertovec argues that if these changes lead to enduring structural changes, they need to be analysed as 'processes of transformation': 'When such processes accumulate to alter fundamentally some key societal structures, we can designate them as forms of significant transformation' (Vertovec, 2009: 24). In order to consider all practices involved, he argues that transnationalism should be analysed along four dimensions of transformation (Vertovec,

2004a, 2009): the economic, political, sociocultural and religious. Each of these domains ought to be examined – even if they are distinctly categorized – in relation to each other.

### *Further developments: Transnational social spaces*

Another field of enquiry emerging in the 2000s was in ‘transnational social spaces’. Researchers led by Thomas Faist (Faist, 2000) in the Bielefeld sociology school, Manchester-pioneering anthropologists (Schiller and Levitt, 2004) and social geographers (Voigt-Graf, 2004) accomplished some of the pioneering works. Before I explain these works in greater detail, I shall clarify what is meant by ‘place’ and ‘social space’.

‘Place’ can be a microsociological concept referring either to a material geographical location or to identification of an individual to a location (Wasson, 2007). ‘Space’, however, refers to a form of social organization wherein individuals establish spatial relationships with their environment, which enables or constrains their behaviour. The concept of social space is, on the one hand, related to geography, and on the other hand, ‘beyond geographical place’. Correspondingly, ‘space’ has fallen under the particular purview of human geographers (Tuan and Hoelscher, 2001), but increasingly has also become the object of enquiry by anthropologists and sociologists.

Research in social geography highlighted how migrants could produce spaces across two or more countries (Voigt-Graf, 2004). In instances where migrants established various forms of relationships with their countries of origin, they create ‘transnational social spaces’ across borders at the same time as they establish social spaces within the borders of their destination countries.

From the perspective of the Bielefeld school of sociologists and Manchester school of anthropologists, research focused only on the destination country was limited. These scholars were keenly aware that migration processes must necessarily begin from the migrant’s country of origin. They contended that the changing dynamics in countries of origin had to be understood first, in order to understand their effects in countries of destination. The examination of migratory processes from this dual perspective eased the discovery of ‘transnational social spaces’.

Going one step further, Faist (2000) developed a typology outlining the various characteristics and diverse impacts of transnational social spaces on different countries. According to Faist, characteristics could be (1) weak and short-term resulting in *dispersion and assimilation*; (2) strong but short-term leading to *transnational exchange and reciprocity*; (3) weak

and long-term giving rise to *transnational networks*; or 4) strong and long-term bringing about *transnational communities*. What forms transnational social spaces took depended on persons that migrants interacted with, as well as on places they lived in.

Peggy Levitt and Nina Glick Schiller employed the concept of ‘transnational social fields’ in which new ideas and new sources were reproduced, and various transnational networks intersected with each other (Schiller and Levitt, 2004). Inspired by Bourdieu’s concept of ‘social fields’, Levitt and Glick Schiller brought a theory of power inherent in the emergence and transformation of these networks (Glick Schiller, 2005).

### *Different scales and forms in research*

Aside from these conceptual innovations, the research also classified transnationalism into different forms and scales. Smith and Guarnizo (1998) defined transnationalism driven by global capital, media and political institutions as ‘transnationalism from above’, and the one emerging from localities as ‘transnationalism from below’. State policies that encourage transnationalism among migratory elites are an example of ‘transnationalism from above’, while the political mobilization of ‘deterritorialized’ migrants (Mahler, 1998) constitutes an instance of ‘transnationalism from below’.

For Itzigsohn et al. (1999), continuous and institutionalized transnational activities could be classified as ‘narrow transnationalism’ and intermittent activities as ‘broad transnationalism’. In their words: ‘transnationality in a “narrow” sense refers to those people involved in economic, political, social, or cultural practices that involve a regular movement within the geographic transnational field, a high level of institutionalization, or constant personal involvement. Transnationality in a “broad” sense refers to a series of material and symbolic practices in which people engage that involve only sporadic physical movement between the two countries, a low level of institutionalization, or just occasional personal involvement, but nevertheless includes both countries as reference points’ (Itzigsohn et al., 1999: 323).

From a social field perspective, Glick Schiller (2003) made a distinction between ‘ways of being’ and ‘ways of belonging’ in transnational social fields. What distinguishes between the two states is that of consciousness, that is, whether the migrant involved is aware of his or her transnational activities. ‘Ways of being’ are the taken-for-granted everyday practices and social relations (e.g. speaking the language, watching local television in the country of origin). ‘Ways of belonging’ refer to the conscious ways in which migrants demonstrate their loyalties (e.g. wearing a Christian cross or Jewish star, flying a flag).

Given these various transnational forms and scales, the question of how to measure transnationalism is a vexed one. Some researchers have argued for a method of enumeration: counting transnational activities such as the number of international visits per year or the frequency and amount of financial remittances, etc. Others have argued that certain interactions cannot simply be enumerated. Rather, transnationalism should be analysed in its entirety in economic, social, cultural and religious domains, even if some of the interactions are hard to calculate (Mahler and Hansing, 2005; Schiller and Levitt, 2004). For instance, Levitt (2003) emphasized the key role that religion played in transnational networks, which required closer investigation.

### Critiques of transnationalism

As the concept of transnationalism gained attention in academia, it also raised criticism. Critiques questioned its extent, its novelty and its theoretical strength. Below I will specify each of these critiques.

#### *The extent of transnationalism: An exaggerated phenomenon?*

Transnationalism has been one of the most used concepts to depict the interconnectedness of capital, goods and people since the 1990s. Critiques assert that the concept has been employed haphazardly. Indeed as a variegated phenomenon, transnationalism can mean multiple things. As a concept, it continues to require refinement and an agreement over its definition (Waldinger, 2008).

Critiques take issue with the bias inherent in transnationalism research, pointing out the fact that research work was mainly conducted with people already involved in transnational activities while ignoring a large number of migrants who were not (Guarnizo, 2003; Landolt, 2001; Portes, 2001; Smith, 2003). For instance, Alejandro Portes and his colleagues showed that many migrants among Dominicans, El Salvadorians and Mexicans in the US were not involved in transnational activities and that the ones who were remained only at the levels of 10–15% (Portes et al., 2002).

To quote Portes (2003: 877), 'we have the paradox that transnationalism, as a new theoretical lens in the field of immigration, is grounded on the activities of only a minority of the members of this population'. Waldinger (2008: 25) argued that the literature of immigrant transnationalism displayed only a rosy picture. The reality is that 'the potential to maintain contacts to the home country (and hometown) is impeded by states' ever more vigorous efforts to control migratory movements'.

One needs to be careful not to fall into the trap that all migrants are transnational (Faist, 2000). Transnational persons are the ones who establish, develop and promote economic, political and/or sociocultural networks with other countries. Not all persons do so and to categorize all migrants under this umbrella would only be incorrect, if not limited.

Nonetheless, some of the critiques (Portes, 2003) also acknowledged that even if transnational activities comprised only a small part of everyday lives, this would not make them insignificant. These activities would still need further explanation, especially when considering the political, cultural, social and economic orientations of second-generation migrants. As some suggested their disposition to transnationality with their parents' country of origin may decrease over time (Portes et al., 1999), yet they may develop new forms of transnational relationships with other places.

Another issue that needs to be taken into account is to conduct research not only with migrants but also with their relatives and close friends. Social relationships do not occur unilinearly. It is important to analyse with whom transnational migrants establish their networks, and the processes emerging on both sides.

#### *The novelty of transnationalism: 'Transnational relations always existed'*

Sociocultural and economic interactions across different localities have existed in human history at all times, just as transnational migration has existed since modern nation-states were mapped and created. The flow and movement of transnational migrants across countries of origin and of destination is a long-standing phenomenon. One only needs to turn to anthropological studies for evidence of families migrating in the early history of nation-state formation.

*The Palgrave Encyclopaedia of Transnational History* (Iriye and Saunier, 2009) stated that 'transnational migration patterns diverged' during the era of imperialism (see the entry 'empire and migration'). In the Global North peasants left their homes for newly industrializing places within Europe and the Americas. Migrants in other parts of the world left because of the political pressures they faced (e.g. the Jews in Eastern Europe and Russia). In the Global South, migrants moved to plantations and mines to seek work. From the 1830s to the 1920s, self-financed traders, forced migrants and labour migrants began establishing long-distance networks with their countries of origin.

As early as migration from Asia and Europe to the US in the 20th century, migrants had begun establishing emotive networks with their left-behinds

(Chan, 2006; Morawska, 1999). These networks were both for economic and psychological assistance. Even in cases where migrants could never visit their country of origin, they maintained contact through letters, post deliveries and then in later times, phone calls. Research has revealed how these networks played a major role in nationalism movements in countries such as Greece, Italy and Armenia (Gabaccia and Ottanelli, 2001; Laliotou, 2004). Certainly there were migrants who could visit their country of origin, and in some cases, they returned for good (Hatton and Williamson, 1994). But these 'thousands of migrants who returned to their homelands, including an estimated one quarter of the 16 million Europeans who arrived in the United States during the early decades of this [20th] century', as Gmelch (1980: 135) observed, 'were barely noticed by social scientists'.

Early migrants shared knowledge about their countries of destination with their families back home, and allowed some members of their families to establish new networks to migrate. Once settled into their new surroundings, migrants founded associations to help their left-behinds. These associations channelled not just economic resources, but also provided support for political and social developments in their home countries. In other words, assistance from afar came in the form of both financial and social remittances. But it is important to note that this was a dual process. Countries of origin were equally interested in the welfare of their migrating citizens, and provided support in various ways. They provided a variety of services such as insisting on destination countries to look after migrants' social security funds, as well as introducing new bank accounts for them.

Given that these processes and practices were already well in place, and that migrants, for instance, had always already formed relations with their places of origin (Waldinger and Fitzgerald, 2004), critiques questioned what exactly new does 'transnationalism' purport to represent.

Indeed, when the transnationalism literature arose, none of these phenomena were new. But transnational practices have, over time, taken different forms and operated under different scales: the means of communication between migrants and their relatives in contemporary times include, for instance, the Internet, which intensified the relations and networks of transnational migrants. These new forms will be elaborated under 'Transnationalism in the network society' below. Christian Joppke and Ewa Morawska (2003: 20) summarized that, 'Although not a new phenomenon in the history of international migration, contemporary immigrant transnationalism, of course, is not an exact replica of

the old, but a different configuration of circumstances.'

Even if the phenomenon itself was not new, bringing the facts together under a new analytical lens was ground-breaking. As Robert Smith (2003: 725) states: 'If transnational life existed in the past but was not seen as such, then the transnational lens does the new analytical work of providing a way of seeing what was there that could not be seen before.'

### *The theoretical strength of transnationalism: 'It is not a theory but a paradigm'*

Initially Nina Glick Schiller and her colleagues presented transnationalism on the basis that it was necessary to create an alternative theory to theories of assimilation or cultural pluralism (Glick Schiller et al., 1992: 13–19). Portes and his colleagues sought to offer a middle-range theory of transnationalism (Portes et al., 1999). Some argued that the concept of 'transnational' constitutes a perspective, rather than a new theory. Waldinger (2007) defined it as a social process (inextricably intertwined with assimilation). Kivisto (2001) suggested that transnationalism should be considered as one possible variant of assimilation. The critiques assert that transnationalism has not been successful in either repudiating or complementing assimilation theory (Kivisto, 2001). However, the debate depends on how one defines a theory. If a theory provides a framework to understand a social phenomenon and if one accepts that transnationalism is a perspective to understand related transformations (in economic, political, sociocultural and religious arenas), one also acknowledges that transnationalism does offer a theory. Theories, however, are improved as more evidence is gathered. As mentioned above, transnationalism literature still lacks clarity over its definition and further data on intergenerational differences. Hence the debate still remains open.

## **Transnationalism in the network society**

### *Contemporary communication technologies*

What needs to be taken into account is that contemporary communication technologies have a crucial impact on the scale and intensity of transnational relations. Technologies influence the ways migrants conduct their daily lives (Vertovec, 2004b). Online communication, for instance, make possible close and intimate relations across and within borders. One should not ignore the fact that the broadband access in the developing countries of emigration is

not as frequent as in the countries of immigration. However it is also clear that today migrants can be included in the daily lives of their far-away relatives with more ease, frequency and convenience than in the past.

An ethnographic research conducted by Mirca Madianou and Daniel Miller revealed how Filipino migrant women involved themselves in the daily routine of their children. Through access to mobile phone facilities, the women monitor their children's homework and meals, and follow their success at school on a daily basis (Madianou, 2012). Where up to recently emails were the primary means of communication (Wilding, 2006), now many migrants and their relatives make use of other forms of communication (e.g. instant messaging and social networking sites) to maintain their transnational relations. Madianou and Miller (2011) argue that one needs to conduct 'a truly transnational research', in other words, to look at both sides of communication, to fully understand the effects of transnationalism. Among overseas-based migrant women, the researchers found that transnational communication strengthened the women's position in their families and allowed them to reconstruct their role as parents. The effect of transnational communication on the part of their children though ambivalent, nevertheless, required more attention.

Apart from the ways technology facilitates intimate relations across geographies and distance, it also aids migrants' continuous involvement in the larger political, economic and sociocultural processes of their countries of origin. In this way, migrants are able to live in two separate countries simultaneously, although not in their material geographies. Again, a transnational perspective would stress the mutuality of these relationships. As migrants maintain links with their countries of origin on a daily basis, so too do their relatives establish relationships and understandings with the migrants' new location. In theory mutual relationships ease the transfer of so-called social and human capital across countries.

Characteristics of contemporary transnational migratory flows are multidimensional (Morawska, 2007). The migratory processes that are mentioned here are not transformed only by the developments in technology but together *with* them. Present-day transnational processes are advanced along with technology developments that enable persons to be in two distinct places at the same time. As a result of communicative networks across countries there emerges a simultaneity of co-habiting. More than anything else, this underscores the point that a geographically based understanding of nation-states and their populations must be re-thought.

### *Remittances and governmental strategies*

Financial remittances are often positioned and perceived by local governments as crucial for the development of countries of origin. Today, countries such as Pakistan, Nepal, Egypt and the Philippines have claimed to be ever more in need of them. Migrant remittances are regarded as a component of international development funds and are increasingly monitored not just by origin countries, but also by international organizations (World Bank, 2011). Apart from organizing financial remittances, migrant hometown associations also facilitate the construction of schools, hospitals, roads and the creation of other support organizations.

To attract the channelling of funds and remittances back home, governments in countries of origin implement various incentives. The Indian government, for instance, applies high interest rates on the British and US dollar accounts of Indians abroad. These are complemented by reductions in their income taxes. Numerous other governments such as the Mexican, Turkish, Colombian or Eritrean (Al-Ali et al., 2001; Fitzgerald, 2000; Guarnizo et al., 1999; Ostergaard-Nielsen, 2001, 2003; Smith, 1998) have undertaken similar initiatives.

Wendy Larner (2007: 334) argues that in most of the policy documents of international organizations and economic development agencies, 'diaspora strategies are now an integral part of a governmental imaginary in which entrepreneurial, globally networked, subjects create new possibilities for economic growth and in doing so contribute to the development of a knowledge-based economy'. In several migrant-sending countries, such as the case of the Philippines, so hegemonic has such a national imaginary become that not only have migrants abroad internalized this ideology, but so too have the local population whose aspiration is also to become migrant citizens.

Whereas previously the aim for states was to convince migrants to return to enrich their territorial sovereignty, today it is to extend their sovereignty and expand their borders into the global economy through the members of their diaspora. Looking at the genealogy of national migration policies, Larner (2007: 342) suggests that the latest 'diaspora strategies represent a new way of thinking about economies, populations and states'. Hence contemporary policies constitute efforts to create links to certain migrants whose set of knowledge and competencies can be used in the interests of the neoliberal phase that origin countries are going through.

State institutionalization of transnational migration is not carried out only in the economic field. Contemporary initiatives in the political field include voting from abroad, double citizenship

(Faist, 2007) and its related discussions on which nation-state one should establish allegiances with. In fact the issue with double citizenship was under debate since the beginning of the 20th century. However what is different today is that rather than rejecting the notion of double citizenship, nation-states acknowledge the demand and the need for it. In particular, origin countries take it on their agenda sooner with the primary motive being that citizens living abroad could bring them an added value in economic and political terms.

## Transnationalism's contributions to social sciences

It is as crucial to understand the mechanisms of transnational processes, as it is to understand their contributions to social science enquiry.

### *Researching the flows*

Transnationalism brought a new perspective to social sciences by focusing on the 'flows' across borders. Research work particularly in migration studies has mostly been conducted within national borders due in part to policy-oriented research funded by national governments. Seen within the container of national borders, migratory processes were divided into pre-departure, departure, settlement and post-settlement phases. These phases were artificially defined on the basis of national regulation, and did not reflect the experiences and real lives of migrants. One can say that the early migration research reflected the logic of Newtonian physics, which considers atoms (in this case nation-states) as distinct from each other. However, transnationalism, corresponding more with quantum physics, contends that analysing the flows and links between nation-states is in fact crucial to understanding the changes within nation-states.

By focusing on the 'flows', researchers also recognize the need to re-think the concepts of geographical place and social space. As mentioned in the previous section on 'transnational social spaces', conceptualization of being in two places evoked new ways of understanding geographies. Transnationalism, therefore, puts on the agenda new ways to understand notions of citizenship, belonging and identity. Researching the flows highlights how existing social enquiry has been limited by a narrow focus on national borders, a point to be elaborated in the subsequent section.

As Stephen Castles (2003: 24) points out: 'Today, global change and the increasing importance of transnational processes require new approaches from the sociology of migration. These will not develop

automatically out of existing paradigms, because the latter are often based on institutional and conceptual frameworks that may be resistant to change and whose protagonists may have strong interests in the preservation of the intellectual *status quo*. ... The key issue is the analysis of transnational connectedness and the way this affects national societies, local communities and individuals.'

### *Revising methodological nationalism*

One of the biggest contributions of transnational research has been at the methodological level. A group of researchers pioneered by Wimmer and Schiller emphasize the limitations caused by what is called 'methodological nationalism' (Wimmer and Schiller, 2003). Methodological nationalism refers to the assumption that the social world is constituted only within the framework of nation-states. Transnational research, however, showed how persons involve themselves in relationships across different geographical places and borders, and how these relationships in turn change people's understandings of their location. In other words, transnational relationships change the ways in which people experience the place that they reside in and the boundaries of their nation-state.

Following 'methodological nationalism' one can argue that state-centric analyses in international relations studies are also inadequate. Particularly in migration research, dichotomies such as countries of origin/destination or first/second generation of migrants are misleading (Waters and Jimenez, 2005). Just as how transnational migrants develop relationships with different persons according to their resources and aims, the ways in which different generations organize their relations and networks are not the same either. It is all too easy to presume that first-generation migrants would establish greater transnational networks than second-generation migrants. In reality, different members in each generation may have different loyalties and attachments to their home country. This may be through attachments created within migrant communities (transnationalism from below) or activated by their state institutions and business interest groups (transnationalism from above).

Dichotomous categorizations also fail to capture the changing composition of migrant generations, which is never fixed but responsive, for instance, to the migration policies of destination countries. Castles and Miller (2009) point out that migration policies in destination countries have increasingly favoured highly skilled to unskilled migrants. This means that even among same-generation migrants, not all will share the same characteristics. Individual reasons and means of migrating may affect the types

of networks established in their home countries, and the political, economic and sociocultural support rendered by migrants. Consequently, different sorts of social spaces are created.

### **Contributing to methodology: Multi-sited research**

Understanding these dynamics of a transnational process suggests the needs for new methodologies to be developed. Multi-sited research, which studies several sites simultaneously (Marcus, 1995) and shows the ways in which different places are nested within each other, provides a useful starting point. Social enquiry has hitherto been dominated by comparative research projects investigating subjects in bounded places. Multi-sited research, however, eschews boundaries to show instead the interrelations between geographies. Ideally, a research team for such a study would consist of researchers situated at multiple sites to observe the interactions across each site simultaneously (Mazzucato et al., 2006). In wedding or funeral studies, for instance, multi-sited research would capture the intimacy and complexity of experiences both in the home and host country between migrants and their relatives. One researcher, Valentina Mazzucato, developed a 'simultaneous matched sample methodology' in her research on Ghanaian migrants' transnational networks (Mazzucato, 2009). Her research team, comprising of several researchers located in different places at one time, examined the circulation of remittances across borders to find out the ways in which multiple sites are connected to each other.

### **Assessment of research to date**

Transnationalism offers us a new perspective in social sciences not because it discovers networks that did not exist before, but because it calls our attention to the examination of flows that has been largely overlooked. Migrant transnationalism is only one example of such an enquiry, yet it has made major contributions to the field of transnationalism to an enormous extent. This focus on a transnational perspective brings a new set of questions to bear on social enquiry. The future of transnationalism studies, I suggest, should take into account the following:

- *Critiques and conceptual clarity:* Many of the above-mentioned criticisms repeat themselves, without taking into consideration even the most cited/criticized authors' replies (see in particular Glick Schiller and Levitt, 2006). Researchers will need to take into account the criticisms charged at transnationalism before embarking on their

transnational research projects. This is important to prevent inflating the literature with messy concepts that render it vague and irrelevant.

- *Mutual relationships:* Studies need to take into consideration both sides of transnational networks for a complete analysis. This is also necessary to explore subsequent developments on each side. For instance it is impossible to explore immigrants' newly emerging identity politics in Europe without looking at developments both in origin and destination countries (see for instance the Kurdish, Yezidi and Alevi diaspora and their struggle for recognition). One has to understand the conditions in the origin country, as well as the new orientations in the destination country.

- *Generational differences:* Despite two decades of engagement, the literature still falls behind exploring generational differences. The argument that transnationalism would fade out with assimilation to the new country has proven to be limited, as shown by above-mentioned studies. The studies also demonstrate that not all migrants are transnational. One needs to explore the ways in which the subsequent generations establish transnational networks with their parents' country of origin, as well as with other countries, if any.

- *Comparative studies with mixed methods:* The literature also falls behind embarking on comparative studies and on research using mixed methods. Most of the earlier research composed of detailed case studies using ethnography. Comparative research can explore both divergences and convergences, and distinguish the determining factors. Research employing mixed methods can make use of various forms of data.

*Relationship with other fields of enquiry:* While the literature has provided useful definitions of transnational networks, there is no thoughtful analysis of what they mean for the definitions of related concepts (such as nationality and citizenship, national modes of governance and geographies). If transnationalism is a phenomenon/a social process, it is important to understand the dynamics it alters in other social processes. The changes in citizenship that is traditionally based on a territorial understanding are linked to the changes in practices of sovereignty.

*Interdisciplinarity:* Finally to account for all these, transnational research projects should employ interdisciplinary approaches to understand the changes in different fields.

## Annotated further reading

Al-Ali NS and Koser K (2002) *New Approaches to Migration? Transnational Communities and the Transformation of Home*. London and New York: Routledge.

This edited book evaluates the meaning of 'home' for transnational peoples, as 'globally-oriented identities' emerge. The other themes are transnational spaces' relationship to national and local spaces, as well as implications in both home and host countries.

Basch L, Glick Schiller N et al. (eds) (1994) *Nations Unbound: Transnational Projects, Postcolonial Predicaments, and Deterritorialized Nation-States*. London: Gordon and Breach.

This book, one of the early examples of transnationalism literature, displays that immigrants build social, economic and political networks between their countries of origin and destination. The book includes ethnographic studies of migration and illuminates the challenges to the concepts of nationhood.

Bauböck, R (1994) *Transnational Citizenship: Membership and Rights in International Migration*. Aldershot: Edward Elgar.

This is one of the early and well-theorized books on the relationship between transnationalism and citizenship. Bauböck argues that liberal democratic citizenship rights ought to expand beyond national territories. This book is predominantly analytical and normative.

Faist T (2000) *The Volume and Dynamics of International Migration and Transnational Social Spaces*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

This book explains the causes, nature and extent of the movement between rich and poor countries. Faist asks: Why are there so few international migrants out of most places? And why are there so many out of so few places? He further analyses the emergence of transnational social spaces by using examples from the Turkish–German case.

Hannerz U (1996) *Transnational Connections: Culture, People, Places*. London: Routledge.

This book is a good example of transnational cultural connections between different places around the world. Hannerz argues that cultural and identity-related studies need to extend beyond national borders in an ever-more interconnected world.

Iriye A and Saunier PY (eds) (2009) *The Palgrave Dictionary of Transnational History*. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan.

This is an excellent resource with numerous entries on modern social world history. More than 350 authors study the world history not by a chronological order but through the interconnectedness of peoples, goods and capital. They show that the modern history is not composed of nation-states, but of transnational circuits and interconnections.

Levitt P (2001) *The Transnational Villagers*. Berkeley: University of California Press.

This book is based on in-depth fieldwork with

Dominican immigrants in Boston and their relatives in their home country. Levitt examines the ways in which the familial, cultural, political and religious ties shape the daily lives in both places. She also shows that transnationalism and assimilation are compatible with each other.

Smith MP and Guarnizo L (eds) (1998) *Transnationalism from Below*. New Brunswick, NJ: Transaction Books. In this edited book Smith and Guarnizo's objective is to distinguish 'transnationalism from below', that is migrants' conscious efforts to escape, from 'transnationalism from above', that is multinational corporations, global capital flows and states advancing neoliberalism.

Vertovec S (2009) *Transnationalism*. London and New York: Routledge.

This book first surveys the broader literature of transnationalism and later focuses on migrant transnationalism. Vertovec, one of the most experienced writers in the field, revises his earlier writings regarding migrants' transnational practices and their effects on social, political, economic and religious transformations.

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**résumé** Cet article présente le transnationalisme distincte de la mondialisation et du diaspora. Il explore d'abord la recherche du transnationalisme d'une perspective historique. La section suivante passe en revue certaines des critiques du transnationalisme en ce qui concerne son étendue, sa nouveauté et sa force théorique. Plus tard, il élabore sur le transnationalisme dans une société en réseau, et suggère comment l'exploration du transnationalisme a contribué à l'enquête sociale. Enfin, il évalue la littérature et discute les orientations futures possibles pour la recherche sociale.

**mots-clés** états-nations ♦ migration ♦ réseaux ♦ transnationalisme ♦ vue des pays d'origine

**resumen** Este artículo analiza el noción de transnacionalismo como uno distinto a la de globalización y diáspora. En primer lugar, la investigación sobre transnacionalismo es explorada desde una perspectiva histórica. La siguiente sección revisa algunas de las críticas al transnacionalismo en términos de su alcance, novedad y fuerza teórica. Posteriormente se elabora el noción de transnacionalismo en el contexto de una sociedad en red, analizando cómo la exploración del transnacionalismo ha contribuido a la investigación social. Por último, se evalúa la literatura existente y se discuten posibles direcciones futuras para la investigación social.

**palabras clave** estados-nación ♦ migración ♦ perspectiva de los países de origen ♦ redes ♦ transnacionalismo