

Unit I 31: Transnationality and migration

1. Summary

The transnational perspective on migration phenomena meant a paradigm shift in migration research. Instead of seeing migration as a linear, from A to B and unique migration process, the researcher puts himself or herself in the place of the migrating person and tries to understand the migration movement from his or her point of view. Transnational aspects have become important in international relations and exchange processes in general. Transnationality involves at least two places, the movement from one to the other place is cyclical, in both directions.

2. Transnationality

From the perspective of political science, transnational relations can be defined as follows: "Transnational relations are understood as normal interactions across national borders in which either the authorities themselves or the actors with whom the authorities have contact, without a specific and clear national mandate to participate in negotiations or decision-making processes" (Jacobsson et al. 2004:27, translation from English by CJ).

In anthropology, the concept of "transnationality" resulted from a "change of perspective in ethnological migration research, with which the perspective reduced to the destination country or to the country of origin is to be dissolved and the complex lifeworld of migrant*s is to be taken into account. The prefix 'trans' stands for the social, economic, and cultural interconnections between the country of origin and the country of destination that are produced and shaped by migrants and are expressed, for example, in network relationships, capital transactions, (modified) cultural practices, and values" (Münst 2008:45). In doing so, the research attempted to relate the local and temporal movement of migrants to two overlapping field positions: "These field positions combine in the migration process - in the person of the migrant - to form a third position in which the processes and logics of migration, the context- and location-dependent dynamics between exclusion and inclusion, manifest themselves and, to that extent, can also be tapped" (Münst 2008:46). For empirical

research, this means that it attempts to follow the migratory movements. In ethnological migration research this is done with the "methodological approach of multi-local and multi-perspective field research" (Münst 2008:46, cf. also Marcus 1995).

Case study: Dragan Mitrovic

"Dragan Mitrovic came to Switzerland in the seventies as a labor migrant. His center of life today is Zurich, where he lives with his children and wife and where he runs a car repair shop. He regularly sends money to his parents in Serbia, and he often travels back and forth between his native city of Rahovac and Zurich. When asked about this, he says, 'You know, we, the Serbs, we have two households, one here and one in Rahova'."

Source: Dahinden 2009:16.

Janine Dahinden (2009:16) writes: "As recently as the 1980s, migration researchers would probably not have used the term 'transnational' to describe such and similar examples; today, however, this would be the term that would be uttered spontaneously and first. The persons mentioned are integrated in so-called transnational fields. Dragan Mitrovic's engagement takes place simultaneously in different places around the globe. He financially supports two households - one there, a second here - and money and other goods flow in his network, which crosses national borders." Dahinden (2009:17) concludes that "emigration does ... not a break with the region of origin. On the contrary, in the migration process new and lasting interdependencies and reciprocities can form - in the transnational space. This can take different forms: by sending remittances or by establishing an 'ethnic business'; in the form of engagement in associations or by simultaneous political activity in the country of origin and host country; or by the formation of new religious forms in the transnational space. Transnationalism studies (or transnational studies) examine social facts and phenomena of transnationality and capture them theoretically" (Dahinden 2009:17).

Crucial to transnational ways of life are new communication technologies. Baldassar and Marla (2014:54), for example, noted that smart phones, tablets, and the Internet, as well as greater and more affordable mobility, have made social exchange, maintaining relationships, and participating in family life possible and regular, even over great distances. Omnipresent communication also enables daily interactions between migrants, their families and their relatives back home. An important reason for this is also the massive cheapening of international telephone calls (cf. Ariza 2014:110/111.). Parents today can care for and

accompany their children despite great distances through financial support, frequent phone calls, and visits, as Poeze and Mazzucato (2014:167), for example, showed using the example of Ghanaian families.

Transnationality always encloses certain localities: "Transnational movement relies strongly upon certain sites, which constitute a reference point within a complex crisscrossing of individual migratory paths. Put differently, instead of constituting a mere flow of circulation and mobile people, resources and images, transnationalism inhabits 'translocalities'" (Sinatti 2008:62).

Transnationalization as a scientific view of migration

The concept of transnationalization, on the other hand, attempts to understand the changes that have occurred as a result of migration processes at the level of the acting subjects and the social spaces they produce. With the prefix "trans," the pioneering research of Glick Schiller, Bash, and Szantan Blanc (1992) gave a new conceptual framework to the everyday world of migrants' lifestyles. The transnationalism concept has been discussed in the U.S. context for a number of years. In the broadest sense, it is considered a critique of one-sided structure-oriented approaches. Moreover, it is seen as a tool for analyzing migrations and migrant arrivals in the age of "information capitalism" (Castells 2001-2003), in which transnational and transstate spaces are increasingly expanding due to increased cross-border movements of people, goods, and information (cf. Apitzsch 2006). At the same time, the concept represents a critique of the dominant notion that understands migration as a unidirectional path and limited spatiotemporal process from a country of origin to a host country. Moreover, it criticizes spatial concepts in which the nation-state represents the natural and safe "container" (Pries 1996) in which all social experience takes place. This also calls into question the concept of the immigrant and the emigrant.

Instead, the new space creates transnational identities that develop contrary to rigid divisions of national belonging. Conditioned by the rapid growth of communication and mobility technologies, transnational relations also bring political, social, and cultural changes. Glick Schiller, Bash, and Szantan Blanc (1992) define transnationalism as the process by which immigrants create social fields to link the country of their origin and the country of their settlement. Their goal is to move beyond the binary model of "emigrants" and "immigrants" and of "push" and "pull" factors to focus on the transnational practices of transmigrants.

Empirical studies have examined how transmigrants bring their social relations and multiple varying identities to resist or adapt to the contexts they face in transnational fields. According to Portes et al. (1999), transmigrants live double lives. They often speak two languages, feel they belong to multiple homelands and cultures, and usually represent complex social or political interests that condition their presence in two or more countries.

Source: Apitzsch 2014:20.

Transnationality is always also characterized by mechanisms of inclusion and exclusion. Kathrin Düsener (2010:41) writes: "The question of migration is also always about aspects of inclusion and exclusion. Inclusion (Latin *inclusio*, 'the inclusion') means as much as inclusion, inclusion, ultimately therefore belonging; exclusion (literally exclusion, from the Latin *exclusio*), analogously also exclusion, describes as an opposite term to inclusion in the elevated colloquial language the fact that someone is excluded, i.e. excluded - partly for different reasons and possibly against his will - from a project, a meeting and the like. The participants want - for example, for reasons of reputation or mistrust - to remain among themselves, i.e. ultimately exclusive. This can also be accompanied by devaluation or even discrimination of those who are excluded. In the context of migration, exclusion means that migrants are not admitted as workers, for example, or are perceived primarily as competitors. However, migrants work in the host country either in the same field in which they also worked in their home country or in fields that natives reject for various reasons" (Düsener 2010:41).

Accordingly, as Hartmann-Hirsch 2014:107 noted with regard to Luxembourg, "the interplay between nation-state sovereignty and transnationalism ... represents an ambivalent interaction in which actors can adjust their stance depending on the partner ..., depending on the level, and depending on the historical context."

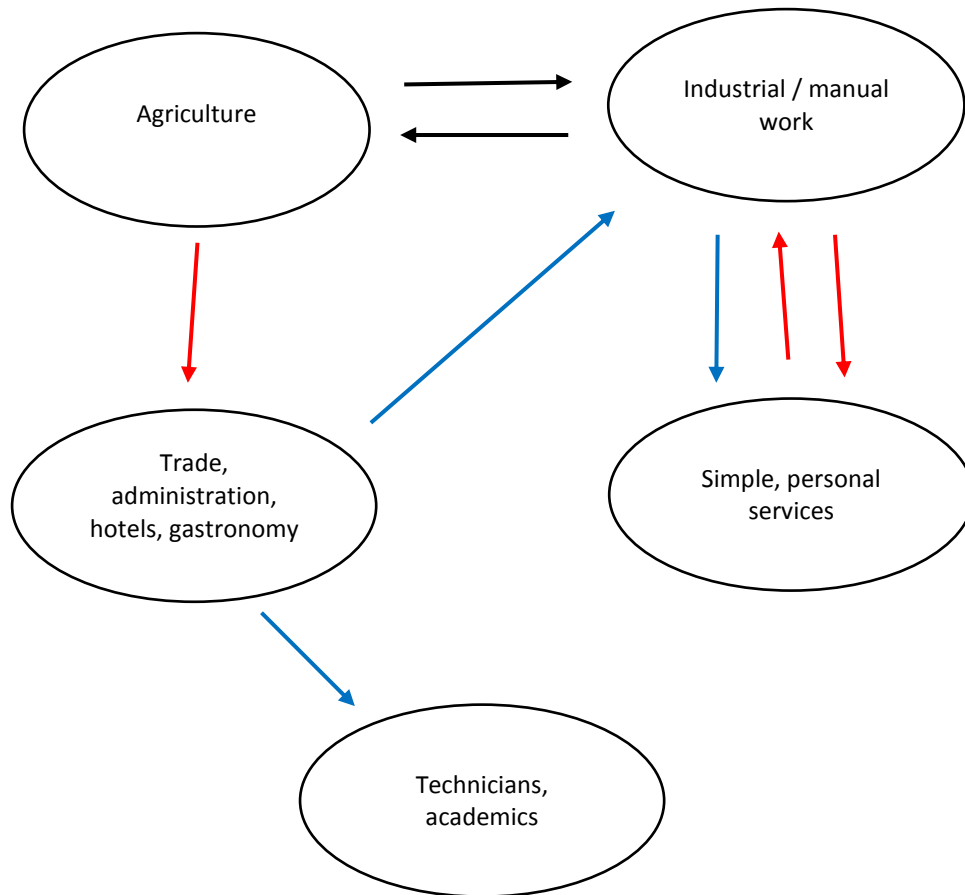
However, transnational migration does not only imply multi-locality, but often also involves a change of belonging to a social group or class. Nonini (2012:64/65) has rightly pointed out that transnationality is often associated with a change in economic function: peasants become traders, laborers become self-employed small business owners, and white-collar workers become freelancers. Yes, Glick Schiller et al. (2015:143) see the transnational phenomenon as a direct "product of world capitalism": because, on the one hand, tens of thousands of jobs were lost in highly developed countries due to the internationalization of capital in the context of restructuring and de-industrialization processes, and, on the other hand, tens of thousands of low-cost jobs were created in many emerging states by transnational corporations, agribusinesses, and tourism, workers in both the North and the South were increasingly forced to increase their mobility - that is, to migrate.

Unit I 31: Transnationality and migration

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Ludger Pries (2008b:55) has illustrated the connection between cross-border migration and job changes, i.e. transnationality and transprofessionalism, using the example of Mexico and the USA in the following diagram:



Domestic: 

Mexiko → USA: 

USA → Mexiko: 

Source: Pries 2008b:55; simplified representation by CJ.

Pries comments on the scheme as follows: "The intra-sectoral and inter-sectoral migration of the respondents varies quite significantly with the respective change of country (from Mexico to the U.S. or from the U.S. to Mexico) or remaining in the country in which the previous employment was also held. The highest above-average intra-sectoral employment changes (as measured by the standardized residuals, which are simplified by the difference in ... observed and expected frequencies), occur for job changes within the same country. This is particularly true for technical and academic occupations, with a standardized residual (S-residual) of 23.1 (where a value of 0 would be expected under a statistically random distribution).... In principle, however, also for all other economic sectors the standard

residual is always higher for employment changes in the same country than for the other two possibilities of country changes. Occupational employment careers are apparently realized only within, but not between, countries" (Pries 2008b:54/55, emphasis by CJ).

Transnational movement patterns and intra- and intersectoral work and occupational changes also lead to serious consequences at the level of identity. In every life and work situation, those aspects of identity must be updated that are demanded and promising in the new work context. In transnational processes, the individual performs permanent additional identity work (cf. on this also the concept of "balancing identity," cf. ► Unit I 37: "Cultural Identity and Hybridization Tendencies"). Both aspects oriented toward the future and those oriented toward the past come into play. Düsener (2010:53) speaks in this context of "retro- and prospektive[r] identity work: with a view to the dimension of time, the individual undertakes in his identity work both retrospective (=retrospective) and forward-looking (=prospective) linking processes that influence each other." Circular transnational movements such as migration thus reinforce the coexistence and juxtaposition of past experiences, encompassing at least two places, with their respective prospects for the future - also tied to at least two places.

The new view of transnational space also means - if one thinks about it further - that new forms of transnational participation have to be found, both in the country of origin and in the country of immigration (cf. also ► Unit I 32: "Integration and Participation"). Transnationality always has to do with mobility - and with inequality (cf. Faist 2015:73). In this context, geographical mobility can be understood as a precursor to social mobility (cf. Faist 2015:74 as well as Favell 2014:146ff.).

The great European refugee crisis of 2015 can also be understood under the aspect of transnationality: Large migration groups move through a whole series of countries, guided by local traffickers via corresponding apps on their smart- and I-phones, whereby the spaces of action and mobility increasingly transcend borders and even continents. This enlarges the strategic field of action for many people who were previously primarily locally or nationally oriented and acted.

While in the 1990s transnationality was often perceived as a social movement or as a description of your "alternative globalization from below," today the view has become more differentiated: Most researchers today agree that "transnationality" does not refer to a new social phenomenon, but rather to phenomena such as migration or minorities described and understood from a different, i.e. transnational, perspective. The perspective has thus become more dynamic, but also closer to reality (on the question of the transnational perspective, see also ► Unit D 40: "Transnationality and Nation-States").

Studies have shown that, on the one hand, not all migrants are involved in transnational practices and, on the other hand, transnational practices are often only temporary or transitory. For example, a survey of 1,200 immigrants to the United States who came from Colombia, the Dominican Republic, and El Salvador found that only a small proportion were economically and politically transnational. The study also found that it was predominantly well-educated, married, naturalized, and long-term U.S. residents who maintained transnational activities and networks (Dahinden 2009:17). In other words, transnational activities require resources among migrants, stable residency status, and minimal education.

Migrants use their transnational networks as a strategic resource (see Pries 1997 and Hess 2005a). This applies not only to ethnic or social networks, but also to religious networks (cf. Kivisto 2014:95). However, transnational religious networks do not reinforce integrative tendencies, but also serve for or confrontational purposes. Examples of the latter are religious terror networks of jihadist or Salafist groups (cf. also in detail ► Unit C 19: "Terrorism").

It is interesting to note Vertovec's (2009:64) suggestion that men and women act differently in transnational social spaces: While men are more likely to maintain public and institutional transnational relations in both the country of origin and the country of immigration, women seem to participate more in the life of the country of immigration.

2.1 Ethical implications

What are the consequences of the transnational view of migration? First of all, territorially demarcated living and working spaces exclusively in the country of immigration seem outdated or one-sided for some migrants. The living and working space is bilocal and transnational. This means that migrants are affected by a far greater number of additional adaptation and coordination problems than previously assumed: Migrants not only orient themselves to the standards - e.g. labor law, social insurances, company law - in the immigration country, but they are also forced to align sometimes very different standards of emigration and immigration countries.

In addition, the individual phases of life are no longer so clearly defined, in the sense of school and education in youth, gainful employment in middle age and retirement after reaching pensionable age. The phases of life are merging more strongly into one another and can overlap to some extent in the two places of residence.

More than ever, and in a new way, the question of integration and participation arises both in the country of immigration and in the country of origin (see also ► Unit I 32: "Integration and Participation").

It is doubtful whether facilitated naturalization alone is an adequate solution to the problem of transnationality.

The following conclusion suggests itself: Concepts of exclusive nationality to one country - be it in the form of retaining the exclusive nationality of the emigration country or naturalization in the receiving country while giving up the previous nationality in the emigration country - are completely inappropriate in transnational migration spaces. Possible responses may include: Dual or multiple citizenships in two or more countries or political, economic and social in the respective place of residence not linked to nationality. In the second case, the person concerned would have to decide in which country he or she wants to be entitled to vote and hold office (cf. also ► Unit I 32: "Integration and participation").

3. Control Questions

1. What does "transnationality" mean in the context of migration research?
2. To what extent are migration movements connected with processes of inclusion and exclusion? 3.
3. Explain the connection between occupational and national change using Pries' scheme.
4. What is the connection between circular, transnational migration processes and personal identity work?
5. What are the implications of the concept of transnational migration for the integration and participation of migrants?

4. Links

Transnationale Aktivitäten und Lebensstile. Transnationalität und Integration

<http://www.ekm.admin.ch/ekm/de/home/identitaet---zusammenhalt/transnat/aktivitaet.html>

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http://www.swp-berlin.org/fileadmin/contents/products/studien/2001_S02_woe.pdf

Artikel: Transnationale Migration - Eine vielversprechende Perspektive?

Von Barbara Lüthi

<http://geschichte-transnational.clio-online.net/forum/id=880&count=21&recno=9&type=diskussionen&sort=datum&order=down&segment=16>

Transnationalität als Perspektive – neue Ansätze in der Migrationsforschung

Vortrag von Janine Dahinden

http://www.academia.edu/4815649/2009_Die_transnationale_Perspektive

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Unit I 31: Transnationality and migration

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