Are We All Transnationalists Now?

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Currently, we can look back at fifteen years of transnational research. The transnational paradigm for studying migration and the social (trans)formations instigated by connectivity is certainly a success story – as the rapidly expanding number of studies reveals. The spanning of social relationships beyond borders into new sites and places, continuous spatial movement as an important facet of social life and multiplication of formal memberships and belonging increasingly characterise the social realm all around the world. These trends are well captured in this volume which aptly demonstrates that our conceptual tools geared at grasping the new complexities and subtleties have been considerably refined since the early 1990s. This volume is a valuable collection of contributions combining theoretical and methodological approaches as well as precise empirical analyses conducted in manifold social fields. I see it as a timely contribution to transnational research, demonstrating its strengths and innovative potential. At the same time, this volume uncovers an important problem entailed in transnational research which I would like to discuss in this short essay. Given the novelty of the transnational paradigm, it is oriented by one strong bias that requires closer attention. In the pages that follow, I shall argue that the transnational paradigm privileges an overtly optimistic picture of emerging global connectivity, celebrating in its analyses visions of world-spanning ties of mutuality and collective attachments. It highlights the emergence of bridging ties as well as of communicative channels, while neglecting ruptures, distances as well as boundary dynamics that are part and parcel of transnational processes.

To put it simply: In order to establish the transnational condition, today, it was necessary to stress the relatedness between people and social realms in a world-spanning perspective. However, if we agree that the transnational paradigm is a powerful tool for describing the simultaneity of globally expanding social relations, as well as decentred processes of localisation, then the obstacles to connectivity demand closer attention. These deserve our attention not as an anomaly, but rather as an intrinsic element of transnational processes. Thomas

Faist's reflections (this volume) on the overtly enthusiastic prognoses formulated by system theory scholars conceptualising the world society as of one communicative space, without producing empirical evidence to substantiate this claim, point in the direction of my argument. Urmila Goel's careful analysis of the Indernet (this volume) brings the discrepancy between a celebratory discourse deployed by users of new communicative media, on one hand, and the restricted impact of the new technologies, on the other, to light. By drawing upon the analyses presented in this volume, I intend to highlight the obvious strengths of this approach and then proceed to some apparent weaknesses and blank spots in transnationalist research that the authors of this volume have addressed. A tension is expressed in the title of this essay: The transnational research carried out from industrial centres is biased, suggesting that human life around the globe is characterised and perceived as being forged in and reinforced through transnational ties. But what is the state of the "transnational condition", today?

The Importance of the Transnational Paradigm

Transnational studies provide scholars with refined analytical tools for studying social dynamics in a world increasingly characterised by globality. I follow Nina Glick Schiller's distinction between the terms "transnational" and "global". In her view (2007: 449), speaking about transnationalism or transnational process means to "emphasise" the ongoing interconnection or flow of people, ideas, objects and capital across the borders of nation-states. These flows take place in contexts in which the state shapes but does not contain such linkages and movements. In contrast, the term "global is best deployed for those world system phenomena that affect the planet, regardless of borders and local differences" (ibid.). Following this distinction, studies in the transnational field focus on micro and mezo-constellations that come about under the conditions of globality (see Lachenmann, this volume). They privilege processes that are usually ignored by globalisation or world society studies, i.e. actor-centred perspectives, localisation as well as boundary dynamics. As Faist argues (this volume), transnational studies serve as an important corrective to the overtly systemic and top-down-approaches deployed by world society as well as systemic analyses in the field of globalisation research.

Neither global expansion, nor peoples' movements, nor cultural transfers are recent phenomena. The "transnational condition" is an ongoing, intensifying processes of social exchanges in the field of politics, economy, environmental concerns (see Lindenthal in this volume), social security and artistic production. Scholars working in the fields of globalisation, world society as well as transnational studies, increasingly concur on this point. The novelty of the transnationalist approach is its insistence (demonstrated throughout the work of Ludger Pries

2008) upon the simultaneous embeddedness in distant localities as well as its providing conceptual space to encompass migrants living in more than one society. The proponents of this paradigm are silent, though, regarding whether transnationality is seen by them as the norm in migration, or as one important formation among those who migrate. The former is usually implied, as revealed by Glick Schiller's critique of multiculturalist as well as (neo)assimilationist approaches that focus upon national constellations and suggest that peoples' movements mean the permanent abandoning of one place for another. Transnationality as a general feature of migration is seen by her as an intrinsic element of past societies that has been intensified and become more visible in recent times.

One of the biggest problems of transnational studies is simultaneously also one of their major strengths. Transnationality is observed as occurring and shaped in a wide range of societal spheres. International and national orders, legal systems, capitalist expansion, global cultural flows, modernity, social movements, wars and resistance, to name just some of the most frequently mentioned topics, all provide important contexts for studying transnationality. Social sciences encounter in these circumstances the problem of extending their research to diverse and distant fields of inquiry, putting their conceptual tools to severe tests. At the same time, corrections to established methodologies have become necessary – which is a welcome occasion to re-think some of the basic disciplinary assumptions. In particular, social anthropology embraced for a long time a holistic paradigm that postulated the cultural boundedness of societies, their homogeneity as well as their static character. It invented the notorious "anthropological concept of culture" that many scholars working in this field abandoned a long time ago, but that is nowadays used largely outside the discipline in essentialising discourses of culture. Sociology, as other neighbour disciplines, is prone to methodological nationalism (Wimmer/Glick Schiller 2002), conceiving of societies in their boundedness within borders of the nation-state while neglecting the substantial scope of transnationality shaping the social live. The advantage the transnationalist perspective offers is then given by its quest to develop conceptual tools for analysing cultures in their processual capacities (Wimmer 2005) and societies in their complexities – as interactive spaces constituted through trans-regional exchanges.

Given the problem of how to study societies in their multi-sited locations – by which I do not only mean multi-locality in spatial terms, but also the simultaneous shaping of social relations by different types of formations and organisational levels – transnational approaches deployed in social anthropology as well as in micro-sociology (see Lachemann in this volume) are well advised to start off from actor-centred, interactionist approaches that focus upon individuals, small collectivities as well as personalised networks, and only then cautiously proceeding to their embeddedness in societal formations on a larger scale (while systemic and quantitative approaches in political sciences and sociology provide complementary perspectives). This technique was successfully developed by the

team of the Manchester School, centred around Max Gluckman, Clyde Mitchell and others. Mitchell's analysis of the Kalela dance (1956) is one of the finest examples of how a micro-analysis of a leisure activity in a Southern African town can be used to demonstrate broad processes of (late) colonial influence on African societies. These processes include industrialisation, urbanisation as well as emerging urban-rural inter-linkages resulting from labour migration. This procedure resembles peeling an onion in reverse. The analysis of social interactions, on the occasion of group singing and dancing, gradually reveals the larger and larger implications of the meanings of songs as well as of the perfomative acts that mimicry the colonial society's hierarchy and shed light on ethnic categorisations that are shaped through the urban co-existence of migrant workers.

It was the Manchester School that alerted social anthropologists to interactionist perspectives, used in particular for studies of conflicts, by means of the extended case study method. This approach allowed scholars working in this field to observe the transformative properties of conflict for social orders. Furthermore, partly building upon studies of the Chicago School, this team produced rich ethnography challenging simplifying assumptions on migration and integration. This school provides us with analytical tools useful for studying transnational relations which were taken up in other disciplinary fields and in other national contexts. Among them is situational analysis based in observing social interactions in a diachronic perspective, i.e. in the extended case-study method (on parallel research in France, see Salzbrunn, this volume).

The Manchester School contributed furthermore to the elaboration of the concept of network for micro-sociological research, applying mostly qualitative research methods. The concept of social network was brought into social anthropology from other disciplines, while the concept of "social field" developed by the Manchester School spread to other "scientific communities" and is currently informing transnational studies well beyond the disciplinary boundaries of social anthropology (see, Lachenmann, this volume). Today, Alejandro Portes (2001: 812) focuses upon "dense networks across political borders created by immigrants in their quest for economic advancement and social recognition". Glick Schiller (2007: 455) defines "social field" as an "unbounded terrain of multiple interlocking egocentric networks". According to her, the term "network" is best applied to chains of social relationships that are egocentric and are mapped as stretching out from a single individual. "Social field" is a more encompassing term than "network", "taking us to a societal level of analysis" (ibid.).

In the sphere of transnational studies, the notion of "transnational social spaces" is frequently evoked in a metaphoric manner, denoting relationships, aspirations as well as imaginations between those who travel as well as those left behind at home. In this sense, it denotes dense interactive horizons, but does not pay sufficient justice to the social constitution of interactive processes. In this vein, despite the fact that life on the move is a phenomenon restricted to less than 10 % of the global population, almost everybody is becoming a transnationalist.

Almost everybody forms part of social constellations that are shaped in diverse ways by migration practices: through remittances that can play a decisive role in a family's or community's well-being as well as in all those places where the "locals" are confronted with "newcomers" in manifold sites of social interaction.

When we go one step further in the transnationalist conceptualisation, in terms of imagining the world, in relating to other spaces, in the – arguably often very restricted, but nevertheless – enlarged radius of movement and communication (almost) everybody becomes a transnationalist. The old and new means of communication, paired with the available transportation technologies provide people around the globe with a significantly heightened awareness of globality as the very basis of local concerns as well as of converging cognitive frames (see Lindenthal's contribution). With communications occurring increasingly beyond the scope of face-to-face exchanges as Greschke (this volume) argues, the sense of immediacy is significantly hightened. One could even speak of a "celebratory mode" of connectivity – in particular embraced by those involved in transnational communicative networks. With the reinforced reflexivity on globality, actors increasingly conceive of global processes in relation to their own concerns. Their own radius of action is significantly shaped by distant events. Wars, conflicts and calamities are often evaluated with regards to one's own well-being.

Simultaneously, problems and cases of injustice, but also new social projects evolving in distant places may instigate a sense of solidarity and involvement. Therefore, transnational solidarity networks, religious dynamics as well as new social movements can create new transnational social fields. These dynamics are buttressed by the easy availability of information and a heightened sense of immediacy. Thus connectivity appears as one of the major properties of social dynamics in the current world society. It does not come as a surprise that transnational studies have greatly contributed to revealing the importance of transnational flows, the ensuing reflexivity as well as local positionings vis-à-vis global spectators (as analysed by Hering in this volume). However, looking back at the scope of research in this field, it is worth while asking whether the major thrust of research does not cover up dimensions in social relations that are significantly less smooth, less self-evident and more problematic than the term suggests.

Transnational Research Designs and Their Problems

Transnational studies have thus far neglected the necessity to make a close examination of the ruptures, inequalities, power differentials and conflicts entailed in transborder social relations. The thrust of research has so far been geared towards observing how social relations expand in space and time, with scholars mostly trying to demonstrate the durable character and salience of kin and community ties. In order to examine these interconnections methodological choices were necessary that, to some extent, have narrowed the scope of interest. In the follow-

ing, I shall concentrate on some weaknesses in this field that have not yet received sufficient attention. Above all, it is my contention that while rejecting methodological nationalism, transnational research still tends to endorse methodological ethnicisation. This comes about through some problematic choices in research designs.

Above all, (too) many studies select communities as their social units of observation and take their internal solidarity for granted. In a similar vein, while observing transnational relations, as in the realm of transnational activism, solidarity tends to be taken simultaneously as *explanans* as well as as *explanandum* (see Radcliffe et al. 2002).

Secondly, distances and boundaries are not sufficiently taken into account. The transnational research postulates for very good reasons that spatial distances are to be seen as social constructions. Space-time-compression (Giddens 1991, following Karl Marx) is indeed a feature of contemporary societies that has greatly accelerated in recent decades. Nevertheless, as Vattimo (1992) argued already long time ago, societies continue to be differentiated by unequal distribution of resources which makes for substantial differences in the speed with which people move. While the ability to communicate has been significantly enhanced, transportation is still a scarce commodity for those persons with low income. For many migrant workers as well as for political refugees (though usually for different reasons) as well as their kin and co-fellows, spatial distances and/or political boundaries continue to be a crucial feature affecting their existence – whereas the oversimplifying terminology of transnationality covers up the internal problems in kinship and friendship relations (this issue was already taken up in the introduction to this volume).

Thirdly, most studies concentrate on the transnational social spaces while neglecting processes of localisation, i.e. confrontations with persons, groups and organisations in localised contexts that are characterised by diversity, persistence of social boundaries, limited access to valued resources as well as being prone to conflict and contestation. This issue has been thoroughly criticised by Glick Schiller and Çağlar (forthcoming): Their concept of rescaling constitutes an important corrective to the mainstream transnationalist approaches. Salzbrunn's contribution in this volume recapitulates the thrust of their critique, so that I shall not repeat their arguments here. Instead, I shall concentrate on the related concept of belonging, discerning three major problems.

First. On ethnicisation and (putative) solidarity in transnational social spaces. While there are important exceptions of course, many research designs are prone to methodological ethnicisation by selecting distinct categories of people as their object of observation – i.e. members of religious congregations, ethnic or national groups – and following them around the globe. Such a choice may well reflect persisting boundaries in social interactions. These may be true in the case of irregular migration, when migrants find little opportunity to enter into communication with members of the "societies of arrival", with their employers (beyond tak-

ing their commands and receiving salaries), or with migrants coming from other places of origin. Still, rather then taking this state of affairs for granted, researchers should be careful in selecting their units of analysis. As difficult as it may be, other units of analysis would be more likely to reveal whether the concentration of communications within one's own group of origin is really the norm in observed situations; if so, whether it was deliberate or enforced, and if not, who were other interaction partners and which resources and strategies made for particular choices. Is social life really as ethnicised as researchers as well as ethnic activists are trying to convince us? If so, when is the concentration upon interactions among one's own peers regarded by actors as their own choice and when is it seen as forced?

Social relations in transnational spaces tend to be perceived as harmonious and solidary. The transmigrants as well as those who remain at home appear in many studies as characterised by commonality of interest, mutually accepted division of labour as well common aspirations and expectations. When inequality and power differentials come into the picture, these are usually described as instigated by the "systemic colonisation of the life-worlds" (Habermas 1981), i.e. of capital and state as impinging upon individuals and collectivities. That market transactions are realised in social relations is all too often ignored. The very fact that migrants may compete among themselves for jobs, that new sources of income may destabilise relations within families and households; that those who remain at home, on one hand, and the transmigrants, on the other hand, are likely to enter into conflicts over the use of remittances as well as the modalities of sharing diverse types of assets finds little space in the available analyses. Rescher's analysis of gender conflicts ensuing in transnational social spaces (in this volume) provides telling examples of substantial re-arrangements in kin and household constellations. His and other analyses continue to highlight the fascinating fact that the capitalist world's economy necessitates the maintenance of family ties and allegiances among persons spread across the globe. Scholars like Kearney (2004) have described how capitalism has contributed to stabilising traditional kinship and local structures while taking advantage of these formations. In a similar vein, Germana D'Ottawio's contribution in this volume provides a very timely analysis of the mutual reinforcement of interpersonal reciprocity ties and capitalist expansion in the field of human reproduction. Her study reveals the possibility that the problems entailed in these constellations, facing relatives, friends and neighbours, have not received sufficient attention so far.

Transmigrants and those remaining at home tend to be depicted as sharing the same goals, interests and political attitudes. While following discrete groups of people engaged in their daily activities, scholars are prone to concentrate on networks sharing political convictions and endeavours. But transnational space is forged by networks of diverse political allegiance. "Local societies" do not necessarily share political ideologies. On the contrary, factionalism, i.e. political group formation cutting across socio-economic lines and often stabilised through

patron-client-relationships, is a wide-spread phenomenon in local societies around the globe. Transnational activism tends to reinforce local conflict lines while local factions are likely to impinge upon their supporters in transnational social spaces. Such phenomena can be observed for instance in the case of the Indian anti-dam movement (Pfaff-Czarnecka 2007) where party politics, economic interests, environmental or human rights concerns instigate local divisions in diverse camps. Gandhi draws our attention to the deeply entangled nature of negotiations in the course of the Narmada project in Gujarat: "Resistance is a process of negotiation between actors who operate from particular positions along a spectrum of power relations. Complex, horizontal engagements of convergence and disengagement rather than static relations of dominance "from above" and resistance "from below" characterise the relationship between the state, *adivasis* and activists" (Gandhi 2003: 486).

Radcliffe et al. (2002) draw our attention to such movements' unruly, complex, and partly contradictory character. On the basis of a study of indigenous and political transnationalism in the Andean region, they argue against a simple "meeting of above and below" model, as reflected in many over-enthusiastic transnationalist models. They suggest that the "issue networks" they have observed operate simultaneously on diverse levels, and are full of entanglements and contradictions: "political transnationalism represents the entanglements of diverse ethnic, class and geographically dispersed institutionalised and politicised social actors around the notion of indigenous needs, and the policy and political frameworks through which to address these needs. ... We find entanglements around gender hierarchies, political affiliations, notions of professionalism, and cultural authenticity" (Radcliffe et al. 2002: 3). "In practice, the work on Andean indigenous transnational issue networks demonstrates that the interests, agendas and practices constitutive of transnational indigenous development are radically heterogeneous" (Radcliffe et al. 2002: 14).

Secondly, while acknowledging the persisting salience of state institutions reinforcing the territorial boundedness, the actual process of transgressing borders has not yet received sufficient attention in transnational research. The thrust of studies concentrates rather on those for whom borders either did not constitute an obstacle, or on those who managed to cross them. Those unable to pursue transnational life, hindered by the insurmountable thresholds of national boundaries are hardly ever objects of inquiries – despite the fact that the wish to move across borders is an important element of their life. While political science and social geography are already dealing with this theme, the importance of boundaries needs to become an object of transnational studies in other disciplines.

Some people experience closed doors when they seek access to a new country, and for others national boundaries can be problematic when temporary permits and national social security systems do not match. Yet other groups of people thrive on the existence of (physical) state boundaries, for instance by engaging in smuggling. This transnational way of life would come more fully to

light if social science research would pay more attention to the question of how it is affected by the crossing of national boundaries. The notion of "trans-border", that is frequently evoked, highlights rather the lowering of thresholds when people shift between countries and their institutions rather than the human creativity exercised in dealing with borders as part of a transnational way of life.

Spatial dynamics have always posed difficulties for social science research. Transnational analysis has taken them under consideration more than other fields of social science research. This was made possible in particular by drawing upon the constructivist approaches elaborated in cultural geography as well as by insisting upon the constitution of space through social interactions. The constructivist understanding of space attaches priority to mental maps that may significantly reduce distances or even render them unimportant. But the annihilation of space through time in our current imagery often lacks confirmation in actual social practices. The availability of new communication technologies is changing our sense of the immediacy and the form of human exchanges. Still, the means of communication as well as of transportation are not equally available to all and we are still in the process of establishing when face-to-face communication matters and when other forms of exchange are sufficient. The differences in the ease with which people can travel from place to place are significant. "Being there" has not ceased to be important – as is shown by numerous examples of transnational politics (see Faist's insistence on the importance of face-to-face communication).

The importance of spatial distances and the problem of immediacy through spatial dislocation have been particularly well demonstrated in transmigrants' political action. Transnationalist research has highlighted so far the multiplication of political attachments as well as long-distance political involvement. But the problematic sides of these dynamics need also to come to light. While some migrants lose interest in the politics going on in places of their origin, others tend to acquire more nationalist or particularist positions regarding politics in their places "of origin". This can be seen in the example of the Hindutva movement, i.e. in the Hindu-extremist violence actions against members of other faiths in India – best exemplified in the case of struggles over the spiritual sites in Ayodhya, North India that were hugely supported, financially as well as ideologically, through transnational networks. The forms of involvement and the consequences of political action are very different if you are on the spot, or far away from it. It is one thing to send money and express moral support to co-fellows engaging in local political struggles, and another thing to actually fight, risk bodily harm or death, and bear the consequences. The concept of simultaneity developed by scholars who document that migrants increasingly engage in transnational political networks, in their homelands as well as in new locales, requires therefore some additional consideration. The literature is largely silent on the problem of simultaneous political involvements in contexts of differing immediacy. Eva Gerharz' study makes therefore an import contribution to this field when she observes the increased intensity in exchanges between Jaffna and the Tamil dia-

spora while simultaneously highlighting processes of closure and of re-affirmation of boundaries, localities and identities.

Thirdly, transmigrants have a problem of belonging. Transnational studies obscure this fact. Indeed, their basic assumption is that transmigrants simultaneously belong to different social configurations by forming part of a transnational social space. I should like to problematise the concept of transnational social space, not by questioning the existence of what it denotes, but rather by drawing attention to the delicacies of belonging in a world on the move. I should like to suggest that problems of belonging are relevant at the places of origin as well as at the places of arrival. And certainly, the relations in the spaces in-between, i.e. during journeys, in exchanges between people living in diverse local contexts as well as in transnational networks are prone to rupture, conflict and to problematic contestations.

The problem of formal membership in transnational spaces has already attracted a lot of attention in the debates on dual as well of multiple memberships. Institutions have not yet been attuned to the continuous flux of people and the resulting necessity to readjust. But some important innovations have taken place. The regional integration of Europe has significantly reduced the importance of national borders between the member countries, but important boundaries still remain, for example in the field of social security systems. Some countries such as Germany have reduced obstacles to dual citizenship. Nevertheless, citizenship remains an important problem for many people seeking access and residency permits in countries of arrival, with legislation discriminating more and more between "haves" and "have-nots". On the other hand, collective duties attached to formal membership may cause problems at the places of origin – as powerfully argued by Ramble in the case of Northern Nepalese communities. Local communities dwelling in marginal locations often dread losing members. Consequently, those who out-migrate are frequently challenged to either come back on a regular basis, or to provide financial support – under the threat of losing membership and the benefits of local solidarity entailed in formalised collective attachments.

Belonging through material attachments is another field worthy of further consideration. The current research tends to concentrate on transnational and translocal networking in the field of finance. Investments in transnational space, loans as well as donations, are certainly important features of the world society. However, from the point of view of migrants, having material possessions at different locales can be cumbersome. Belongings can keep people attached to places that they wish to abandon – as was repeatedly experienced in Nazi Germany, for example, when houses, industries and libraries prevented Jews from leaving early enough to establish a safe existence elsewhere. Also, the social relations of ownership and division of labour can prove to be very problematic: Those who remain at home can exert pressure upon labour migrants to provide goods for conspicuous consumption, rather than opt for long-term investments. Glick Schiller

(2007) rightly argues that kin networks maintained between people who send remittances and those who live on them can be fraught with tension. Often, migrant families living away from their place of origin need to make choices in money allocation between the material well-being of their nuclear families and the demands put upon them by broader kinship and friendship networks in their communities of origin. Time and time again migrants have discovered upon coming home that money they earned under severe conditions was entirely spent by relatives during their absence. Those who remain at home are likely to develop metropolitan imageries of capitalist consumption which can bolster the unproductive use of remittances. Enhanced status considerations are yet another feature of transnational social spaces. These are often mentioned in the relevant studies, but we still know little about their impact upon social relations in kin and communal relations.

Cultural identity, the third dimension of belonging, can become a pawn used in social relations in the transnational space. Transnational attitudes oscillate between two extremes. On one hand, there are cosmopolitan attitudes (that however tends to be elitist as Janoschka highlights in this volume), transcultural rapprochements as well as to reflexive hybridity or creolisation. On the other hand, identity politics can reinforce particularist positioning (on their dynamics in shifting contexts, see Zirh's analysis in this volume); hence, social closure can be the direct result of transnational encounters. These can be caused by the migrants' experiences of exclusion and marginalisation at places of arrival. This experience may buttress nostalgia, but also occur through emotional blackmail exerted upon the transmigrants who may possibly wish to establish durable ties in new contexts far away from their original homes by those living there and seeking their support. We may ask therefore: When is culture "what goes without saying" (an important form of belonging as tacit understanding), when is it located at the very root of people's identity, and when is it a representational devise (i.e. belonging made explicit)? Whether belonging is made to serve as a tool of collective representation depends upon the social relations structuring the transnational space. In this field also, transnational studies open up a broad and fascinating scope for future research.

If we wish to abandon the metaphoric facets of the transnational space concept and establish it as being composed of multi-scalar social relations and transactions, then a closer examination of the social ties making up its fabric is necessary. For instance the term "transnational communities" that informed a lot of research in the early phase of the transnational studies has diverted scholars' attention from some major features of transnational social life. At first glance, "community" denotes equality, sameness and social harmony. But when we look beneath collective representations of commonality, then inequality, conflict as well as mechanisms of negative reciprocity may come into the picture. In this vein, transnational social spaces can be cosy, instigating a warm sense of mutuality, but also can confront members with restrictions and a lot of pressure – within

and beyond communal boundaries. A historical perspective is required here in order to grasp the processes of stratification within migratory streams.

The localisation theory developed by Glick Schiller and Çağlar (forthcoming) provides an important corrective to transnationalist approaches when we reflect on the social relations of belonging in transmigrant situations. The problem of migrants' belonging has been discussed time and again in integrationist approaches, but for a long time it was neglected in transnational research which privileged the observation of migratory dynamics, ignoring local attachments at places of "arrival". In dealings with authorities, in interactions at schools and in kindergardens, relations reaching across cultural boundaries, i.e. those forged between the "locals" and the "newcomers", become very important. Salzbrunn illustrates this point in her contribution to this volume. Joint activism can significantly buttress the mutual sense of belonging, but in other instances, the "locals" may wish not to relate with the newcomers. Therefore, "translocal" relations can result in new constellations of reciprocity, but they often tend to be confrontational and put pressures upon newcomers who more often than not may feel that they do not entirely belong – and never will. However, alliances can be created around the notion of belonging to a neighbourhood without regards to national background, especially in multicultural neighbourhoods like Belleville/Paris. But more often than not, the condition of not-belonging comes about through extremely diverse assessments by all the social actors involved in a given "transnationalist situation". While many transnationalists (in particular, scholars examining the transnational dynamics) oscillate towards cosmopolitan positions (even very tacit ones), a significant number of locals acquires xenophobic attitudes. The "right to cultural difference", based upon the "anthropological notion of culture" challenges overtly optimistic depictions of multiple belonging in transnational space.

This short *tour d'horizon* was intended at underlining my contention that transnational studies have contributed greatly to our knowledge of how people relate in the world society and the ensuing transformations. It is obvious that the transnational condition is by no means confined to those who frequently cross borders. The transnational research has powerfully suggested that a myriad of direct as well as indirect connections exist between disparate individuals and collectivities that do not even know about each other, but are shaped by action and events taking place in other parts of the globe. But we need to accept that the constellations of connectivity as well as the configurations of multiple belonging in transnational social spaces, today, confront everybody with challenging options and choices and, with new conflict potentials and uncertainties, that scholars are just starting to explore.

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