Transnational Migration: Challenges and the blind spots
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Winter Term 2013
4 Credits
MA and PhD

Description and the Aims: This course will explore the flow of people across national boundaries in the late twentieth century and how migrants build and sustain border-crossing connections and networks; focus on the different kinds of institutions involved in this process and their change in time; concentrate on the key concepts of transnational migration perspectives, like globalization, ethnicity, community, locality, sovereignty, citizenship, and multiple membership. The aim of the course is to familiarize the students with the main theories of transnational migration, their conceptual network, and their distinct trajectories of development in the US and Europe, as well as their blind spots in close relation to these trajectories. The latter point will be addressed throughout the course not as a separate weekly topic. The course will put a special emphasis on the way(s) globalization and spatiality are conceptualized within the different trajectories of transnational migration research. On the basis of selected case study material addressing transnational migration and the related processes in different parts of the world, we will focus on transnational migration patterns and the social, economic, cultural and political repercussions of migrant transnational social formations on the nation-states involved. One of the objectives of this course is to analyze the interface between migrant formations and the state and the challenges transnational migration poses to religious and political formations, citizenship schemes, agencies of development, and to urban politics.

Structure: Seminars will begin with a short lecture by the instructor and will be followed by a presentation/introduction of that week's topic, in which student(s) responsible for that week will present the readings structured by critical comments and questions (depending on the number of students registered to the course). This introduction will be followed by a discussion. For each session there will be two or three key (required) texts. Those preparing the introduction of the topic could also include the optional (suggested) readings into their presentation, in addition to the key texts. It is inevitable to prepare in advance for the seminars, as there is a strong emphasis on class participation. At the end of each meeting, the instructor will distribute few questions (as a hand out) to rethink the discussed readings of the week further and to relate them to the readings of the previous weeks.

Learning Outcomes: At the end of the course, the students are expected to:

- Have an understanding of the emergence of transnational migration perspective and its varieties, as well as their different trajectories of development
- Have a critical understanding of the key concepts of transnational migration, namely of “ethnicity”, “community”, “sovereignty”, “citizenship” and “ethnic economy”
- Understand the importance of processes of capital restructuring and urban transformation in studying transnational migration
Have an understanding of the blind spots and limits of transnational migration perspectives

**Course requirements and grading:** Each student will be assessed through a combination of seminar contribution, oral presentation, and written work (again this scheme depends on the number of students registered to this course).

*Oral presentation (30%)* Students are expected to introduce one of the seminars. The written introduction (max. 4 pages) is due two days before the class. This assignment should ideally include a succinct summary of the main thesis of the text as well as critical comments and questions about the readings.

*Term paper (60%)* Approximately 4000 words paper is due by the end of the term. Students can write their term paper on the seminar topic they introduced, but can also choose another one (after consultation with the lecturer).

*Active class participation (10%)*

(*) optional (suggested) reading

**Week 1: Introduction and Migration Theories and the Rise of Transnational Migration Perspective (I)**

Although migration studies has always been an interdisciplinary field, each discipline concentrated on migration from within a different conceptual framework and approached to it on the basis of a different set of questions. Mapping up this landscape is important to situate and understand the rise of transnational migration perspective, its central questions and the different trajectories this field followed in different disciplines.


Week 2: Migration Theories and the Rise of Transnational Migration Perspective (II)

Although there are core questions the sociologists and anthropologists - advocating for a transnational migration perspective - addressed, it is difficult to talk about a single voice. It is important to approach transnational migration approaches in a time span.


Week 3: Migration, Globalization and the Nation-State (I)

What are the entanglements between globalization and transnational migration? Why is it important to address the phenomenon of transnational migration in close relation to the changes nation-states are going through in a globalized world? What are the multilevel relations between migration and nation states?


Week 4: Transnational Migration, the Nation-State and the Urban

Although there has been a strong interface between the urban processes and histories of migration, it is important to concentrate on how cities enter into transnational migration theories. This week’s reading concentrate on the way globalization and global cities have been conceptualized within transnational migration theories and raise questions about the way they theorized locality. These questions are addressed in the context of neoliberal urban restructuring.


Smith, M. P. 2001 Transnational Urbanism, Malden: Blackwell, pages to be specified

Glick Schiller, Nina and Caglar, Ayse 2009 Towards a Comparative Theory of Locality in Migration Studies: Migrant Incorporation and City Scale, Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies
Week 5: Migration, Citizenship and Transnational Membership I

Changing forms of membership is at the heart of the processes transnational migration gives rise to. These have repercussions on concepts of sovereignty, schemes of citizenship and the understanding of democratic participation. Multiple membership and the increasing tendency to accept or tolerate dual citizenship are related to the increasing transnationalization of migration and politics. The readings of week 5 and week 6 approach these questions through the case studies from different regions.


Jonathan Fox (2005) UNPACKING “TRANSNATIONAL CITIZENSHIP”
Annual Review of Political Science Vol. 8: 171-201.
Week 6: Transnational Migration and Citizenship II


Dual citizenship for transborder minorities? How to respond to the Hungarian-Slovak tit-for-tat - Rainer Bauböck: Dual Citizenship for Transborder Minorities? A Rejoinder


Glick Schiller, Nina and Ayse Cagar 2008 “And Ye Shall Possess It, and Dwell Therein”: Social Citizenship, Global Christianity, and Non-Ethnic Immigrant Incorporation In C. Bretell ed. Immigrants and Citizenship: Anthropological approaches


Week 7: Forced Migration, Refugees and the undocumented

Migrants, undocumented migrants and refugees are situated differently within migration studies. To what extent the transnational migration perspectives share this imaginary? What are the implicit assumptions behind this distinction? How are they challenged in social movements and in theory. What are the instances and the sites involved in tracing the refugees?


Week 8: Transnational Migration, Development and the new institutional actors

Migrants and migration increasingly fall into the interest and programs of development agencies. The aim of the readings of week 7&8 is to raise critical questions about: the relations between migration and development; the basic concepts of this collaboration; the mainstream framing of these developments and about the basic institutional agencies of development through migrants.


**Week 9: Remittances and their Transformative Capacity**


(*) Muenz, Reiner World Bank Report

 (*) Faist, Thomas. Transstate spaces and development, in Rethinking Transnationalism, ed. By Ludger Preis

**Week 10: Transnational Migration and Entrepreneurship**

What are transnational migration and transnational entrepreneurship entangled? How are these concepts related to “ethnic entrepreneurship” and “ethnic economies”? What are the fault lines of the concept of “ethnic entrepreneurship”?


(*) Caglar, Ayse: Mediascapes, Advertisement Industries and Cosmopolitan Transformations: German Turks in Germany. New German Critique, Spring/Summer 2004, Number 92.

(*) Rath, J 2005 Feeding the Festive City Immigrant Entrepreneurs and Tourist Industry.


Ong, Aihwa (2007)

Week 11: Transnational Migration, Ethnicity, Religion and politics
Despite all attempts of a critical approach, the concept of ethnicity lies at the heart of transnational migration perspectives. What are the methodological consequences of the centrality of “ethnicity” in migration studies? What kind of blin spots does this centrality create?
What are the effects of transnational migration on religious movements, discourses and politics?


(*) Allievi, Stefano and Joergen S. Nielsen eds. 2003 Muslim networks and transnational communities in and across Europe. Leiden, the Netherland (pages to be specified)


**Week 12: Concluding session ; The Challenges and the Limits of Transnational Perspective to Migration: The Return of Assimilationism**

This is a wrapping up session. The return of a variety of assimilationist perspectives will be addressed in the context of transnational perspectives’ blind spots.


(*) Bommes, Michael (2005) Transnationalism or assimilation? file:///users/caglara2/Desktop/Bommes:%20Transnationalism%20or%20Assimilation%20—%20JSSE.webarchive

(*) Nina Glick Schiller and Peggy Levitt 2006 Haven’t We Heard This Somewhere Before? A Substantive View of Transnational Migration Studies by Way of a Reply to Waldinger and Fitzgerald The Center for Migration and Development Working Paper Series • Princeton University CMD Working Paper #06-01