

## TRANSNATIONAL REGIMES AND MIGRANT RESPONSES IN AN ALTERED HISTORICAL CONJUNCTURE

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Those who live their lives across the borders of nation-states as well as scholars and policy makers who research transnational lives are facing rapid alterations in mobility regimes. The articles in this special issue represent trends among transnational migration scholars who have been documenting various aspects of these changes. In order to be able to respond adequately to the transformations in the world that affect migrants and non-migrants alike, it is necessary to theorize temporality. The introductory article by Nina Glick Schiller speaks directly to the altered terrain, theorizing both time and space. Building on but also critiquing the initial generation of scholars who proposed a transnational framework for migration studies, Glick Schiller challenges contemporary scholars to rethink the assumptions about mobility and settlement that actuated the initial analysis. She urges placing differential power including that of nation-states, migrant agency, and the globe spanning processes of capital accumulation within the same temporal analytic framework. Working with the concept of historical conjuncture, she builds from Stuart Hall's cultural studies and theorization of changing configurations of power to explicate dispossession, displacement, the constituting of racialized, gendered, ethnicized differentiation and new forms of political solidarities of the displaced.

Ninna Nyberg Sörensen fills out this portrait of an altered world by examining and theorizing the significance of 'the migration industry' at this point in history, taking her continuing engagement with Dominican migration as a case in point. She argues that the altered migration regime, the 'changes in the right to move and settle, the absence of avenues for regular migration and the concomitant rise in high-risk irregular migration', including the increased danger of travel, intensified migration, and increased deportation, have fundamentally altered transnational migration patterns. Her article continues Glick Schiller's challenge to contemporary transnational migration researchers to speak to a transforming world.

Each of the other four papers takes up an aspect of the rapidly altering mobility regimes that we are all confronting, drawing on case studies from the Nordic region, which has long been portrayed

as migrant welcoming but with varying degrees of severity is now contributing to the conjuncture of repressive migration regimes linked together by globe-spanning migration industries. Directly addressing historical change, Marie Sandberg compares Polish transnational family formations and forms of communication at the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> and 21<sup>st</sup> centuries. She notes the utility of the concept of regimes to link strands of transnational precarious labor and family and gendered strategies of support. Historical comparisons such as Sandberg's allow us to remember that family transnational migration strategies respond to changing and increasingly precarious times and can accommodate regimes that allow for permanent settlement and chain migration as well as temporary labor and return. However, all transnational migration is now being challenged by politicians who define anyone of migrant background as foreign and suspect.

Synnøve Bendixsen takes up the exploration of an altered terrain for transnational migration that has developed within the past ten years. Her concern is the effect on transnational survival strategies for those deemed deportable in a mobility regime marked by increasing pressures on those deemed 'irregular' by the combination of the European Union, Frontex, and individual state policies. Bendixsen's focus is how migrants deemed deportable by Norwegian state policy respond by altering but maintaining transnational kinship strategies which include efforts to live in Norway.

Östen Wahlbeck explores the transferability and the mobilisability of transnational social resources in initiating and maintaining transnational businesses and the historical transformations in the viability of migrant's transnational small business networks. He demonstrates that while migrant entrepreneurs in Finland might have arrived with transnational business networks and continue to maintain multiple personal transnational connections, state regulation of enterprises and the growth of large scale businesses that penetrate into daily life may make such ties ineffectual, i.e. lacking mobilisability. Wahlbeck argues for 'the importance of studying the changing opportunity structures and barriers to entrepreneurial activity as they have been configured both over time and place'.

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Finally, addressing social work as an academic discipline *and* a professional practice, Erica Righard shows that many of the social problems that social workers confront within their professional practice are transnational in their dynamics and cannot be adequately understood when limited to local or nation-state contexts. The discrepancy between the state-boundedness of social work and the transnational dynamics of the social problems it encounters at the current historical conjuncture calls for an 'unbounding' of how social work is conceptualised.

Once we acknowledge the altered historical conjuncture within which we are conducting transnational migration studies, pressing moral/political issues are clearly on the agenda. Bendixsen's question concerning irregular migrants has much broader resonance: 'In light of the politicization of the transnational paradigm in terms of questions of loyalty, development and security, refugee and migrant regimes, and transnational practices', how is our research being read? Does evidence of transnational ties delegitimize asylum claims, become evidence of a threat to the nation-state of settlement, constitute the migrant as the discordant thread in the social fabric?

These questions point to the fact that transnational migration studies is now at a crucial juncture. The challenge to all of us is to link the study of transnational migration to the contemporary restructuring of our world and the social movements, reactionary and progressive, that address it. Those migrants who are in precarious positions cannot be seen as tolerated strangers or threats to national social order but as sharing the precarity of the dispossessed and therefore as part of the movement for social and economic justice.