



# Canadian-Asian transnationalism

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In recent years, Canada's relationship with its southern neighbour has been an overriding pre-occupation of politics, public policy and academic debate (Clarkson 2002). There are good reasons for this. The United States received more than 80 percent of all Canadian exports in the 1990s, and supplied 67 percent of all imports. In the same decade, more than two-thirds of foreign direct investment stock in Canada was owned by U.S. interests, and over half of Canada's foreign direct investment was located there. Not unrelated to these economic linkages, Canadian foreign policy has become largely reactive to—if not always completely in accord with—the U.S. geopolitical agenda. At the same time, cultural flows across the border are extensive (and largely one-way).

If, however, a different set of measurements is taken, Canada's most significant global relationships begin to look a little different. The 2001 census of Canada recorded 1.8 million residents who had arrived in the country over the previous decade. Of these, only 3 percent had come from the United States, while 58 percent had arrived from Asia—primarily China, India, the Philippines, Hong Kong, Sri Lanka, Pakistan and Taiwan (Statistics Canada 2003). The 2001 census even shows a visible 'minority'—and primarily Chinese and South Asian—population becoming a majority in a few suburban neighbourhoods. In Richmond, British Columbia, the visible minority population amounted to 59 percent of the total in 2001. In Markham, Ontario, the equivalent figure was 56 percent (Statistics Canada 2003).

The consequences of such migration flows have been extensively studied in recent years, and geographers have made significant contributions to these efforts. These contributions relate to issues of contested urban landscapes (Ley 1995; Preston and Lo 2000), labour-market integration (Preston and Giles 1995; Hiebert 1999; Pratt 1999; McKay 2002), entrepreneurship and ethnic economies (Walton-Roberts and Hiebert 1997; Wang 1999; Hiebert 2002), residential patterns, housing trajectories and property markets (Ley *et al.* 2001; Ley and Tutchener 2001; Olds 2001; Bauder and Sharpe 2002), refugee settlement (Hyndman and Walton-Roberts 2000), the role of immigrant communities in local politics and civil society and redefining citizenship (Mitchell 1997a, 1998; Isin and Siemiatycki 1998), and the racialisation and discrimination of immigrant communities (England and Stiell 1997; Walton-Roberts 1998).

Over the last decade, however, it has also become increasingly recognised that immigrants do not simply settle. Rather, they maintain important linkages with their places of origin. The implications of these linkages were first recognised in the mid-1990s and have since stimulated intense interest in a phenomenon dubbed 'transnationalism'. Implied in this concept is a realisation that many immigrants live a substantial part of their emotional, social, economic and political lives in their place of origin while working, living and settling in Canada. Thus, theirs are not—or at least not just—immigrant stories of setting up anew for a better life; they are more complex tales of

networks of family obligations shaping migration and work decisions, tangles of emotional yearnings frustrated by economic necessities, and ongoing dislocations between 'home', citizenship and identity. In this special thematic section of *The Canadian Geographer*, we highlight some of the implications of transnationalism between Asia and Canada for citizenship, identity, politics, social integration and our understanding of space in a globalising age. Rather than seeking to summarise the contributions, this introduction contextualises them in the emergent literature on transnationalism.

### From Migration to Transnationalism?

Linda Basch, Nina Glick Schiller and Cristina Szanton Blanc (1994, 6) famously defined transnationalism as the 'processes by which immigrants forge and sustain multistranded social relations that link together their societies of origin and settlement, and through which they create transnational social fields that cross national borders'. These multiple strands include interconnected social, cultural, economic and political linkages. A deluge of subsequent studies has highlighted the nature of these linkages, focusing on individual and collective financial remittances, negotiations of gender and familial relations across global space, involvement in 'hometown' and home country politics, cross-border entrepreneurship and business networks and the construction of hybrid identities or a transnational consciousness (Smith and Guarnizo 1998; Cordero-Guzman, Smith and Grosfoguel 2001; Levitt 2001b; Smith 2001; Kennedy and Roudometof 2002). In many of these case studies, the focus has been on the United States and primarily upon immigrants from Latin America and the Caribbean. Recent work, however, has also drawn attention to Canadian examples, and to a more diverse range of source areas (Winland 1998; Hyndman and Walton-Roberts 2000; Wong 2000; Olds 2001; Walton-Roberts 2001).

By the end of the 1990s, several programmatic statements had attempted to define and delimit transnationalism as an empirical phenomenon and as an analytical concept. Alejandro Portes, Luis Guarnizo and Patricia Landolt (1999), for example, seek to restrict its application to circumstances in which cross-border connections are extensive, regular and resilient. They also deem

the individual transmigrant as the appropriate scale of analysis, and note the multiple economic, political and sociocultural dimensions to the process. Steven Vertovec (1999) takes a somewhat broader view, incorporating transnational consciousness, identity construction and hybrid cultural forms, as well as transnational capital flows. Peggy Levitt (2001a), meanwhile, endorses the notion that transnational research must start at the level of the individual, but goes further in suggesting that linkages add up to more than the sum of the individual experiences involved, to create what she, after Basch and colleagues, terms a transnational 'social field' or 'public sphere'. Such a social field does not just enrol those who live as transnationals; it may also include those who have never ventured far beyond their city or village in a source country. Thus, social expectations and interactions, political activities, economic obligations and cultural values are all constituted under the influence of this social field, which, at the same time, they reproduce.

The literature on transnationalism has not always, however, asked critical questions of itself. These relate to the novelty or originality of the phenomenon, the extensiveness of transnational practices within immigrant and other groups, the resilience of the phenomenon as settlement duration lengthens and a second generation comes along and the theoretical implications and political engagement of transnationalism as a concept. This introduction explores some of these issues in a preliminary way and situates the essays that follow in relation to them.

### New Sources in Old Bottles?

Do contemporary Chinese, Indian, Filipino and other immigrants to Canada behave or feel any differently from their British, Greek, Italian and Portuguese predecessors? This question is, at the same time, both significant and irrelevant. It is irrelevant in the sense that a social phenomenon need not be entirely novel to be important. There is no particular need to establish the originality of transnational processes in order to appreciate their significance to 'home' and 'host' societies, as well as to transmigrants themselves. Furthermore, as Portes (2001) points out, the *conceptual* discovery of a process is frequently and unsurprisingly preceded by empirical observations that were not

accompanied by a recognition of their significance. Hence, as Nancy Foner (2001) notes, immigration scholarship at the time (and subsequently) was largely oblivious to early twentieth-century transnationalism between the United States and Europe, primarily because its intellectual agenda was set by the notions of assimilation and integration.

Nevertheless, it is useful to consider how contemporary transnationalism is empirically different and whether this reflects something novel about the sources, characteristics and integration of new immigrants as well as the broader political, economic and cultural context of their lives. The characteristics common to both earlier immigrants to Canada and the United States and those in more recent waves are striking. As Levitt (2001b) points out, earlier migrants to North America also sent remittances, established hometown associations, maintained emotional ties and often returned home temporarily or permanently. Focusing on Eastern European Jews and Italians in particular, Foner (2001) notes that immigrants of a century ago left relatives behind, supported them financially and communicated regularly. These immigrants involved themselves in home country politics and returned to visit or settle (see also Wood 2002 on Italians in western Canada).

But there are also features of contemporary transnationalism that appear to make it distinct in important ways. Most obviously, the technological and financial feasibility of maintaining close—even instantaneous—contact and exchange between distant places is now far greater, and at least some technologies are widely accessible and affordable. Relatively low-cost fares permit frequent return visits, international financial institutions facilitate money transfers, ubiquitous prepaid phone cards provide calls for a few cents a minute and, for some, email communications and chat rooms allow instantaneous exchange of news. Hence, Jennifer Hyndman and Margaret Walton-Roberts (2000), for example, note the frequency of phone, fax and email communications between Burmese refugees in Vancouver and their friends and relatives in camps on the Thai-Burma border. In this issue, Sutama Ghosh and Lu Wang reflect on the role of the Internet in maintaining a place-based sense of identity from afar as they access Web sites in India and China from Toronto. These technologies represent more than just an intensification and acceleration of historical

cross-border connections. They also allow certain social practices to take place across great distances that would not have been feasible before: continued involvement in everyday family decisions back home; active monitoring of business interests or political developments, on an hourly basis if necessary; and even, as Johanna Waters shows in this issue, the transnational rearing of children.

While the technologies of personal interaction have greatly facilitated migrant transnationalism, they have also facilitated, along with institutional processes of deregulation and liberalisation, the closer economic integration of national economies. Thus, there now exists an infrastructure for global business that did not exist in the same way a century ago, some of it provided by states or supracountries, but much of it embodied in the private-sector intermediaries of the world economy—banks, accountancy firms, management consultants, advertising agencies and so on (Sassen 1999). This institutional context and infrastructure facilitates and permits transnational entrepreneurship and business networks that would not have been as viable a century ago.

It is also worth noting that out-migration is a more important practice in sending countries than it has ever been before. In 1920, for example, only 3 to 4 percent of Poles, Germans or Italians lived in the United States; by 1990, around one-tenth of all Mexicans and Cubans did so (Levitt 2001b). Likewise, close to 10 percent of all Filipinos currently live outside the country of their birth. Transnationalism as a way of life is also more common in more countries than it has ever been before. Since the late 1960s, Canada has seen a dramatic diversification of its immigrant sources—a trend repeated in other immigrant societies (Ley 1999; Li 2003). Both the scale and the scope of the phenomenon are, therefore, novel. And with the scale of immigrant communities come institutional structures that foster and maintain transnational ties. There are, for example, more than 250 Filipino community associations registered with the Philippine consulate and operating in the greater Toronto area, serving a Filipino population of 133,700 (Statistics Canada 2003). In addition, 'ethnic media' are now easily available; for example, Toronto is served by more than a dozen Filipino-Canadian community newspapers and magazines. In Vancouver, Lloyd Wong (2002) notes, the combined circulation of 46 ethnic newspapers exceeds

that of the two local English-language dailies. Similarly, immigrants in major Canadian cities can watch news and entertainment rebroadcast from their homelands on cable television.

The scale and scope of migration also point to the role of the state in contemporary transnationalism. Immigration and settlement policy in North America may ignore the importance of transnational ties (Hyndman and Walton-Roberts 2000; Wong 2002), but many sending countries are actively fostering out-migration and transnationalism. The Italian state assumed in the early twentieth century that sojourners in North America would eventually return, and many did (Foner 2001). The governments of India, the Philippines and elsewhere, however, are courting their émigrés with dual citizenship and voting rights, not to encourage their return, but to attract their wealth in the form of foreign direct investment and remittances. The 20 million 'people of Indian origin' (or PIOs), as the government of India calls them, are in some cases several generations removed from their 'homeland', but with a collective wealth estimated at U.S.\$160 billion—just over one third of India's gross domestic product—they are being assiduously courted by it (Sharma 2003).

Furthermore, while some states reconfigure their notions of citizenship to embrace transnationalism, it is also important to note that nationhood itself is a far more developed concept than it was in earlier migrations. Many European source countries in the early twentieth century were engaged in only the beginnings of nation-building projects. Italians immigrating to North America, for example, did not arrive with a strong sense of Italianness (Wood 2002, 20). Now, many Asian source countries are also actively constructing precarious national identities, but there is undoubtedly a more institutionalised construction of Chinese, Filipino or Bangladeshi nationhood than those that existed for transmigrants a century ago. Thus, while discourses and practices of transnationalism appear at one level to transcend and problematise the territorial nation-state, at another level they are predicated upon and authored by it.

If circumstances in home countries are now more conducive to transnationalism than in the past, then processes of incorporation into destinations such as Canada are also different. Homeland ties are now forged in a context of official multiculturalism that validates them, and in a political

context in which the 'ethnic' electoral vote is often crucial. Thus, not only are homeland cultural ties now acceptable in the mainstream discourse of Canadian society, but those deriving a collective identity by retaining them are courted politically. The Liberal party of Canada, in particular, has been assiduous in its networking with recent immigration communities. Indeed, the transnational interests of immigrant communities may, as a result, find a receptive audience in the corridors of power (Winland 1998). Hence, Hyndman's paper in this issue shows how Sri Lankan communities have sought to define Canadian aid objectives, while Walton-Roberts notes how the successful lobbying efforts of Punjabi immigrants have resulted in the opening of a Canadian consulate in Chandigarh (see also Clark 2003). These studies point to the fact that migrant transnationalism is closely tied up with other forms of transnational linkage. This is also clear in Leonora Angeles's paper, which explores a transnational social space in which the discursive practices and ideological commitments of Canadian development assistance are negotiated.

While political influence might be enjoyed by a select few, immigrant integration into the increasingly polarised labour forces of world cities may encourage the maintenance of transnational lives. On the one hand, when many visible minority immigrants find their qualifications and experience ignored in the Canadian labour market and are incorporated into insecure service-sector employment and marginal social positions, then transnational ties and the possibility of returning home, where class and status positions are elevated, are more appealing and important options (Levitt 2001b; Sassen 2001). On the other hand, where immigration flows are highly selective on the basis of human and economic capital endowments, as in the case of Canada's business immigrant programme, new arrivals have the financial means and incentive to continue their lives transnationally (see Waters this issue; also Ley 1999; Ong 1999; Hiebert 2002; Wong and Ng 2002).

All of these features of contemporary transnationalism provide a basis for arguing that it represents a relatively novel social process. Together, they may also imply a further characteristic of the phenomenon—namely, an increasing depth of *functional integration* between social processes in distant places. A common distinction drawn

between the notions of economic internationalisation and globalisation is that the former implies flows across borders, which have been commonplace for centuries and in many cases predate borders themselves. The latter, however, connotes the functional integration of places in a unifying space that creates interdependency and a significant impact of social processes in one location on another (Dicken 1998; Held *et al.* 1999). While this distinction is usually applied to corporate globalisation ('globalisation from above'), we might extend it to migrant transnationalism 'from below'. In this way, when flows of remittances support large sections of a national economy and drive significant processes of class mobility, when closely maintained family ties create a broader family migration strategy involving sponsorship of relatives and when a formal status of dual citizenship allows participation in two polities, we are seeing interdependencies that are quite distinct from the flows that might have existed in the past.

### The Extent of Transnationalism

If transnationalism is, in some respects, a novel condition, a second question concerns the extent of the phenomenon. Levitt (2001b, 4) suggests that '[I]n this era of heightened globalization, transnational lifestyles may become not the exception, but the rule'. Portes (2001, 182) concedes, however, that there has been a tendency in the literature to overstate the phenomenon as researchers 'sample on the dependent variable'—looking for evidence of transnational behaviour among immigrant communities and inevitably unearthing striking vignettes that illustrate the process. Portes's own work among Latin American communities in U.S. cities, for example, has systematically shown that participation in transnational economic activities is exceptional, rather than the norm (Portes, Haller and Guarnizo 2002). In this issue, however, Walton-Roberts demonstrates a remarkably widespread phenomenon. She notes that in western Canada alone, 30,000 visas to visit India are issued annually to Indo-Canadians, and a 1997 survey of South Asians in Vancouver shows that approximately one-third had traveled to India within the last year.

Three further points can be made with respect to the extent of transnationalism. First, as Sarah Mahler (2001) has shown in relation to Salvadorans

in New York, transnational practices may be lived very differently at each end of the process. While transnational experiences are pervasive in hometowns, they merely 'punctuate' life in New York; interaction with home is occasional for migrants, but ongoing dependency on remittances is an everyday reality for those left behind. It is possible, of course, that the reverse may be true in other cases, but this alerts us to the notion that transnationalism is not an 'equal' process and may include relationships of dependency across global space—economic dependency in one direction, perhaps, and emotional dependency in the other. An extension of this point would include a sensitivity to the subnational geographies of transnationalism. As Walton-Roberts shows, migration and transnationalism can be highly localised, as illustrated by the linkages between the Doaba area of Punjab and the suburbs of Vancouver. It would, furthermore, be true for nearly all groups of Asian origin that migration to Canada means, in practice, migration to Vancouver, Toronto or Montreal. Indeed, it might be more accurate to speak of global translocalism than of transnationalism (Appadurai 1996).

Second, the extent of transnational practices undoubtedly varies across different immigrant groups. This has much to do with the circumstances of their arrival and the political and economic conditions of their homelands. Hence, Hong Kong business immigrants of the 1990s often found that greater economic opportunities existed in their place of origin than in Canada, while some Filipino immigrants have now been joined, through 'family reunification' or 'skilled' worker immigration categories, by virtually their entire extended families, thus largely severing emotional, social and economic ties with their homeland. Thus, findings of extensive transnationalism among one group should not be extrapolated as a behavioural characteristic of immigrants in general.

Third, experiences of and access to transnationalism will be differentiated by class, gender and circumstances of migration (Hyndman and Walton-Roberts 2000). Even within immigrant groups, there exists enormous diversity. Indeed, the ethnic and national categories used to define and locate immigrant groups in census and immigration databases foster a tendency to make group generalisations that essentialise diverse identities and

experiences. The complexities of individual lives thus become subsumed within the statistical stories constructed from group categorisations—'Filipino' experience, for example, rendered homologous with the Live-In Caregiver Programme and a highly segmented incorporation into the labour market, or Korean immigrants assumed to conform to the stereotype of the corner-store entrepreneur. As Ghosh and Wang's introspective paper in this issue demonstrates, very personal circumstances can lead to diverse experiences of transnationalism—and financial resources in particular significantly limit the translation of a transnational consciousness into transactional practice. In short, the categories of analysis used to carve up immigrant and transnational populations are defined according to ethnic or national origin, which is a poor substitute for categories that refer to the nature of their integration into social processes—based on class or gender, for example.

### The Transience of Transnationalism

A third concern relates to the sustainability or transience of transnationalism. Do immigrants retain their sense of dual attachment and multilocal lives after 5, 10, 20 years of settlement? Will the second generation do so, too? Some suggest that the phenomenon will only grow in significance, due to ongoing immigration flows, increasingly widespread dual citizenship provisions that allow for *de jure* as well as *de facto* transnationalism, a growing critical mass of immigrants and 'hometown' communities in host cities that enable identities and connections to be nurtured and maintained and the continued marginalisation of immigrant communities, making transnational ties an important resource for those economically and politically disempowered in host societies (Wong 2000). There is also evidence that the second generation may be more interested in exploring its roots outside Canada than is often assumed (Pratt 2002).

Preliminary evidence suggesting a contradictory pattern is presented in this issue by Waters, who finds that even in the case of trans-Pacific families, the notion of a disembedded transnationalism is overstated, as family members do put down roots and slowly integrate into Vancouver. We may, therefore, simply be identifying a part of the process of settlement, rather than a new phenom-

enon that redefines the notion of integration and assimilation. It is important to note, however, that transnational practices do not necessarily imply a lack of integration. Indeed, the official sanctioning of transnationalism by sending countries could be contrasted with the apparent tightening and territorialising of citizenship requirements in Canada. Bill C-18, the Canadian Citizenship Act, tabled in October 2002, proposes higher standards of official language competence and stricter physical residency requirements for citizenship and limits the transmission of citizenship to future nonresident generations (Wong 2002; CIC 2003).

### Transnationalism as Transgression?

While the questions above turn on the empirical dimensions of transnationalism, a fourth concern relates to its theoretical and political significance. There are two dimensions to this question. One relates to the potential of transnationalism to subvert essentialising identities and traditional territorialisations or cartographies. The other involves a reading of transnational practices as a form of resistance to globalising capitalism.

Katharyne Mitchell (1997b, 107) argues that research on transnationalism has the potential to destabilise 'linear and containing understandings of time and space' and to celebrate 'new anti-essentialising concepts of subjectivity that emphasise plurality, mobility, hybridity and the margins or spaces "in-between"'. Similarly, Levitt (2001b, 13) discusses the potential of transnationalism to 'elude essentializing identities', while Hyndman and Walton-Roberts (2000, 247) note a 'decentering of static identities'. This is a politically and theoretically appealing prospect, and certainly the very notion of transnationalism and its identification as an empirical phenomenon unsettles concepts such as nationhood, citizenship, immigration and ethnic identity. New possibilities for self-identification emerge that transgress conventional categories and de-link cultural identity from geographical place (Gupta and Ferguson 1997). How liberating and empowering this theoretical transgression is for those involved, however, is very much open to question. As Mitchell argues, much of the early work that tackled these issues (that of James Clifford or Homi Bhabha, for example) was largely ungrounded in geographical places and lives. While grounded research on transnationalism has

picked up considerable steam since Mitchell was writing in the mid-1990s, it is still unclear that 'everyday transnationals' are necessarily empowered by their dislocations and transgressions.<sup>1</sup>

Traditional cartographies and spatial categories are also disrupted by transnationalism. A corollary of transnationally connected lives is that the carving of global space into national containers of economic, political and sociocultural processes becomes less meaningful. National territories define the spatiality of social life less and less (although there are good reasons to question whether they ever provided an appropriate delimitation). In Hyndman's study in this issue of aid, migration and civil war, the representational containment of Sri Lanka's troubles to the 'national' scale is clearly inappropriate, and yet even the most recent discourses concerning development assistance and aid locate problems squarely within national borders. In a different sense, the same is true of Walton-Roberts' study, which demonstrates that a national scale of analysis is misleading when migration sources and destinations are so localised. This is not to say, however, that the significance of national borders has diminished; if anything, the state's power to screen those entering and leaving a territory has greatly increased. Thus, it is the role of the territorial state as a scale or container for social processes, rather than its power to create and police legal boundaries, that is diminished.

At a larger scale, processes of transnationalism also have implications for the ways in which we carve up the world for pedagogical and research purposes. Area studies and world regional geographies provide common spatial vocabularies with which to define research interests and curriculum content—and, more importantly, popular geographical imaginations. Many such classifications have always been empirically arbitrary and intellectually ethnocentric (Lewis and Wigen 1997). World regions were assumed to be knowable and encompassable by the outsider, such that many scholars did not (and still do not) blush at being described as a Southeast Asianist or an Africanist. The degree of *mastery* implied was in no small

measure proportional to the level of racialisation to which natives were subjected by the predominantly white centres of knowledge production. Thus, while such designations obscure the level of internal diversity within these regions, they also imply a degree of containment whereby Southeast Asia, for example, is to be understood as a self-contained object of study, rather than a constellation of places constituted in relation to historical and contemporary relations with the rest of the world.

Transnationalism undermines such regionalisations as borders become increasingly porous. The distant objectifying gaze with which world regions such as East, South or Southeast Asia were once beheld—and through which they were held together—is now problematised by the insertion of Asia into Canada and the complicity of Canada in events in Asia. In some cases, the gaze itself is through Asian-Canadian eyes. Thus, while 'Asia' remains a popular construct and intellectually interesting in that respect, its utility as an analytical category is highly suspect. The corollary is the need for multiple scales of analysis and a critical perspective on traditional territorialisations.

Another transgressive quality to transnationalism springs from its constitution in mass migration—a form of globalisation 'from below' that might counteract or undermine corporate globalisation 'from above'. For some, transnationalism represents resistance to, or escape from, capitalist globalisation (Kennedy and Roudometof 2002, 4). Michael Kearney (1991), for example, sees the potential for transnationals to 'rebel' against global capitalism, while others see transnationalism as at least a coping strategy in the face of global capitalism.

We might well ask, however, whether the transmigrant is resistant to, victimised by or simply participating in global capitalism. Rather than transnationalism being seen as resistant to globalisation, it is perhaps more accurately conceived as a constitutive part of globalisation. To view transnational practices otherwise is to neglect both the breadth of globalisation processes (which amount to more than a corporate world economy) and the structural circumstances in which transmigrants operate. Mitchell (1997, 109) articulates this point when she calls for the retention of a sense of structural inequality when tackling transnationalism:

1 See, for example, Bailey *et al.* (2002), although Gibson, Law and McKay (2002) do provide a highly suggestive study of transnational Filipina class identities.

[I]t is also imperative to maintain a knowledge of the structural principles undergirding a system that infects and is infected by every other system in an *unequal exchange*. Without this, the power relations evident in every facet of transnational contact—between states, institutions and people—become lost. . . . I join with those who believe that the abstract celebration of travel, hybridity and multiculturalism is premature.

In other words, transnationalism must be seen as occurring inside a system of capitalist power relations, and the transmigrant is no less a part of this for having crossed borders.

This has implications for the epistemological commitments of much research on transnationalism, which places the individual at the centre of analysis.<sup>2</sup> It is unclear why social ties at the *individual* level should be prioritised in this way, especially if broader structural processes are thereby neglected. Uneven capitalist development processes must be seen as a major factor in driving migration, immigrant integration and transnational ties in both source and destination countries—a point that Saskia Sassen's (1998, 2001) work on global cities and transnational migration has highlighted. Incorporating both the state and the structural imperatives of capitalist restructuring implies, then, that the empirical focus cannot remain solely upon the individual remitter, entrepreneur or political activist. Furthermore, quite aside from the theoretical rationale, Ghosh and Wang demonstrate the epistemological difficulties involved in knowing the mind of the transmigrant as they highlight a shifting consciousness, a highly situated identity and conflicting sentiments that are not easily understood or generalised.

A more appropriate theorisation of transnationalism, then, would locate it within other processes of globalisation to provide a picture, not just of 'multistranded' connections between individuals, but also of the embeddedness of individuals in broader structural processes. This is a project that the papers in this collection undertake in various ways.

2 Indeed, Portes, Guarnizo and Landolt 1999 argue that the individual and his or her network should form the privileged locus of analysis for transnational research.

## Conclusions and Directions

This essay has addressed a number of critical questions arising from the literature on transnationalism. It is evident, however, that despite the problems in specifying the novelty, extent and durability of the phenomenon, there are processes occurring that can usefully be examined and compared under the rubric of transnationalism. Three broader directions appear to arise from this critical assessment.

First, the literature on transnationalism, like that on globalisation, initially implied a transcendence and undermining of the nation-state as a unit of regulation or analysis. While it is true that the territorial state as a scale or container for social processes is undermined by transnational processes, it is also now apparent that the state is far from irrelevant to the processes described by these terms. Transnational ties are circumscribed in important ways by the regulatory authority of the state in the form of immigration criteria and procedures, the responsiveness of the host country government to lobbying from immigrant communities regarding policies towards their homelands and, equally, the varied policies among 'sending' states towards their overseas citizens or coethnics. Beyond these specific regulatory and political roles, the importance of the nation-state is implied in the very notion of transcendence, which is predicated upon the reality and continued significance of national borders and national identities.

Second, it is clear that statements about transnationalism must be carefully modulated to acknowledge the diversity of experiences among and between immigrant groups. It is a considerable leap of faith to extrapolate from the many group- and place-based case studies of transnationalism to a generalised notion that transnational ties are an expected feature of immigrant life. There is, thus, a need for careful and critical attention to the locus of analysis and the distinctions between different groups and within groups (along axes of class and gender, for example) and to the sub-national geographical specificity of transnational ties.

Third, transnationalism should be read as an integral part of other forms of time-space compression or globalisation. The various kinds of transnational ties created by migrant networks are interwoven both with each other and with

other forms of globalisation. Hence, migration flows lead to remittances, which may help to finance future migrants. Migrants also create social ties along which business networks and investment flows may develop and, equally, migration flows may be driven by business opportunities. Furthermore, flows of development assistance and other forms of foreign policy may in some respects be shaped by the demands of immigrant communities, while aid itself will often carry with it ideological constructs, from neoliberal economic and social policy to feminism, developmentalism and 'good governance'. Political linkages thus become interwoven with social and economic ties. Finally, the processes of foreign-investment-driven growth in many parts of Asia cannot be divorced from the urban economic restructuring that has occurred in North American cities. Thus, the nature of the labour market into which immigrants become integrated is not unconnected with the processes of change in their place of origin—and those changing social and economic circumstances in industrialising homelands play an important role in motivating and financing emigration. The conceptual connections are thus every bit as intricate and encompassing as the transnational processes they describe. It is this empirical and theoretical terrain that the following papers explore.

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