Chapter 32

Transnationalism

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Introduction

Transnationalism is not entirely new, but this phenomenon and its consequences reached a particular intensity at a global scale towards the end of the twentieth century. Within the social sciences, transnationalism has a multiplicity of meanings. It has been variously conceptualized as social morphology (diaspora and networks), a type of consciousness (diasporic and multiple identities), a mode of cultural reproduction (syncretism and hybridity), an avenue of capital (transnational corporations and global monetary flows), a site of political engagement (international NGOs and diasporic politics), and a reconstruction of place or locality (translocalities) (Vertovec 1999). Indeed, Vertovec (2001b: 576) argues that transnationalism as a concept has become "over-used to describe too wide a range of phenomena (from specific migrant communities to all migrants, to every ethnic diaspora, to all travelers and tourists)." Similarly, Guarnizo and Smith (1998: 4) caution against transnationalism "becoming an empty conceptual vessel." This chapter attempts to temper such skepticism by demonstrating that transnationalism is a useful concept in representing contemporary phenomena relating to mass migration and processes of political and cultural change across national spaces, and that geography can play a key role in understanding transnationalism and its consequences.

Recent literature has attempted to delineate and understand the growing phenomenon of "transnational communities" comprised of migrants who retain deep and extended attachments to people, traditions, and movements located outside the boundaries of the nation-state in which they reside (Vertovec 2001a). This interest is inspired by the fact that new forms of migration and travel are now occurring with different intensities of linkages with homelands, relating to the rapid development of travel and communication technologies and also to shifting political and economic circumstances in both sending and receiving countries. Evidence is growing for the considerable economic, social, and cultural impacts of these transnational communities (see, for example, Glick Schiller et al. 1992; Smith & Guarnizo 1998; Portes et al. 1999; Pries 1999; Vertovec & Cohen 1999). Mitchell (1997b) suggests that transnationalism is a "sexy topic" because of its transgressive quali-

ties: it necessitates the crossing of borders, both literal and epistemological. Since borders are often associated with power (the power to keep in or out), movements across (national, disciplinary, theoretical) borders seem to be transgressive. Travel, and specifically migration, is thus an important means by which borders and boundaries are being contested and transgressed.

Scholarship on transnationalism in geography has tended to focus on economic globalization; however, less has been written about cultural globalization and the connections between cultural mobility and identities, citizenship, and transnational spaces. In what follows, therefore, I review the major debates that have been articulated in the social sciences and cultural studies relating to these issues. I suggest that geographers have much to contribute to understanding the implications of cultural globalization, including the paradox that the growth and intensification of global interconnection of people, processes, and ideas is accompanied by a resurgence in the politics of differentiation (Glick Schiller et al. 1992). I also suggest, following Mitchell (1997), that geographical scholarship opens possibilities for harnessing the progressive and transgressive potential of transnationalism that has perhaps not been apparent in some analyses of transnational processes and discourses.

Transnational Identities and Cultures

Theories of international migration tend to suggest that migrants cross borders, bringing their culture with them, and become relatively less or more assimilated to prevailing cultural norms of the new territory – they are either sojourners or settlers. Recently, however, theorists have attempted to link globalization to local transformations and struggles against modernity and marketization, instigating a reengagement with culture and transnationalism, often under the heading of "transnationalism from below" (Zhou & Tseng 2001; see also Henry et al. 2002). In contrast to seeing cultural identity as reflecting either the nation of origin or the host nation, it is more appropriate to see it as transnational.

The growing complexity of transnational communities is reflected in a rising concern with identity rather than with culture *per se*. Research on transnationalism generally reveals that large numbers of people now live in social worlds that are stretched between, or dually located in, physical places and communities in two or more nation-states. Hannerz (1996) describes the diverse "habitats of meaning" that are not territorially restricted and where multiple identities are constructed. As Vertovec (2001b: 578) argues, each habitat or locality represents:

> a range of identity-conditioning factors: these include histories and stereotypes of local belonging and exclusion, geographies of cultural difference and class/ethnic segregation, racialised socio-economic hierarchies, degree and type of collective mobilisation, access to and nature of resources, and perceptions and regulations surrounding rights and duties.

Together, these create what have been variously termed "transnational social fields" (Glick Schiller et al. 1992), "transnational social spaces" (Pries 1999), or "translocalities" (Appadurai 1995). These concepts encapsulate a complex set of conditions that affect the construction, negotiation and contestation of cultural and social identities, and of individuals' places of attachment and sense of belonging. These new

transnational social spaces are formed by combinations of dynamic "ties, positions in networks and organizations, and networks of organizations that reach across the borders of multiple states" (Faist 2000: 191).

Much recent scholarship has explored differing migration processes, collective and individual experiences, policy and institutional contexts, and cultural flows to suggest ways in which local identities are shaped by transnational factors (see for example Çağlar 2001; Riccio 2001; Al-Ali et al. 2001; Hansing 2001). As Çağlar (2001: 610) argues, people who live transnational lives "weave their collective identities out of multiple affiliations and positionings and link their cross-cutting belongingness with complex attachments and multiple allegiances to issues, peoples, places, and traditions beyond the boundaries of their resident nation-states." Vasile (1997: 177) suggests that globalization has constituted "the core of profound social and cultural transformations: new tastes, new forms of language, new deployment of symbols, new practices of worship." These global processes and forms are embedded in local social and spatial structures, so that both western and nonwestern localities give rise to as well as transform global practices as these pass through locally embedded histories and geographies (Mitchell 1995).

Social and cultural impacts of transnational migration are considerable and varied. As Vertovec (2001b) argues, intense linkages and exchanges between sending and receiving contexts are maintained by marriage alliances, religious activity, media, and commodity consumption; these transnational connections affect migrants as never before with regard to practices of constructing, maintaining, and negotiating collective identities. This has a significant bearing on the culture and identity of the "second generation," or children born to migrants. Vasile (1997), for example, demonstrates how, using a case study of Tunis, accelerated and increasingly dense transnational movements of capital, people, commodities and ideas have introduced new forms of architecture and dress, new gender relations and ethics of consumption and display, and new signifiers of power and position. Some of these innovations contradict or clash with existing social practices and values thought of as normatively Tunisian. However, working-class Tunisians, who might be thought of as marginal to these innovations, have actively reinterpreted and remade local cultural traditions and modern consumption practices, reworking and reviving Islamic religious practices. The transnational socio-political context of Islam, the collapse of state socialisms and the failures of free-market prescriptions for prosperity are woven through local geographies and into patterns of subsistence and sense of locality and home in Tunis.

Similarly, Faist (2000) explores transnational communities built around political or religious identities that last beyond the first generation of migrants. Here, there are usually strong ties of migrants and refugees to the country of origin and the country of immigration through social and symbolic ties. Faist argues that since the prerequisites for international migration include prior exchanges in economic (e.g. foreign investments), political (e.g. military cooperation or domination), or cultural (e.g. colonial education systems) dimensions, activities in transnational social spaces do not create transnational linkages *ex nihilo*, but usually evolve with preexisting linkages, building new ones and challenging existing arrangements, such as citizenship and notions of acculturation. In the country of immigration, obstacles to socio-economic integration and/or a denial of acculturation or cultural recognition are

usually conducive to the transnationalization of political and cultural activities (e.g. Caribbean immigrants in the UK). In addition, if the countries of immigration are liberal democracies that do not assimilate immigrants by force, immigrant minorities have a good chance to uphold cultural distinctiveness and ties to the country of origin. The multicultural policies of the destination country are conducive to upholding the transnational ties of immigrants (again, Caribbean immigrants in the UK are a good example). Therefore, not only repressive policies and discrimination advance immigrant transnationalization, "opportunities to exercise multicultural rights and a liberal political environment can also further transnational activities and a border-crossing collective consciousness" (Faist 2000: 200).

Unlike assimilation and ethnic pluralism theories, immigrant cultures cannot be seen as baggage to be packed, uprooted and transplanted; they are instead structures of meaning engendered by and expressed in private and public spaces, images, institutions, and languages (Geertz 1973) and inherent in social and symbolic ties. The ongoing transnationalization of meanings and symbols through social and symbolic ties in transnational social spaces helps to sustain cultural border-crossing. This is enabled by modern technologies (satellite/cable TV, instant communications, mass affordable short-term long-distance travel), liberal state policies (polyethnic rights and antidiscrimination policies), changing emigration state policies, and immigrant capacities to mobilize resources (organizational, social, and human capital). The result is transnational syncretism of culture. The concept of border-crossing expansion of social space has, therefore, become more important in understanding issues of transnational cultures.

Transnational social spaces are also diasporic spaces. As Cwerner (2001: 28) argues,

> Diaspora, as a transnational, multi-lateral socio-economic, political, and cultural formation, should be seen as a heterogeneous social space comprising communities, associations, networks of various kinds (family, friendship), cultural producers and ethnic businesses, as well as multilateral links established among host societies, and between these and the homeland.

Theorists are beginning to explore examples of transnational cultural activities in diasporic spaces. For example, Al-Ali et al. (2001) examine the activities of Bosnian and Eritrean refugees in Europe. These include musical, artistic and literary events where musicians, artists and writers from home countries are invited to perform in the host countries (e.g. the 1999 Eritrean Festival in Frankfurt); maintaining an active cultural calendar organized around national holidays and parties; promoting native language speaking and religious practice through special schools. Similarly, Çağlar (2001) explores Turkish youth cultures in Berlin and how they exhibit multiple and multilocal sources. She discusses, in particular, the importance of Turkish hybrid musical forms and Turkish café-bars, clubs and discos in the "non-ethnic" neighborhoods of the city. The references to Turkey in these new sites are different to those in the restaurants and cafés in the immigrant neighborhoods, since the references to Turkey are very selective and relate not to Turkey as a cultural space but to urban spaces in Turkey. As Çağlar (2001: 609) suggests,

> By stressing the non-ethnic sources of the self, young people in [these] places . . . criticise the common binary opposition used in discourses on German Turks, and the belongingness and

cultural formations that confine them either to German or to Turkish culture . . . This unmooring envisages new notions of community, membership and entitlement that cannot be conceptualised within a topos of *a priori* spatialised cultures and their spatial extensions through ethnic communities and ghettos.

Through these transterritorial sites, these young people are making claims to parts of the city from which they had been excluded.

In their study of Turkish Cypriots in Britain, Robins and Aksoy (2001) shift the focus of their analysis from cultural identities to cultural experiences. They connect Young's (1994: 146) notion of mental space (a place in and from which individuals symbolize and participate in cultures: an "intermediate area of *experiencing*, to which inner reality and external life contribute") to external geographies ("how we picture the world out there" (Robins & Aksoy 2001: 689). They suggest that the capacity to experience, and to learn from experience, is related to the ways in which transnational migrants conceive of and symbolize real-world geographies. Thus, despite the fact that "official" and ideological politics are still very much concerned with issues of identity, it is the responsibility of social scientists to move beyond cultural identity to consider particular cultural and experiential possibilities. In their interviews with Turkish-Cypriot women in Britain, they found that in some cases "it is no longer a question of cultural synthesis or syncretism, but of moving across both the British and Turkish cultural spaces" (2001: 704). All of the women refused to identify as British and were concerned about retaining their Turkish Cypriotism. But this was not about national sentiment, belonging and attachment; rather it was about "certain ethical and moral values, about how families and communities should function" and "about the way in which human beings should relate to each other." These things were more important to them than what is conventionally designated by the term "identity" (ibid.: 705); the different mental spaces of cultural experience and cultural thinking were most important. Thus the complexities of lived experiences, feelings, thoughts and narratives about being Turkish Cypriot cannot be captured through an imposed matrix of identity; experiences and thoughts were clearly more important to the women interviewed than identity (see also Dwyer 2002).

It is clear, therefore, that transnational processes and practices have put issues of cultural identity and cultural community into a new context. As Beck (2000) argues, questions of culture and identity have shifted from national contexts to postnational and cosmopolitan ones; in other words, identities have become unfixed. Robins and Aksoy (2001) ask whether new kinds of identities will, or will have to, emerge out of the processes of cultural transnationalization, or whether cultures will be organized around something other than identities. Crucial to this is mobility and boundary-crossing, the passage from one space to another, shifting between cultures, and the implications of this for transnational citizenship.

Transnational Citizenship

Changing global configurations of postcoloniality and late capitalism have resulted in the reinscription of space; this has profound implications for the imagining of national homelands and for discursive constructions of nationalism (Gupta 1999).

Transnationalism brings about the displacement of culture and identity from the nation, forcing (as discussed) a reevaluation of ideas about culture and identity but also enabling a denaturalization of nation as the hegemonic form of organizing space. As Kearney (1995) argues, transnational migrants move into and create transnational spaces that may have the potential to liberate nationals within them who are able to escape in part strong state hegemony. However, he also notes that deterritorialized nation-states may extend their hegemony beyond their national boundaries. President Aristide of Haiti, for example, has referred to Haitians living in the United States as the tenth Haitian province (Basch et al. 1994).

The political consequences of transnational phenomena are potentially far-reaching, since transmigration raises questions about the nature of citizenship and citizenship rights. Global flows and cross-border networks represented by transnational migrant communities challenge assumptions that the nation-state acts as a container of social, economic, cultural and political processes. A number of different theories have been formulated in recognition of these new processes, including "flexible" (Ong 1999), "postnational" (Soysal 1994), "diasporic" (Laguerre 1998), and "transnational" (Bauböck 1994) citizenship. As Faist (2000) argues, however, the implications of transnationalization for citizenship and culture have not been systematically explored.

Faist delineates three concepts for analysis of immigrant adaptation in the receiving countries. Where the latter seeks to assimilate immigrants on the basis of a unitary national and political culture, acculturation will normally take place, with adaptation of values and behavior to the nation-state's core. Where the receiving country supports ethnic pluralism on the basis of multicultural citizenship and recognition of cultural differences, cultural retention will occur, with practices maintained in a new context and collective identities transplanted from the emigration country. However, where the receiving country encourages border-crossing expansion of social space based on dual citizenship, transnational syncretism will occur, with a diffusion of culture and emergence of new types of cultural identities. This form of transnational citizenship does not deny the existence or relevance of borders and nation-states, but simply recognizes the increasing possibility of membership in two states. For example, the Mexican government uses immigrants as a support for conducting business at home and abroad (Smith 1999). In order to retain foreign revenue, some states (especially in Asia and Latin America) are attempting to capture migrants through rights to dual citizenship, health and welfare benefits, and property and voting rights. In January 2003, for example, the Indian government reversed its policy preventing Indians living overseas from attaining dual citizenship (BBC News 9/1/03). Other countries such as the UK, France, and Netherlands have tolerated dual citizenship and thus are replete with transnational social spaces.

Sexual politics is one arena where transnational phenomena have challenged national constructions of citizenship. Connections between travel, mobility, and sexuality have a long and complex history. As Binnie (1997: 242) argues, "contemporary transformations of the global economy have created new possibilities for the transformation of sexual cultures"; this is occurring in a range of cultural locations, shaped by transnationalism and its impacts on citizenship. In particular, the development of a European economic bloc could have consequences for the social and cultural politics around sexuality because the need for labor mobility has necessi-

tated rights of free movement for workers between member states. Similarly, transmigration is raising similar issues for citizenship globally. Major issues relate to rights of immigration for same-sex partners. The fact that same-sex partners now have rights to marriage in the Netherlands, for example, raises questions about whether these partnerships should be recognized in other EU member states.

The dilemmas raised by these issues emerged recently in South Africa, which has constitutional guarantees barring discrimination on the basis of sexuality. A test case was brought before the Constitutional Court in 2000 to challenge the constitutionality of the Aliens Control Act (1991), which allows preferential treatment to be given to a foreign national applying for an immigration permit who is the "spouse" of a South African resident (Stychin 2000). The national lesbian and gay rights lobbying group challenged this and the Court found the failure to recognize same-sex partnerships to be unconstitutional. Despite this, Stychin (2000: 606) argues that mobility should not necessarily be celebrated as the unproblematic basis for the constitution of lesbian or gay identities or rights to citizenship. Mobility is often constrained by relationships to class and consumption, which are often connected to gender and ethnicity, and might also be related more to forced migration, oppression and refugees than to voluntary travel. In addition, transnational migrants (especially when members of a minority ethnic group) are subject to intense state surveillance and surveillance within migrant communities, especially if they are women. This can create further layers of oppression for gay migrants. However, Stychin (2000: 623) also argues,

> It is surely no coincidence that mobility has assumed such a central role in claims to sexual citizenship today. Both citizenship and mobility articulate to inclusion and exclusion. The hegemony of free movement in economic discourses of globalisation under late capitalism has proved a useful discourse upon which to graft sexual citizenship demands.

Globalization has facilitated the emergence of transnationalism in the politics of sexual citizenship, even though this tends to center on those already privileged within gay and lesbian communities. Changes in civil society resulting from transnational social, cultural, and economic processes are shaping citizenship claims and are having a material impact on people's lives.

Transnational migration, therefore, poses challenges to both the sovereignty of nation-states and to citizenship rules within nation-states. The former result in the decrease of the power of the state to control immigration flows due to international laws protecting the rights of immigrants and refugees, but also due to the increase in transnational flows of professional workers. Sassen (1998) refers to this as a *de facto* transnationalizing of immigration policy (see also Çağlar 2001 on recent changes to Germany's citizenship laws and the move away from *ius sanguinis* to *ius soli* principles of citizenship against the backdrop of the standardization of immigrant rights across western Europe). Exclusionist models of citizenship based on the nation-state are thus challenged by postnational or transnational models. In addition, actors embedded in transnational networks are having a significant impact on domestic policy and politics; the role of transnational feminist movements in the diffusion of gender-mainstreaming mechanisms is a clear example (Bickham Mendez & Wolf 2001; True & Mintrom 2001).

Critiquing Transnationalism

Analyses of transnationalism often celebrate new anti-essentializing concepts of subjectivity that emphasize plurality, mobility, hybridity, margins, and in-between spaces. As discussed, these concepts offer a powerful new way of thinking about the manifestations of culture such as ethnicity, gender, and sexuality, breaking down barriers and adhering to neither the "melting-pot" nor the "mosaic" idea of cultural mixing and identity formation. Authors such as Bourdieu (1984) and Bakhtin (1984) see popular hybridity as an exciting challenge to or subversion of dominant cultures and the exclusive lifestyles of dominant elites. By bringing together and mixing languages and practices from different and normally separated domains, they have the potential to disrupt dominant cultures by their "out-of-placeness." Clifford's (1992) notion of "traveling culture" perhaps best exemplifies this, where relations of movement and displacement are prioritized over locality and fixity. Culture, then, is located in a place of movement or a "site of travel" rather than in a fixed or controlled space. Similarly, Appadurai (1990) celebrates the deterritorialization created by new cultural mediascapes. Other critics have welcomed the reworking of multiple identities and syncretic cultural forms by cross-border movements. Bhabha (1994), for example, celebrates the spaces of the margins, of inbetweeness and hybridity, as privileged locations from which to challenge hegemonic notions of race and nation.

Similarly, Brah (1996: 208) refers to the many processes of cultural fissure and fusion that underwrite contemporary forms of transcultural identities, which seriously problematize the idea of a person being a "native" or an "insider." She argues that notions such as hybridity and diaspora allow for the recognition of new political and cultural formations that continually challenge the marginalizing impulses of dominant cultures.

Other critics have argued that the celebration of travel, hybridity, and multiculturalism is premature (see for example Spivak 1991; Shohat 1993; McClintock 1993). Those celebrating new transnational cultures and hybrid subject positions neglect the oppressive socio-economic forces underlying the changes and their material effects on individuals. Transculturation often takes place in profoundly asymmetrical ways in terms of relative power between different groups. The reality of transnational social spaces indicates that migration may not be definite and irrevocable and transnational lives in themselves may become a strategy of survival. For example, Morley (2001) cautions against the uncritical celebration of all notions of mobility, fluidity, and hybridity as intrinsically progressive. He argues that there is too much emphasis on people's abilities to remake and refashion identities rather than the inequality of distribution of forms of cultural capital through which people can refashion identities and the extent to which people are forced to live through identities ascribed for them by others. Mobility (rapid and over long distances) is celebrated as a condition of postmodernity, but actually only applies to 1.6 percent of the world's population (Morley 2001: 429). Transnational webs, therefore, also include large numbers of relatively immobile persons and collectives.

It is easily forgotten in celebratory accounts of transnationalism that, for many transnational travelers, mobility is involuntary or forced (Hannerz 1996). As hooks (1992) points out, the actual experience of crossing borders can be far from liber-

ating; for people of color, it can often be terrifying. There is also a growing literature on sex tourism in transnational spaces where powerful images, fantasies, and desires (produced both locally and globally and inextricably bound up with race and gender) coincide with the economic vulnerability of young, poor, black women drawn into the sex trade to service white male tourists (see for example Brennan 2001). As Mitchell (1997a) argues, the heralding of positions at the margins too often neglects the actual marginalization of subjects; heralding the forces of deterritorialization inadequately addresses the powerful forces of oppression that accompany them (see also Visweswaran 1994). Nonini and Ong (1997: 13) are also critical of the dilution of research by a cultural studies approach "that treats transnationalism as a set of abstracted, dematerialized cultural flows, giving scant attention either to the concrete, everyday changes in people's lives or to the structural reconfiguration that accompany global capitalism." Furthermore, while marginal spaces might offer the potential for resistance, empirical studies suggest that they can also be used for less radical purposes. For example, Mitchell (1997c) has demonstrated that Chinese businessmen strategically use various diasporic, deterritorialized and hybrid subject positions for the purposes of capital accumulation. And she argues (1997a: 110):

> Theorizing global processes with new conceptual tools enables alternatives to the "globalisation-from-above" model. But without "literal" empirical data related to the actual movements of things and people across space, theories of anti-essentialism, mobility, plurality and hybridity can quickly devolve into terms emptied of any potential political efficacy.

In the light of this, Mitchell argues that there is a need for analyses and understandings of lived experiences of travel and transnationalism before hybridity, third spaces, and drives towards cultural diversity can be celebrated. Tracing actual border crossings and the actual physical constraints encountered by refugees as they seek to cross borders, rather than theorizing transnational mobility in the abstract, acts as a material corrective to unimpeded "traveling cultures" and diasporic populations in some theories.

In the west, ideas of hybridity are currently popular with highly educated cultural elites, but ideas about culture, ethnicity and identity that develop in poverty-stricken underclass neighborhoods are likely to be of a different nature (Friedman 1997: 83–4). Evidence of racial tensions in many North American and European cities, the conflation in popular perceptions of asylum-seekers with illegal immigrants, and increasing xenophobia around the world point to the fact that class and local ghetto identities tend to prevail, with little room for the mixing pleaded for by cultural elites. The global, cultural hybrid, elite sphere is occupied by individuals who share a very different kind of experience of the world, connected to international politics, academia, the media, and the arts. In the meantime, the world becomes more polarized in terms of wealth, and heads towards increasing balkanization where regional, national and ethnic identities are perceived as bounded, threatened, and in need of protection. As Bhabha (1994) reminds us, hybridity seems an insufficient basis on which to consolidate new forms of collectivity that can overcome the embeddedness of prior antagonisms. Hybridity and transnational syncretism sound nice in theory, but do not necessarily exist outside of the realms of

the privileged (McEwan, 2001). There is a need, therefore, for contextualized studies of how macro-forces (globalization, immigration, informal economies, and state regulation) affect the lives of individuals living in fragmented transnational spaces and how dispersed communities cope with the cultural alienation that often accompanies transnationalism (see for example Stoller & McConatha 2001).

Transnational migrations of wealthy individuals have provided an incentive for states to rework national ideologies around the concepts of race and nation. In addition, because wealthy migrants have economic and cultural power, they are able to challenge and in some cases transform notions that have served historically to exclude by race and class (see Mitchell 1993, 1997b on the Hong Kong diaspora). However, it must also be remembered that transmigration is deeply embedded in gender relations. As Salih (2001) argues, access to global mobility is gendered, yet in recent literature on transnationalism there is a tendency to ignore the ways in which nation-states and global economic restructuring are operating in gendered ways (see Willis & Yeoh 2000; Fouron & Schiller 2001; Robins & Aksoy 2001). Her focus on migrant Moroccan women in Italy illustrates a specifically gendered form of embeddedness within nation-state hegemony and, very often, a different experience of transnationalism between men and women. Conditions for moving transnationally are not always available to women, or are limited or framed within a set of normative and culturally gendered rules. Migrant women have qualitatively different experiences of citizenship in their country of origin and occupy different positions in their country of immigration (see for example Goldring 2001). Like Willis and Yeoh, Salih proposes a household approach to understand transnational women's culturally constructed reproductive roles in both countries. She also challenges celebratory stances towards transnationalism and highlights how transnational spheres are not only contingent upon the vulnerability of migrants within global economic systems, but are inscribed in specific cultural and normative constraints.

Conclusions

As Hall (1996: 233) argues, we should not view the current fashionability of hybridity and transnationalism in a wholly negative light. The celebration of both might be premature, but we should not forget the potential for the democratization of culture in this process, the increased recognition of difference and the diversification of the social worlds in which women and men now operate. This pluralization of social and cultural life expands the identities available to ordinary people (at least in the industrialized world) in their everyday working, social, familial, and sexual lives. As Hall (ibid.: 234) argues, "these opportunities need to be more, not less, widely available across the globe, and in ways not limited by private appropriation." For Bhabha (1994: 9), it is the interconnections of different cultural spaces and the overlapping of different cultural forms that create vitality and hold out the possibility of a progressive notion of culture and identity. A challenge for geographers, then, is to think about the place and meaning of transnationalism and cultural hybridity in the context of growing global uncertainty, xenophobia, and racism. We might consider why it is that both are still experienced as an empowering, dangerous or transformative force. Why is it that on the one hand cultural

difference is celebrated through a consumer market that offers a seemingly endless choice of identities, subcultures, and styles, yet on the other hand transmigration continues to threaten and shock? Conversely, why do borders, boundaries and "pure" identities remain important, producing defensive and exclusionary actions and attitudes, and why are the latter so difficult to transcend?

Geographical understandings of transnational processes and discourses are particularly important. As Mitchell (1997a: 110) argues, geographers can contribute to contextualizing and grounding theoretical understandings of hybridity and margins, as well as deconstructing concepts such as capitalism and modernity, to enable transnationalism to serve a progressive politics of the future. Understanding geographical contexts on several different scales is essential to "force the literal and epistemological understandings of transnationalism to cohere" (ibid.). Significant strides in this direction have been made elsewhere. For example, Marcus (1995) provides a useful methodological outline of "multi-sited ethnography," which enables the tracing of cultural formations "across and within multiple sites of activity" (ibid.: 96) using methods "designed around chains, paths, threads, conjunctions, or juxtapositions of locations" (ibid.: 105). He advocates approaches that follow the people (especially migrants), the thing (commodities, money), the metaphor (signs, symbols, images), the plot (narratives of everyday experiences and memories), the life (biographies), or the conflict (issues contested in public space). The new work on transnational spatial ethnographies reviewed throughout this chapter also makes significant contributions in "bringing geography back in" (ibid.: 110) to studies of transnationalism.

Much of this work points to the fact that transnational processes rather than abstract cultural flows are located within the lived experiences of transnational migrants. Geographers might explore the literal movement across borders (of capital, people, cultures, information) that have dramatically increased recently, and interrogate the "epistemological celebrations of the spaces and positions astride borders, in-between nations and betwixt subjectivities" that have often been apparent in works on margins and hybridity (Mitchell 1997a: 101). In doing so, because of its different scales of analysis and its possibilities for forcing the contextualization of understandings of hybridity and margins, geographical analysis might help realize the transgressive potential of transnationalism.

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