

Beyond Home and Exile: Making Sense of Lives on the Move

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At the turn of the 20th century, as globalisation has reached the most remote hinterlands, new rounds of economic and political instability have displaced millions of 'economic migrants' and 'political refugees' while leaving others unable to move, thereby reconstituting the social structures of both 'core' centres of wealth and power and the developing world 'periphery'. It has been estimated that some 150 million people currently live outside the country of their birth (IOM 2000). But at about 2.5 percent of the world's population, this proportion is not that much different from earlier periods when population movements peaked. The significance of changes during the post-colonial era lies not in the fact of international migration – which has existed for centuries – but rather in the great increase in the magnitude, density, velocity, and diversity of global connections, in the growing awareness of these relationships, and in the increasing recognition of the possibilities for activities which transcend state boundaries. As increasing numbers of people flee violent conflict or poverty in developing societies to ever more diverse destinations, the cognate notions of globalization, diaspora, and transnationalism have recently gained currency as means of understanding such phenomena (Sørensen et al 2002).

Work on the nature of globalisation has tended to privilege economic over cultural, social and political processes, but globalisation is not only a matter of the construction of a 'global' economic space; it also involves the restructuring and extension of networks of flows - of money, goods, information and people - and their

articulation with spaces on different scales (Castells 1996; Smith 2001). Within the social sciences, work on the relations between the global and the local has focused attention on diaspora (Clifford 1994; Cohen 1997; Van Hear 1998; Safran 1999) and on meanings of the concept as 'social form', 'type of consciousness' and 'mode of cultural production' (Vertovec 2000). Work on transnationalism (Glick Schiller et al. 1992; Smith and Guarnizo 1998; Ong 1999) has often been linked to what has been called transmigration (Basch et al 1994; Rouse 1991, 1992; Kearney 1995; Portes et al 1999; Mahler 1998). Within the humanities and more broadly in the arts and in literature there is a long tradition of exploiting the twin ideas of home and exile not only as markers in geographical space but also as having a bearing on mental landscapes (Gurr 1981; Eagleton 1980). For the last decade there has been a virtual explosion of prose works by writers who celebrate and agonize over the dilemmas of belonging to two or several regions (Rushdie 1991; Naipaul 1987, 2001; Vassanji 1995; Chaudhuri 2000). In the emerging discipline of cultural studies scholars have pointed to the emergence of 'hybrid' and 'postcolonial' practices, dilemmas and identities, paying special attention to mass communication, travel, tourism global market commodities, texts, tastes, fashions, and ideologies (Hannerz 1992; Friedman 1994; Hurley, Larrier and McLaren 1999).

These inter-related bodies of writing and research reflect growing understanding of global interconnectedness and that people on the move are able to extend and sustain social life into widespread networks of relations that include places of origin and destination. But work on globalisation and on diaspora and transnationalism differs in the key assumptions made about the role of the state in the production of meaning, identity, and social outcomes. Whereas the perspective of 'globalisation' largely is decentred from specific national territories, work on diaspora and transnationalism depicts economic, political and socio-cultural processes and relations as 'anchored' in, while also transcending, more than one nation state, and thereby understands the nation state and transnational practices as mutually constitutive social formations (Smith 2001).

Increasingly, people in almost every region of the world lead transnational or transregional lives. Their allegiances often straddle particular villages, small towns or cities of countries of origin and specific places in their new 'homelands'. When that is the case, it may be more to the point to talk of trans-local relations. Even when people stay put, their ideas, dreams, everyday work and leisure activities are influenced by cultural practices from outside their temporary or permanent home region (Frederiksen 2002). Drawing on several cultures has for a long time been a possibility for mobile (upper) middle classes, who have the freedom, legally and economically, to move across borders and between cultures, doing business and consuming other cultures on their way (Westwood and Phizacklea 2000). But while class similarity and solidarity may make integration seamless for travelling urban

educated middle class people, many migrants from developing countries enter the transnational context from a marginalized position within their own nation state, and are largely excluded from prosperity and full participation in the developed countries of destination (Fletcher 1999; Sørensen and Olwig 2001). Thus, migrants with less education and a rural background may experience harsh processes of differentiation and marginalization when poverty or insecurity forces them to recreate 'community' and 'home' away from 'home' (Naipaul 1987).

How, then, do people make sense of 'home' and 'exile'? This was the topic of an international researcher training course offered by the Graduate School of International Development Studies at Roskilde University, December 2-5, 2001. The researcher course brought together a group of approximately twelve senior researchers working on issues related to development, postcolonial and cultural studies and twenty PhD students conducting research within the field. We also invited the Indian poet Sujata Bhatt to take part and read from and discuss her poetry. Using case studies from across the world, including papers from the invited speakers and the participating PhD students, we discussed what it means to make a living on the move. Cases emanating from Africa, Asia, Latin America as well as Europe were included to give a picture of multiple flows of lives and meanings.

One area of discussion was the ways in which difference and distance produce cultural articulation. In terms of theory and method we explored how the articulations can be studied. The powerful literatures of exile and diaspora were used as examples. In new surroundings texts, images and stories are created of lost homelands. Which narratives persuade groups of people that life elsewhere is better than what they know? Which texts, tastes, images, and other forms of communication are transmitted between the new and the old home? Which bodies travel in terms of class, sex and generation? Who stay put? And is bodily mobility the exception rather than the rule for different diasporas or transnational communities?

Those who do not travel still make transnational meanings. They consume and recreate global culture in their own image and for their own purposes. They propel their local culture into different and distant cultural spaces. They make their own national, regional, and local mixtures of global flows of meaning, which privilege certain meanings while neglecting, suppressing or ridiculing others. Transnational meanings may even be utilized for highly nationalist causes. Is it the case that increased physical and imagined mobility makes the notion and reality of exile obsolete? Is the experience of exile present particularly in situations in which the loss of homeland has been an outcome of violent conflict? If people living in exile and diasporas perpetuate nation we want to examine by which means. 'Nation' seems to be privileged in relation to other spatially defined commonalities such as village,

city, region or continent. When people live their lives in movement and culture makes itself at home in motion, how do people cultivate, negotiate, nurture and maintain an identity? In short, what is the relationship between mobility and identity?

The researcher course moved from the global to the local and from large-scale to small-scale situations. Together we explored unconventional methodologies, combining ideas and procedures from development studies, anthropology, cultural studies, history and literature. We focussed not only on what are the changing contours and meanings of exile and the contemporary diasporic condition, but also on how we may study these meanings and conditions.

The contributions in this collection address various aspects of these issues. Most are by invited and local senior researchers who took part in the course, two are by PhD students who were at late stages of their work, Ole Jensen and Igor Machado.

Ulf Hedetoft's article is an a wide-ranging overview and discussion of conceptual clusters surrounding notions of 'belonging' and 'migration' in the context of nationalism and globalization. He traces how 'belonging' from having been associated with schools of thought asserting the natural coincidence of place and culture has now become 'part of both mainstream discourse and of competing, alternative discourses'. He introduces four dimensions of 'belonging': sources (localities and the familiar), feelings (identification and memory), ascriptions (nation and race) and fluidities (the global and the cosmopolitan). The article is particularly engaged with the third and fourth dimensions. Nation-states as 'sites of homeness' is discussed in the context of the tension inherent in 'ascription' between egalitarianism and notions of the freedom of the individual to choose. Furthermore the connection between 'nation' and 'belonging' is addressed from a common sensical point of view, which recognizes the strength and universality of a sense of belonging, grounded in 'place' and 'blood'. The case of the United States is used to modify these home-grown (and European) notions of belonging. 'The US has reworked and modernized the model in order to assimilate patriotic identity ... to individualism and cultural pluralism' allowing more scope for individuals to 'seek their own avenue toward American identity'.

The section on 'globality' – Belonging in/to Globalization - discusses how familiar notions of 'belonging' are being reconfigured by a changing international context. The nation state's monopoly on encouraging sentiments and practices of 'belonging' is being challenged by a widespread scepticism directed at ideas of essence and 'organicism'. At the same time nations endeavour to inculcate in their citizens a sense of civic rather than ethnic nationalism, and steer a balanced course 'between rampant globalization and conservative nationalism'. The consequences of these contemporary tendencies for concepts related to 'migrancy' are explored in the last

section of the paper by way of four sets of distinctions: Between migrancy and global movement; migrants and movers; multicultural settings and identity fixation, and finally house and home. In his conclusion Hedetoft notes that the proponents of multi-culturalism and champions of migrants 'around the world ... are doing little else, willy-nilly, than using as their role model the discourses of ethnicity, minority positioning and related claims-making so prevalent on the domestic scene of the great globalizer, the 'melting-pot' of the USA'.

As discussed by **Michael Peter Smith**, the discourse on the declining role of the state under globalization has focused on the national level of analysis without closely examining the ways in which other levels of the state structure and other actors operating at these levels remain highly active. Using the specific case of the transnational politics of diasporic reincorporation into the Mexican state and nation – more precisely the regional state of Guanajuato, Mexico, and the (trans)locality of Napa-El Timbinal - Smith pays special attention to the changing representation (and appreciation) of the 'migrant' in local public discourse. The empirical analysis shows how the transformation of the migrant from an 'outsider' disdainfully labelled 'poncho' to an extra-territorial 'insider' entitled to citizen rights, even when abroad, has been used to construct an ongoing collaboration between the state and its migrant diaspora. He therefore concludes that state policies, legitimating discourses and institutional practices are key elements through which transnational citizenship is being constituted as migrant networks both accommodate to and resist state-centred actors in diasporic projects.

Keith Breckenridge discusses how 'the modern South African state, perhaps more than any other, has been defined by the effort to regulate the movement of international and domestic migrants'. Limitations and control of mobility of the nation's African, Asian and 'Coloured' population was a cornerstone in the politics of Apartheid. He explores the centrality of the practice of 'fingerprinting' in this domain. Fingerprinting was a 'colonial invention' which right from its beginnings was used to make 'natives' accountable and fixing them in time and space without at the same time granting them citizen's rights. His article is a fascinating historical account of 'fingerprinting' and other biometric techniques as instruments of control in the South Africa of the early 20th Century. Breckenridge underscores how the South African state was at one and the same time characterized by pervasiveness of control and by impotence. He argues that the failure of the state to impose its will on groups of the population has to do with a general 'failure of panopticism' which again exposes 'the constraints of the archive', when dealing with living beings and social situations on the move.

Over the last ten years, the existence of transnational connections has been widely documented by dozens of studies of migrant groups in the U.S. and new theoretical

concepts and understanding have emerged. The study of transnational migration to Europe is more recent. However, to date no major comparative efforts have been undertaken to examine similarities and differences in U.S. and European experiences. **Ninna Nyberg Sørensen's** paper traces the development and consequences of two transnational fields of action generated by Latin American migration to the U.S. and Europe. In particular, it looks at three interrelated social processes, namely the way in which transnational fields affect migrants accommodation into U.S. and various European countries; how U.S. and Europe based migrants influence economic, political, and socio-cultural development in their countries of origin; and the extent to which (and conditions under which) new forms of diasporic or transnational identifications emerge among migrants in the U.S. and Europe. In terms of theoretical approach, she argues in favour of an analytical distinction between *transnationalism*, defined as actions and discourses facilitating participation in more than one nation state project, and *transnational practices*, defined as fields of actions carried out across and in defiance of nation state boundaries, which potentially challenge such boundaries but not necessarily transcend them. Such a perspective illuminates the variation in transnational networks as well as variation in the kind of transnational relationships it is possible to sustain from different social positions in different localities.

Igor Machado's article also deals with migration from Latin America to Europe, in his case migration of Brazilians to Portugal, but his interest is that of cultural analysis. He demonstrates how a 'hierarchy of otherness' operates at the discursive level in Portugal. The way immigrants from the former Portugese empire are placed and regarded in Portugal is the consequence of 'the maintenance of racial-hierarchical structures which permeated all Portugese imperial thought'. The relations of dominance and subordination between Portugal and its colonies in Africa and Latin America, which gave rise to the doctrine of Lusotropicalism, the official doctrine of the Portugese state in the 1950s, have left a legacy of racism in Portugal which means that immigrants from Africa are found at the bottom of the socio-economic ladder of opportunities. Brazilians in Portugal come next, and are defined according to social and cultural stereotypes, which have consequences for their insertion in the job market. Machado's approach may be characterized as a form of macro anthropology, influenced by theories of discursive formations.

In her article on literature of home and exile **Bodil Folke Frederiksen** takes a step further into the realm of discourses. She argues that fiction is deeply implicated in knowledge production relating to home and exile, displacement, migration, diaspora and multiple belongings, and indeed shares features and insights with social science discourses. The article attempts to bring together what she calls 'narratives of modernity and mobility' from the corpus of fairly new African and Indian literature and trace parallels and differences in selection of themes as well as in form. Her

examples are the colonial writers Jomo Kenyatta and Peter Abrahams, and the postcolonial V.S. Naipaul, Amit Chaudhuri, Ayi Kwei Armah, Amitav Ghosh and M. G. Vassanji. Her argument is that while it still makes sense to talk of identification with 'home' as a defining feature of this literature, it is increasingly uncertain what exactly 'home' means. An earlier literature of place, linear mobility between places and dual identities, related to colonialism and modernity, is being challenged by a new postcolonial literature of spaces, characterised by multiple belongings and increasing but less systematic mobility. Whereas in European modernist writing homelessness and exile were explored as a *universal* condition of alienation in capitalist society, postcolonial writers are preoccupied with *specific* spaces, mobilities, belongings, connections and identities. While the colonial outlook is still conditioned by a bi-polar world-view emerging from the dualism of colonizer and colonized, postcolonial writing reflects new conditions of economically and politically conditioned migration and mobility and multi-faceted complex global displacements.

The case story told by **Ole Jensen** of migration from Baltistan, a remote high altitude part of Pakistan, to Karachi may seem to contradict the predominance of new fluid patterns of mobility. Young men migrate to Karachi in search of education and thus of economic opportunity. During the period of study in Karachi they typically return at least once to Baltistan in order to get married. Their aim is to return to Baltistan in the employment of the state. On the background of a brief history of the development of the metropolis of Karachi, Jensen explores settlement patterns, social and religious activities of waves of Balti immigrants. His guiding questions are and 'what makes a Balti' and 'what unmakes a Balti' in the big city? He demonstrates how the village unit, which in Baltistan was 'an ecological imperative' is reproduced in the city, but now as a 'principle of social organization'. Apart from the intrinsic interest of his study it alerts us to the dangers of generalising over the vast spectrum of contemporary forms of migration.

From a point of departure, which interweaves autobiography and theoretical discussion, **Silvio Torres-Saillant** offers an analysis of the enduring significance of borders for migrants and in his case, as he writes, for a migrant scholar of colour. Using his own voyage - from his father's house of 'neo-colonial education' in Santo Domingo, the Dominican Republic, to his mother's migrant apartment in Washington Heights, New York, and down-town to New York University from where Torres-Saillant years later graduated in Comparative Literature - he vividly describes his own transformation from the 'eminently terrestrial outlook that working for a living from primary school onward' had fostered in him, to the 'discovery that Western narratives of humanity could afford to ignore the historical experience of people of backgrounds similar to [his]', although 'Antillean people harbor all of humanity's complexity no less than the French, the Chinese, or the Iroquois'. The

story of his own intellectual quest illuminates the way that colonialism led to economic asymmetries, which are perpetuated in unequal fights over literary and theoretical canons and a lack of recognition of contributions by non-Western intellectuals. In critical dialogue with Homi Bhabba, Paul Gilroy and Edward Said he theorizes and attacks Western 'provincialism' and the enduring Western hold on 'truth claims'. Along the way, the intertwined histories of the Dominican Republic and the USA, that were to produce thousands of political exiles and economic migrants, are discussed. At the present, Torres-Saillant argues, the effort to affirm the intellectual legacies of non-white ethnic minorities faces particularly grievous challenges given the advent in the U.S. and British Universities of influential trends in the organization of literary and cultural knowledge that favour a movement away from the ethnic, the national, and the local, stressing instead the crosscultural, the transnational and the global.

When people flee conflict or persecution, **Nicholas Van Hear** argues, a common pattern is for most to seek safety in other parts of their country, for a substantial number to look for refuge in a neighbouring country, and for a smaller number to seek asylum in countries further afield, perhaps in other continents. If displacement persists and people consolidate themselves in their territories of refuge complex relations will develop among these different domains of the refugee diaspora. Each of these domains corresponds to some extent to one of the locations associated with the three 'durable solutions' that the UNHCR is charged with pursuing for refugees: integration in the country of first asylum, resettlement in a third country, or return to the homeland. Taking his cue from the burgeoning literature on diasporas and transnationalism, Van Hear looks at some of the shortcomings of the notion of 'durable solutions', and offers a simple schema for considering diaspora and transnational relations that may transcend the thinking underlying this notion. The Afghan, Palestinian and Sri Lankan refugee diasporas are considered in light of this schema, and transnational connections between some displaced households in Sri Lanka are highlighted. Van Hear concludes by exploring how transnationalism might be considered in itself as an 'enduring' if not 'durable' solution to displacement.

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