

Transnational migration: taking stock and future directions

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***Abstract** Increasing numbers of sending states are systematically offering social and political membership to migrants residing outside their territories. The proliferation of these dual memberships contradicts conventional notions about immigrant incorporation, their impact on sending countries, and the relationship between migration and development in both contexts. But how do ordinary individuals actually live their lives across borders? Is assimilation incompatible with transnational membership? How does economic and social development change when it takes place across borders? This article takes stock of what is known about everyday transnational practices and the institutional actors that facilitate or impede them and outlines questions for future research. In it, I define what I mean by transnational practices and describe the institutions that create and are created by these activities. I discuss the ways in which they distribute migrants' resources and energies across borders, based primarily on studies of migration to the United States.*

In her 1990 inaugural address, Ireland's President-elect, Mary Robinson, claimed she was assuming the stewardship of a new, more tolerant Ireland that included those in residence and Irish emigrants and their descendants as well. She invited those whose families left Ireland generations ago to reassert their membership in this extended Irish family and offered to be their spokesperson.

Beyond our state there is a vast community of Irish emigrants extending not only across our neighbouring island ... but also throughout the continents of North America, Australia and of course Europe itself. There are over 70 million people living on this globe who claim Irish descent. I will be proud to represent them. And I would like to see Aras an Uachtatán [the president's official residence] serve – on something of an annual basis – as a place where our emigrant communities could send representatives for a get together of the extended Irish family abroad.

Former President Robinson's message was directed at individuals who are well integrated into the countries where they live. Since Irish immigration to the United States began over a century ago successive waves of newcomers have moved up the socio-economic ladder, achieved political prominence, and become leaders in the business community. Though these individuals express strong pride in their ancestry, they are also loyal citizens of the United States. Why, then, would the new Irish

President try to reclaim these emigrant descendants? And why might they be interested in heeding her call?

Mary Robinson is not alone in her efforts to create a nation extending its boundaries to include emigrant members. Increasing numbers of sending states are systematically offering social and political membership to those residing outside their territories in an attempt to capture the resources migrants can offer. They purposefully promote transnational participation even as migrants establish new host-country ties. The proliferation of these dual memberships calls into question ideas in good currency about immigrant incorporation, their long-term impact on their countries of origin, and the relationship between migration and development in both contexts. But how do ordinary individuals actually live their lives across borders? Is assimilation incompatible with transnational membership? How does economic and social development change when it takes place across borders?

This article takes stock of what is known about everyday transnational practices and the institutional actors that facilitate or impede them and outlines questions for future research. In it, I define what I mean by transnational practices and distinguish them from other cross-border relationships. I describe the political, religious, and social institutions that create and are created by these activities and discuss the ways in which they distribute migrants' resources and energies across borders drawing primarily on studies of migration to the United States. The final section outlines current debates and proposes directions for further study.

The nature of transnational social relations

Studies of transnational migration evoke passionate responses. Proponents claim that contemporary migration cannot be understood without studying the impact of migration on both sides of the border. The social, economic, and political ties linking migrants and non-migrants are so deep and widespread that they fundamentally change the ways individuals earn their livelihoods, raise their families, enact religious rituals, and express their political interests (Basch et al. 1994; Portes et al. 1999; Levitt 2001; Smith 1995). Critics claim that strong sending and receiving-country ties are nothing new, that only a small number of individuals actually sustain them, and that they will not last beyond the first generation (Jones-Correa 1998b; Suarez-Orosco 1998; Waldinger 1997). They also argue that few clear, widely-accepted analytical concepts guide this field. Instead, the term 'transnationalism' is used to describe everything under the sun, which seriously diminishes its explanatory power.

Though there is some truth to many of these claims, they can be attributed largely to the relative newness of this field and to the limited number of systematic surveys and comparative case studies that have been carried out thus far. Many studies are in-depth analyses of relations between locales in one particular sending and receiving country. While they demonstrate that transnational relations exist, and reveal a great deal about their characteristics in a specific setting, they cannot shed light on their relative weight or on how widespread transnational practices are among the population as a whole. In addition, few longitudinal studies explore how transnational practices change over time or the extent to which they remain salient beyond the first generation. Many children of immigrants in the USA, in particular, are too young to have made the life choices that will ultimately determine the kinds of transnational

practices in which they will engage. Finally, few studies compare how transnational practices vary between different kinds of sending and receiving-country communities.

Having said this, much research now underway addresses these questions and will soon provide us with a more nuanced understanding of the nature and magnitude of transnational relations.¹ In the interim, this section provides one road map to the current state of the art of the field, with all its weaknesses, assessing what we know and how well we know it, based on the limited available data.

Once begun, migration spreads through social networks. For some immigrant groups, these networks evolve no further. They do not deepen, grow more extensive, or become more institutionalized. Over time, ties unravel as migrants become incorporated into the countries that receive them, grow less beholden to claims from those who stay behind, or migration slows. Still, increasing numbers of ordinary and elite migrants may continue to engage in a range of transnational practices or economic, political, and socio-cultural occupations and activities that require regular long-term contacts across borders for their success (Portes et al. 1999).

In many cases, the magnitude, duration, and impact of migration is so strong that migrant social networks mature into transnational social fields or public spheres spanning the sending and receiving country (Fraser 1991; Mahler 1998). These extend beyond the chains of social relations and kin that are specific to each person located within them (Glick Schiller 2000). Individual actors cannot be viewed in isolation from the transnational social fields in which they are embedded. The economic initiatives, political activities, and socio-cultural enterprises in which they engage are powerfully shaped by the social fields in which they are carried out. Those who live within transnational social fields are exposed to a set of social expectations, cultural values, and patterns of human interaction that are shaped by more than one social, economic, and political system.

The transnational social fields that migration engenders encompass all aspects of social life. Though they may arise at first in response to the economic relations between migrants and non-migrants, social, religious, and political connections also emerge which constitute and are constituted by these arenas. The more diverse and thick a transnational social field is, the greater the number of ways it offers migrants to remain active in their homelands. The more institutionalized these relationships become, the more likely it is that transnational membership will persist.

Some researchers describe transnational social fields encompassing all migrants from a particular sending country residing in a key site of reception. Glick Schiller and Fouron (1998), for example, argue that Haitian young adults who have never migrated still live their lives within a social field connecting the USA and Haiti because so many aspects of their lives are permeated by Haitian immigrant influences. Transnational social fields, however, often form from connections between multiple localities. Although there may be large overarching fields between the United States and Mexico, the Dominican Republic or El Salvador, for example, these are constituted by smaller, bounded fields between particular sending villages and cities and specific urban or rural receiving points. Brazilian migration to the United States has created transnational social fields between the city of Governador Valadares and migrants in New York City; Pampano Beach, Florida; Danbury, Connecticut; and the greater Boston Metropolitan area (Margolis 1994). Transnational social fields also unite Dominicans in Venezuela and Spain to those who stay behind.

These arenas can operate at multiple levels. A political party, for example, may link migrants and non-migrants to one another through personal ties between members in local sending and receiving-country chapters. These local, personalized ties, however, often form part of coordinated efforts between the party's national level sending- and receiving-country operations as well. Similarly, relations between local parishes extend and deepen existing ties between national and regional sending- and receiving-country churches.

Studying transnational actors and the social fields they inhabit helps clarify several things. First, the ways in which individuals distribute their resources and loyalty between the sending and receiving country is, in part, determined by the kinds of institutional opportunities available to them. If transnational social fields are institutionally complete, if they create and are created by numerous political, religious and social institutions affording migrants a variety of ways to remain active, then more transnational practices are likely to occur. If the social field offers fewer institutional choices, then the volume of transnational activities is likely to be lower.

Second, focusing on social fields also calls attention to non-migrants and those who move only periodically but who also enact aspects of their lives within these arenas. Movement is not a prerequisite for engaging in transnational practices. There are those who travel regularly to carry out their routine affairs, whom some researchers have called transmigrants (England 1999; Glick Schiller 1995; Guarnizo 1997). There are also individuals whose lives are rooted primarily in a single sending- or receiving-country setting, who move infrequently, but whose lives integrally involve resources, contacts, and people who are far away. Finally, there are those who do not move but who live their lives within a context that has become transnationalized.

The scope and intensity of the transnational practices that *frequent travellers*, *periodic movers*, and *those who stay in one place* engage in varies considerably. Guarnizo (2000) defines 'core transnationalism' as those activities that: (a) form an integral part of the individual's habitual life; (b) are undertaken on a regular basis; and (c) are patterned and therefore somewhat predictable. 'Expanded transnationalism', in contrast, includes migrants who engage in occasional transnational practices, such as responses to political crises or natural disasters. Itzigsohn et al. (1999) characterize broad transnational practices as those that are not well institutionalized, involve only occasional participation, and require only sporadic movement. He and his colleagues contrast these with narrow transnational practices that are highly institutionalized, constant, and involve regular travel.

These terms help to operationalize variations in the intensity and frequency of transnational practices but cross-border engagements also vary along other dimensions such as scope. Even those engaged in core transnational practices may confine their activities to one arena of social action. Or the same person may engage in core transnational activities with respect to one sphere of social life and only expanded transnational activities with respect to another. There are those, for example, whose livelihoods depend upon the frequent, patterned harnessing of resources across borders while their political and religious lives focus on host-country concerns. In contrast, there are those who engage in regular religious and political transnational practices but only occasionally send money back to family members or invest in homeland projects. Some individuals whose transnational practices involve many

arenas of social life engage in comprehensive transnational practices while others engage in transnational practices that are more selective in scope. Table 1 provides concrete examples of variations on these different dimensions of transnational activism.

Table 1: variations in the dimensions of transnational practices

	Comprehensive	Selective
Core	Transnational business owner who is also active home-country political party member, member of church with sister congregations in home and host country, and hometown association leader.	The political party official whose job it is to coordinate party activities between the sending and receiving country but who does not participate in any other kind of transnational group and maintains few cross-border social and familial ties.
Expanded	Periodically contributes to sending community projects, makes contributions to political campaigns, and provides occasional economic remittances to family members.	Periodically engages in only one of these activities.

The concepts of core and expanded transnationalism must also be extended to include the transnational practices of those who stay behind. Non-migrants who engage in core transnational practices are those whose social and economic lives depend upon and are shaped on a regular basis by resources, people, and ideas in the receiving-country context. These may also be comprehensive or selective in scope. The non-migrant grandparent who, along with her migrant children, is jointly responsible for income generation and raising children across borders engages in comprehensive, core transnational behaviours, although she may only travel once a year. Similarly, the non-migrant who travels during a campaign to mobilize support for a sending-country candidate is enacting selective, expanded transnational practices.

In some cases, numerous individuals embedded within transnational social fields engage in high levels of transnational practices but few communal activities emerge. Colombian migrants in New York have created a complex web of multi-directional relationships but their mistrust and fragmentation impede community organization (Guarnizo et al. 1999). Often, however, certain sites within transnational social fields become sufficiently organized and institutionalized that some kind of transnational community is established. In such cases, it is not merely that numerous individuals live their lives within a social formation that crosses borders. It is that a significant number from a given place of origin and settlement share this experience collectively with one another, transforming the way they think of themselves as a group. Since transnational communities emerge from the social networks that first encourage migration, at least initially, members often know one another personally or have family members or acquaintances in common. They acknowledge that they belong to

a collectivity constituted across space and express some level of self-consciousness about this membership by forming groups like hometown organizations which manifest their transnational character.

Transnational communities lie between what Michael Peter Smith and Luis Eduardo Guarnizo (1998) call 'transnationalism from above', or global governance and economic activities, and 'transnationalism from below', or the everyday, grounded practices of individuals. Communities are one of several mechanisms mediating between 'high' and 'low' levels of transnationalism. When individual actors identify and organize themselves as transnational communities, a response from 'above', by the state or by an international religious group, is more likely. Likewise, when national political and economic actors reach out to local communities, they encourage individual members to maintain loyalties across borders.

Researchers have identified several types of transnational communities. The first is what I call a rural-to-urban transnational village (Levitt 2001).² Migration from the small Dominican village of Miraflores to Boston, which began in the late 1960s, produced such a social group. By 1994, over 65 per cent of the 445 households in Miraflores had relatives in the greater Boston metropolitan area. It is not surprising that migration has completely transformed village life. Numerous houses have been renovated with US dollars. They are crowded with the clothes, appliances, toys, and food that migrants bring back. Almost everyone in Miraflores can talk about 'La Mozart' or 'La Centre', or Mozart Street Park and Centre Street, two focal points of the community in Boston. When someone is ill, cheating on their spouse, or finally granted a visa, the news spreads as quickly on the streets of Miraflores as it does on the streets of Boston. Non-migrants' level of economic dependence on migrant remittances is particularly striking. In 1994, almost 60 per cent of the households in Miraflores said they received at least some monthly income from those in the United States. For nearly 40 per cent of those households, remittances constituted between 75 and 100 per cent of their income. In contrast, only 31 per cent of the households earned their money entirely in the Dominican Republic.

Transnational villages such as Miraflores arise when a large proportion of a relatively small community leaves a well-defined rural locale and settles near one another in a specific receiving-country neighbourhood or town. Non-migrants' economic dependence on remittances is high. At the same time, migrants also depend on non-migrants to bring up their children or to manage what land or property they still own. Migrants and non-migrants tend to know one another or each other's families personally. In the receiving country and at home, their social lives continue to be so entwined with one another that those who do not send money to their families or do not 'do right' by the community feel the consequences. Transnational villages are small and personalized enough for values like bounded solidarity and enforceable trust to continue to prevail (Portes 1995). Many migrants still use their sending community as the reference group against which they gauge their status. One reason why so many migrants contribute toward public works projects or participate in sending-country beauty pageants and patron saint day celebrations is to affirm their continued sending community membership and to demonstrate their enhanced position within it (Berry 1985; Goldring 1998; Smith 1995).

A second kind of transnational village arises between urban areas in sending and

receiving countries (Levitt 2000; Roberts et al. 1999). Migration between the city of Governador Valadares and Framingham, Massachusetts produced one such transnational social group. Governador Valadares is a city of approximately 270,000 located in Minas Gerais, one of Brazil's largest states. By 1994, an estimated 30,000 Valadareneses had migrated, including approximately 5,000 who settled in the Framingham area (Sales 1999). As in the case of Miraflores, the strong connection between Valadares and Massachusetts is widely recognized throughout Brazil. That 'there is not one house in Valadares that doesn't have family in Boston' is a constantly repeated refrain. It is also easy to identify the many homes that have been built or renovated with monies from the United States. Here again, migrants and non-migrants depend socially and economically on one another in ways that have transformed the sending city. The Valadares economy is so dependent on *Valadollares* (Valadollars or migrant remittances) that it is said to be the only place in Brazil where the 1999 currency devaluation had a positive effect.

Though urban-to-urban transnational villages are characterized by greater numbers and looser social connections among individuals who are more geographically dispersed, they are still clearly enough defined that bounded solidarity and reciprocity remain strong. Individuals who wish to defect or to decline membership, however, enjoy more freedom. In the Valadares/Massachusetts case, it is primarily elites who have promoted transnational community formation. It remains to be seen whether ordinary individuals, who earn their livelihoods or raise their families across space, will heed calls to organize collectively. Hernández (1997) suggests that urban-to-urban connections form between particular population groups for specific reasons. Street gang members in Monterrey, Mexico, for example, formed relations with other gang members in Houston to aid their settlement process.

Other kinds of 'normative' transnational communities grow initially out of members' shared attachments to a particular place but gradually mature into groups organized around the identities, occupations, or values that people from that region share with one another. Members of the Patidar community in Massachusetts sustain ties back to Gujarat State in India from where their families originated. But because these households have been migrating to East Africa and Britain for so long, their sense of themselves as a group emerges less out of shared geography and more from the norms and values they have in common. Similar normative communities link Mixtec Indians in Mexico and Northern California. They also have a common geography but organize themselves around their shared ethnic identities and experience of oppression (Rivera-Salgado 1999). Turkish immigrants throughout Europe have created transnational collectivities to press for greater religious freedom (Kastoryano 1994). These individuals also come from multiple sending areas but, again, their shared norms and traditions provide the basis for transnational community formation.

By using the term 'community', I do not wish to imply that all members feel a sense of affinity or solidarity toward one another. The divisiveness and hierarchical nature of all social groups also characterizes transnational communities; old power hierarchies may simply be recreated in new ways. Long-standing patterns of privilege and access do not automatically disappear because they are recreated across borders.

A distinction must be made between transnational communities, the less organized social fields within which they are embedded, and the overall context of economic and cultural globalization producing these social forms. Transnational migration

cannot be used interchangeably with the more general terms 'transnationalism' and 'globalization'. Migration-driven transnational activities at all levels are different from those arising from globalization, though migration flows are often encouraged by economic, political, and religious globalization.

Transnationalism generally refers to the cultural, economic, and political linking of people and institutions within a variety of contexts including business and organizational practices, foreign investment and production, or cultural interchange (Sørensen 2000). Rather than regarding transnationalism as an outgrowth of migrant networks, some scholars contend these networks are themselves a product of late capitalism. Nonini and Ong (1997), for example, argue that transnational migration began in response to capitalist flexible accumulation and its need for transnational functionaries. These scholars see migration as part of the larger process of de-territorialization, which may or may not involve actual movement, but that transforms the way in which individual and group identities are constructed. Transnationalism de-emphasizes the role of geography in the formation of identity and collectivity and creates new possibilities for membership across boundaries (Appadurai 1996; Hannerz 1997).

Globalization refers to the political, economic, and social activities that have become interregional or intercontinental and to the intensification of levels of interaction and interconnectedness within and between states and societies (Held et al. 1999). Global processes tend to be de-linked from specific national territories while transnational processes are anchored in and transcend one or more nation-states (Kearney 1995). Global processes take place throughout the world while transnational practices are the political, economic, social, and cultural processes occurring beyond the borders of a particular state, including actors that are not states but that are influenced by the policies and institutional arrangements associated with states (Glick Schiller 1999).

Globalization also transforms the everyday lives of ordinary individuals but these changes differ from those brought about by transnational migration. The Miraflores woman who tries to establish a more equitable relationship with her husband does so not only because Dominican women in general are gaining more independence. She is also motivated by social remittances that have exposed her to the same kind of marriage as her migrant sister. In such cases, transnational migration and globalization are both changing gender relations. The impact of transnational migration differs from, but must be understood within, the context of heightened globalization within which it takes place. Changes prompted by migration and globalization mutually reinforce one another.

Finally, I want to locate transnational communities with respect to the term 'diaspora', also used to describe a range of contemporary migration experiences. Diaspora traditionally referred to groups who were forcibly expelled from their homelands and who remained socially marginal in the societies that received them as they waited to return. Classic examples of this are Jews, Greeks, and Armenians. Of late, researchers have also begun using this term more broadly, defining those 'dwelling in the diaspora' as individuals who have been exiled or displaced to a number of different nation states by a variety of economic, political and social forces (Baumann 2000; Clifford 1997; Tololyan 1996).

Transnational communities are building blocks of potential diasporas that may or

may not take shape. Diasporas form out of the transnational communities spanning sending and receiving countries and out of the real or imagined connections between migrants from a particular homeland who are scattered throughout the world. If a fiction of congregation takes hold, then a diaspora emerges. Dominicans who identify themselves as belonging to a diaspora might be transnational community members or isolated individuals who, wherever they are, share a sense of common belonging to a homeland where they are not living. Similarly, the Garifuna diaspora consists of transnational communities connecting New York and Honduras or Belize and Los Angeles and the many individual Garifuna migrants living around the globe (England 1999; Matthei and Smith 1998).

The kinds of transnational relationships I describe are not new. The emergence of these ties is linked to the logic of capitalist expansion but their intensity, quality, and frequency change in this new phase of global capitalism (Portes et al. 1999). New communication and transportation technologies permit frequent and more intimate connections. The aeroplane and the telephone make it easier and cheaper to remain in touch. They transform migrants' contact with their sending communities, allowing them to be actively involved in everyday life in fundamentally different ways than they could have been in the past.

A second difference in the nature of present-day transnational relations is the economic and cultural context within which they develop. Migration today takes place in the context of heightened global economic interconnectedness. Many of today's migrants arrive already partially socialized into aspects of Western, if not North American, culture. Often, they already strongly identify with US values because they have been thoroughly exposed to them through the media and through their interactions with migrants (Alarcón 1989; Morawska 2001).

The changing nature of the US economy also means that migrants are incorporated into the labour market in different ways than in the past. In the early 1900s, rapidly-industrializing US companies needed low-skilled labour for jobs that frequently did not require English speakers. In contrast, today's migrants enter a post-industrial economy that courts high-skilled workers but offers limited opportunities for the unskilled, non-English speaker. Because many contemporary migrants are people of colour they face discrimination in the labour market. New migrants are more insecurely incorporated into the labour market and they face more limited opportunities for advancement.³

Finally, the kinds of homeland connections sustained by migrants today differ from those in the past because they are forged within a cultural context more tolerant of ethnic pluralism. At the turn of the twentieth century, and particularly during the period preceding World War I, migrants were under tremendous pressure to naturalize and become 'good Americans'. In contrast, the United States of the early twenty-first century is more accepting of ethnic diversity. The pressure to conform to some well-defined, standardized notion of what it means to be 'American' has greatly decreased.

Institutional actors

Individual grants and the social fields they are embedded in create and are created by institutions that also act transnationally. The density, diversity, and power of these institutions, and the ways they are structured, exert a tremendous influence over the

volume and impact of transnational practices. The following section lays out common patterns of institutional activity within transnational social fields, the motivations underlying these political, religious and civic activities, and some observations about their impact on transnational membership.

States

Increasing numbers of states are systematically redefining their boundaries to include members no longer in residence, just as Ireland is doing. While Mary Robinson's invitation to Irish emigrants was more symbolic than substantive, other states have launched major programmatic initiatives to regain or reinforce migrants' continued political and economic involvement. In the past, many states hoped emigrants would return to live and contribute to the nation-building project (Glick Schiller 1999). In contrast, contemporary states recognize that although today's migrants are unlikely to return to their sending communities, they can still advance state consolidation and national development from their new homes. In response, states are articulating new versions of long-distance nationalism that endow migrants with special rights, protections, and recognition in the hopes of ensuring their long-term support (Glick Schiller 2000; Guarnizo 2000).

Several factors motivate states to court their emigrant constituents. They often do so for symbolic purposes. National governments want to show the global community they are more modern and democratic than was previously believed. They want to signal to their citizens that they are sufficiently developed and powerful to protect their citizens living abroad.⁴

A far more important reason is to ensure the continued economic involvement of migrants in their homelands. Numerous governments have become highly dependent on migrant remittances. In 1996, for example, Itzigsohn (2000) estimates that the ratio of workers' remittances to exports of goods, services, and income was 47 per cent in El Salvador and 21 per cent in the Dominican Republic. According to Carlos Dore, a close advisor to former Dominican President Leonel Fernández, migrants 'are the sine qua non for Dominican macro-economic stability', including monetary exchange rates, the balance of trade, international monetary reserves, and the national balance of payment (Guarnizo 1997:7). Published totals for remittances undercount the significant sums of money migrants send back to their countries of origin through informal channels. They also do not reflect the money migrants spend on vacation trips, consumer goods, houses, lands, and businesses nor how they stimulate growth in particular economic sectors, such as the construction industry.

While remittances have less impact on the national economies of countries as large as Brazil and Mexico, they still play a critical role in regions where there are large numbers of migrants. Other governments, while less dependent on remittances, have come to view migrants as an additional economic development resource. The goal of the Gujarat State's Non-Resident Indian Division (NRI), created only recently despite over 150 years of emigration from the region, is to 'channelize the savings and surplus financial resources of the NRI in to the developmental efforts of the State for mutual benefits'.

Other government programmes promote business development in sending countries or encourage receiving-country business creation which can also benefit countries of

origin. The Mexican government created the Hispanic Fund, which grants loans to small and medium-sized businesses and stimulates investment partnerships between Latino-owned businesses in the United States and in Mexico (Guarnizo 1998). The Salvadoran government created a transnational credit union that assists migrants in the United States and helps non-migrant family members in El Salvador to secure loans (Hamilton and Chinchilla 1999). The Brazilian Consul in Massachusetts created the Brazilian Business Network, which fostered small business development in New England and encouraged business partnerships between US and Brazilian entrepreneurs.

Many of these initiatives have met with limited success. Though the Central Reserve Bank in El Salvador authorized Salvadoran Banks with branches in the United States to act as remittance transmission agencies, to gain greater control over remittance flows, only an estimated \$8–10 million out of approximately \$1 billion was wired this way (Landolt et al. 1999). Several governments have created special investment funds or savings accounts offering migrants higher-than-average interest rates to attract dollars. Few migrants in my study of Brazilians in Massachusetts, however, contributed to a Valadares-focused investment fund, established jointly by the Mayor of Valadares and the Brazilian National Bank to support projects in Minas Gerais. They said they were reluctant to invest in an unstable economy, which they felt had forced them to migrate from Brazil. They also deeply distrusted government officials and politicians and asked why they were now so interested in migrants when they had never paid attention to them when they lived in Brazil.

A final kind of economic scheme initiated by states piggybacks onto the work of hometown associations. Hometown associations have served as platforms for matching fund schemes that pool remittances with government funds and expertise, and occasionally private-sector contributions, to support economic development projects (Dresser 1993; Smith 1998). Though these efforts often result in significant improvements in health, education, and sanitation, critics claim they co-opt migrants who must sacrifice autonomy in exchange for services (Guarnizo 1998).

A second way in which states inscribe migrants as long-term, long-distance partners is to offer them some form of dual political membership. They allow dual nationality, enabling migrants to continue to belong even if they become naturalized citizens of the countries that receive them. Or they create arenas that endow non-resident citizens or former members who have become naturalized citizens of other countries with political voice.

Political as well as economic motivations underlie these arrangements. First, migrants have the potential to be organized into strong lobbies that advocate for sending-country interests. Jewish-Americans' efforts to influence US foreign policy toward Israel are often raised as an example of effective diaspora politics that many groups want to emulate (Levitt 2001).⁵ Second, migrants also make large campaign contributions. Fundraising trips to US cities with significant concentrations of migrants have become essential stops for Dominican, Haitian, and Mexican candidates. Third, migrants can strongly influence how their non-migrant family-members vote. If those who stay behind are financially dependent on their migrant family members, then non-migrants are more likely to vote as instructed. Finally, states can exert greater control over migrants' political activities if they are channelled through official mechanisms.

Seven of the ten countries sending the most immigrants to the United States

between 1981 and 1986 now allow some form of dual citizenship. Some seventy nations, including Canada, Italy, Israel, South Africa, and New Zealand, allow their citizens to retain or regain their citizenship or nationality after becoming naturalized in another nation. Though it is impossible to count the numbers of those who are actually dual citizens, some estimate that tens of millions claim loyalty to two polities (Aleinikoff and Klusmeyer 1998; Gribbin 1999).

Furthermore, many states are extending voting rights to migrants, though, here again, it is difficult to say what the impact of these overtures will be.⁶ In some cases, voter legislation has been approved but not implemented. Though the Dominican government approved the expatriate vote in 1997, it has still not passed a plan for holding elections abroad. In 1996, residency was eliminated as a voting requirement in Mexico but later that year, a new article passed which made voting abroad contingent upon a national citizens registry and a new citizen identification card. In 1998, the Ministry of Governance, officially charged with these tasks, announced it would be unable to complete them in time for the 2000 election (Martínez Saldaña 1999). The *Partido Revolucionario Institucional* (PRI), in office at the time, was said to be influential in tying up this legislation because the majority of Mexicans in California were allegedly anti-PRI (Quiñones 1999).

In the Mexican and Dominican cases, migrants have the potential to exert a major influence over election outcomes. The *Institute Federal Electoral* (IFE) calculated that 10,787,000 Mexicans would be living outside of Mexico in the year 2000 or over 15.38 per cent of the electorate (Martínez Saldaña 1999). Dominicans living in New York City constitute the second largest Dominican voting block outside the Dominican capital. In cases like Brazil and Colombia, however, where migrants can already vote, their participation has not been particularly significant. According to Lucio Pires De Amorim, the Director General for Legal and Assistance-Related Consular Affairs for Brazilians Living Abroad, only 50,000 Brazilian migrants registered to vote in the 1998 election, and of these only 25,000 actually cast their ballots. Fewer than 4,000 out of more than 100,000 Colombians in the New York City metropolitan area turned out to vote in the three presidential elections prior to 1998 (Jones-Correa 1998a).

A third way that states extend their boundaries to include those living outside their territory is by instituting policies and create government agencies designed to serve migrants and protect their interests. In 1994, the Haitian government created the Ministry of Diasporic Affairs to co-ordinate relations between the Haitian government and the Haitian diaspora (Laguerre 1998). The Mexican *Programa Paisano* was instituted to reduce bureaucratic problems for migrants returning to visit (Guarnizo 1998). The Dominican government also instituted a series of policies to facilitate return and continued long-distance membership. A customs policy instituted under former President Leonel Fernández allows return migrants to transport their belongings back to the island, including one car per household, without paying taxes. The government placed customs officers at each consulate to help migrants complete the necessary paperwork prior to their actual journey. Dominicans planning to return to live on the island are also eligible to buy 1373 housing units in Santo Domingo, built by the government specifically for returnees. Prospective buyers are to take out mortgages with designated US banks. They have up to fifteen years to repay their loans, with the government covering 60 per cent of the original down payment.

Though most of these policies primarily benefit returnees, they send a symbolic message to those remaining abroad that their government is still concerned about them and that their economic and political involvement, and eventual return, would be welcomed (Levitt 2001).

Another set of policies stokes migrants' loyalties by offering them services and programmes in the host country to which they might not otherwise have access. The Brazilian government offered a group health insurance plan to Brazilian workers living in New York. *CONASIDA* (a Mexican health care agency) opened offices in the Los Angeles consulate to help fight AIDS in the Mexican community. The Mexican *Instituto Nacional de Educación para Adultos* (INEA) signed an agreement with the One Stop Immigration and Education Center (OSIEC) in California to distribute materials and provide technical support to help migrants learn to read in Spanish before they attempted English-language literacy (González Gutierrez 1993). In 1994, the ARENA government in El Salvador expanded its consular programme to include the provision of legal services for undocumented Salvadorans, the promotion of business development among prominent Salvadoran entrepreneurs, and the implementation of campaigns to inform migrants about their rights in El Salvador (Landolt et al. 1999). Finally, many governments organize events and celebrations to strengthen migrants' cultural identification with their countries of origin, including Independence Day celebrations, art and poetry contests, and sports competitions.

Political parties

Like states, political parties also organize transnationally to gain access to migrants' financial and political clout. The Mexican Partido Revolucionario Democrata (PRD), the Dominican Partido Revolucionario Dominicano (PRD) and the Partido de la Liberación Dominicana (PLD), the Brazilian Workers Party, and the Indian Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) are just some political groups creating municipal and regional party organizations where there are large numbers of migrants.

Political parties have also come to rely on migrant contributions, just as states have. An estimated 10 to 30 per cent of the Dominican PRD's budget and as much as 50 per cent of the funding for the 1994 Dominican presidential campaign came from migrant contributions (Levitt 2001). The Haitian diaspora contributed over a quarter of a million dollars toward the Aristide and Bazin campaigns (Laguerre 1998). Political parties also recognize the extent to which migrants influence how non-migrant family members vote. Like states, they view their contacts with migrants as an additional way to mobilize non-migrants' support.

Some political parties want to keep migrants focused on home-country politics and to enlist their support to promote regime change. Mexican political groups in California, for example, wanted a resolution included in the state Democratic Party platform that encouraged US intervention in the Mexican presidential election to help ensure the integrity of the vote (Dresser 1993). Salvadoran migrants helped create international solidarity and lobbying networks among members of *Frente Farabundo Martí para la Liberación Nacional* (FMLN), an opposition political party (Landolt et al. 1999). Haiti's underground and resistance movements also relied heavily on the diaspora for financial and material support (Laguerre 1998).

Other political groups articulate a dual agenda, promoting political integration into

the United States while simultaneously encouraging migrants to stay active in homeland politics. They recognize that when migrants are organized into well-integrated, strong constituencies, they are in a better position to achieve both sending and receiving- country goals. Migrant party leaders are encouraged to use party organizations to encourage political participation in the USA as well as to further the cause of home-country political candidates. In the Mexican case, for example, both formal and informal political groups used their organizations to mobilize around voting and citizenship rights (Dresser 1993). The Dominican Partido Revolucionario Dominicano (PRD) also unofficially allowed its members to use the party infrastructure in support of various Democratic candidates in New York (Levitt 2001).

Some political groups have instituted policies aimed at institutionalizing migrants' long-term, long-distance political participation. The Dominican PLD, for example, designated three legislative seats on its ticket to Dominicans living abroad. Since there is no formal mechanism for electing representatives from the migrant community, these candidates run from their hometown districts. Although they are officially elected to represent districts on the island, they also unofficially represent their constituencies abroad (Itzigsohn et al. 1999). The first dual citizen residing abroad was elected to represent a Colombian region in the national congress (Guarnizo et al. 1999). At the same time, plans are underway to nominate a candidate for a Colombian congressional seat to represent Colombians living outside the country. By promoting political integration into the United States and establishing channels for migrants' continued representation in home-country politics, political parties enable assimilation and continued transnational membership.

Hometown organizations

A third set of institutions that arises in response to, and promotes, transnational migration are hometown organizations. Hometown organizations generally provide some combination of social and economic support to migrants in the receiving country and raise significant sums to support public works and social service projects in communities of origin. Some groups have no organizational partners while others belong to state or national organizational networks.

In 1972, for example, eight clubs formed the first state-wide federation of hometown associations from Zacatecas (*The Federación of Clubes Zacatecanos Unidos*). By 1995, the Federation included 43 member clubs supporting 56 projects in 34 municipalities. By that time, approximately 150 Mexican hometown clubs had been established and ten state-level associations had been formed (Goldring 1999). Zacatecan Federation members paid lower prices for a Mexican health plan administered by the Mexican Ministry of Health. The Federation also acted as an intermediary, lobbying and obtaining funds from state and federal government agencies to support community projects, scholarships, and federation programmes (González Guttierrez 1995). Salvadorans in California also created Communities United to Provide Direct Aid to El Salvador (Comunidades), a coalition of fifty hometown associations that co-ordinate and support each other's efforts. As these organizations expand to include more and more individuals who consider themselves to be Salvadoran-American, they also serve as arenas from which to pursue immigrant community interests (Landolt et al. 1999).

Sending states support hometown organizations because they generate significant resources that can be used to promote regional development, strengthen links between migrants and non-migrants in the areas of business, tourism, culture, education, sports, and health, and lastly, help improve the image of migrants in their sending countries and enhance non-migrants' understanding of the reality of host-country life.

Recent research suggests that the impact of hometown organizations, particularly those aggregated into state and regional federations, has been mixed (Goldring 1999). Though migrants are connected to the daily life of their sending communities, over time their interests and goals diverge from those who remain behind. Migrants want a place where they can rest and retire (Goldring 1992; Smith 1995). They want to preserve all that embodies their memories of childhood because these ease the difficulties of immigrant life. Non-migrants, however, need jobs and concrete services. They would be willing to abandon the customs and traditions migrants cling to in exchange for employment and health care (Levitt 2001).

As their social and economic power increases, migrants' views often take precedence over non-migrants. Because migrants are the major donors, they disproportionately influence the kinds of hometown projects that are undertaken (Levitt 2001). Sending-country officials and political party operatives often pay more attention to migrant entrepreneurs and influential community leaders than to those who remain behind. By first holding open meetings with the entire community and then holding closed meetings with immigrant entrepreneurs, for example, the Mexican State governors who visit Los Angeles reinforce existing class divisions (Guarnizo 1998).

Furthermore, because hometown associations help non-migrants meet their own needs, sending communities are often left doing the lion's share of the government's work. This allows states to continue pursuing development strategies that hurt rural development and neglect economic growth since migration acts as a safety valve (Goldring 1992). Efforts by the Haitian government to build a transnational nation state and portray Haitians abroad as the hope of the nation, for example, are said to divert attention away from the underlying causes of Haiti's continuing economic and political crisis (Glick Schiller 1999).

The success of hometown groups also depends upon the ways in which local-level transnational activities are mediated by state and federal level interventions. Some Mexican communities accept assistance from their state, government-supported federations, thereby enhancing their resource base but constraining their autonomy. Other groups reject state overtures, which diminishes their ability to act transnationally but preserves their independence (Smith 1998). State-transnational organizational relations can also create or constrain opportunities for dialogue. The local and transnational alliances and collaborative arrangements mounted by Salvadoran immigrants brought a wide array of Salvadorans into contact with one another, including elites and ordinary individuals who had not had conversations before (Landolt et al. 1999). The Mexican government's greater willingness to cultivate ties with Mexicans living abroad also brings a wide range of US-based groups into contact with political actors both within and outside the Mexican government (Martinez 1999).

Religious institutions

Formal and informal political groups are just one-way migrants and non-migrants keep feet in two worlds. Religious institutions are also important sites of dual membership. In the case of Christian denominations, these groups generally link sending and receiving-country chapters of the same institution at various levels of the organizational hierarchy. Local home and host-country Dominican and Brazilian parishes, for example, are connected to one another by cross-border ties between family members and clergy that are then reinforced by links between the state and national Catholic Churches. Hindu groups often link franchises of sending-country religious groups that continue to be supervised by 'mother' religious institutions in the homeland. Members of the International Swaminarayan Satsang Organization (ISSO), one such organization, have created a national association in the United States that maintains close ties to leaders in India. They meet regularly, though informally, with similar national-level groups around the world.

Transnational religious groups ground migrants by making them members of local sending- or receiving-country religious organizations. Cross-border ties between these groups allow migrants to circulate easily between chapters, thereby facilitating belonging wherever they are. Non-migrants also participate in organizations that become increasingly transnationalized. The ideas and practices migrants introduce transform home-country religious practices while new migrants infuse fresh 'country-of-originness' into the host-country religious sphere (Levitt 1998). The deeper and more far-reaching these connections, and the more convergence in religious life that occurs, the easier it is to express dual membership in religious arenas.

These localized transnational ties are reinforced by the globalization of religious life in general. Transnational religious membership incorporates migrants and non-migrants into institutions that articulate discourses, launch programmatic initiatives, and organize social movements aimed at a global religious community. While the Catholic Church enables dual membership through ties between sending and receiving-country parishes, the church's role as a public religion, whose rituals, activities, and symbols are similar around the world, also encourages a sense of belonging to a community spanning borders (Casanova 1994).

Directions for future research

What does this complex of transnational individual and organizational activities add up to? How can their impact on migration and development be meaningfully assessed? In the preceding sections, I offered a conceptual map of the field of transnational migration studies and profiled a range of transnational practices that institutional actors engage in. While the research I described sheds important light on various dimensions of transnational migration, there is clearly a great deal we still do not know. Single case studies do not tell us how widespread transnational practices are or how they vary among groups. While the kinds of activities states, political parties and religious organizations engage in are being documented, not enough is understood about the numbers and kinds of people participating in these programmes, how enduring they are, or what their long-term impact will be. In this section, I propose questions and directions for future research.

Of primary concern is the impact of transnational practices on home and host-

country mobility. While some argue that transnational practices will allow marginalized groups to circumvent mobility barriers (Nagengast and Kearney 1990; Rouse 1991), others claim they merely reorder or reproduce long-standing inequalities (Guarnizo 1998). In addition, while many assume that transnational practices and assimilation are incompatible, others argue that long-term transnational involvement and incorporation can coexist and, in some cases, mutually reinforce each other (Faist 2000; Levitt forthcoming 2002; Portes et al. 1999).

I want to suggest a more constructive way to frame these debates. Embedding an explicit expectation about the potentially transformative consequences of transnational practices overlooks important prior questions. As a result, too much attention is focused on whether or not transnational migration brings about political and social change and not enough attention is paid to actual individual and institutional practices, the ways in which these vary across individuals and groups, and the factors that explain these variations. Posing 'either-or' questions also misses the nuanced, complex reality characterizing migrants' and non-migrants' lives within transnational social fields.

Instead, transnational social field construction is more realistically understood as ongoing, bringing members from different social groups into contact with one another who might not have had contact in the past (Landolt et al. 1999; Popkin 1999). Within this arena, opportunities increase for some and diminish for others depending on, first, the social and economic contexts migrants depart from and enter; secondly, their socio-economic characteristics and the social capital they possess; and lastly, the transnational institutions occupying the social fields in which transnational actors are embedded. What we must explore further are how and why migrants distribute their loyalty and energy between their home and host countries and with what consequences and the ways in which nation-state and global economic and political dynamics shape these relationships.

A first set of sub-questions involves the ways in which different types of transnational membership overlap with or counteract one another. Are certain kinds of belonging prerequisites for other kinds of involvement? Under what circumstances can participation in some spheres compensate for informal or partial participation in others?

A second set of questions concerns variations in transnational community form. When does transnational migration give rise to some form of community and when do migrants remain isolated actors within transnational social fields? How do cross-border activities enacted within formal organizations compare with those carried out in more informal settings? What is the relationship between these and broader, transnational social groups formed by indigenous-rights activists, academics, or businesspeople?

A third set of questions concerns the nature of the state and the ways in which it mediates transnational activism. How do the activities of strong states compare with those of weak ones? What might explain differences in the extent to which authoritarian versus democratic states encourage long-term dual membership? (Guarnizo 2000). What is the relationship between national-level transnational activities and those carried out between state and local levels of government? How does the character of nationalism change when it is expressed permanently via long distance? (Glick Schiller 2000).

Finally, to what extent will transnational practices remain salient for the second generation? It makes sense that the children of immigrants born in the USA, or who spend most of their formative years in this country, would feel their strongest sense of attachment to their family's adopted, rather than ancestral, home. Several recent studies suggest that this is, in fact, the case (Kasinitz et al. 1998; Rumbaut 1998).

It may be premature, however, to conclude that transnational practices will all but disappear among the second generation, though they are likely to be less frequent and more narrow in scope. Recent work indicates that second generation transnational practices often emerge in unexpected forms and in unexpected places (Espiritu and Tran 1998; Kibria 1998). What forms will these attachments assume? In what spheres activity will they predominate? How will they vary by country of origin, gender, and class? What will their significance be for long-term sending and receiving-country civic engagement?

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Notes

1. For example, Portes and colleagues are carrying out large-scale, comparative surveys of entrepreneurship and hometown organizational activity which will shed light on how widespread these practices are among the population as a whole and how they vary across national contexts. Robert C. Smith is carrying out longitudinal work in a transnational village spanning New York and Mexico while Morawska (2001) has systematically compared contemporary transnational ties to those sustained by earlier generations. Levitt (forthcoming 2002) is conducting a comparative, historical study of five transnational communities, with a particular focus on the relationship between transnational religion and politics.
2. Transnational villages have much in common with what others have described as 'translocalities' (Smith 1998) or 'bi-local communities' (Guarnizo 1994; Glick Schiller, Basch and Blanc-Szanton 1992; Rouse 1991).
3. While this is the case for unskilled workers, it may not be true for the new cadre of professional, highly-trained workers who are coming to the USA. Indeed, these individuals enjoy more opportunities for assimilation because many of the elite schools, social clubs, and work settings that might have been closed to them in the past are now much more accessible (Gold 2000).
4. Debates about the extension of voting rights to Mexicans abroad, for example, are seen by some as an effort by the Mexican government to demonstrate that Mexico is now a true democracy. Granting the franchise to non-residents is the 'icing on the cake' of participatory governance (Molinar 1999). Until the early 1990s, the Brazilian government paid little attention to migrants because they made up such a small proportion of the overall population and because they were so regionally concentrated. It was only when news reports claimed that Brazilian nationals were mistreated in Europe that the Brazilian government stepped in. By so doing, leaders tried to signal to the Brazilian public that they were powerful enough to defend Brazilian nationals on the global stage.
5. Yvonne Haddad (personal communication) makes this point about the Muslim community in the USA.

6. In the majority of these cases, expatriate voting rights are generally restricted to presidential elections with the exception of Colombia, where migrants can vote in regional and provisional elections.

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