

Beyond Transnationalism:

An Alternative Perspective on Immigrants' Homeland Connections

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For the contemporary student of international migration, the central intellectual problem is how to manage two competing methodological temptations – of nationalism, on one hand, and transnationalism, on the other. Methodological nationalism is the more common approach, as in both scholarly and popular views, nation-states are thought to normally contain societies (as implied by the concept of “American -- or Mexican or French - society”); from this perspective, the appearance of foreigners, with their foreign attachments, is seen as deviant, disrupting an otherwise integrated whole and one that is expected to disappear. Consequently, the scholars – like the nationals – stand with their back at the border, looking inwards, their focus fixed on the new arrivals. What they see is that the immigrants respond pragmatically to the opportunities that they encounter, searching for a better life and adapting a cultural toolkit that pays dividends in their new home. As the receiving environment is dynamic, its institutions open; the new arrivals respond in kind, crossing ethnic boundaries, heading away from others of their own kind and toward the mainstream, whatever that might be.

More recently, however, the alternative approach appears more enticing: as the movements of goods, services, ideas, and people (though the latter to a notably lesser extent) appear to be sweeping across boundaries, the epiphenomenon seems to involve the nation-state. From this standpoint, social relations and activities (if not societies) naturally extend across national boundaries. Looking across borders, the view is one of nation-states that have lost the capacity they once possessed to control the passage of people across frontiers; unable to keep out or extrude unwanted foreigners, they also find it hard to maintain the line between citizens and aliens, which, if not disappearing altogether, is increasingly blurred. Whereas ties to home and host country were

previously seen as mutually exclusive, today's political and ideological environment appears more relaxed, as the shift from melting pot to multiculturalism legitimates the expression of and organization around home country loyalties. Thus, with stepped-up migration has come the proliferation of activities linking the migrants to the places from which they come, whether of the routine sort, involving remittances, communication, and travel, or the more concerted activities of home country political engagement or immigrant philanthropy. Ours, it appears, is a transnational age, where there are few emigration states without diasporas that they are trying to mobilize; likewise, there are few emigrations where self-conscious diaspora social action is not to be found.

The appeal of the transnational approach is easy to see, as it reminds us that to say international migration is to say cross-border connections. Whereas the mythology of the classic countries of immigration assumes that the newcomers are arriving in order to build a life in the new land in reality it is often not the case: many migrants instead want to take advantage of the gap between rich and poorer places in order to accumulate resources designed to be used upon return back home. Some eventually act on these plans; others, whether wanting to or not, end up establishing roots in the country of arrival. Given the uncertain, transitional nature of the migration process, connections linking origin and destination places are ubiquitous. Large flows of remittances, migrant associations raising funds to help hometowns left behind, trains or airplanes filled with immigrants returning home for visits to kin and friends features are encountered wherever large numbers of international migrants are found throughout the contemporary world. These same phenomena transform the places from which the emigrants come, providing both the opportunities and the motivations to leave, which is why receiving states find

that migrations, once begun, are so difficult to stop. For all these reasons, a transnational approach appropriately points beyond a U.S.-centrism that defines the problem as one of “immigration.” Indeed, by successfully directing scholars’ interest toward the linkages tying migrants, stay-at-homes, and emigration states, the transnational approach has underscored the *international* dimension of population movements across borders, with the fruitful result of refocusing attention toward the myriad feedbacks and spillovers that pull points of origin and points of destination together.

This new sensitivity has unquestionably generated significant value-added; nonetheless, in its implementation the transnational perspective has left much to be desired, as this essay will show. While rejecting the conventional view that social relations are normally contained within the boundaries of a state, the students of immigrant transnationalism have unfortunately forgotten about all the opposing processes that transform foreigners into nationals, and cut their ties off at the water’s edge. The better view, as will be shown in this essay, lies beyond the simplistic dichotomies of the two competing methodological temptations, emphasizing instead the *regularity* of international migration and its inevitable collision with the mechanisms by which nation-states attempt to keep themselves apart from the world. Building on earlier work of an empirical as well as theoretical kind (Waldinger, 2003, 2007a, 2007b, 2008a, 2008b; Waldinger and Fitzgerald, 2004; Waldinger, Popkin and Magana, 2007; Soehl and Waldinger, forthcoming), the pages that follow will first provide a critical review of the transnational perspective on migration, tracing its intellectual career and providing an evaluation. Starting from the standpoint that intellectual migrations invariably produce cross-border connections, I will then provide an alternative perspective, one designed to

explain variations in the strength, persistence, and coverage of those cross-border ties. The remaining sections apply that perspective to a range of cross-border phenomena. Given the complexity of global migrations, the burgeoning literature, and the huge scholarship devoted to both historical and contemporary eras of mass migration, this essay will focus on the international migrants who have converged on the contemporary United States and the complex relations that link them to both old and new homes.

Stranger through the gates: the development of an intellectual field

The concept of “immigrant transnationalism” came out of Anthropology, an intellectual development consistent both with the discipline’s core orientations and the types of research toward which anthropologists had gravitated. As Nancy Foner (2003) has noted, while American Anthropology long emphasized the study of cultures outside of the United States, that bias had the unintentional effect of directing anthropologists first to the countries that were sending emigrants to the United States, and then, in a second stage, extending the scope of field work to the places toward which the migrants moved.

Statement: Field experience in the Philippines and among immigrants from the Caribbean, areas with long and varied histories of back-and-forth migrations to different parts of the world, characterized the professional background of the three anthropologists, Nina Glick Schiller, Linda Basch, and Cristina Blanc-Szanton, who first launched the concept into the literature. Glick Schiller and her colleagues proposed a new framework for understanding migration, one that they labeled “transnational”. Positioning themselves against the already out-dated view that immigrants were the uprooted, these anthropologists contended that an increasing number of movers, opting neither to return

home nor sever ties, represented a distinctive social type. Now labeled the “transmigrants” these movers “develop and maintain multiple relations – familial, economic, social, organizational, religious, and political that span borders (Glick-Schiller et al, 1992:1) To understand this new phenomenon the researchers proposed a new conceptualization: transnationalism.

Not only was the perspective new; so too was the reality it sought to illuminate. The anthropologists were wise enough to see that what they called “transnationalism” characterized the earlier wave of mass migration, and that social scientists – not just political actors – had been responsible for extinguishing memory of this earlier experience. Still, the argument for a historical break proved irresistible: technological changes facilitated here-there connections; a more inhospitable reception context encouraged the newcomers to keep up their home society ties; and sending states more quickly and more avidly sought to retain and influence the transmigrants, in the process constructing “deterritorialized nation-states”

A volume of conference proceedings, published in 1992, announced the intellectual program; two years later, a book entitled *Nations Unbound* delivered the results. Neither a monograph nor an edited collection, the book was a pastiche, made up of the different projects that the authors had independently conducted and out of which their new theoretical framework had grown. Though the book incorporated insights from Szanton-Blanc’s research on Philipinos, it principally drew from the research that Glick-Schiller and Basch had conducted among immigrant organizations among Haitian and Eastern Caribbean migrants in New York.

Seeking to develop a “transnational analytical framework,” the authors defined transnationalism as “the processes by which immigrants forge and sustain multi-stranded social relations that link together their societies of origin and settlement.” Making “central the agency of transmigrants” *Nations Unbound* saw transnationalism as encompassing the activities of the transmigrants: building kinship networks that extended across two (or more) states; starting businesses that either facilitated or were dependent on cross-state connections; forming organizations oriented toward both receiving and sending states; using their influence to affect sending country policies, whether for reasons connected to self-advancement or political commitments; or pressuring the host society government, to secure policies that would advance sending country goals.

On the other hand, the options available to the transmigrants were circumscribed by the responses taken by the relevant actors located both in sending and receiving states. As the authors wrote, the transmigrants’ “identities and practices are configured by hegemonic categories, such as race and ethnicity, that are deeply embedded in the nation building processes of these nation-state (22).” Highlighting a variety of influences, the authors’ most original contribution was to underline the ways in which sending state actors sought to retain emigrants’ loyalties, and shape their own attachments in ways that would suit the goals of sending state leaders. With these policies, sending state leaders embarked on a new strategy, one that the authors characterized as “deterritorialized nation-state building. (269)” Lying behind the strategy was the claim that the nation-state stretched beyond its geographic boundaries; unlike the earlier diasporas, made up of dispersed peoples lacking a state, in this situation “there is no longer a diaspora because where its people go, their state goes too (269).”

Reception Beginning at the margins of a discipline that until then had been marginal to the study of immigration to America, the idea of “immigrant transnationalism” quickly took off. Since migration is an inherently a transitional process, invariably yielding back and forth moves and exchanges of myriad types, what the anthropologists called “transnationalism” could almost always be found, at least once one knew what to look for. Framing the new perspective against the publicly dominant, but intellectually beleaguered perspective of assimilation lent additional appeal. The twin emphasis on novelty – of both the intellectual perspective *and* the phenomenon – provided the perfect means for launching a new research program, as Ewa Morawska has pointed out:

By setting up immigrants’ transnationalism as a new and exciting idea, sociologists and anthropologists...have reinforced each other’s success strategies, removing from their ‘cognitive sight’ even a suspicion that their novel phenomenon may not be so new at all. (2005: 215)¹

Last, the zeitgeist also helped, as the transnational concept provided immigration scholars with a way of thinking about globalization, of which the mass migrations of peoples and the spillovers they generate may comprise the most visible, if not leading edge. With attention focused on so many other phenomena of a seemingly transnational nature – whether corporations, or human rights activists, or non-governmental organizations – the effort to identify a “migratory counterpart” (Kivisto, 2001: 549) struck an obvious chord.

No less importantly, prominent gatekeepers ushered the newcomer through the door. The formation of a research center on “transnational communities” at Oxford University provided instant respectability, while assembling the type of global network

for which the transnational perspective seemed to call. Still more decisive was the entry of Alejandro Portes, the most influential U.S. immigration scholar and a researcher with a consistent, almost uncanny ability to set trends and whose intervention gave the study of transnationalism prominence it had not possessed before. In a widely read 1997 article, outlining the immigration research agenda for the new century about to begin, Portes put the study of “transnational communities” at the top of the list; here, he argued that the homeland connections maintained by contemporary immigrants, while not unprecedented, possessed qualities that made them distinctive, and therefore demanding of scholarly attention:

...the number of people involved, the nearly instantaneous character of communications across space, and the fact that the cumulative character of the process makes participation ‘normative’ within certain immigrant groups (813)

Refinements Two years later, Portes announced his own program, starting with a critique of the very anthropologists and the other qualitative social scientists who had gotten the field started. In their enthusiasm, he charged, these previous researchers had muddied the waters, finding transnationalism wherever they looked – an easy error to commit, since most immigrants engage in at least *some* cross-border activity, but one that deprived the transnational concept of any specific meaning. Better, he argued was to focus on those aspects of the phenomenon that were at once novel and distinctive: “occupations and activities that require regular and sustained social contacts over time across national borders for their implementation” (Portes, Guarnizo, and Landolt, 1999:219). Conceptually muddled, the earlier work was deficient on methodological grounds as well: Portes charged that the ethnographers had sampled on the dependent

variable, looking exclusively at those immigrants who maintained regular, recurrent homeland connections, at the expense of those who broke off or scaled back, on their ties. Instead, he called for survey research that would establish the prevalence of transnationalism – as *he* defined it – and also identify “the major factors associated with its emergence (Portes et al, 2002).” Results, based on a survey of Colombian, Dominican, and Salvadoran immigrants in the United States, followed soon thereafter. However, the particular question posed by Portes also largely determined the answer that his research would provide: as engaging in regular and sustained cross-border activities entails knowledge, money, and time, not to speak of legal rights, the conclusions – that only a small proportion of immigrant engage in regular cross-border activities and that transnationalism is “...mainly the pursuit of solid, family men [who are] educated, well-connected and firmly established in the host country” and not “the recently arrived and the downwardly mobile” (Portes, 2003: 887) – -- were entirely predictable.

While drawing attention to the topic and giving it new-found legitimacy, this intervention generated controversy among the scholarly transnationalists themselves. The ethnographers shot back. Emphasizing the “importance of ongoing observations...of what people do” as contrasted to “what they say that they do”, Glick Schiller underlined the contextual, situational influences that might lead immigrants to accent host country ties at one time, and home country ties at another (for a similar argument, see Smith, 2006). But methodological quarrels were actually a sideshow to deeper conceptual differences. On the one hand, while Portes and collaborators used surveys to collect information, they were ultimately engaged in case studies, just like the anthropologists whom they criticized. In so far as the surveys were valid, their results shed light on

patterns among migrants from small, peripheral countries in close proximity to the United States – indeed, just like the small, in some cases, tiny island societies on which Basch and Glick Schiller had already shined a bright light. But whether the lessons from these studies could be extrapolated to other populations, migrating under different circumstances – whether the much larger, heavily undocumented migration from Mexico, a country with a very distinctive relationship to the United States or the smaller, but more selective migration from China, a country competing with the U.S. for world influence and the source of a worldwide diaspora -- was a question the surveys could not answer. On the other hand, the anthropologists had always insisted on distinguishing the people they called “the transmigrants” from the rank and file immigrants, which was exactly the same argument that Portes and his collaborators advanced. Indeed, years after initiating the transnational perspective, Glick-Schiller continued to sound the very same note, contending that “distinguishing transmigrants from migrants who have very different experiences of connection and incorporation has proven useful (105);” in her view, only the transmigrants “live their lives across borders, participating simultaneously in social relations that embed them in more than one nation-state” (2003: 105).

Thus conceptually, Portes and Glick Schiller stood on the same side, each emphasizing a kind of hard transnationalism consistent with the concept’s etymological roots – meaning a condition of being beyond the nation. Still, insofar as they conceded that only “some” migrants would find themselves “suspended, in effect, between two countries (Portes and Rumbaut, 2006:131),” both took a relatively cautious stance. In an ironic twist, by defining transnationalism narrowly and focusing on the relatively small group of “transmigrants,” they moved transnationalism to the periphery of the migrant

experience even as they heralded the “transnationals” as a distinct and new class of migrants.

Others took a more breathtaking view. Scholars seeking to create the new research field of “transnational migration studies,” saw the development of communication and travel technology, combined with the spread of economic and political globalization, as creating a social world that is ontologically transnational; from this perspective. In this light, “transnational phenomena and dynamics are the rule rather than the exception, the central tendencies, rather than the outliers (Khagram and Levitt, 2005: 6).”

Not everyone has been willing to go quite so far; depending on the context, the more daring have also been willing to hedge their bets. Thus statements of a softer transnationalist view concede the “significance or durability of national or state borders” (Levitt and Jaworsky, 2007: 134), but portray home and host country ties as mutually compatible (Morawska, 2003). These arguments emphasize the relaxation of the demands for national “belonging,” so that participation in both sending and receiving states is allowed and sometimes even encouraged. Hence, transnationalism’s salient quality can involve “simultaneity,” with “movement and attachment” to home and host countries “rotating back and forth and changing direction over time,” as “persons change or swing one way or the other, depending on the context” (Levitt and Glick Schiller, 2004: 1011). An alternative, rather modest claim contends that migrants and their descendants “...*may* continue to participate in the daily life of the society from which they emigrated but which they did not abandon (Glick Schiller, 1999: 94; emphasis added).”

Since so few migrants seem to adopt a transnational condition of being, many researchers now also prefer to emphasize transnational *practices* instead. Here, the fine lines associated with “transnationalism” get replaced with a continuum, in which the regular, sustained trans-state practices of the transmigrants shade off into something more erratic and less intense (Levitt, 2001b). On the one hand, these cross-border activities can fluctuate, possibly becoming more, possibly less focused on the home society as time goes on. On the other hand, those same practices take a multi-dimensional form – involving economic, social, political, and cultural activities, which may be pursued in multipurpose or specialized form.

Evaluation It is hard not to notice the proliferation of concepts and the unending debate over definitions, both of which suggest that something may be amiss. As indicated by the conceptual jungle that has quickly emerged, the temptation to apply the prefix “trans” to one or another aspect of the migrant phenomenon has proven overwhelming, but without doing much to illuminate the matter at hand. Notwithstanding the burgeoning of scholarship, clear statements of mechanisms are difficult to detect, as noted by Itzigsohn and Saucedo, who could find “no theoretical guidelines... to generate hypotheses about why people participate in transnational practices (2002: 771).” In response, they suggested three possibilities, linear, reactive, and resource dependent transnationalism. The first, depicting the cross-border connection “as simply the continuation” of pre-migration bonds, emphasizes the *geographic* location of key social ties, with territorial boundaries growing in salience if and as those ties shift from home to host society. Reactive transnationalism sees resources as *negatively* associated with cross-border ties: territorial boundaries will be less salient among the less successful and

more frustrated, who will seek economic opportunity and social support in the home country. In contrast, resource dependent transnationalism implies that resources will be *positively* associated with cross-border ties, with territorial boundaries of less salience for political or economic entrepreneurs, who can turn ongoing exchanges between host and home societies into a source of advantage. While plausible, these hypotheses are at best an initial, rough and ready guide, accounting for the motivations that might lead immigrants to sever or sustain cross-border ties. Not well illuminated, however, are the factors that might keep the cross-border connection alive across the generations, so that they might resemble the long-distance bonds that knit together the classical diasporas. Likewise, the literature has yet to provide an account of variations across the different forms of cross-border involvement – whether occurring in political, economic, or cultural spheres, or whether involving concerted action or the everyday, uncoordinated activities of ordinary immigrants.

One notes a somewhat similar absence of clearly stated, substantively significant hypotheses. Since connectivity between sending and receiving societies is at once cause and effect of international migration, discovering the cross-border activities of remittance sending or political involvement that migrations almost always produce is no surprise. Consequently, finding, as do Guarnizo, Portes, and Haller (2003: 1213) that there is “such a thing as a class of political transmigrants—immigrants who become involved in their home country politics on a regular basis” is not a “fundamental question,” as they suggest, but rather the null hypothesis. A better approach is followed by Levitt and Glick-Schiller, who advise researchers to make “the relative importance of nationally restricted and transnational social fields,” a matter of “empirical analysis (2003: 1009).”

Doing so, however, puts the question right back into the traditional “immigration” frame, focusing on the cross-state experiences of the immigrants, the great majority of whom get captured by the new state where they have come to reside.

The emphasis on parsing the “transmigrants” from movers of some other type stands in tension with another oft-sounded theme, the insistence that the concept of a transnational social field provides the best way to conceptualize the connections linking migrants with stay-at-homes. In this view, migrants gain simultaneous incorporation at both ends of the chain, in turn, providing a conduit for a flow of ideas, resources, and people that brings points of destination and settlement together. However, what the literature means by incorporation is residence, something quite different from the dictionary definition, where incorporation is described as the “action of being united into a society or association.”¹ Moreover, rather than analyzing incorporation in the dictionary sense, the scholars take it for granted. Thus, Luis Guarnizo (2001) constructs his study of Colombian, Dominican, and Salvadoran migrants in the United States as an investigation into dual citizenship’s impact on immigrant political participation, not noting that the question is relevant only to the lucky few who have joined the club of the Americans, as opposed to the candidate Americans who have not yet naturalized, not to speak of the undocumented immigrants whose residence on U.S. soil violates the law. Furthermore, the vivid, often compelling ethnographic studies generally point to the asymmetry in power relations between migrants and hometowners, but *not* the simultaneity in incorporation, as they instead show that the relationship between the

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http://dictionary.oed.com/cgi/entry/50114755?query_type=word&queryword=incorporation&first=1&max_to_show=10&single=1&sort_type=alpha: **2.** The action of uniting into a society or association (in intr. sense); = INCORPORATION

migrants and host country dominants is one of exclusion. For example, Peggy Levitt's (2001b) case study of Dominican migrants in Boston and their ongoing ties to their sending village in the Dominican Republic provides extensive detail on the ways in which Dominican political organizations have changed their practices, in order to facilitate participation by migrants. Thanks to their U.S. earned incomes, and the possibility that they could intervene with U.S. politicians to advance Dominican interests, the migrants are a force with which Dominican political leaders must contend. But not so Boston politicians, whom, as Levitt shows, do not pay attention to groups that do not vote – such as her Dominicans – and have every reason not to facilitate the incorporation of newcomers whose loyalties and behavior would be hard to predict. Robert Smith's wonderful ethnography of Mexicans in New York (2006) tells a very similar story. Focusing on migrants from a village in the Mexican state of Puebla, he shows how activists in New York have used their ability to raise money from the emigrants in order to overturn the established leadership in the town they left behind. But if migration has given formerly powerless peasants voice in Mexico, it has yielded no such gains in New York. Though the particular migrants studied by Smith were long-settled and thus enjoyed unusually high levels of naturalization, they were in the United States, but not of it: as Smith explains, their involvement with their place of origins coexisted with “utter disengagement with New York politics.” (2006: 66)

Notwithstanding these shortcomings, the students of immigrant transnationalism deserve a good deal of credit, most importantly, for seeing that connections between “here” and “there,” between place of reception and place of origin, between homes new and old, are an inherent and enduring component of the long-distance migrations of the

modern world. The problem is that the discovery of cross-border connections just begs the question. If international migration is a recurring phenomenon, cross-state social action, whether uncoordinated or concerted, will also re-appear. Moreover, the analysis can't be confined to a so-called "transnational social field" linking movers and stay-behinds in distant and disparate location. That field, itself, is embedded in a broader field, made up of state and civil society actors here and there, who respond, in various ways to the challenges and opportunities generated by the cross-state flows produced by migration. While aware of these interactions – which, indeed, were foregrounded in Basch et al's pioneering *Nations Unbound* – the scholarly transnationalists are too taken with the migrants' cross-border connections to systematically ask about the factors that might weaken, or possibly, end these ties. Nor are they quite ready to take critical distance from the migrants and their claims to belong to or represent a homeland community where they no longer reside, and whose interests and points of view these may no longer share. Consequently, the key questions are those the literature has yet to pose: Do the processes that cut across borders escape the control and of states and their peoples, and if so, for how long and to what extent? Or are cross-state connections mainly circumscribed by state actors and nationalizing forces, with migrant activity and identity increasingly confined to territorial boundaries, whether of receiving or sending states? Which, of the various forces involved in the triangular social field encompassing migrants here and there, are the most influential and where – whether on sending or receiving grounds – are those influences to be found? And do cross-border ties persist from one generation to the next or do they instead fade as the children of the foreigners transfer loyalties to the people in whose state they reside?

An Alternative Perspective: The Importance of Politics and Place

To say international migration is to say cross-border connections: the ties linking sending and receiving countries are a salient aspect of the migration experience, appearing during present as well as past eras of migration. But the linkages that the literature calls transnational are only a surprise to those who believe that nation-states normally contain societies, as implied by the concept of “American society.” The better perspective, however, understands that networks of people, information, and goods *regularly* span the boundaries of the state, which is why international migration is a recurrent phenomenon. Moreover, migration builds other, subsequent bridges across boundaries, since most migrants maintain some connection to the significant others that they have left behind. Thanks to the gap between rich and poor places, migration also lets movers accumulate resources that prove particularly useful at the point of origin, whether as sources of support for the stay-at-homes or as assets that can be invested back home. For a small minority, greater economic resources combine with the new freedoms made possible by emigration to produce continuing engagement with homeland politics, often resulting in greater levels of influence than ever experienced before.

Ironically, these cross-border connections reflect the continuing confinement of economic and political resources to the rich states on which the migrants converge. Precisely because they yield results, migrant grass-roots, spontaneous cross-border efforts trigger responses from the same home states that either expelled the migrants or ignored them, but now find that the nationals living in another state have something to offer.

Over the long term, however, the spillovers initially generated by migration get contained as well, since place and state turn out to matter. Settlement transfers social

relations from home to host societies, reducing the resources that can be sent back across the territorial boundary while orienting the migrants to the conditions and standards of the place where they reside. In adopting local patterns of consumption, behavior, and preferences, migrants and immigrant offspring also become increasingly dissimilar from the stay-at-homes, which is why the benefits to cross-border interactions also decline. The distinctively political nature of international migration speeds these transitions, since as foreigners, migrants cannot move back and forth across state boundaries as they please. Furthermore, since host society citizenship confers standing and rights, while home societies cannot effectively protect their emigrants or solve their problems, immigrants are motivated to gain membership in the society where they actually reside.

The following sections extend this perspective, showing how migration at once generates cross-border ties but also triggers changes that cut off those connections at the water's edge:

Everyday cross-border activity: Migration involves the crossing of a territorial, but not necessarily, a social boundary. Once described as the “uprooted,” migrants are now often described as “the transnationals”. That label almost surely goes too far, but it is certainly true that many, perhaps most, of the migrants remained connected.

For many, though not all migrants, cross-state connections are often part and parcel of the familial survival strategies that propel migration in the first place. That pattern holds best for labor migrants – exemplified by the Italians of the *last* era of mass migration and the Mexicans of the *current* era – among whom movement from poor to wealthy societies is a way to generate resources at the point of destination to be used at the point of origin (Massey et al, 1987; Gabaccia, 2000). Migrations of this sort send one

household member to a place where wages are high, who in turn transmits savings to be spent on consumption and/or investment in a place where the cost of living is low.

Hence, connectivity is part and parcel of the migration experience itself: the things that flow across border -- information, resources, and support -- provide the glue needed to bind family members now separated in space.

This strategy works in the short-run, but proves hard to sustain over the long term. While consumption can be controlled as long as home society norms override host society expectations, maintaining the necessary level of deprivation is difficult. Most importantly, consumption expectations systematically differ between “here” and “there,” which is why, over time exposure to the new pattern generates new wants and needs, disrupting migrants’ ability to maintain the international family economy on which a trans-state way of life depends. The next logical step is to relocate family members so that they are all living in the place where wages are earned; however, that change further upsets the balance between spending and earning, since it also reduces the capacity to either send resources home or squirrel them away for investment at some later point in time (Piore, 1979). Consequently, the fact that economic resources are contained within the rich states both propels but also constrains migrants’ trans-state ties.

Of course, migration of low-skilled laborers, usually of peasant background, is only one variant on the many migration types. High-skilled labor is far more likely to be welcomed as well as wanted; yet these streams often involve a temporary, sometimes circular component, as exemplified by the foreign graduate students enrolled in American universities or the foreign engineers on short-term contract in high technology companies. By definition, refugees and asylum seekers cannot go back, at least not as

long as the homeland conditions that expelled them persist. While for some, the breach is definitive, for others the ties to the places and more importantly, people left behind remain compelling.

While those ties erode with time, for many migrants the interval between the short- and the long-run turns out to be quite extended. Even after settlement, large numbers maintain ongoing connections to the people from they are now separated by borders, sending back remittances, making the occasional trip back home, purchasing ethnic products made in the home country, and communicating with relatives and friends at home. These connections also keep the migrations flowing: information about the opportunities found elsewhere leaks out beyond the initial circle; veteran migrants help newcomers, who, in turn, tend to show up where the previous movers had settled; ongoing contacts – letters, phone calls, return visits – tell the stay at homes that they would do better by moving elsewhere. As long as new arrivals keep coming, the connections get refreshed, with the newcomers' intense interest in keeping up ties to the stay-at-homes making it easier, more convenient, and cheaper for the old-timers to do the same.

Connections produce greater connectedness, swelling the size of the market, creating economies of scale and opportunities for specialists in the provision of here-there connections, lowering the cost and increasing the convenience of maintaining home society's ties. That was the pattern during the era of trans-Atlantic migration, when immigration generated so tremendous an increase in letter-writing that postal systems were forced to respond, introducing changes that transformed delivery of trans-Atlantic mail from an event that was extended, occasional, unpredictable event to one that was

routine. Relatively speaking, time-space compression may have been greater in the last era of migration than in today's; however communication between contemporary migrants and their home-country relatives and friends can be instantaneous, yielding a tremendous flow of telephone traffic between the United States and the countries from which its immigrants come (Horst and Panagakos, 2006). While telephone lines might not extend to some of the small, isolated villages from which some immigrants come, the rapid diffusion of cell phones allows almost everyone, everywhere to be connected. Likewise, tele-communication may not be free, but it is not terribly expensive. Competition within the telecommunications industry constantly drives prices down, with cheap telephone cards to be found in just about every other store in the immigrant neighborhoods of Los Angeles, New York, Miami, and increasingly every other major American city. Access is also growing at the other end: the migrants' friends and relatives may be too poor to own a phone, but they frequently do have enough cash to buy a chip that will give them some minutes of phone time every week or two.

As in the past, people and money are moving back and forth. At Christmas time, airplanes headed for San Salvador or Kingston, Jamaica or Port-au-Prince, Haiti are jam-packed with immigrants, many equipped with U.S. passports, on the way to spend the holidays with relatives still living at home. As with communication, the ethnic tourism of immigrants and those of their relatives lucky enough to enter the U.S. visa is a good business, attracting investors eager to serve this market and help it grow (Programa de la Naciones Unidas para el Desarrollo, 2005). Even more attractive, perhaps, is the business of sending the dollars earned by the immigrants in the United States, back to the countries from which they have come (Ratha, 2005; United Nations Development

Program, 2009)). The flow of remittances has burgeoned to impressive proportions. With so much money leaving a rich country, and gravitating toward a wide variety of poor countries, there is no shortage of actors seeking to facilitate what the immigrants will do on their own. Remittances are now a topic of top priority for the World Bank, the International Monetary Fund, the American Development Bank, to name just a few. For the private sector, the remittance business is an opportunity to be exploited, which is why large American banks are taking over Mexican chains, Central American banks are opening branches in Los Angeles' immigrant neighborhoods, and all of the banks, whether U.S. or foreign-owned, are opening their doors for undocumented immigrants.

On the other hand, not everyone can move from "host" to "home" country and back with equal ease. Travel remains costly, which is why it is occasional and of limited duration. More importantly, the potential to maintain in-person contacts to the home country is impeded by the U.S.'s ever more vigorous efforts at controlling migratory movements, putting up barriers at the territorial frontier, and creating blockages for those migrants who have made it into the United States but have not yet managed to become official members of the American people. While legally authorized immigrants and naturalized citizens can move back and forth across the border at will, the very process of gaining membership in the new country yields detachment from the place and people left behind (Waldinger 2008).

For these reasons, international migration inevitably yields cross-border connections, though in a complex, multi-dimensional way, as illustrated by the data on Mexican immigrants in the United States, shown in Table 1. Responses provided by a nationally representative sample queried as part of the 2006 Latino National Survey

indicate that remittance-sending, communication, and travel are routine, large-scale activities.² The great majority (82 percent) reports frequent contact with friends and family in Mexico. Almost a third report having traveled during the prior year, an impressively high proportion, considering the group's relatively low socio-economic position, the costs entailed in traveling, and the impediments imposed by the undocumented status shared by many. However, a third report never having traveled back to Mexico after having migrated to the United States. Responses to a question about remitting fall out in similar fashion, with almost 40 percent sending money home once a month or more, but a third never sending remittances at all. The great majority of immigrants remain engaged in one form of cross-border activity or another and relatively few appear to have dropped out of an ongoing connection altogether. On the other hand, the proportion engaged in cross-border activities of higher intensity, as often suggested by the notion that "transmigrants" may "live lives across borders", appears to be relatively small as well. More importantly, perhaps, pervasive connectivity does not preclude settlement: only a minority of the immigrants reported having plans to return to Mexico for good.

Table 1 about here

Homeland politics Just as they motivate and constrain migrant routine trans-state activities, borders separating sending and receiving states are protective, insulating migrants from the pressures of the home state, and providing them with political resources not previously available. As Aristide Zolberg (2000) has pointed out,

migration involves a shift in political jurisdiction: transplanting people into distinct, separate political environments, migrations recurrently give rise to social movements, built in the receiving society, but designed to effect change back home. As just noted, the many exchanges linking places of origin and destination – whether involving remittance-sending, communication, travel, or the institutions that support these activities – effectively knit “here” and “there” together, thus facilitating and motivating continued involvement with home country politics, while diminishing its costs. Moreover, presence on the soil of a democratic society entails at least some rights, even if those rights are contested and variable. Because the migrants’ cause can be framed in terms that resonate broadly – whether appealing to beliefs in human rights or self-determination – they find domestic allies, whose intervention helps secure the space for autonomous social action. Likewise, because social boundaries are relatively diffuse, migrants inevitably develop close social ties to citizens, generating another set of allies whose political entitlements are without question.

Over the long-term, the material and the political combine. The same logic that propels a transnational family economy supports the trans-state projects pursued by political activists: because they collect funds in countries where wages are high in order to support political mobilization in countries where costs are low, small contributions from low-wage migrant workers are enough to give exile activists the resources they need to make a difference back home. Moreover, even among the most disadvantaged migrants, not all the migrants stay at the bottom; many instead experience upward movement, with some of the more successful migrants putting their means, as well as their contacts, at the disposal of the trans-state activists. That the migrants mobilize in a

more powerful country, with a capacity for acting in ways that could help or harm home country regimes, also adds to their impact. While state-seeking or regime changing exiles may be blocked from exercising direct influence at home, their host society location – as well as host society allies – gives them the option of connecting to host society policy makers whose views home society actors are less likely to ignore.

On the other hand, displacement to the territory of a different state, representing a new people, yields impacts that work in the opposite direction. Though expatriate voting is actually more common than non-resident voting by immigrants (Baubock, 2005), and political parties often maintain foreign branches in which emigrants can participate, the electoral infrastructure constructed on the other side is always far more rudimentary than that found in the sending state. Relative to the hostland, where one can participate on-site and non-citizens have numerous options for civic engagement (Leal, 2002), homeland political involvement entails greater effort and therefore higher opportunity costs.

Moreover, migrant long-distance patriotism collides with host society expectations. Although the sociological dictionary defines “assimilation” as the decline of an ethnic difference, the very same process transforms foreigners into nationals. Since, as Alba and Nee point out (2003: 145-53), acceptance is contingent on a transfer of loyalties from home to host state, with allowance provided for residual ethnic attachments, immigrants to the United States respond accordingly. Their adoption of a U.S. national identity is facilitated by the country’s pluralistic political cultures, where demands for exclusivity are modest and immigrants can attach a hyphenated, cultural modifier (of Mexican-, Chinese- Italian-, etc) to the newly acquired national identity of American.

Consequently, the bounded nature of the new environment yields two, contradictory effects. On the one hand, it deactivates the migrant rank and file, though the extent of that effect varies with the circumstances of migration and the degree to which a politicized identity was imparted prior to or during migration. Refugee movement, which are impelled by politics, are more likely to breed a more lasting political disposition, and all the more so, when the émigrés (or at least a substantial portion among them) are of elite origin, arriving with political skills and other forms of cultural and social capital that can be put to political ends. By contrast, the typical labor migration, involving displaced agrarians, with strong local, but weak national, identities and little involvement in national political structures, tends toward disengagement, as evidenced by the earlier experience of Italians (Gabaccia, 2000) and the century-long experience of Mexicans (Gonzalez Gutierrez, 1999).

Indeed, survey data on Mexican immigrants in the United States – who comprise a tenth of all persons born in Mexico and a quarter of the U.S.'s foreign-born population - highlight the limits of rank and file home country involvement. As emigration from Mexico has been mainly impelled by economic, not political, considerations, pre-migration political engagement is a minority experience. Thus, the National Latino Survey shows that a majority of immigrants (62 percent) did *not* vote in Mexico, prior to emigrating to the United States; an even larger proportion had no pre-migration involvement in a social or political organization. That political involvement *before* migration was low does not necessarily imply disengagement *after* migration. Thus, the great majority think that it is appropriate for immigrants to vote in Mexican elections. Likewise, a nationally representative survey of Mexican immigrants taken by the Pew

Hispanic Center in 2006 found that only a minority agreed with the statement that “I am in the U.S. and elections in Mexico are not important to me anymore.” However, engagement is far from intense. Almost two-thirds of the Mexican immigrants queried by the same Pew survey agreed with the statement “I am insufficiently informed about Mexican politics to vote.” Roughly the same proportion, queried in a separate nationally representative Pew survey also conducted in 2006, reported that they were more concerned about politics in the U.S. than in Mexico. Similarly, when asked by the Latino National Survey about the level of attention paid to Mexican politics, almost 60 percent said “little or none.” In a pattern entirely consistent with these responses, only 4 percent of immigrants queried by the Latino National Survey reported belonging to a hometown or civic association, even though the great majority engage in some form of regular, cross-border connection with relatives or friends in Mexico.

Table 2 about here

On the other hand, almost all migrations include at least some persons who remained impelled by homeland matters. Even though the rank-and-file may disengage, migration generates resources and provides protection for the minority of homeland activists, furnishing them with significant leverage. Moreover, the hard core is rarely alone, as there is often a large constituency that resonates to the homeland call, at least occasionally. In general, social identities change more slowly than social connections: even if no longer sending remittances or making periodic trips home, many immigrants retain an emotional attachment to their country of origin. Consequently, symbolic,

homeland-oriented ethnicity persists, providing a base for homeland activists to mobilize (or manipulate). The political structure and culture of the United States facilitates and encourages homeland oriented activism, motivating ethnic lobbying. Furthermore, a long history of rallying around homeland causes has made homeland oriented activism a fully acceptable, almost normative path, of Americanization. The denominator also matters: where the numbers are huge, as with Mexican immigrants in the United States, any cause that engages the energies of one, two, or three percent of all migrants can impel significant numbers into action. Hence, homeland politics is a salient aspect of the contemporary immigrant scene, one which home state leaders ignore only at their peril.

Home state responses Given the many forms of migrants' involvements with their home communities – not to speak of the resources that they mobilize – sending states are powerfully motivated to respond, doing so in ways that both retain the emigrants' loyalties and shape their attachments so as best to meet home state leaders' goals. Emigration nations may not quite be unbound – contrary to the claims of Linda Basch and her colleagues in their pathbreaking book (1994) – but these anthropologists were certainly right in concluding that many states follow where “their” people go, doing what they can to sustain national loyalties in a deterritorialized setting. The portfolio of relevant policies is now vast; “diaspora engagement,” to borrow the term coined by the geographer Alan Gamlen (2008), runs the gamut, from monitoring the emigrants, to activating their national solidarity, to furnishing them with services, to providing them with incentives to keep on transmitting resources across borders, and possibly even giving them the right to vote from abroad.

Though a growing activity, the scope of diaspora engagement runs up against a fundamental constraint: having moved across borders, migrants have largely escaped the power of sending states, which are no longer able to use coercion to achieve the usual goals of extracting resources or ensuring political compliance. Moreover, migration often inverts the power relationship, with the previously poor, sometimes previously persecuted, often previously ignored migrants now possessing resources that emigration states can only dismiss at their peril. While common, the rhetoric of diaspora cultivation is cheap. Scholarly enthusiasts, for example, have repeatedly broadcast the decision, by former Haitian President Jean-Baptiste Aristide, to declare the Haitians living abroad as comprising the country's "tenth department." However, taking heed of what the migrants want costs money, which is why sending state claims to represent the diaspora – especially when made by states that can't keep their citizens from fleeing -- should be treated with a highly skeptical eye. As noted by Carlos Gonzalez Gutierrez, a key architect of Mexico's program of diaspora engagement, attending to the needs of a population that "has decided to leave the country and settle permanently in the United States" adds to the obligations of states "with so few resources and so many domestic problems (1993: 225)." Moreover, that task entails raising funds from taxpayers whose wages are low, to be spent on people living where costs are high – exactly the opposite of the strategy pursued by the migrants, who use the higher wages earned in a wealthy country in order to help out significant others or political allies in a poorer country where costs are low.

Still, states *can* exercise influence, in part because *residence* in a richer, freer contrary does not automatically yield *membership*; instead, it often creates practical

problems for the migrants, which states can help resolve. While no longer able to exercise compulsion, providing assistance to extra-territorial nationals is also a right, recognized by international law, and one defended by the same *receiving* states, which may reject the migrants, but want to maintain reciprocal rights. As migration is a transitional process – with the migrants uncertain as to whether they will stay or return and many still nurturing an emotional attachment to the country where they were born – policies that offer the migrants *recognition* as legitimate, if displaced, members of the nation can also prove of significant appeal.

If sending states have cards to play in the negotiations with the migrants, they still have to manage another, possibly more difficult problem: namely, the resistance of receiving states and their peoples, both to the intrusion of foreign states and to the visible manifestation of the migrants' foreign attachments. Today's migrants do benefit from the shift from the melting pot to multiculturalism, which provides greater allowance for the retention and even the public expression of home country loyalties. If tolerating, and sometimes accepting, homeland loyalties, receiving country publics generally expect that the claims of the immigrants' place of residence will come first. Consequently, just how to manage the competing claims of new and old lands has been a persistent dilemma, both for homeland-oriented migrant activists and for sending states seeking to connect with "their" peoples. And while those connections do enjoy some protections from international law, just how far consular officials can go in engaging with emigrants is a matter filled with ambiguity.

The case of expatriate voting exemplifies these dilemmas. High among the claims made by migrant activists, but often resisted by sending states is the right to vote abroad,

a pattern that is actually more common than its converse – voting by non-citizen immigrants living in receiving states – and one that appears to be on the rise (Bauböck, 2005). Indeed, electoral systems increasingly allow for expatriate voting, worldwide: according to a 2007 report from the Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance, for example, over 100 countries permit some form of expatriate voting, in some cases for the President only, but in other cases for a wider set of electoral offices (IDEA, 2007) .

Normatively, expatriate voting is the converse of the political challenge with which migration confronts democratic receiving states, namely the growing gap between the state's demography and its democracy, limited to those eligible for voting rights. While democratic theory is unambiguous in spelling out what democratic immigration states must do – namely, include all long-term residents subject to the state's laws – expatriate voting is a thornier case. After all, expatriates are asking for something that non-citizen, resident voters don't seek, namely the ability to affect decisions, the consequences of which they are largely exempt. Moreover, the very argument made for expanding receiving state membership to encompass foreign residents – that the polity should include everyone subject to its laws (Walzer, 1983) – provides the grounds for rejecting the voting rights of persons who no longer live in their home state and have therefore escaped its reach (Lopez-Guerra, 2005; Rubio-Marin, 2006). Even though political theorists agree that democratic states *must* include long-term foreign residents in the polity, whereas expatriate voting is at best *permissible*, migrants appear to have had more success as *emigrants* seeking voting rights from sending states than as *immigrants* seeking voting rights from those democratic states where they actually live (see Bauböck, 2005) – an irony that would seem to reflect the very different power relationship

characterizing the migrants, on the one hand, and sending versus receiving states on the other.

Not noted by the many academic proponents of expatriate voting is the fact that it entails redistribution, reallocating resources from the more deprived stay-at-homes to the more prosperous migrants, who also enjoy the good fortune of living in a more secure society, where public and private goods are more likely to abound. The extraterritorial nature of expatriate voting entails real, non-trivial costs. As noted by the International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance, in its *Handbook on Voting from Abroad*, “External voting processes involve logistical arrangements that often cost more per voter than elections organized in the home country (2007: 262).” Mexico’s initial experiment in expatriate voting in its 2006 Presidential election led to an expenditure of \$27.7 million (Navarro and Carrillo, 2007), amounting to just under \$1200 per expatriate vote cast. As pointed out by Marcelli and Cornelius, these costs, and the related logistical difficulties will surely “increase as the Mexican migrant population becomes increasingly geographically dispersed within the United States, (2005:432).”

Similarly, the fact that expatriate voting unfolds on the territory of a different, sovereign state generates a series of problems, all of which are difficult to resolve, some of which may undermine the democratic process at home: how to guarantee universal, equal, and secret suffrage; how to regulate party competition; and how to prevent offences against electoral law. Similarly, sending states cannot provide external voters with the same security available on their own territory nor furnish a mechanism for resolving disputes should extraterritorial votes or campaign practices be contested (Nohlen and Grotz, 2000; 2008). Each of the various practical options also entails its

own set of trade-offs. Postal voting can result in the lowest costs and yield the greatest coverage, but also involves the greater security risks. Greater security can be achieved by voting in consulates or in special election booths, but at significant financial cost and to the detriment of voters living in areas of lower immigrant density.

Although migrant elites clamor for the expatriate vote, the masses do seem uninterested. For example, a Mexican survey of immigrants in transit across the U.S.-Mexico, found that the respondents reported considerable interest in expatriate voting, but little inclination to invest effort or time in voting, let alone traveling to an out-of-town consulate in order to cast a vote (Valle, 2005). Responses like these are entirely consistent with a broad range of experiences, whether coming from long-established systems of expatriate voting, like France's or Sweden's, or the newer systems, such as those that have sprouted elsewhere in Latin America (IDEA, 2007; Navarro, 2007). The pattern holds even when the expatriate electoral system is relatively friendly – as demonstrated by the case of the 2004 election for President of the Dominican Republic, when migrants account for less than 1 percent of the vote (Itzigsohn and Villacres, 2008: 672; see also Jones-Correa, 1998: 125-6).

The migrant rank and file lacks interest because the decisive vote is generally the one that they previously made with their feet. While that vote neither severs homeland connections nor ends homeland loyalties, it does produce distance from the home state. The challenges of conducting an election across borders only widen that distance, as expatriate voting systems simply cannot reproduce the electoral infrastructure found on home grounds. Moreover, the demands of life in a new land tend to re-orient concerns, diminishing interest in homeland matters, which also receive reduced attention in the

new, foreign environment. By contrast, expatriate voting, its feel-good quality notwithstanding, cannot do much for the migrants in the here and now. In the end, the political disruption produced by international migration is too much to sustain an extraterritorial electorate, which is why immigrants find themselves caged – possibly connected to kin and friends left behind, but having little interest and seeing little need in the home country vote.

The longue duree: If cross-state ties are an integral part of the migrant phenomenon, what happens to those attachments as a new generation, raised and/or born in the country of destination, replaces the migrants? Will home country connections persist, as did the long-distance bonds that knit together the classical diasporas? Or will they instead fade, to be replaced by activities and attachments oriented toward the society of destination?

As evidenced by the essays collected in Levitt and Waters' pioneering collection, *The Changing Face of Home: Transnational Lives of the Second Generation* (2003), home-country connections do persist among contemporary second generation Americans. However, regular home country involvements engage a relatively small portion of today's immigrant offspring, for whom the "here-there" tie is at best of modest salience.

Robert Smith's (2006) ethnography of Mexican immigrant and immigrant offspring in New York and their ties to their hometown, offers evidence of strategic importance, as the subjects of his study came from an area where the survival of a religious cargo system made for higher than average levels of cohesion. On the one hand, Smith demonstrates the continuing ties linking the immigrant offspring born or raised in New York to their parents' home town, Ticuani. The children of the well-

established, and hence, legal immigrants whom Smith studied could return to Ticuani frequently and they did. Not only was the encounter with the hometown common and recurrent, it had emotional resonance, providing returning children and adolescents with a safety and freedom that their crime-ridden Brooklyn neighborhoods lacked, while fortifying family ties.

On the other hand, the hometown attachment proved difficult to maintain. As Smith tells the story, life cycle factors got in the way. While some adolescents and young adults formed a youth group, raising money for public works in the hometown, the group eventually faltered. Relationships with the established immigrant leaders proved problematic; preferring to operate in a more gender egalitarian fashion, the immigrant offspring also found the first generation's *macho* style disturbing. Most importantly:

The group also fell victim to life-course changes as its members grew older and became weighed down by adult responsibilities. It was formed when most of its members were just in or just out of college, in their late teens to mid-twenties. Most have since married and had children; a number have jobs with inflexible hours and demanding time commitments. These changes have focused their lives more on marriage, raising children, and working in New York (2006: 193).

Thus, in contrast to the transnationalist view of migrants "living lives across borders," place turns out to matter, constraining mobility, but also creating tensions that aligned with other first/second generation divides. Return trips are far from idyllic, as place also generates fissures dividing the second generation New Yorkers from their contemporaries in *Ticuani*. The latter are "often quite poor...and their dress clearly identifies their local origins and their poverty." By contrast, the former possess what the

stay-at-homes lack: “designer sneakers, fashionable clothes, and gold chains, present[ing] an image of modernity and power (247)”, not to speak of something of which many of the stay-at-homes can only dream, namely “the power to leave Ticuani to go north (248)” whenever they wanted. Not surprisingly, returning second generation youth have to “negotiate[e] their Mexicanness with Ticuani natives who call them ‘tourists’” (247) and find that “their standing in Ticuani is contested” (262).

Work conducted at a large canvas sounds similar themes. *Inheriting the City*, a study of second generation New Yorkers based on a large-scale survey, in-depth interviews, and ethnographic studies, provides ample evidence of ongoing cross-border ties, at least to some extent. With but one exception, a majority in each of the five groups studied had made at least one return trip to the country of origin; among several groups, a sizeable minority had made four or more such trips; among two of the groups, close to one fifth sent home remittances. On the other hand, “strong ties to their parents’ country are the exception, not the rule (Kasinitz, et. al: 2008: 262).” For most respondents, “the United States was indisputably home (2008:262);” though common, return travel had the paradoxical effects of heightening identification with the United States, precisely because the young people found their parents’ home country to be foreign and strange. Along with Americanization came a relationally-framed, national identity, linked to the place of birth or socialization, and accompanied by corresponding distinctions between “us” and “them:”

The distinctions that members of the second generation make *when describing themselves* also tacitly concede the power of the American environment. Chinese young people are quick to differentiate between the “ABCs” (American-Born

Chinese), the “ARCs” (American-raised Chinese), and the much-maligned “FOBS” (Fresh Off the Boat), Koreans speak of the first, second, and “one-and-a-half” generations, which attests to the profound sense of “in-between-ness” of “those born there and raised here.” Dominicans distinguish between the young people raised on the island and the “Dominicanyorks”...(Kasinitz, et al, 2004: 6-7; emphasis added).

Similarly, childhood and youth spent in the United States also eroded the fundamental tool needed to sustain ongoing cross-border contacts, namely, proficiency in the home country language. Regardless of the group, only a minority expressed a *preference* for speaking the home country language; often, “younger siblings, born and raised in the United States, could only speak English;” though Spanish persisted at far higher rates than either Chinese or Russian, use of English had become near universal.

In the end, while *some* home country connection is a common aspect of the second generation experience, what the scholars call transnationalism does not appear to be a lasting alternative to host country involvement; rather, social relations and social identities come to converge with the territory in which today’s second generation resides. The results should not be surprising: “living lives across borders” may be a beautiful ideal appealing to cosmopolitan intellectuals, but it is far from the easiest of options. First, second, and later generations all find that the cross-border engagements entailed in travel and sending remittances tax scarce material resources. More importantly, cross-border ties draw on human resources that get eroded by the everyday accommodations to life in a distinct, national society, with particularly strong effects among the immigrants’ offspring. Place also matters, transforming the second generation into nationals,

possessing preferences, tastes, and loyalties that make them different from their contemporaries still residing in the country of origin. Some residual, especially symbolic, attachment to a place of origin does persist among many; given ongoing social connections to the home country, it seems reasonable to expect that a small minority of immigrant offspring may emerge as influential home country advocates, an outcome facilitated and legitimated by historical precedent and political tradition. For most of the children of today's immigrants, however, tomorrow will not bring transnationalism. Theirs, rather, will be a future of foreign detachment.

Conclusion

As the 20th century faded into history, the view that nation-state and society normally converge also waned. Instead, "globalization" became the order of the day, with international migration bringing the alien "other" from developing to developed world, and trade and communications amplifying and accelerating the feedbacks traveling in the opposite direction. Consequently, social scientists have been looking for new ways to think about the connections between "here" and "there," as evidenced by the interest in the many things called "transnational". The excitement is particularly great among those studying international migration, for whom the transnational perspective has provided an indispensable tool for thinking about the linkages tying together sending and receiving places.

In their enthusiasm for the possibility that migrants might be living lives across borders, however, the scholars have gone too far. While the ongoing advent of new arrivals keeps here-there connections refreshed, time takes its toll, as relevant social ties and loyalties get transplanted from old to new homes. As a rule, the many cross-border

activities and exchanges do *not* cluster together. While many immigrants maintain *some* degree of connection to the country left behind, transnationalism is a rare condition of being and transmigrants an uncommon class of persons. The scholars have also ignored the ways in which contemporary nation-states (especially the most powerful among them) circumscribe the immigrants' social connections while transforming their identities. Though for some period of time, the immigrants find themselves in-between here and there, over the long term ties get cut at the water's edge, as core social networks shift from old to new homes and the immigrants engage where they have settled. Consequently, even as sending states rush to cultivate the emigrants' loyalty and engage with those whom they perceive as the "diaspora," they have little to offer and hence connect with relatively few. Moreover, the immigrants and especially, their offspring, get transformed into Americans, willy-nilly picking up the everyday habits and tools that help them fit into the new environment and acquiring experiences that make them increasingly different from the stay-behinds.

While the transnational perspective fails to deliver on its promise, it has nonetheless performed a useful scholarly function. After all, the activities linking immigrants to their countries of birth -- the sending of remittances; travel; communication; political activity; business investment; philanthropy -- appear wherever and whenever international migrants are found. By attending to these cross-state connections, which international migrations *invariably* produce, the transnational perspective has moved scholarship beyond the largely unconscious, implicit nationalism of established approaches, highlighting important aspects of the migrant phenomenon that prior research had largely ignored.

The incidence of immigrants' cross-border activities is therefore beyond debate. Yet, that is but the first step toward an empirical research agenda. As I have tried to show in this essay, unpacking the different dimensions of the phenomenon -- for example, everyday connectivity from concerted, political action across borders -- is the next stage. Though political engagement is far more selective than remittance-sending or communication, questions remain regarding the prevalence, persistence, and variation by gender, social class, place of origin, type of migration of each form of cross-border involvement. Likewise, long-distance migrant politics is not of one type: the activities of the smaller (but not insignificant) number of transnational or diaspora activists take a variety of forms -- state-seeking, regime-changing, philanthropic, ethnic lobbying -- which have yet to be fully compared. Similarly, there is much to be learned about home country spillovers. Although sending state responses is a topic of growing interest, comparative studies are few and far between; we also know too little about the ways in which connections to migrants affect the behavior and attitudes of their significant others, still living at home.

In the end, scholarship in this field needs to understand the factors that both promote *and* supplant cross-border involvements. That goal requires a departure, both from the views of the globalists who see immigrants living in two worlds as well as those of unselfconscious nationalists, who stand with their backs at the borders. A better perspective emphasizes the collision between the processes that recurrently produce international migrations, extending social and political ties across states, and those that cut those linkages at the water's edge, transforming immigrants into nationals and shifting their preoccupations and social connections from home to host states. Applying

that optic, we can then understand why the immigrants are so often in-between here and there, keeping touch with and trying to remain true to the people and places that they have left behind, while simultaneously shifting loyalties and allegiances to the place where they actually live.

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Table 1: Cross-border connectivity: Mexican immigrants in the U.S.

Contact with friends and family in Mexico	
once a month or more	82%
never	8%
Visits Mexico	
once a year or more	32%
never	34%
Sends money to Mexico	
once a month or more	39%
never	34%
Intensity of cross-border connection:	
monthly contact; monthly remitting; travel home within past year	
none	11%
some	78%
all three	11%
Plans to go back to Mexico to live permanently	
yes	10%

Source: Latino National Survey, 2006; N=3,482; responses weighted.

Table 2: Cross-border social collectivity: Mexican immigrants in the U.S.

Voted before migrating to US?	
no	62%
Active in social or political organization prior to migration	
somewhat or very	9%
no activity or membership	84%
Appropriate for migrants to vote in home country elections	
disagree, somewhat or strongly	19%
agree, somewhat or strongly	57%
More concerned about government and politics in Mexico or US?*	
Mexico	10%
US	62%
"I am in the US and elections in Mexico are not important to me anymore"***	
agree, somewhat or strongly	28%
disagree, somewhat or strongly	68%
"I am insufficiently informed about Mexican politics to vote"***	
agree, somewhat or strongly	63%
disagree, somewhat or strongly	31%
Pays attention to Mexican politics	
some or a lot	37%
little or none	59%
Belongs to a hometown or civic association	
Yes	4%

Sources: Latino National Survey, 2006; N=3,482; responses weighted; * = Pew Hispanic Center 2006 National Survey of Latinos, N=513 (Mexican born respondents only; responses weighted); ** = 2006 Pew Hispanic Center Survey of “Mexicans Living in the U.S. on Absentee Voting in Mexican Elections,” N=925, responses weighted.

¹ The scholarly debate has indeed moved far from the formulation taken by the initial “transnational perspective” on migration, which asserted that the home country connections of contemporary international migrants took an unprecedented form. Concerns generated by research on the international migrations of the contemporary era directed historians to patterns of which they had been aware, but perhaps not fully attentive. The social scientists have agreed that connections between here and there were indeed seen before – though most still insist that there is something distinctive about the host/home linkages of today. More importantly, there is a steady stream of publications seeking to make systematic past/present comparisons. For further discussion, see Foner, 2000; Morawska, 2001; Waldinger, 2008a

² Unfortunately, the Latino National Survey did not ask about legal status, making it impossible to distinguish patterns among naturalization citizens, legal residents, and unauthorized immigrants.