

TRAJECTORIES OF TRANSNATIONALISM AND RETURN

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The limits of transnationalism: failed returns to Poland as motivations for permanent settlement abroad

It has become a commonplace that 21st century EU migrants maintain transnational lifestyles, keeping in close touch with their countries of origin. Transnational links in turn promote flexible migration strategies: migrants come and go, not always being sure how long they will stay in sending or receiving country/ies; when they will stop migrating; or where they will eventually settle. In this context of potentially endless transmigration, 'return' – with its connotations of finality – might seem an outdated concept.

However, the novelty of 'New Migration' is by no means clearly established. My own research among Poles in Poland and the UK suggests that not all Poles are 'settled in mobility' (Morokvasic 2004); that some forms of transnationalism/translocalism are a luxury not available to all; and that 'return' in its old-fashioned sense remains a meaningful concept. Families with school-age children seem to be settling in the UK, in part because it is complicated and expensive for them to maintain transnational lifestyles; indeed, return visits to Poland may put them off the prospect of permanent return. Migrants with small children or no dependants often come to the decision to settle in the UK in a different manner: having more freedom of manoeuvre, they experiment with return to Poland, but it is this experience which convinces them to settle abroad.

My paper explores the process of migrant decision-making, especially (a) the extent to which returnees attribute their re-integration problems specifically to aspects of contemporary Poland (the labour market) rather than those encountered by returnees to all countries across the ages; (b) how and why they arrive at the decision that migration should stop; and (c) whether this implies a reduced role for transnationalism in their future lives: some people loosen their ties to Poland, seeing identity change as a zero-sum game, while others embrace the idea of dual/hybrid identities and maintain a translocal lifestyle even though 'home' is now more clearly in the UK.

Dennis Conway

Indiana University, USA

How transnationalism affects Trinidadian return migrants' preparedness and re-integration adjustments when 'back home'

In this paper we are interested in examining the affectiveness, (and ineffectiveness for some) of return migrants' transnational experiences and practices such as prior repetitive visiting and frequent IT communication, in helping build, or not helping at all, corporeal- and remote- shared experiences of 'preparedness' and re-integration 'back home' in Trinidad and Tobago. We seek to learn more about how influential are return migrants' transnational, multi-local social networks of family and friends both overseas and back home in the re-integration adjustment process.

In our qualitative assessment, we rely upon respondent's narratives and the perspectives they elucidate on their transnational lives both 'over there' and 'here' (now that they have returned). The detailed narratives provided by 40 interviewees were collected during semi-structured interviews conducted in 2004 and 2005. We used a snowball sampling technique to identify these hard-to-find 'returning nationals', or 'citizens by descent'. We classified the sample according to their return migration pedigree; there being nine second-generation, seven 1.5- generation and twenty-four "prolonged sojourner" returning Trinidadian transnational migrants in our sampled cohort. As classified by their educational attainment and their current occupations, the majority of our informants are middle class transnational elites, most are in mid-career, mid-family formation and in their 30s and 40s when they returned.

Although we have undertaken one examination of the topic of 'repetitive visiting as a pre-return strategy' (Conway et al 2009), many unanswered questions remain concerning the return visit-return migration nexus, as Duval (2004,2005) has pointed out. One goal of this paper, therefore, is to specifically revisit this

particular question and shed further light on its vagaries. Might there be qualitative differences in the nature of return visits that make a difference in helping re-integration adjustments? For example, are return visits to fulfill family obligations more important influences on the actual, eventual return than visits to celebrate and participate in Carnival festivities, winter-holiday visits (as Trini-Canadian, Trini-American “snow-birds”) to “lime” on Tobago’s beaches, enjoy Christmas parties, and “play tourist”? Are return visits made explicitly to familiarize potential returnees with the changes that have taken place since they left, or since their last visit, so that such visits are deliberate fact-finding and cultural adjustment missions for foreign spouses and children born abroad? Are return visits made explicitly to evaluate the job market ‘back home’ so that a return migration can be made with much more confidence so that suitable employment will be found? Or, do returnees depend upon family and friendship networks back in Trinidad and Tobago and non-visiting means—such as the phone, email, the internet and Skype—to acquire the important knowledge they need to secure gainful employment on their return?

Giulia Sinatti

International Institute of Social Studies of Erasmus University Rotterdam, The Netherlands

Return migration or transnational movement? Insight into the differing understandings of return and transnationalism of migrants and policy actors in Senegal.

This paper explores the topic of return migration as it is understood and practiced by different sets of actors who are all engaging with this theme, albeit from different perspectives. In policy debates, return is increasingly paraded as a win-win-win scenario that brings advantages to receiving states, sending states and migrants themselves. Advancements in scholarly work on return migration, however, have highlighted that ‘return’ and ‘transnational movement’ are in many instances combined. The difficulties in tracing a clear line of demarcation between these two terms are nonetheless largely ignored in policy discourse. The case of Senegal is used to exemplify how migrants, the sending state and receiving countries understand return migration and the benefits that might derive from it. The article reveals that assumptions underlying the interpretations of each of these actors rely on very different conceptions of return is and how it relates to transnational movement.

Productive investment in the homeland is an explicit priority of the Senegalese government that has created institutions and developed policies to reach out to its diaspora and attract the return of its resources and skills, whilst encouraging continuous transnational movement. Return to Senegal is also an increasing expectation of European policymakers, who see it as a means of containing migrant presence in Europe through the definitive removal of unwanted immigrants. Return is a widespread aspiration also among Senegalese migrants, who dream of returning to the homeland as marking the end of their transnational migration practices. Although all attributing an important role to return and transnational movement, at a closer look the convergence of outlooks between these actors is only apparent.

Inspired by the discursive paradigm in political studies, this paper applies interpretive tools to examine the structures that support and give meaning to understandings of ‘return’ and ‘transnational movement’ on behalf of these different actors and how these understandings, in turn, might shape actors’ behaviours. This allows to highlight similarities and differences in the understandings of return and transnational movement held by policymakers vis-à-vis the practices of Senegalese migrants, therefore uncovering the different viewpoints from which various actors engage with these forms of migrant movement and immobility.

Marie-Laurence Flahaux

Université catholique de Louvain & INED, France and Belgium

Is return central in the migration projects and trajectories of Senegalese and Congolese migrants?

African migration is often seen as permanent in European public discourses. Political decision-makers tend to think that African migrants intend to settle permanently and that they want to bring their whole family as soon as possible to destination. However, as King (2000) highlights, in origin countries, the intention to return is often present in the minds of migrants at the time of their departure abroad.

Neoclassical and NELM theories conceive of international migration from initial intentions of migrants. The first does not consider an intention to return at the time of departure and regards migration as

definitive, while the second predicts a return when the migrant will have reached his goal (Cassarino 2004). However, if the motive for migration is essential for understanding the migratory project, intention may evolve during the migration (de Haas & Fokkema 2011). According to the transnationalist approach, migrants maintain links with their origin country. According to the location of their family, these links may vary and have an effect on the decision to return (Constant & Massey 2002 ; Massey et al. 1987). They also may weaken in time, which may cancel the return project (DaVanzo 1983). During the migration, economic, administrative and familial opportunities and obstacles may arise and modify the aspirations of migrants (Jefferu & Murison 2011). Moreover, the evolution of the situation in the origin country as well as the international migratory context may play a role in the choice of return (Carling 2004 ; Reyes 2004).

The objective of this paper is to study the determinants of the migratory projects of Congolese and Senegalese migrants at the time of their arrival in a Western country and the determinants of their eventual return. More precisely, I intend to examine to what extent the situation in the origin countries, migration circumstances, links kept with the origin country, and restrictive immigration policies have an impact on the way the migrants plan their migration and finally decide to return. In this way, it is also possible to compare initial intentions with the effectiveness of returns and to detect which migrants change their plans. Furthermore, the paper aims to compare migrations from Senegal and DR Congo. It allows us to explore similarities and divergences between migrants from two different African countries which have known very different political and economical evolutions and where social norms are not the same.

This work combines quantitative and qualitative methods. Quantitative data are those from the MAFE-Senegal (2008) and MAFE-Congo (2009) surveys. They have the advantage of being transnational, longitudinal and comparable. They include information on the familial, professional, administrative and material situation of migrants at the time of departure and during the migration. Moreover, as they have been collected both in the origin (Senegal and DR Congo) and destination countries (in France, Italy and Spain for Senegalese migrants and in Belgium and United Kingdom for Congolese ones), analyses of determinants of return are possible. Qualitative semi-structured interviews with return migrants were also carried out in the regions of Dakar and Kinshasa. They are helpful for interpretation and illustration of the quantitative results.

The results suggest that the period of departure has a negative effect on the initial intention and the decision to return to Senegal and DR Congo. This means that the harder it is to leave or the harder the living conditions in the origin countries are, the less people intend and decide to return. Migrants from both countries who migrated for studies or for professional reasons are those who intend to return the most, but only Senegalese migrants who migrated for these motives do effectively return while Congolese migrants change their plans. Transnational aspects of migration also play a role in return. In both cases, migrants who left their family behind in the origin country are more likely to return in comparison with those who have a family at destination. The preparation of return seem stronger in the side of Senegalese migrants: when they have a property in Senegal, they are more likely to return, while this is not the case for migrants from DR Congo.

María Hernández Carretero

PRIO, Norway

Morals, reciprocity and belonging: transnational engagements and migrant trajectories

The transnationalism literature highlights the importance, for many migrants, of maintaining social bonds across national borders. This paper examines a) the role played by moral considerations in how transnational, interpersonal relationships between migrants and those they leave behind evolve; b) how those moral considerations are inscribed in a logic of social belonging which migrants strive to maintain in spite of their physical absence; and c) how migrants' transnational engagements and their migration trajectories affect each other.

Migrants' transnational engagements, such as providing for relatives left behind or attending to friends' requests for support, conflate moral and financial considerations. Through the case of Senegalese migration to Spain, I consider how migrants' commitments with their social networks back home interact with the evolution of their migration trajectories. More specifically, I attend to the nature of interpersonal commitments and to how migrants themselves explain elements of their migration trajectories –such as the very decision to leave, the frequency and nature of return visits, the success of investment projects in the homeland, or the ability to return– in relation to their continued fulfilment of obligations and expectations with respect to socially significant others at home. The Senegalese case, characterized by primarily male migration, provides a rich example of strong transnational dynamics between the migrant and relatives and

friends in Senegal. Senegalese migrants speak of their migration in terms of the closely interrelated aims of providing for their families and achieving socioeconomic success. They also overwhelmingly express a desire to settle back in the homeland after a limited number of years, once able to invest in a productive activity that can ensure a financially promising return. On the basis of empirical data from my doctoral fieldwork among Senegalese migrants in Spain and communities of origin in Senegal, I analyse the moral and social meanings that migrants attribute to their continued engagements with family and friends in the homeland, and how the ethos of return interacts with the everyday realities of those transnational engagements, and the effect this has on migrants' trajectories.

Wei Li, Claudia Sadowski-Smith and Wan Yu

Arizona State University, USA

Return migration and transnationalism: evidence from highly-skilled migration

We aim to present the results from our research on highly-skilled academics in the United States who have migrated from the emerging economies of the so-called BRIC countries--Brazil, Russia, India, and China—in order to contribute to scholarly debates of transnationalism and return migration. Brazil and Russia are important commodity suppliers with rising economies, whereas India and China constitute the dominant global suppliers of manufactured goods and services as well as the largest sources for highly-skilled international migrants. While skilled professional migration from the BRIC countries to the United States has dramatically increased since the 1990s, recent economic developments in these countries also have the potential to induce return migration by luring back expatriates and/or their children in the context of a global race for highly-skilled people.

Few of the emergent works on return migration have specifically focused on the highly-skilled and, to our knowledge, little scholarship exists on faculty as a special case of such movement. The empirical results of our study show that, among some highly-skilled BRIC migrant faculty, transnational activities in the form of “brain circulation” (Cao, 1996) prevail over decisions for long-term return. Rather than return permanently to their countries of origin, the migrant faculty we studied are more likely to participate in transnational activities, such as maintaining or re-establishing intellectual and professional connections to their homelands that include back-and-forth travel, part-time work opportunities or collaboration, while continuing to live and work in the United States most of the time. We contend that these activities constitute a form of “virtual return” and should thus be theorized as an important complement to long term, “permanent” return migration. In fact, in their circularity and seasonality, these transnational activities may resemble certain features of the transnational labor migration that has been theorized to characterize unskilled migration, such as that between Mexico and the United States.

Our paper will also discuss the main factors that appear to influence migrant faculty's decision-making about actual or virtual return. Our study confirmed the importance of migrants' racial, ethnic and national backgrounds, gender, family status, life stage, training, and patterns of transnational family and professional connections. We also found that differences in the development of each country influenced migrants' decision-making about return, such as the existence of programs geared at attracting highly-skilled migrants and the success of individual countries in transforming not just their economies but also in investing in R&D and research environments. The potential for return migration was more widespread among migrant faculty from China and India than Russia and Brazil. By discussing our notion of “virtual return” migration and exploring the factors that influence such movement, our paper will contribute to an emergent body of scholarship about contemporary highly-skilled migration and its linkages to theories of immigrant transnationality as well as to theories of migrant racialization and differential incorporation in the United States. This focus will also help explore the implications of such new migration patterns for the United States and the global economy.

Elaine Ho

National University of Singapore, Singapore

The emotional economy of Mainland Chinese re-migration from Canada and its intersections with state ideologies of immigration, return and transnationalism

Recent literature questions the assumption that return must be to a purported homeland, usually seen to be the country of birth, and permanent in nature. In fact, two forms of 'return' are perceptible, one of which sees the return of an individual to their country of birth, and the other in which immigrants return to their host country following a brief sojourn or period (see King and Newbold, 2008). This paper focuses on the latter case through a qualitative study of Mainland Chinese immigrants who returned to China after obtaining permanent residency or citizenship status in Canada. This return to China is, however, not their final destination as they claim that they plan to move back to Canada again eventually. This paper critically considers the emotional economy (see Lindquist, 2009) of return and sustained transnationalism that shapes migrant trajectories over the lifecourse. This considers the workings of emotional registers such as stoicism (towards experiences of deskilling in Canada), guilt (towards left-behind kin) and hope (for future aspirations), which contribute to temporary return decisions and plans for further transnationalism. In so doing, the paper also examines the intersections of these emotional registers with state-sponsored ideologies of the immigration/return/transnationalism nexus, thus questioning the legitimacy and viability of these discourses and the influence they pose over migrant lives.

Ayumi Takenaka

Bryn Mawr College, USA

The rise and fall of transnational ethnic bonds: Japanese-Peruvian return-migration to Japan and its transnational impact

Two decades after Japanese-Peruvians, together with other South Americans, began to return migrate to Japan in 1990, the return-migration phenomenon has come to an end. Initially induced by the Japanese government in the name of shared ethnicity, Latin American return migration is largely regarded to have "failed" by Japanese policy makers today. It has "failed," because Latin American return-migrants, in the eyes of the Japanese, did not assimilate, integrate, or "make it" in Japan the way they were expected to do so. Thus, once imagined ethnic bonds ceased to exist in Japan. At the same time, however, ethnic ties have sustained themselves well outside of Japan. The Japanese-Peruvian community in Peru has thrived and prospered with renewed ethnic ties to Japan through remittances and growing cultural inflows and influences from Japan.

When do transnational ethnic bonds flourish and when do they cease to exist? What explains the rise and fall of transnational ethnic bonds? Drawing on my long-term ethnographic research in the Japanese-Peruvian communities in Peru and Japan (and the US), I found that transnational ethnic bonds are cultivated, imagined, or debilitated depending on location (i.e., where migrants are vis-à-vis their ancestral homeland) and the use of such ties (i.e., how elites utilize such ties and for what).

The story of Japanese-Peruvian return migration offers insights into the connection between return migration and transnationalism in three ways. First, prior imagined transnational ties often lead to "failed" integration of return migrants, because such ties breed expectations. Second, failed expectations serve to confine return migrants to marginal positions, because they help justify migrants' marginal status in the name of "failure"—failure to live up to prior expectations. And thirdly, weakened (or severed) ethnic ties in the ancestral homeland do not necessarily debilitate ethnic ties in a transnational context. Ethnic bonds, often assumed to be firm, fixed, and sustainable due to their association with innate, primordial attachments, rise and fall in reality, because they function differently within and beyond national borders. This paper shows how and why through the changing and unchanging relationship of Japanese-Peruvians to Japan in the process and aftermath of their return migration to Japan.

Aija Lulle

University of Latvia, Latvia

Connections between transnationalism and return migration in the post-socialist context

In my paper I will try to explain connections between transnationalism and return migration in the broader context of neoliberalism and nationalism in post-socialist space.

My work is based on data from my fieldwork in Great Britain during 2010-2012, and especially on the island of Guernsey, where I carried out ethnographic research on Latvian migrant workers.

While large scale out-migration from post-socialist countries is most closely associated with neoliberalism, my research suggests that post-socialist nationalism plays a role. The aspiration to create transnational ties through the space of flows nourishes long-distance nationalism, nostalgia, the longing to belong to a particular nation, and the desire to return to its claimed territory, including its bio-social and cultural environment.

The normative notion of moral obligation unites the concepts of nationalism and neoliberalism, and enables us to trace its role in the connections between return migration and transnationalism at individual, family, national and international scales. Moral obligations may be self-imposed or be felt as externally imposed, and may range from the cultural repertoires and meta-projects of nation states and gender regimes, to individually justified reasoning, actions and experiences, such as the neoliberal moral obligation to perform and achieve in order to earn self-respect, and the obligation to care about the well-being of one's family.

I suggest that connections between transnationalism and return migration can be analysed through modalities of movement, influenced by these moral obligations over a range of time-scales: readiness (preparedness) for a journey, various circulations of people, capital, goods and (possibly) final return. My analysis takes into account the macro contexts of developments in both home and host countries, as well as the contexts of life-course transitions, including at the bodily scale (both as an individual – pregnant, ageing, dying -, and considering the family as a body). The transnational setting provides a complex temporary space of flows, filled with choices and constraints, which can be conceptualised as a continuum of movements, from more permanent settlement to completed return, with modalities tending towards or away from the execution of return decisions. When reflecting upon possibilities of (non)return and undertaking the action of return, moral obligations towards self, family and nation are selectively considered by individuals on the move.

Marta Bolognani

University of Sussex, UK

Is there such a thing as return lifestyle migration?

Lifestyle migration is a budding term in British sociology> It mainly refers to the migration projects within the developed world of relatively affluent individuals who start a search for what they consider a more fulfilling way of life. It is often based on a comparative analysis between the ills of the country of origin and the idyll of a particular destination (Benson and O'Reilly 2009). So far lifestyle migration has been applied mainly to white groups. Through the help of the most extensive literature review on return migration to date and evidence emerged from a British Pakistani case-study, in this paper I will show that lifestyle migration is not alien to the decision-making process of prospective return migrants. Some return migrants in fact consider return as a self-realization search based on a comparative project between country of origin and country of settlement made possible by the achievement of a relative affluence. The advantages in applying the concept of lifestyle migration to some forms of return migration are multiple. First of all, it facilitates a longitudinal analysis of transnationalism by combining historical, sociological and individualised push and pull factors. Secondly, it allows to identify tangible evidence of migrants' change over time in status, power, position in respect to the country of origin and ambitions.

TRANSNATIONALISM AND THE POSSIBILITY OF RETURN

Melissa Siegel and Ozge Bilgili

Maastricht Graduate School of Governance, the Netherlands

Transnational social ties and intention to return: an analysis based on Afghan, Burundian, Ethiopian and Moroccan migrants in the Netherlands

Migration scholars acknowledge more and more that “return” does not necessarily mean the end of a migratory movement (Cassarino 2004, Duval 2004). In a transnational era, it is important to recognise movement as continuous, and make the distinction between different types of return (permanent vs. temporary) and short-term visits as part of a “transnational way of being” (see. Ley and Kobayashi 2005, Levitt and Glick-Schiller 2004). In this paper, we explore the ways in which transnational social ties that migrants maintain with their family and friends in the origin country are related to their intentions to return to their origin country. More precisely, based on the IS Academy Migration and Development World in Motion Survey conducted among first generation migrant households from Morocco, Burundi, Ethiopia and Afghanistan in the Netherlands, we investigate the correlation between transnational social ties (measured by contact with family and friends in the origin country and previous short-term visits) and intended temporary and permanent return. Moreover, we take temporary return a step further and also assess interest in utilizing a temporary return program (TRP).

The analysis of this research is two-fold. First, we begin with a descriptive analysis of the differences among migrants from different origin countries with respect to their transnational social ties and permanent and temporary return intentions. We show that Moroccans and Ethiopians are more likely to maintain contact with their family and friends in the origin country, and have more frequent return visits compared to Afghans and Burundians. Next, we demonstrate that migrant groups show differing preferences with regards to permanent and temporary migration. Namely, while a large proportion of Ethiopians want to return to Ethiopia permanently, only less than a quarter of the other groups want to return permanently to their origin country. However, when it comes to temporary migration, Afghans, who are less interested in permanent return, are the ones most positive towards temporary migration and TRPs.

In the second part of the analysis, we evaluate the relationship between transnational social ties and intentions for permanent and temporary return separately. The results of our analysis show the inherent linkages between transnational social ties and different types of return. Moreover, taking the large group differences with regards to our dependent variables as a starting point, we assess the moderating effect of origin country with regards to the link between transnational social ties and intention to return. We conclude by drawing attention to the significance of origin country conditions in relation to intention to return.

Silje Vatne Pettersen and Jørgen Carling

Statistisk Norway and PRIO, Norway

Determinants of return intentions among immigrants in Norway

This paper aims to identify the determinants of return intentions among ten immigrant groups in Norway. Using a quantitative survey conducted by Statistics Norway in 2005/2006, we specifically examine the impact of a set of indicators measuring the migrants’ ties to the country of origin on the one side, and ties to Norway on the other. With a median length of residence of 12 years among the 3053 surveyed, it is possible to explore whether integration in Norway and continued ties to the country of origin have opposite effects on return intentions, and how a possible dual belonging to the two countries impacts the intention. We will interpret the results within the transnational perspective on return migration, keeping in mind that intentions may be different from actual behavior, and rather an indication of orientation.

Rojan Ezzati and Marta Bivand Erdal

PRIO, Norway

Where are you from or when did you come? Migrants' transnational practices and return considerations interrogated with and without a national lens

The objective of this paper is to explore the potential of alternatives to defining the population studied based on ethnicity or nationality. The question we explore is: To what extent is national or ethnic background a more important characteristic than length of stay in the country of settlement and age at migration for understanding migrants' a) transnational practices, b) sense of belonging, and c) considerations of return.

The theoretical starting point is the work of Vertovec (2007) on 'super-diversity' and Wimmer and Glick Schiller (2003) on 'methodological nationalism', arguing that the diverse and transnational character of contemporary European societies requires new approaches to migration studies that go beyond the traditional ethnicity and/or nation-state categorizations. This does not mean taking ethnicity or nationality out of the equation, but rather to incorporate these as important characteristics in addition to other variables such as age, reasons for migration and length of stay in the country of settlement.

In this paper, we explore the potential, strengths and weaknesses of an alternative to the national or ethnic background as defining features of a population, using 45 semi-structured interviews and 12 focus groups with migrants in Norway. These migrants' are either part of a 'super-diversity' case study, where the sample includes migrants who have come to Norway 1) as children, and 2) in the past 1-5 years, or part of country of origin specific case studies (Pakistanis and Poles). Our operationalization is one among many possible, which highlights the significance of time, age and life-cycle through a focus on age at migration, length of stay and current age. The comparisons across our data enable both methodological reflections on the role of 'nationality' in our understanding of contemporary European societies, and thematic insights on migrant transnationalism, sense of belonging and considerations of return, focusing on dimensions related to time and age vs. 'nationality'.

Arjen Leerkes

Erasmus University and Ministry of Security and Justice, the Netherlands

Putting transnationalism into perspective: on the determinants of voluntary return among asylum seekers who have exhausted all legal means

Asylum migrants who have exhausted all legal remedies are expected to return to their country of origin. This study, based on structured face-to-face interviews with 108 asylum migrants who had almost exhausted all legal remedies in the Netherlands, attempts to explain why some migrants intend to return, while others opt for illegal residence or onward migration. The relatively low return intentions among failed asylum migrants are primarily attributable to concerns about their safety in the country of origin, and to health problems. Indicators of attachment to the country of origin (remittances, contact with family and friends in the country of origin, having underaged children in the country of origin, degree of education obtained in the country of origin, work experience in the country of origin) only had a modest positive effect on return attitude, and no significant effect on return intentions. These findings confirm qualitative studies on return among asylum migrants, and suggest furthermore that insights about return among labour migrants are of limited use to understand return among asylum migrants.

In the presentation, I will also present the preliminary findings of a statistical follow up study that examines the determinants of actual IOM return rates from the Netherlands in the period 1998-2011.

Alistair Hunter

University of Edinburgh, Scotland

Empowering or impeding return? Mobile phones and the 'pressure of communicability' in transnational families.

This contribution will discuss the findings of empirical research into the factors influencing the decision of hostel-dwelling male migrant workers in France to return home to their families in North and West Africa at retirement. In the last decade, hostel residents' communications with their stay-at-home families have been transformed by the use of new information and communication technologies, particularly mobile

telephones. Theorists of transnationalism have attributed to new communication technologies an empowering role for prospective returnees, enabling them to be better informed and prepared for return, yet it is found that instead of empowering hostel residents, such technologies actually impede return. This is because these technologies tend to exacerbate and amplify the burden of financial responsibility that they feel towards their dependent families. Their pensions are exportable from France but the extra financial dependency of the family in countries of origin forces some retired hostel residents to claim additional welfare benefits, which are not exportable. Some retired hostel residents are therefore obliged to reside in France for much of the year in order to be eligible for these non-exportable benefits, thus blocking permanent return. Instead their preference is for periodic return visits. These findings are drawn from a qualitative multi-sited research design involving ethnographic fieldwork both as a live-in resident of a migrant worker hostel in the Paris region, and in Morocco and Senegal as an invited guest in respondents' homes while accompanying them on their return visits.

Hung Cam Thai

Pomona College, Claremont University, USA

Burdened: going into debt to return

Drawing on my larger project that examines the link between return activities and consumption patterns in contemporary post-war Vietnam, this paper examines the role of remittances in Ho Chi Minh City, paying particular attention to social conflict and economic stratification among those who send and those who receive money in transnational families. Data analysis is derived from 31 months of fieldwork done in distinct intervals over a five year period between 2003 and 2009, including nine research trips during each summer between 2003 and 2008, as well as a 10-month stint of fieldwork conducted between May 2004 and March 2005, with a final phase of research conducted between January and June 2009. In addition to fieldwork, I conducted in-depth interviews with 192 people from a cross section of contemporary urbanites living and working in a new "global Saigon." Moving beyond the rhetoric of a country reconciling with the wounds of colonialism and war that ended almost thirty-five years ago, this paper spotlights the personal and social consequences of an emergent and sustained remittance economy in the Vietnamese diaspora. I argue that the links between overseas migrants over the past three decades and their families in the "sending" community have been based on a sturdy remittance economy, but various factors have contributed to a wide gulf in understanding about the personal and emotional causes of monetary flows. One of the consequences that have emerged in these remittances flows, which is the focus of this paper, is the ways that low wage migrants are burdened with large debts that they borrow to send to their family members back home. I explain the multiple reasons why some migrants borrow money and why others do not, and from what sources they take loan out in order to send money back home.

Tove Sagmo

PRIO, Norway

Visiting home: the impact of return visits

Drawing on theoretical development within migration studies this article examines the link between return visits and return migration. Using data obtained from fieldwork among Burundian immigrants living in UK and Norway the study shows that conditions in both countries impact on decision-making and ultimately that integration and transnational orientation can coexist. The article is focusing on two main themes: The range of motives for visiting the country of origin and its impact on identity, belonging and future plans. The conceptual framework revolves around an understanding of transnationalism as a dynamic process rather than a state of being. Particular focus will be put on return visits as a mechanism of 'social remittances'. The role of return visits in developing or rejecting ideas for business innovation, community or family formation, or governmental and political change in Burundi, is explored.

Erlend Paasche

PRIO, Norway

When return visits alienate

The return visit, as remittances and investments in the country of origin, is often conceptualized as a precursor to a more permanent return. However, there is a sedentarist bias implicit in the idea that return

visits necessarily allow for a more permanent return 'home' as soon as enough resources have been gathered and the prospective returnee's preparedness is sufficient. Return visits can indeed serve this function, for instance through enhancing social visibility and allowing the migrant to cultivate social networks and explore livelihood opportunities, but this should not be assumed a priori. As pointed out in this paper, the return visit can be a profoundly alienating experience where identities, belongings and taken-for-granted ideas about quality of life are revisited by the migrant, and the experience of the visit can run counter to the very idea of returning on a more permanent basis. This paper explores this phenomenon through a gender-sensitive analysis of the essentially social factors at play when return visits to Iraqi Kurdistan result in alienation.

POST-RETURN TRANSNATIONALISM

Vanessa Iaria

Sussex Centre for Migration Research, University of Sussex, UK

Post-return transnationalism and the Iraqi displacement in the Middle East

Since the end of the US-led military operations in Iraq, an estimated 400,000 Iraqi refugees have 'returned' unassisted. Due to the persistent insecurity and slow reconstruction process in Iraq, a significant but unknown number of returnees have re-migrated and engaged in cross-border livelihoods between Iraq and neighboring Syria and Jordan. Iraqis' spontaneous returns and circular migration strategies have received limited academic and non-academic attention. What is the nature and dynamics of 'return migration' in the context of the Iraqi refugees displaced to Syria and Jordan after the 2003 US-led occupation of Iraq?

This article addresses this question and offers a theoretical and empirical discussion of the relationship between refugee return and transnationalism, two phenomena that characterise the current Iraqi forced migration in the Middle East. It argues that in the Iraqi case, refugee return is rarely a one-way physical movement followed by permanent integration back in the home communities. It is a complex process that occurs over a prolonged period of time and entails cross-border mobility, and the development of transnational identities, social networks and livelihoods connecting host and home societies.

The international refugee regime is concerned with tracking and preventing refugee re-migration after return. Stopping returnees' mobility, however, may hamper the independent transnational livelihood strategies and development opportunities that the Iraqi people have pursued in the absence of official, sedentary solutions to their protracted displacement. The arguments of this paper will be illustrated drawing from first-hand qualitative evidence collected during an extensive period of multi-sited field research in Syria and Jordan.

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Ethiopian female returnees experiences of transnationalism and reintegration

This paper will explore the role of transnational engagement in the reintegration strategies of Ethiopian female returnees. Two phases of transnational engagement will be assessed: first, the transnational engagement with Ethiopia while in the country of migration, and second, the sustained transnational ties with the country of migration after the return to Ethiopia. It will be argued that both phases of transnational engagement can contribute to reintegration.

The paper is based on 83 qualitative interviews conducted with three groups of Ethiopian female return migrants in Addis Ababa in 2011. The first group is women who migrated to the Middle East as domestic workers, the second is women who migrated to Europe for higher education (Masters degree) and the third is women who migrated to the North (as refugees or through family reunification) and have returned as professionals. Of these female returnees, less than a quarter can be considered 'transnational' both in their ways of being and ways of belonging (Levitt and Glick Schiller, 2004). The paper will explore the differences between the three groups transnational engagement and reintegration strategies. It will be demonstrated that the professional and student category had the most opportunities for transnational engagement while in the country of migration and that the professional category had the most opportunities for transnational ties maintenance upon return.

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The myth of 'return and reintegration' in Afghanistan

A sustained history of conflict in Afghanistan has resulted in a dynamic association between different waves of conflict and migration - whether forced, voluntary or mixed migration. Depending on the political mood of the time, these refugees and migrants were either welcomed, hosted, or slowly alienated and marginalized in host countries. Increasingly since 2002, and more so since 2007, the political push has been to return Afghans to their country of origin - whether voluntarily or by force.

What has been the situation of these Afghans upon return to their country? How did their return process condition their reintegration? Often times, the question is poorly framed. Donors and international organization have attempted to increase chances of reintegration through individual and community economic assistance. However, the social aspects of return were largely ignored. How is one to return if they have never lived in Afghanistan, or if his/her entire social network have been relocated to Iran, Pakistan or Europe? How does a returnee negotiate his reintegration when he has no knowledge of the context or no social support network to rely on?

Looking at transnationalism through both the prism of exile and migration, and the prism of reintegration, is a useful analytical tool and variable to help us understand the return experiences of Afghan refugees, migrants, failed asylum seekers and unaccompanied minors. It is this same transnationalism or transnational identification that helps many returnees to once again leave their country on renewed attempts of a better life abroad. Based on data collected in Afghanistan from 2007-2012, this paper will seek to illustrate the experiences of return of voluntary returnees as well as deportees, with a specific angled geared towards the impact of transnationalism in their experience of return and "reintegration" in Afghanistan.

Ceri Oeppen

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Transnationalism after return: Afghan returnees from the UK and Norway in Kabul

Migrants' transnational activities have been widely studied and are now considered a normal, even expected, activity that migrants undertake in order to maintain connections with networks in their country of origin and diaspora. However, the transnational activities and connections of returnees have been less extensively researched. This is partly due to a smaller body of research on return migration generally but also, arguably, because return is still seen as a 'return to normality', where return is the end of the migrant's journey and therefore the end of their position as global actors; with social connections 'returning' to being shaped by geographical proximity. This paper questions this assumption and suggests that there is no reason to expect that return means people cease to be transnational actors. Based on qualitative research with Afghans returning to Kabul from the UK and Norway, this paper explores the ways and reasons that returnees maintain (or even extend) their transnational connections and activities after return to their country of origin.

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From diaspora with dreams

This paper examines the realisation of 'projects' to return to the country of origin for Chilean migrants who lived in Sweden. The discussion focuses on the relation between these return-projects and the diaspora after return. Drawing upon ethnographic research, it is argued that the returnees' narratives reflect that return migration is not solely an individual undertaking, but rather something embedded in the social context of migrants. The implementation of a return project will in this case serve as a journey back to the 'roots', with some different connotations depending on if the return took place within the first year after the 'end' of exile or later. The study demonstrates that returnees tend to position themselves as part of the diasporic network even after their return. By their involvement in maintaining social ties across national borders the Chilean returnees may also re-figure the notion of space within migration contexts.

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Returning empty-handed. involuntary return and disrupted transnational practices in Ghana

Much research indicates that transnational practices are cardinal for successful migrant return and reintegration in the country of origin. Studies show that regular contact with relatives, sending of remittances, and investment facilitate return and reintegration. Likewise studies point to the importance of continued transnational practices after return in relation to mobility, contact, remittances etc.

But what happens when transnational practices are disrupted and return is involuntary and untimely? This paper explores this question, focusing on Ghanaian migrants deported from Europe or North Africa or repatriated from the civil war in Libya. It argues that returning empty-handed – without money, assets, and presents – is extremely difficult and shameful for returnees, violating family expectations and a moral economy of reciprocity that their mobility is embedded in. Family pressures often lead to re-migration of the returnees with the hope or expectation that migrants may be more successful on their new journeys and, hence, be able to be transnationally involved.

The paper is based on recent field studies in Ghana in February 2012 but also draws on previous fieldwork on transnationalism, return and other mobility practices in Ghana in 2008 and among Somali diaspora groups since 1999.