

**Living Here and There:
*How Immigrants Are Creating Transnational Social
Spaces that Transform Communities and Nations***

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FINAL DRAFT – NOT FOR CIRCULATION

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I am a Brazilian living in America, but my life is more than just that of an immigrant. I am one of the millions of immigrants who are choosing to live *transnational* lives. We live, work, socialize, play, and do politics in the United States *and* in our home countries. We are both here and there, quite unlike the past generations of immigrants who left their homes and never looked back.

The difference between immigrants and transnationals is etched in my own family's story. Nearly a hundred years ago, my grandfather emigrated from Spain to Brazil. He left his family behind and never returned to his village, Pontevedra in Galicia. As with most immigrants at that time, his only option was to assimilate into the culture of his new country. His children—my mother, uncles, and aunt—grew up speaking Portuguese and never learned Spanish. Their experience with my grandfather's old world culture was limited to eating *paella*, reading the poetry of Rosalia de Castro, and celebrating the 12th of October, Spain's national holiday.

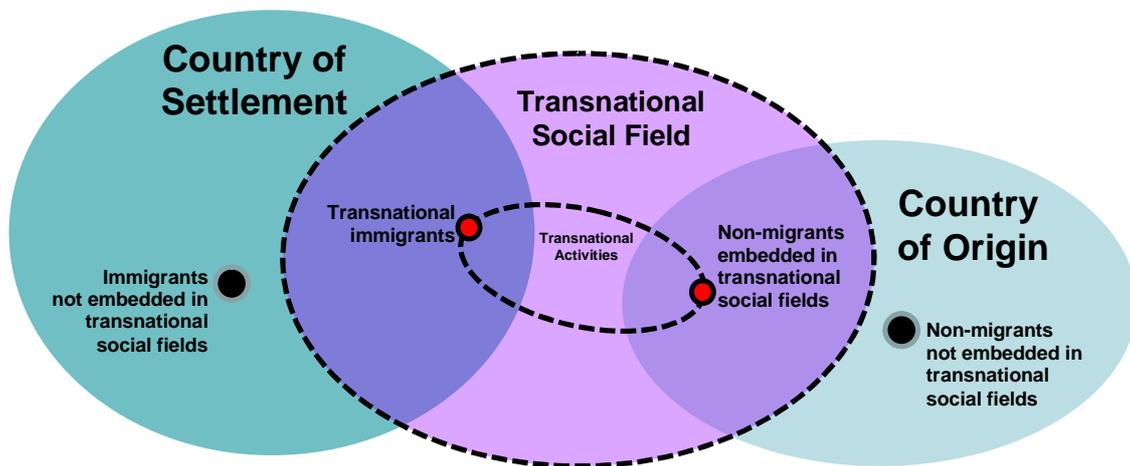
That was then. Today, technological, economic, demographic, political, and cultural factors have paved the way for increased transnational immigration. As transnational immigrants engage in cross-border activities, we build "social fields"—relatively stable, lasting, and dense sets of ties¹—which link our countries of origin and settlement and through which circulate ideas, information, products, and money, in addition to the movement of people. At any given time we are firmly rooted in a particular place—Boston or Rio de Janeiro, for instance—but our daily lives often connect to, overlap with, and depend on people and resources located in another national setting.

When I am in Boston, I interact frequently with my family, friends, and colleagues in Brazil by phone or e-mail, as do many other Brazilian immigrants, whether they are poor, middle class, or rich. I switch between American and Brazilian television stations on Boston's cable system. Like many other Brazilians, I have bank and investment accounts here as well as in Brazil. Unlike many of them, as a legal resident of the United States I can travel freely back to Brazil without fear of being unable to return. Because I married a Canadian, my two sons, both born in the United States, hold passports from three countries. I go to Brazil at least once a year, and more often to Canada to visit my wife's family.

When I am in Brazil, I vacation, spend time with family, and advise public officials about economic and urban development, my professional expertise. I am also developing an Internet business—digaai.com—to connect the 1.9 million Brazilians living and working in practically every country in the world. From my home in Boston I put together the start-up team for the project that includes another Brazilian in the United States, four Americans in Michigan, and several Brazilians in Brazil. Last year I designed a project that helped a Brazilian university to receive a \$300,000 grant from an American foundation and led a U.S. consulting team focused on helping to develop the creative industries of a major Brazilian city.

I live in transnational social space, as do many of the Brazilians, Indians, Malaysians, Mexicans, Ecuadorians, Cape Verdeans, and others from elsewhere whom I know in Boston. Social research, including some I have conducted, shows that a growing fraction of all immigrants—millions of people in the United States, tens of millions worldwide, and more and more of the new immigrants arriving in America—lead transnational lives. Although more affluent immigrants are likelier to engage in transnational activities, an increasingly large proportion of poor immigrants live in cross-border space too.

Transnational space also encompasses tens of millions of people who are not immigrants but are affected by the actions of transnationals. For example, many transnationals have family members in their country of origin who depend on remittance payments for their subsistence and are influenced by American culture when they communicate with their transnational family member.



My transnational experience is different than that of immigrants from other nations. In Brazil, the social and economic conditions and the rules of exit are different from those of other sending countries such as Mexico, South Korea, China, the Philippines, and India. Brazil's *diaspora* is more recent than that of Mexico, South Korea, or China. Its economy is less developed than that of South Korea and larger than that of India or the Philippines. And its immigration rules allow its citizens to be citizens of other nations, something which Korea, for instance, prohibits. These differences in a nation's conditions certainly affect the ways transnationals from different origins live and how they perceive their own status. Another important difference in my experience is that I am a first-generation (1.0) immigrant. For many 2.0 and 3.0 generation of immigrants who were born in America and have embraced an American identity, transnationalism occurs when they rediscover their ancestors' nation of origin and re-create those links.

Transnationalism is an emergent trend in global living. And as it grows and spreads it unleashes new dynamics that challenge the ideal of immigrant assimilation, undermine the narrow-minded politics of the homogenous, mono-cultural nation-state, and reinforce the flatness of the global economy. At the same time, transnationalism drives trends in medicine, education, philanthropy, and business that rise up multiculturalism in America and other nations.

Meet the Transnationals

Emerging profiles of transnationals show just how different they are from immigrants of a century ago. Then, migrating families might have carried a photo album and a batch of recipes to remember the old country. Now, they have a MySpace page. They call home at least once a week for pennies. They check the news back home via satellite TV. They return home for vacation when they find good deals on Travelocity or Expedia. When in their home country, they might inspect the clinic or school they contributed to via a “hometown association.” These sorts of frequent, regular cross-border activities characterize the transnational life.

Remittances are perhaps the best documented transnational behavior. Developing-country immigrants in the United States send some \$150 billion to family, friends, and communities in their home countries every year.² Of course, immigrants a century ago sent money home too, but what was a trickle then is now a torrent of cash, large enough to prop up the economies of entire nations.³ The development prospects of some nations have become inextricably linked to the economic activities of their respective *diasporas*. Remitting is a regular activity for many immigrants. In 2007, I conducted a survey with the Innovation Network for Communities that shows that 83 percent of Brazilian remitters in Massachusetts send money every month—sometimes twice a month—an average of \$875 per month.⁴

The research revealed that remitting is just the tip of the transnational iceberg. Nearly two-thirds of respondents indicated that they call home two or more times a week, for about a half-hour each time. The vast majority watches television or radio programs from Brazil. Nearly three out of four send e-mails to or receive e-mails from people back home. Almost half purchase Brazilian food and spices and one in five buys Brazilian videos, DVDs, and music CDs. More than a quarter of those surveyed have savings accounts and about 7 percent have mortgages in Brazil. A third sends money to their families in Brazil to cover real estate and student loans, pensions, and other investments.

These transnational behaviors are not unique to well-to-do Brazilian immigrants. Nearly two-thirds of the Brazilian remitters surveyed earn less than \$35,000 a year, but 62 percent of them call home two or more times a week and 47 percent of those who did

not finish elementary school make regular use of the Internet to connect with people back home.

A comparable transnational profile emerged during a September 2007 discussion with about 20 Korean-Americans; 30- to 40-year old professionals who are members of NetKAL, a network sponsored by the University of Southern California's Asian-Pacific Leadership Center.⁵ Their answers revealed a range of transnational behaviors: most email friends regularly in South Korea and fly there once or twice a year for a week or two; most buy Korean foods, spices, music CDs and videos, as well as Korean-made electronic goods; about half said they participate or had participated in business activities in South Korea and send money to their families there; several said they plan to send their children to South Korea in the summers to study the language and culture and get to know their relatives.

In addition, the group noted several transnational cultural trends that are underway: Korean-American musicians are taking rap music to audiences in South Korea; some Silicon Valley businesses look at South Koreans, who are among the world's most frequent users of cell phones and the Internet, to predict consumer trends in the United States; when the U.S. soccer team played South Korea in the World Cup, many Korean-Americans rooted for the South Korean team; Korean-American nonprofit organizations in the United States are establishing offices in South Korea in a bid to expand their influence. "South Korea's past decade of growth as a global economic powerhouse has coincided with the maturation of Korean-Americans born in the United States to immigrant parents," notes Angela Killoren, associate director of the USC center and a transnational who grew up in Korea, went to high school and college in the United States, and has worked in both countries. "Living and working as a transnational not only strengthens family and cultural roots, but makes great fiscal and career sense."

Other research has uncovered similar trends. About two-thirds of immigrants from the Dominican Republic travel home once or twice a year.⁶ More than half of Mexican remitters in the United States send money home monthly; some 30 percent have a savings account or home mortgage in Mexico. A 2007 study found that 72 percent of foreign-born Latinos living in the United States send remittances, travel back home, or telephone relatives, and 27 percent own property in their country of origin.⁷

Transnational realities are spilling into politics— both here and there. More than ever before, immigrants in the United States cross national borders to vote, run for office, contribute to political campaigns, organize rallies, and participate in hometown associations, unions, and politically-active churches. In recognition of this, national politicians from other countries compete with governors and mayors in America for emigrants' campaign money. New York City and Boston, where Dominican Republic political parties have chapters, are obligatory stops for Dominican candidates for their nation's presidency. By some estimates, Dominicans raise 10 to 15 percent of campaign funds in the United States⁸ and Dominican politicians find that the opinions of

transnational Dominican immigrants influence the voting decisions of Dominicans back home. Transnational influences affect American politicians too. When Rudy Giuliani was mayor of New York City he traveled regularly to Santo Domingo, capital of the Dominican Republic, to campaign for election.

In Chicago, Jose Gutierrez, a Mexican-American political leader, wields influence in both the United States and Mexico. "One morning," reported *The Chicago Tribune* in April 2007, "he's unveiling a blueprint for more immigrant services in Illinois as Director of the state's Office of New Americans Policy and Advocacy. The next night, he's brainstorming with activists in his home state of Michoacan about a slate of candidates for Mexico's congress." Gutierrez, who arrived in Chicago in 1986, says that transnational politics is part of a new Mexican consciousness that transcends borders and pushes for change on both sides of the border. "The nation-state concept is changing," he told the *Tribune*. "You don't have to say, 'I am Mexican,' or, 'I am American.' You can be a good Mexican citizen and a good American citizen and not have that be a conflict of interest. Sovereignty is flexible."⁹

Transnational politics extends to holding office and voting across national borders. In 1997, Jesus Galvin, a Colombian travel agent living in Hackensack, New Jersey, where he held a city council seat, ran for a Senate seat in Colombia. If elected (which he was not) Galvin planned to hold office simultaneously in Bogota and Hackensack. When a Chicago restaurateur from Mexico helped build new roads and businesses in Teloloapan, in the Mexican state of Guerrero, townspeople elected him mayor in a landslide.¹⁰ Immigrants from Colombia, the Dominican Republic, and Brazil can vote in national elections at polling sites set up in the U.S. by their consulates.

Transfers of political ideas, ideologies, and organizing practices are flowing in both directions between the United States and sending countries. While notions of free and fair elections, free press, and the right to legal representation migrate to the global south, transnational migrant workers, particularly from Mexico and Central America, have proven to be the backbone of grassroots labor organizing that enabled the Service Employees International Union (SEIU), for example, to gain better pay and working conditions for janitors. Transnational Mexicans, Brazilians, and Haitians have helped to revitalize churches across denominations. Today, nearly one-quarter of Latinos in the United States identify themselves as Protestants or other Christians, including Jehovah's Witnesses and Mormons.¹¹ A 2006 survey found that Latinos in the United States who are Catholic—about two thirds of the Latino population—are much more likely than white Catholics to believe that churches should address social and political issues; they see religion as a moral guide for political thinking.¹²

Transnationalism is also penetrating the world of commerce. The U.S. Council on Competitiveness reported in 2007 that foreign-born professionals now own 25 percent of all U.S. public venture-backed companies, 47 percent of all private venture-backed companies, and more than half of all Silicon Valley startups.¹³ Many of these businesses

are unlike the restaurants, dry cleaners, convenience stores, and other local-market businesses immigrants have traditionally operated; they sell into national and global markets, including the immigrants' home countries. WiChorus in San Jose, California, is one of several such businesses. Its founder, Rehan Jalil, born in Pakistan and educated in the United States, started the firm to create lower-cost technology—wireless broadband gear—for the developing world, starting in India's fast-growing economy. He raised \$25 million from U.S. investors. "The trend," reported *The Wall Street Journal* in late 2007, "represents the latest wrinkle in Silicon Valley's relationship with India"—a made-in-the-USA, sold-in-India business model.¹⁴ The co-founder of Bubble Motion Inc., which developed a voice-messaging system for non-English speakers and has offices in California and Singapore, is Sunil Coushik, a native of India and veteran entrepreneur there and in the United States. ReaMetrix Inc., with employees in the United States and India, was founded by Indian Dr. Bala Manian, a physicist, engineer, and Silicon Valley entrepreneur, and develops low-cost diagnostic tests for diabetes and other illnesses.¹⁵

Meanwhile, a growing number of immigrants also own or invest in companies in their countries of origin. For instance, 39 percent of the 289 companies located at the Hsinchu science-based Industrial Park near Taipei were started by U.S.-educated Taiwanese engineers with professional experience in Silicon Valley. Seventy of the firms maintain offices in Silicon Valley to obtain workers, technology, capital, and business opportunities.¹⁶

In April 2007, Pablo Maia, a Brazilian immigrant who heads the Pablo Maia Realty Group of Framingham, Massachusetts, announced the groundbreaking for a luxury Condominium *Spazio Nobre* in Ipatinga, Brazil, a city that is home for many Brazilian immigrants in the United States. To escape from the downturn of the U.S. real estate market, Maia's company sells more homes in Brazil, where housing markets in migrant-sending cities are booming, fueled by remittances the migrants send back home. Construmex, founded in 2001 by the giant Mexican cement producer CEMEX, has helped more than 8,000 Mexican families living in the United States to buy or build their homes in Mexico.¹⁷ Similar trends have been documented in Colombia, Ecuador, and El Salvador. Since the mid-1980s, Dominicans living abroad have accounted for as much as 60 percent of the total annual housing sales in their original country.¹⁸

Drivers of Transnationalism

Transnationalism is not strictly new. From 1870 to 1910 nearly 80 percent of Italian immigrants to the United States were men, most of whom left behind wives, children, and parents that they supported and eventually moved to the United States. Jewish men, too, were often pioneers who later sent money to pay for the passage of other family members. Between 1900 and 1906, the New York Post Office sent 12.3 million individual money orders to foreign lands.¹⁹ But the global scope and intensity of transnational immigrant activity has increased dramatically. In the 1980s, scholars first

noticed the phenomenon, as it was just becoming a large-scale force.²⁰ Now, social science research suggests that as many as 15 percent of all immigrants are transnationals—and organizers and experts in the immigration field with whom I consult consider this to be a gross underestimate. My research among Brazilians in the U.S. shows that 65% of them remit once a month, call home at least once a week, send or receive e-mail from family and friends back home and buy Brazilian-made products.²¹

Several technological, economic, demographic, political, and cultural factors have paved the way for increased transnational immigration. Some are widely recognized, others are not.

Innovation in communication and transportation. Technological advances in these sectors have reduced the time, cost, and difficulty of traveling, connecting, and transacting across borders. Immigrants can maintain more frequent and closer contact with their home societies, allowing them to maintain and expand personal, social, and economic networks. Today, immigrants can hop on a plane or make a phone call to find out how things are going at home. Maxine Margolis, a professor of anthropology at the University of Florida, illustrates this point: “When I asked the Brazilian owner of a home furnishing store in Manhattan, a long time resident of New York, how to say ‘wine rack’ in Portuguese, he was disturbed when he could not recall the phrase. As quickly as one might consult a dictionary, he dialed Brazil to ask a friend.”²²

Increased ease and reduced cost of communication facilitates access to critical information. When Pakistan President General Pervez Musharraf shut down the nation’s newspapers in November 2007, Muhammad Chaudrey, a Pakistani-born taxi driver living in the Detroit area, sent his family in Lahore e-mail reports with the latest U.S. news about their country. In a broader effort to combat censorship, Chinese immigrants in the United States created a satellite-television station, New Tang Dynasty Television. The station broadcasts Chinese and English language programs focused on promoting democracy in China to the United States, Europe, and Asia 24 hours a day.²³

Increased levels of education. Increased levels of education worldwide have served to expand cross-border labor markets. As developing nations expand their pools of well-educated professionals, these individuals gain opportunities to migrate to jobs and businesses in developed countries. “The international migration of college graduates is something that has increased dramatically over time,” says Elaine Fielding, a researcher at the University of Michigan. More than 53 percent of foreign immigrants who came into the Detroit area in 2004-5 had a bachelor’s degree or higher.²⁴ A large source of high-skilled transnationals is the pool of foreign students in American institutions of higher education. According to the Institute of International Education, some 582,000 foreign students studied in community colleges, colleges, and graduate schools

nationwide in the 2006-07 academic year. More than a quarter of them came from India and China.²⁵

Global competition for skilled labor in the information, communications and technology sectors has created plentiful opportunities for people with the right set of skills. Governments worldwide are relaxing work-permit visas, introducing tax incentives and taking other measures to attract this talent from across the world. In the United States, leading corporations have lobbied hard to get the federal government to ease the restrictions on hiring high-skilled workers that were imposed after 9/11. These high-skilled workers are extremely mobile and form an important contingent of transnationals. As they follow labor market opportunities, they create cross-border movement of investment, work, and families.

Economic liberalization of developing economies and the growth of both high-skilled and low-wage jobs in developed economies. In developing nations, the industrialization of traditional economic sectors creates large pools of underemployed labor. These economies and workers are increasingly linking to the supply chains and distribution systems of international firms—the economic bridges for international migration. At the same time, the decline of manufacturing and growth of the service sector in western economies has transformed their occupational and income structures. Growth in the supply of low-wage jobs and the proportion of temporary and part-time employment, as well as expansion of finance, insurance, real estate, retail, and business services are creating opportunities for immigrants at the top and bottom of the occupational scale.

As the globalization of wealth creation expands the middle class in many non-western countries, more potential markets for U.S. companies are created. Some of these markets are fueled by transnational activities. For instance, Citigroup Inc., by some measures the world's largest financial services entity, partnered recently with a telecommunications company in Malaysia to offer service that allows foreign workers in that country to send money home using their cell phones.²⁶

Many developed countries have become dependent on immigration to counter the decline of their natural populations. Without in-migration western countries cannot sustain the necessary demographic for economic growth. Government researchers in Canada calculated that by 2011 immigrants may provide all of the growth in that nation's laboring population.²⁷ Today, migration accounts for some 60 percent of growth in Western nations.²⁸ Many large American cities such as New York City and Los Angeles, as well as smaller cities, depend now on immigration for their population growth and economic development. Immigrants fuel economic growth in urban centers, reports the Center for an Urban Future: "highly skilled immigrant entrepreneurs are creating broader 'enclave economies' of supermarkets, health clinics, banks, law firms, high-tech start-ups and other companies."²⁹

The constant influx of immigrants sustains economic transnational flows such as remittances, consumption of nostalgic products (from back home), and international calling and travel, as well as political and cultural transnational activities. As newcomers increase the transnational contingent in the United States other western nations, they create new links back home that augment a community's transnational connections.

Changing exit and entry rules for immigrants. Global political transformations and new international legal regimes are changing the exit and entry rules that nation-states set for immigration. Decolonization, the fall of communism, and the ascendance of human rights codes have forced nations to take account of an individual's rights regardless of whether they are citizens or aliens. Every nation establishes the context of exit for its departing citizens and the context of entry for its arriving immigrants. These legal, economic, social, and political conditions—including citizenship and trade rules, patterns of social inclusion and discrimination, and foreign policies—impede or facilitate cross-border movement and transnational activities.

Some nations have begun to shift policies to accommodate transnational realities. Mexico and the Philippines, for example, are developing policies that define their emigrating populations as part and parcel of their nation-state. Some nations actively promote “transnational re-incorporation” of their departed migrants to maximize migrant investment and remittances to their home country. At the same time, some receiving countries have significantly expanded the rights and entitlements of immigrants. The complexity of these issues has been evident in the case of the United States, where efforts to pass federal immigration reform have so far failed. The debate has been dominated by anti-immigrant ideology and security concerns. This has been to the detriment of moving forward with effective policies and the more than 12 million immigrants that live in precarious conditions.

Increased cultural hybridization. The globalization of culture and identity weakens traditional tensions between what is one's own and what is foreign, and promotes cultural hybridization that embraces both. Fostered by global consumption, production, and immigration, cultural hybridization is competing more and more with dominant cultures rooted in a single place and set of traditions. Nestor Garcia Canclini, one of the best known and most innovative cultural studies scholars in Latin America,³⁰ notes that culture increasingly is made up of stuff from here and there: “I turn on my television set, made in Japan, and what I see is a world film, produced in Hollywood, made by a Polish director with French assistants, actors of ten different nationalities, and scenes filmed in four countries that also put up the capital.”³¹ Driven to some extent by the worldwide diffusion of American culture, cultural hybridization in many countries evolves in complex ways, with contradictions and back-and-forth flows.

“Instead of creating a single, boring global village, the forces of globalization are actually encouraging the proliferation of cultural diversity,” argues Michael Lynton, chairman

and CEO of Sony Pictures Entertainment. He offers Sony as a case: “Our studio is working with directors and actors in China, India, Mexico, Spain, and Russia to make movies for release in each of those markets.” The company is producing original TV series in Chile, Germany, Italy, Russia, and Spain. “Instead of fewer choices, there are more. And instead of a uniform, americanized world, there remains a rich and dizzying array of cultures.”³² Transnational immigrants are central to this process—as “creative reinterpreters” of culture and cross-border carriers of new hybrid modes.

Sending nations also feel a transnational cultural impact. Nestor Canclini has observed that, with as many as 15 percent of all Ecuadorians, and a tenth of all Argentines, Colombians, Cubans, Mexicans, and Salvadorians living outside their countries, Latin America is not complete inside its borders; its cultures are shaped in Los Angeles, New York and Madrid. Recent research has established the importance of ‘social remittances,’ the transfer of social-cultural meanings and practices that occurs when migrants return to live in or visit their communities of origin; when non-migrants visit those in the receiving country; or through exchanges of letters, videos, e-mails, and telephone calls.³³ David Fitzgerald, a sociologist at the University of California – Los Angeles, observes that transnational migrants challenge nation-state ideals of identity and borders in both sending and receiving countries by moving around, living in a country in which they do not claim citizenship, and claiming citizenship in a country in which they do not live and alternatively, by claiming membership in multiple countries in which they may be residents, part-time residents, or absentees.³⁴

Cultural hybridization, like other aspects of transnationalism, varies in frequency and depth. One of the factors that shapes cultural exchanges is context of exit and entry. For example, while Colombians and Dominicans both come from Latin America and share a common language, their contexts of exit and reception are very different resulting in different patterns of incorporation into U.S. society. Surveys of Colombian immigrants who are mostly white or mestizo show that they feel like they face less discrimination than Dominicans.³⁵ By contrast, surveys conducted among Dominicans in the United States, found that Dominicans are generally regarded as blacks and discriminated against on that basis.³⁶

When an immigrant group finds itself discriminated against in the host country, its members often band together and adopt a defensive stance toward the country, according to data from the Comparative Immigrant Entrepreneurship Project, a project of The Center for Migration and Development, Princeton University. The group appeals to symbols of cultural pride brought from home. A good example of this is the Guatemalan Mayan (Kanjobal) migrants in Los Angeles. They cope with high levels of discrimination by reviving and strengthening traditional forms of ethnic identity through a process of reactive transnationalism.³⁷ When, on the other hand, discrimination is absent, transnational initiatives become more individualized and adopt more middle class forms such as Lions and Kiwanis Clubs, and other charitable associations.³⁸

Because different drivers of transnationalism operate at varying intensity, coupled with different conditions of exit and entry, transnationalism is not monolithic. Nevertheless, the economic, political, and cultural forces driving transnationalism do not seem likely to vanish any time soon. Being here and there is here to stay.

The Transnational Opportunity

Because I was born in Brazil, I am a “Brazilian.” Having residency in America makes me a “Brazilian-American.” Living and working in Boston makes me a “Bostonian.” And since I grew up in a Latin American country, I am “Latino.” But what does all this mean in transnational space? What does the transnationalism of millions of immigrants mean for their identities, communities, and countries of origin? What does it mean for an America where the U.S. Census reports that, for the first time, two Hispanic surnames—Garcia and Rodriguez—are among the top 10 most common surnames and Martinez is in 11th place?³⁹

As the transnational phenomenon changes the nature of immigration, it generates new thorny public policy issues and creates new opportunities for community innovators and business entrepreneurs, while shaping a social space that defies conventional thinking about immigrants and nation-states. It seems to me that there are at least four implications of these trends.

Transnationalism presses for greater openness and flexibility of nation-states’ exit and entry rules, including policies pertaining to citizenship, political rights, and migration.

As the number of transnationals grows, the debate has moved beyond whether migrants should or should not belong to two (or more) polities; it’s now about how best to guarantee their rights and political representation in both countries. Some nations are revising their citizenship rules and political rights, as well as the rules that establish conditions for migrant exit from and entry into countries. They are allowing people to be citizens of more than one country and are recognizing the political rights that other countries have in place. (Going back to the story about my grandfather—a few years ago Spain granted citizenship status to children born abroad to its citizens and my Brazilian mother suddenly became a Spaniard!). The 1997 European Convention on Nationality recognized that dual nationality was no longer a short-term aberration of citizenship, but a growing reality that nations must accommodate. Today all citizens of countries in the European Union have the right to stand for election, as well as vote, in local elections in their country of residence even if they are citizens of another country. More sending countries are allowing nationals living abroad to vote in national elections. Consulates have been instructed to take a proactive stance toward immigrant

communities by providing legal representation, assistance with health care, identification services, and English classes.

In other words, certain rights are becoming more portable—but this process has only just begun to affect countries' social climates. Governments have the opportunity to be more proactive about fostering receptivity towards transnationalism. Strong anti-discrimination and multicultural policies can prevent immigrants from becoming isolated in their country of residence and help them to succeed in mainstream society. To be successful, a nation's integration policies and agendas should take into consideration immigrants' transnational status. Flexibility, universality, and portability are key principles to keep in mind when designing public policies for immigrants.

Transnationalism creates opportunities for social innovators seeking to pioneer 21st century global cities and to stimulate cross-global innovation flows.

The global cities of the 21st century are becoming transnational cities. They are places of international economic, political, and social flows—and increasingly of transnational immigrants. New York, Boston, Chicago, London, Sao Paulo, Mexico City, and Mumbai, for instance, reinvent themselves perpetually by feeding, nurturing, and liberating their immigrants. Globalization gives these cities a new status, transnationalism gives them new functions. Their rusty ports and railways remind us of last century's economy and its immigrants—the Ellis Island society. But JFK, Logan, and the O'Hare airports are the new ports of entry. All the while, transnational immigrants tend to find their primary sense of identity at the level of the city, rather than the nation-state.

Social innovators who understand these processes see opportunities to invent the multicultural and global communities of tomorrow. The partnership between Pitagoras College, a private college in Brazil, and Cambridge College, a private college in Cambridge, Massachusetts, is a good example of social innovation. Last year, these colleges began a program that allows students to complete college degrees that are valid in both countries. According to Mahesh Sharma, President of Cambridge College, students get the associate degree from Pitagoras and bachelor's degree from Cambridge College, which is universally accredited.

Global cities are linked to each other through their transnational residents. One important and growing practice among transnationals is philanthropy. Transnational civic organizations such as hometown associations in Mexico, El Salvador, and the Dominican Republic organize immigrants to finance the development of roads, schools, hospitals, and sport facilities in their home villages. Through these collective investments, immigrants help spur economic development, shape priorities at the local level, and provide an alternative to local power structures.

Transnationalism is proving to be an asset for other sorts of social entrepreneurship. Physicians for Human Rights (PHR), a U.S.-based nonprofit, mobilizes health professionals to support a comprehensive AIDS strategy. PHR realized that health-worker immigrants from Africa, such as nurses, who maintain ties to their countries of origin, had important insight into how policy advocacy in the United States and Africa could be coordinated. These transnationals help PHR develop policies that reflect on-the-ground health conditions and policy environments in Africa and draw on their experiences as advocates in the United States to help local health professionals in Africa advocate more effectively.

Transnationalism promotes “global brain circulation,” a means for immigrants to create and amass wealth through entrepreneurship and employment.

The connected globe offers immigrants unprecedented business opportunities. Instead of operating an ethnic restaurant or small local-market service business in their new neighborhood in America, transnationals can tap into the communications and transportation revolutions of the last 20 years to reach global markets. They operate money-transfer agencies, telephone and other communications services, import-and-export firms, shipping businesses, and construction and real-estate companies. Transnational entrepreneurship is not, according to Princeton Professor Alejandro Portes, an expert in immigration studies, just an ephemeral activity undertaken by isolated, risk-taking, individual migrants, but a distinct path of immigrant economic adaptation.

Transnationals are faring well in the labor market. For the first time some of them are strategically located within the technical and financial structures of developed economies. While professional accreditations and standards continue to be managed at the national level, a growing number of professionals work outside their countries of origin. Many recent immigrants in the United States come from strong merchant cultures, reports Jonathan Bowles, Director of the Center for an Urban Future. “They have highly developed skills, a work ethic, good education, business backgrounds.”⁴⁰ Thousands of Indian IT workers move between Australia, England, the United States, and Bangalore. Together with African and Filipino health professionals, they illustrate the trend towards “brain circulation.”

Today, many initiatives facilitate this process. For example, the United Nations Development Programme created TOKTEN (Transfer of Knowledge through Expatriate National), an initiative aimed at tapping successful expatriate nationals to undertake short-term consultancies in their countries of origin, under UN aegis.⁴¹ SiliconIndia, an Indian transnational consultancy, is one such firm. The company helps Indian professionals considering moving back to India.⁴²

As fluid as commercial transacting has become, there is much more to do in support of transnationals, especially when it comes to portability of education credentials and other assets of individuals. For example, the development of global schools anchored in multiple countries, rather than a single school district; universal credentialing and assessment systems for high school, college, and graduate degrees; digital health and education records; and portable universal insurance, retirement, and individual development accounts. These are just a few potential social innovations that could accelerate and spread transnational dynamics.

Transnationalism shapes a new social space in which immigrants create hybrid forms of identity, community, and culture that promote higher levels of multiculturalism and tolerance.

Today's immigrants are wired and connected. As mentioned, three out of four Brazilians living in the United States send emails to and receive emails from people back home. For other Latinos living in the U.S., the usage rate is 56 percent.⁴³ The vast majority of Brazilian immigrants watches TV or listens to radio programs broadcasted from or originated in Brazil, a trend common in many other transnational communities.

The Internet and other digital technologies create unique opportunities to empower transnational communities, support their transformational processes, and create new forms of citizen action, civic engagement, and community life. For this reason, in 2007, I created Digaai.com, a social network platform that links Brazilian immigrants around the world, providing them with opportunities to build social, political, and economic capital.⁴⁴

Greater connectedness will create more complex personal identities and cultures as immigrants from many places have greater access to the world's cultural inventory. As people move around with their meanings, and meanings find them through mass communication, transnationals are likely to see certain distinctions blur, such as the distinction between citizen and alien, native and foreign, local and global. In fact, hybridism, pastiche, or *mélange* are perhaps better descriptions of what is to come than multiculturalism and diversity.

Being Here and There

Transnational space is not always the most comfortable space to inhabit. Sometimes, you are neither here nor there, you are in between. This can be a confusing and disturbing experience. A friend, Eduardo Siqueira, a Brazilian medical doctor and assistant professor of community health at the University of Massachusetts-Lowell, says there is a dark side to transnationalism. His experience with immigrants shows that some transnationals pay high psychological and emotional costs for being here and

there. This point is shared by the Brazilian sociologist Sueli Siqueira, who argues that rupture and absence are part of immigrant life. Her research shows that 49 percent of Brazilian immigrants who return to Brazil from the United States intend to stay in Brazil permanently and invest in their own business. But some of them go bankrupt in Brazil and immigrate back to the United States. According to Siqueira, 31 percent of those who invested successfully in their own business in Brazil eventually returned to the United States because they could not readapt to life in Brazil.

When you look at the world through the kaleidoscopic lens of transnational experience, society's social, economic, and political challenges look quite different. You no longer see homogenous, mono-cultural nation-states; you see multi-cultural diffusion and hybrid reinterpretations. You no longer see nations and cultures that contain people within their boundaries; you see people in motion between places and perspectives. You don't see either/or bi-polar choices between sending and receiving nations and cultures; you see both/and fusions. You don't see immigrants who are forced to assimilate; you see immigrants who maintain global ties and bring to and take away rich value from America—and immigrants who are changing their newest home.

Using the transnational lens you see trends that are just beginning—in medicine, education, philanthropy, and business—to reflect the bifocality of transnational migration, and will likely yield important changes in American society.

Hospitals, doctors, and health clinics see more patients from other cultures and recognize that mono-cultural, western-style health care won't work for all. New York City's eleven public hospitals, for instance, are tailoring treatment and counseling for 50,000 diabetes patients who speak hundreds of languages and eat varied cuisine.⁴⁵

More schools across the United States are starting foreign language classes in elementary school rather than waiting for middle or high school. Fairfax County, the nation's 13th largest school system, expanded foreign language studies to include Spanish, Japanese, Arabic, Chinese, or French to all 137 elementary schools. In Tarrytown, New York, where half of the 2,600 students are Latinos, almost every student studies two languages. And diversity in schools is helping children and families from different cultures get along better. "It's not as easy to harbor stereotypes when it's their children your children are mixing with," says Dr. Howard Smith, the Tarrytown school superintendent.⁴⁶

Wealthy immigrants are becoming active philanthropists in the American tradition. "There is no tradition of philanthropy" in China, says Anla Cheng, who runs an investment fund that invests in China and sits on the boards of the Metropolitan Museum of Art and the New York Community Trust. "Many people are helping family members or saving money. But that is beginning to change." Cheng has also backed a Bill Moyers television series, "Becoming American: The Chinese Experience" and her

husband, hedge fund manager Mark Kingdon, supports an educational program that is developing a school curriculum on Chinese history.⁴⁷

U.S.-based corporations are finding that transnational markets have their own social license for doing business rooted in legal and cultural standards of more than one country. The combination can yield complexity and conflict. Western Union, for instance, operates a global remittances service. In late 2007, some Mexican immigrants in the United States and Mexico advocated a boycott of the company, complaining that its fees were too high. Other immigrant groups want to work with the company to bankroll development projects in Mexico and within Mexican communities in the U.S.⁴⁸

Of course, there are still borders of all sorts everywhere, and perhaps there will be—and should be—some forever. But we transnationals are boundary spanners and border jumpers. We are explorers and crafters. We are not yet fully conscious of our collective experience, so we are not yet intentional about what impact we seek or what we need as a group. But my guess is that the most important impact we will have will not be for ourselves. It will be on the people we connect with in our home countries and our new countries. They may never leave their countries, but through us they too are becoming transnational people.

Notes

¹ c.f., Thomas Faist, "Transnationalization in International Migration: Implications for the Study of Citizenship and Culture," *Ethnic and Racial Studies*, Volume 23, Issue 2 March 2000, pages 189 – 222.

² The World Bank estimates that about \$232 billion was remitted globally through formal channels in 2005 and that more than 70 percent went to developing countries. For those nations, remittance flows represent a major source of international finance—in many cases, larger than total foreign aid and second only to foreign direct investment.

³ Between 1900 and 1906, the New York Post Office sent 12.3 million individual money orders to foreign lands, with half of the dollar amount going to Italy, Hungary, and Slavic countries (Wyman, 1993).

⁴ "A Profile of Brazilian Remitters in Massachusetts," July 2007, Innovation Network for Communities (www.in4c.net). Survey was conducted by Emmanuel Silvestre, Hispanic Market Research and Services. A sample of 250 subjects (1/1000) is representative of the population with a confidence interval of 6.17% at a confidence level of 95%.

⁵ The Network of Korean-American Leaders (NetKAL) Fellowship Program at the School of Social Work at the University of Southern California provides emerging Korean-American leaders with the resources to not only further their professional careers but also to widen their roles in the community. (interview conducted by Peter Plastrik, Innovation Network for Communities).

⁶ 2003 surveys of Latino and Caribbean immigrants, Manuel Orozco, *Inter-American Dialogue*.

⁷ Roger Waldinger, "Between Here and There: How Attached Are Latino Immigrants to their Native Country?" *Pew Hispanic Center*, October, 2007, www.pewhispanic.org.

⁸ Graham, Pamela, "Reimagining the Nation and Defining the District: Dominican Migration and Transnational Politics," in Patricia Pessar (ed.), *Caribbean Circuits: New Directions in the Study of Caribbean Migration*, Staten Island, NY: Center for Migration Studies, 1997.

⁹ Antonio Olivo and Oscar Avila, "Influence on both sides of the border," *The Chicago Tribune*, April 6, 2007, p. 1.

¹⁰ *ibid.* p. 1.

¹¹ Gaston Espinosa, Virgilio Elizondo, and Jesse Miranda, (editors), *Latino Religions and Civic Activism in the United States*, Oxford University Press, 2005.

¹² Eric Gorski, "U.S. Hispanic favor fusing politics, religion," *Detroit Free Press*, April 26, 2007, p. 18A.

¹³ Council on Competitiveness, *Where America Stands: Entrepreneurship Competitiveness Index*, 2007.

¹⁴ Rebecca Buckman, "U.S. Start-Ups Set Sights on India," *The Wall Street Journal*, September 18, 2007, pp. B1, B4.

¹⁵ *Ibid.* and company Web sites.

¹⁶ Yu-Ling Luo and Wei-Jen Wang, "High-skill migration and Chinese Taipei's industrial development," in *International Mobility of the Highly Skilled*, Paris: OECD, 2002.

¹⁷ Hispanicprwire.com.

¹⁸ *Camara Dominicana de la Construcción*, 1986.

¹⁹ Wyman Mark, *Round-Trip to America, The Immigrants return to Europe, 1880 to 1930*, Cornell University Press, 1993.

²⁰ In the 1960s, Raymond Aron proposed the notion of a "transnational society"—the movement of ideas, people, goods, and organizations across borders—that, in turn, generates a "transnational politics" reducible neither to the relations between states nor within them. In the 1970s, the term "transnational" became popular because global companies began to rethink their strategies, shifting from the vertical-integration model of the "multinational" firm to the horizontal dispersal of the "transnational" corporation.

²¹ According to the American Development Bank – MIF, the percentage of immigrants who send money from Massachusetts is 70% so that the inference based on remitters covers a large part of all adult Brazilians.

²² Margolis, Maxine, *Little Brazil*, Princeton University Press, 1998.

²³ Kathy Chen, "Chinese Dissidents Take on Beijing Via Media Empire," *The Wall Street Journal*, November 15, 2007, p. A1, A22.

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- ²⁴ John Gallagher, "A Brain Drain? Not Here," *Detroit Free Press*, September 13, 2006, pp. 1A, 6A.
- ²⁵ Tamar Lewin, "Study Says Foreign Students Added \$14 Billion to Economy," *The New York Times*, November 12, 2007.
- ²⁶ Kate Linebaugh, "Citi's Asia Plan: Look Beyond the Elite," *The Wall Street Journal*, August 29, 2007, p. C1, C3.
- ²⁷ Christopher J. Chipello and Joel Millman, "Canada's Open Door to Immigrants is Seen As Crucial for Growth," *The Wall Street Journal*, May 23, 2005, p. A2.
- ²⁸ The World Bank, (www.worldbank.org)
- ²⁹ Edward Iwata, "Study shows immigrants 'a real engine' for growth," *USA Today*, February 7, 2007, p. 5B.
- ³⁰ Canclini, an Argentine anthropologist teaching at the Universidad Autonoma Metropolitana in Mexico City, has written extensively on matters of culture and cultural policy. Among his many books, *Hybrid Cultures: Strategies for Entering and Leaving Modernity*, 1995 and *Consumers and Citizens: Globalization and Multicultural Conflicts*, 2001 are the most relevant for the topic at hand
- ³¹ Canclini, Nestor Garcia, *Consumers and Citizens: Globalization and Multicultural Conflicts*, 2001.
- ³² Michael Lynton, "Globalization and Cultural Diversity," *The Wall Street Journal*, September 12, 2007.
- ³³ Levitt, Peggy, *The Transnational Villagers*, University of California Press, 2001.
- ³⁴ Fitzgerald, David, "Rethinking the 'Local' and 'Transnational': Cross-Border Politics and Hometown Networks in an Immigrant Union," University of California, Los Angeles, 2000.
- ³⁵ Guarnizo *et. al.* 1999, Escobar 2004;
- ³⁶ Portes and Guarnizo 1991; Grasmuck and Pessar, 1991;
- ³⁷ Eric Popkin, "Guatemalan Mayan migration to Los Angeles: Constructing Transnational Linkages in the Context of the Settlement Process," *Ethnic and Racial Studies* Volume 22, Number 2, March 1999.
- ³⁸ Portes *et. al.*, 2005;
- ³⁹ "Keeping up with the...Garcias?" *The Detroit Free Press-Detroit News*, November 18, 2007, p.10A.
- ⁴⁰ Edward Iwata, "Study shows immigrants 'a real engine' for growth," *USA Today*, February 7, 2007, p. 5B.
- ⁴¹ See for example www.toktenlebanon.org
- ⁴² See www.siliconindia.com
- ⁴³ Alvaro Lima and Pete Plastrik, "A Profile of Brazilian Remitters in Massachusetts." *The Pew Hispanic Center, Latinos Online Report*, 2007.
- ⁴⁴ digaaí - [dig-ă-ēē] - 1. To give your opinion; to speak up; popular Brazilian expression used as a greeting such as "What is happening?" or "How are you doing?" 2. di-ga [verb] – to say; to express; to enunciate; to present an idea or opinion; to inform or affirm 3. a-í [adverb] – here; in this place; close to the person you're speaking with.
- ⁴⁵ Theo Francis, "Treating Diabetes and Understanding Cultures," *The Wall Street Journal*, October 23, 2007, p.D2.
- ⁴⁶ Joseph Berger, "Building a Nation of Polyglots, Starting With the Very Young," *The New York Times*, November 14, 2007, p.A21.
- ⁴⁷ Geraldine Fabrikant, "For Chinese-Americans, Schools Earn the Prize," *New York Times*, November 12, 2007, p.22.
- ⁴⁸ Oscar Avila and Antonio Olivo, "Western Union boycotts stirs disunity," *The Chicago tribune*, October 21, 2007, p.10.