

BELONGING, MEMBERSHIP, AND MOBILITY IN GLOBAL HISTORY

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ABSTRACT

Belonging, Membership, and Mobility in Global History¹

Belonging and membership in societies depend on resources, societal structures, and stateside frames rather than on postulated and essentialized identities. Throughout the ages migrants have changed societies and affiliations; globalization emerged in the 1490s when the tri-continental African-Asian-European worlds and the dual American continent became connected. Migrants moved translocally or transregionally – the “trans” emphasizes connections across dividing lines or spaces, to continuities created (or, perhaps, merely mentally constructed) by human agency. This essay approaches the topic from four angles: (1) migrants’ “funds of knowledge,” (2) newcomers’ “Otherness,” (3) power hierarchies, and (4) connectivity-inclusions-exclusions. In conclusion, belongings of globally mobile men and women will be discussed as transcultural rather than transnational.

KEYWORDS: migration, transnational, transcultural, globalization, Otherness, funds of knowledge

IZVLEČEK

Pripadanje, članstvo in mobilnost v globalni zgodovini

Pripadanje in članstvo v družbah nista toliko odvisna od predpostavljenih in esencionaliziranih identitet kot od sredstev, družbenih struktur in nacionalnih okvirov. V zgodovini so migranti menjali družbe in pripadnosti; globalizacija se je pojavila okrog 1490, ko sta se povezala trikontinentalni afriško-evropsko-azijski svet in dvojni ameriški kontinent. Migranti so se selili translokarno ali transregionalno – »trans« poudarja povezave z razločevalnimi črtami ali prostori v nepretrganost/kontinuitete, ki jih ustvarja (ali morda konstruira zgolj v duhu) človeški dejavnik. Pričujoči esej se teme loteva s štirih plati: (1) iz »zakladnice znanja« migrantov, (2) »drugosti« novih prišlekov, (3) hierarhije moči in (4) povezljivosti-vključevanja-izključevanja, pripadnost globalno mobilnih moških in žensk pa obravnava transkulturalno in ne transnacionalno.

KLJUČNE BESEDE: migracija, transnacionalno, transkulturno, globalizacija, drugost, zakladnice znanja

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“Belonging” – it is natural and deeply rooted as ideologues have often proclaimed. The empirical data suggest otherwise:

- In 8th- to 13th-century China, in the northern region of century-long settlement and rootedness soils were worn out: millions of families had to migrate southward.
- In the southwestern region of early German emigration, division of inheritance reduced small-holds to a size which made survival non-viable by mid-18th century.
- In the drought-stricken Sahel zone of the present, belonging to the lands and social relationships is becoming impossible.

“Home” – *Heimat* in German – or, more neutrally, the place and region of birth can be unsustainable as well as unfair and unsafe. Once resources become insufficient, societal structures unsupportable, or political institutions life-threatening, neither belonging nor membership appear as natural. Social cleavages – whether by class, kin group, gender, or generation – may push men and women out, may induce or force them to end their membership in the social group of birth: At different points in time elite exertions in the Fulbe societies and in those of the Germanies forced people to reflect on their options. Many decided for out-migration. So did peoples annexed by Central America’s Mexica – or “Aztec” – Empire, some of the Chinese Empire’s many peoples, and many others.²

Just as belonging, under the label of ethnic or national identity (singular), has been considered “natural,” the “global,” under the label “globalization,” has been said to be recent – the authoritative (or, perhaps, authoritarian) World Bank dated its beginning precisely to 1982 (Hopkins 2011: 30): Most historians agree that globalization dates from the 1490s when the tri-continental African-Asian-European worlds and the dual American continent (not yet named) became connected. (Earlier contacts from Asia, Europe, and Africa³ across the Pacific and the Atlantic may have existed but, to our knowledge, without long-term consequences).

Internally the two separate worlds had been connected before: transcontinentally and, in maritime regions where people had developed high nautical skills, over-the-seas or transseas. I emphasize the “trans” rather than the older “inter” – as in *international* – because the latter requires two distinct entities separated by a demarcated border line, while “trans” points to the connections across dividing lines or spaces, to continuities created (or, perhaps, merely mentally constructed) by human agency.

I will approach my topic from four angles: (1) migrants’ “funds of knowledge,” (2) newcomers’ “Otherness,” (3) power hierarchies, and (4) connectivity-inclusions-exclusions.

I will conclude by defining belongings of globally mobile men and women as transcultural rather than transnational.

1

Migrants depart as fully socialized persons (unless, as children, accompanying parents – involuntarily perhaps – or being transported by force of strangers). Migrants thus carry their life-practices but not as “cultural baggage” to be discarded somewhere, rather as everyday ways of life in the frame of societal – perhaps elite-imposed – norms, spiritual beliefs, and patterns of interaction. Culture (singular), viewed as comprehensive and binding, in particular by those who benefit from a particular cultural set-up, need to be operationalized by its common members for everyday applicability and usage, to meet chal-

² This essay is based on Hoerder (2002); Harzig, Hoerder and Gabaccia (2009).

³ The Norsepeople’s voyages to “Vinland” are documented. While coastal voyaging from East Asia via the Aleuts to the Pacific Coast of North America had been discussed repeatedly, possible African crossings of the Atlantic have received no attention (Hamdani 1994).

lenges life poses individually and collectively. For the repertoire of options to act “funds of knowledge” is a more useful concept than the umbrella term “culture.” To deal with issues they confront, residents and migrants, by selecting – hopefully – appropriate responses, draw on a range of traditional, recent, or on-the-spot invented strategies of experiencing, working, enjoying, and coping. The “Culture” may be essentialized as an unchangeable, prescriptive whole; “funds of knowledge” are a sum of applicable specifics from which particular options may be selected as appropriate to an issue at hand. Some such funds are specific to individuals (“human capital”), many require smaller or larger communities (“social capital”). Migrants carry their human capital with them/in themselves; they need to re-establish social capital which is place-, space-, and community-specific.⁴

Funds of knowledge, both as human and social capital, are gendered. Most societies globally – if with many variations – have assigned productive (paid) work to men and reproductive (unpaid) work to women. Men perform a specific craft and by social connotation a craft is skilled work, women cook and raise children – by social connotation raising a child is unskilled work. Placing clay or stones while building a palace in Sokoto or a cathedral in Paris thus is skilled, building the personality of a child is unskilled. It took women scholars to point out that the crafts-persons, creating pottery in the mobile Mande society, were women and that, where men in European societies were withdrawn from a family (by military service or imprisonment, for example) children continued their development while, when a mother was withdrawn (most often by death) child mortality skyrocketed.⁵

Our languages, labelled “mother tongues spoken in fatherlands” in the nation-state variant of polities, imply unquestioned ideologies and often lead research into the wrong direction or even prevent a question from being asked altogether. Languages and ideologies are interwoven. The term “migrants” is often implicitly and with ideological intention understood to refer to men. To recreate communities – one kind of belongings – after migration men *and* women are needed. In the limited number of cases globally and over time, in which only men migrate, they associate with local women – for emotional and sexual ties but, more importantly, to access the women’s social capital which, as “strangers,” the migrant men cannot enter or utilize (examples include the Normans, the fur traders in northern Canada, Fulbe pastoralists, Hausa traders, and others).⁶

Belongings, gendered and generational, or self-created and self-decided identifications (plural) – but never a fixed singular identity – thus are based on individual capabilities, social networks, and group constructions.

2

I will now turn from “belonging” to difference or “Otherness.” In-migrants – an open designation as opposed to the single-move, one-way, permanent “immigrants” – are different by practices, beliefs, dress, physiognomy. They are recognizable as such and, usually, they feel different. Such difference – non-belonging, non-membership, and resulting exclusion – has often and, empirically correctly, been equated with discrimination and victimization. However, agency and migrant strategies in the frame of receiving societies’ constraining structures and racial-ethnic-gender ascriptions may be understood from a concept of “Otherness as cultural resource.” Just as whiteness has been analysed as a resource in colonizer migrations, for men and women of subaltern position “foreignness or otherness is [or may be] one of the most substantial and tangible aspects of socio-cultural capital.” In a dialectical relationship, being

4 The concept of “funds of knowledge” was first developed by Emil W. Haury (1976 and 1986). On the processual charter of culture among migrants see Roberts (2006). On social capital see Hébert, Hoerder and Schmitt (2005).

5 The literature on gender and migration has become legion, if only in the last two decades. See for a summary Harzig (2001).

6 See for example on the fur trade Van Kirk (1980).

different permits both entry into a segment of the labour market – the migrants’ goal to be achieved – and their exploitation, a consequence to be avoided, if in any way possible. 19th-century rural migrants’ within and from Europe sought entry into receiving societies’ or polities’ un- and semiskilled labour market segments as pathway to a future with more, or even better options than available in their society of birth. So do migrants from rural to urban regions within Africa or from African societies to one of Europe’s societies today. In-migrant women and men “are hired precisely because they carry a different cultural baggage.” Demand for labour and thus socio-economic development cannot be and could not have been satisfied without the in-coming Others (Harzig 2005 and 2006).

In the present, for example, Otherness permits a female domestic worker “to situate herself outside the” receiving culture with its hierarchical status assignments, which inevitably place her at the bottom. She may take recourse to the memory of her social position at home – if not abject poverty – and pride herself in assuring her family’s survival through remittances. Mobile women (like men) need such resilience because “the race-class-gender systems of ‘importing’ cultures (North America, Europe, the ‘Middle East’) provide for ready access to stereotypes in order to structure and organize historical ‘knowledge’ and present ‘experience.’” Cultural markers – without reference to their funds of knowledge – are attached to the women, ascriptions and hierarchizations are explicit. In Rome, Italy, women from the Philippines are considered suitable for caretaking and more qualified household tasks since they are Catholic and speak Spanish or English (in addition to Tagalog). Somali women, who are black and arrive from Italy’s former colony, are considered inferior.⁷

“Otherness” permits insertion as well as exclusion. It creates a membership at the discretion of institutions experienced as arbitrary but following an employer-receiving society logic. It is, for many in-migrants, an unavoidable stepping stone. It is, for receiving societies, useful for corralling a reservoir of underpaid labour. Still, the economic benefit may be less than the subversive effect: Societies which rest on the claim that all are equal before the law undercut their very foundational principles. Societies which construct their national culture as superior find the underpaid engaging in processes of resistance and of adding new practices to allegedly “traditional” ways of life.

3

The discussion of usages of otherness has led us, quite perceptibly, to power hierarchies or, to emphasize agency also in this process, to hierarchization. The differences that women from the Philippines and Somalia experience among employers point to placement in inferior position,

- first, by racializing construction of a group by colour of skin,
- second, by historical construction: former violent (military) subjection, colonization,
- third, through religious difference or proximity,
- and, fourth, in result of the preceding, as regards present economic level, through imposed lower wages.

The poor – better, again to emphasize agency: the poorly remunerated, impoverished – are inferior by implication of our language connotations and social structures. Imposed and tradition-supported hierarchies and excluding structures are far cheaper instruments of power imposition than armies and police forces.

The history of forced migration systems – slavery in its many forms, indentured servitude, transportation of serfs, and the Stalinist-Fascist-and-South African forced labour and migration systems – indicated how construction of inferiority, actual imposition of power, and work for exploiters are entwined and mutually supportive.

⁷ Chell (1997). For a study of cultural markers of a migrant group in Kenya see Balaton-Chrimes (2011).

The history of nation-building indicates how assigned belonging is used by bureaucrat-ideologues and their enforcement apparatuses to impose forced repatriation or expulsion: Once “democratic” nations – a late 19th-century invention in contrast to “absolutist” dynastic polities – were constructed as monocultural (and unchanging from times immemorial), “nationals” and “minorities” began to be shifted around, Turks to the new Turkey, Greeks to the new Greece, Germans to the core region of its contracting territory. “The growth of the modern nation-state implied not only the naming of certain peoples as enemies of the nation, but also the expulsion of significant groups for whom the state would or could not assume responsibility. [...] Wars] schooled the new masters of the state apparatus: civilians could become dangerous enemies; [...] it was best to eject unwanted or menacing groups when they threatened to weaken the beleaguered nation.” The oft-used term “ethnic cleansing” implies that dirt is removed and the clean, pure elements remain. Internal ethno-cultural expulsion, severance of being part, is as much an aspect of nation-building as is the construction of external inferiors in colonies (Marrus 1985: 51).

In a worldwide perspective, migration “flows” are constrained by “global apartheid” (Richmond 1994). An industrialized northern, predominantly white segment (but not “hemisphere”) of the world excludes migrants of other colours of skin from societies further south and, until recently, less powerful. Not globalization as interconnectedness is new – new are the shifting power hierarchies from the few, comparatively small newly industrialized states (e.g. Japan, South Korea) of the 1980s to the rise of China-India-Brazil-Russia (BRIC) and the defection of investment (but not financial) capital from the old white core to the new other-coloured spaces of production.

These shifting economic, political, and military hierarchies lead to new directions of migration, new forms of inclusion and exclusion. The regime of global apartheid, a concept of the 1990s, is replaced by many apartheids and exclusions. Expulsions of non-citizens in Ghana, segregation of internal rural migrants in China’s expanding cities. The colonizer-colonized division, through a transitory phase of decolonization, and a (simplified) white vs. the rest-of-the world phase, is becoming multipolar. Migrations are multidirectional rather than predominantly south-north (the latter often along paths once established by the colonizers, but in reverse direction). Their imposition of colonizer languages and construction of transport routes for raw materials, plantation-regime-produced foods, and other products, in a side effect, created migration routes – created linguistic and travelling funds of knowledge appropriated by those viewed as “Others” (Hoerder 2002: Chap. 16, 19, 20).

4

Potential migrants need to cover the cost of their voyages. Since most have extremely few resources, they have to calculate routes and income-generating options after arrival very carefully. The 19th-century “to America” or the 20th-century “to Europe” is no more than a literary trope or an advertising slogan of states in need of labour forces. Self-willed migrants rely on connections and, ideally, known routes; refugees usually have far fewer possibilities to operationalize prior connections. Few potential migrants strike out as – the much-hyped “pioneers” who, in our languages, by implication “happen” to be male. Around 1900, 94 percent of the migrants to the U.S. declared as final destination a place where kin or acquaintances lived. Migrants from Senegal head for “France” because of familiarity with the language but settle in specific communities of earlier, culturally proximate migrants. These serve as anchor point and resource base to facilitate the immediate insertion into the respective local job-market (in a labour market segment commensurate with the migrants’ skills or lack of them) and who will help in stepwise acculturation. This strategy intends to prevent economic disaster and mental-physical rupture. Migrants did and do not cut belongings, they reduce or deactivate existing ones while intensifying or creating new ones. As much as they can, they try to avoid being “in between” or “in limbo.”

Still, it needs to be emphasized that migrants may receive correct information but, within their mental grids of meaning, cannot decode it. When South Slav migrants around 1900 wrote back home

that they could afford shoe polish, their relatives “knew” that they were living “like lords” since in the inhospitable home only lords could afford to wear shoes. Around 2000, people on an island off Senegal’s coast know that in Paris migrants are paid to clean streets and they know that they have capabilities to do better than that. Thus they migrate on the inference that a society that pays street-cleaners is endowed enough to pay people in more productive jobs (Hoerder 1996).

Thus, a core aspect of migration is connectivity: information flows, prepaid tickets, advice on where to cross a border. This benefits migrants and receiving society. In the 19th-century North Atlantic World’s “open doors”-regime, receiving states incurred almost no cost. In fact, though never acknowledged, they benefitted from the migrants’ human capital “paid for” by child-raising in the family-of-birth and training and educational systems of the society-of-origin. The migrants, rather than support the socialization of the next generation “at home,” contribute taxes to the receiving society. Comparatively easy inclusion regimes reduced costs for migrants and states. Exclusion regimes – which began with the exclusion from the U.S. of Chinese women in 1875⁸ and were operationalized with the exclusion of dark East and olive South Europeans 1917-1921-1924 (Gabaccia 2005) – increase cost for all parties and institutions involved. One difference between excluding factors before and after the 1940s is the development of insurance-like social security systems. Newcomers have no dues-paying record. In European countries this could be glossed over in the 1950s, because migrant (rotatory guest) workers became dues-paying members (but not citizens) upon arrival. Once, from the 1980s, the traditional receiving states’ capital shifted to investment in low-wage societies elsewhere, not only did job options decline rapidly, the strain on the social security systems – intended for life-course crises and old age but not systemic problems – also increased rapidly. Rather than pro-actively adjust structures, segments of “western” societies blamed immigrants – the earlier anti-Semitism was remade into an equally racialized anti-immigrantism. What I have discussed for migrants reaching Europe and other segments of the Atlantic World, with variations applies to migrants reaching cities in China, or Brazil, Kenya, or Russia.

5

Migrants’ connectivity to their state of departure has been called “transnationalism” in the early 1990s, a term not quite as new as its catchwordy reception made it out to be. However, *historians* of migration – since the 1880s socialized in and bound to nation-state ideologies, perhaps were imprisoned in them – had reduced and nationalized such connections to nation-to-ethnic enclave moves: Chinese to Chinatowns, Germans to Little Germanies, and Africans to Black quarters. Multiple identifications and flexible selection between belongings was not what nation-building was about. The anthropologists, who coined the term “transnationalism,” referred to Filipino/a migrants and to refugees from Guatemala (Schiller, Basch, Blanc-Szanton 1992). The former come from many regional and island cultures, from urban and rural backgrounds; many of the refugees were of Maya culture and had never been accepted as full members in what elites considered the Guatemalan nation. Furthermore, the terms assumes that migrants establish connections between nations while all empirical evidence shows linkages between communities, those of departure and those of destination (or several of them in sequence): connections are translocal.

Local places are embedded in economic regions and people are trained in skills that fit the regional jobs. To utilize their skills to the best, they (have to) select destinations with similar economies (or accept a process of deskilling). Thus they migrate transregionally⁹ and carry this specific culture with them – but upon arrival are labelled by generalization, since the 19th-century usually a national one. North

8 The Page Act of 1875 was meant to “end the danger of cheap Chinese labor and immoral Chinese women” entering the U.S. (Peffer 1986: esp. p. 28).

9 On this level, data usually include women (and, if migrating, children). The data-bias towards migrating men occurs mainly when people are counted at international borders.

Germans, Rhinelanders, Saxons, and the many others became “Germans” (in an earlier period “Saxons” or “Swabians”) because none of their new neighbours could differentiate between backgrounds. If knowledge of the places of origin is even lower, ever larger blanket categories emerge: “Orientals,” “Africans,” “the Chinese.” This ascriptive “nationalization” of difference could prove useful in receiving polities that offered opportunities for political participation – in systems based on elections there is (or may be) power in numbers.

The translocal-transregional migrants, from the emergence of entry regulations from the mid-1870s via the “invention” of the passport (Torpey 2000) to the 1920s and after, had to deal with frames set by states – they move trans-state or, perhaps, inter-state. The term “transnational” conflates generalized cultures (with no conceptual place for people designated as “minorities”) with political structures. This, of course, is based on the ideology of nation-states, an elite-imposed concept of belonging that combines states, which since the Age of Revolution – at least in theory – treat every person as equal before the law, with a nation which hierarchizes a national majority over smaller groups on the same territory. “Nation-state” is an ideology, not an analytical frame. From migrants it demands unconditional surrender of difference to be admitted to the nation.

Thus, translocal and transregional migrants face inter-state frames and from the late-19th-century nationalization of educational systems and the 20th-century state-wide social security systems – both developments later in decolonizing societies – carry national-cultural and state-institutional practices with them (Hoerder 2012).

“Transcultural” provides the overarching perspective for the different spatial and structural levels (Hoerder 2010: Chap. 14). The spatial extent, to be determined empirically, is often layered: local, regional, state-wide/national, or transstate as in “the German-language region” or Maghreb societies – in the culture of departure as well as in the receiving one: through the entry regulations of, for example, France to a particular job-providing region and a community in a Marseilles or Paris suburb.

The concept of “transculturation” was first developed in distinct society-specific approaches in Cuba, in Brazil, and in Canada. A few open-minded U.S. scholars came to similar conclusions independently. The majority of knowledge-producers, to the 1970s, preferred the term “uprooted” for migrants’ experiences which fit the reigning ideology (in its numerous variants) but never the data. The reconceptualization of belonging and membership occurred from the 1980s (Ortiz 1940). And with the increasing range of destinations, faster transportation, and cheaper communication, migrants have become “global” and “local” or “glocal.” Thus the study of “transcultural lives in a globalized world” is the agenda for migration studies in the next years.

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POVZETEK

Pripadanje, članstvo in mobilnost v globalni zgodovini

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Empirični podatki o »pripadanju« izkazujejo tesno povezanost z viri v družbi rojstva ali bivanja. Na Kitajskem so se moški in ženske k boljšim virom selili že med 8. in 13. stoletjem; jugozahodna regija je zgodnje nemške emigracije izkusila sredi 18. stoletja; v sušnih predelih Sahela se dogajajo še danes – če navedemo samo nekaj primerov v času in kraju.

»Dom« ali kraj rojstva nas morda ne more preživeti in je lahko nepravilčen ali nevaren. Kadar viri – v kateremkoli zgodovinskem obdobju – postanejo nezadostni, družbene delitve na razred, sorodstveno pripadnost, spol ali generacijo pa nevzdržne, moški in ženske pretehtajo dane možnosti in se morda odločijo za selitev in s tem za spremembo pripadnosti.

Vsakršne začasne predstave o »globalizaciji« je treba nadomestiti z dolgotrajnimi perspektivami. Migracija prostore povezuje transkontinentalno in čezmorsko oziroma prekomorsko. »Trans« kaže na povezanost preko črte razlikovanja, na kontinuiteto, ki jo ustvarja (ali morda zgolj konstruira v duhu) človeška dejavnost, medtem ko tradicionalni »inter« – na primer internacionalno – zahteva jasne entitete, ločene z razmejivnimi črtami.

1. »Zakladnice znanja« migrantov: migranti odidejo kot socializirane osebe in »kulturne prtljage« ne zavržejo. Namesto tega jo uporabijo in se z njeno pomočjo spopadajo s težavami. Nekatere »kulturne prtljage« so lastne posamezniku (»človeški kapital«), druge potrebujejo manjšo ali večjo skupnost (»družbeni kapital«). Če migranti s seboj prinesejo človeški kapital, pa morajo znova vzpostaviti družbeni kapital, povezan s prostorom in skupnostjo. Pripadanje – po spolu ali generaciji – ali identifikacije (množina), ki jih ustvarimo ali za katere se odločimo sami – nikoli pa niso fiksna singularna identiteta – so tako utemeljeni na individualnih sposobnostih, družbenih mrežah in skupinskih konstrukcijah.

2. »Drugost« novih prišlekov: migranti so zaradi prepoznavne drugačnosti lahko diskriminirani. V omejujočih strukturah družb prejemnic in rasno-etnično-spolnem pripisovanju je migrantske strategije mogoče razumeti iz koncepta »drugosti kot kulturnega vira«; »drugost« dopušča vnašanje pa tudi izključevanje.

3. Hierarhije moči in pripadanja: Manjvredni položaji, ki jih zasedajo migranti, vključujejo rasizem, historično podrejanje in kolonizacijo, verske razlike ali podobnosti, zaradi vsiljenih nizkih plač pa tudi slabe življenjske razmere. Zgodovina oblikovanja naroda kaže, kako birokrati – ideologi določajo in instrumentalizirajo razlike. Svetovni migracijski »tokovi« so omejeni z »globalnim apartheidom«.

4. Povezljivost-vključevanje-izključevanje: potencialni migranti se povežejo s sidrnimi točkami in viri zgodnejših prišlekov. Enostavno sprejemanje s strani družbe prejemnice znižuje stroške vključevanja, medtem ko režimi izključevanja vsem vključenim stranem in inštitucijam povečujejo stroške.

5. Transkulturno pripadanje: medtem ko »transnacionalizem« poudarja nacijo in državo, pa se migranti gibljejo translokarno in transregionalno in se soočajo z notranjimi omejitvami držav, in sicer od poznega 19. stoletja z nacionalizacijo izobraževalnih sistemov, v dvajsetem stoletju pa z državnimi sistemi socialne varnosti. Iz tega razloga se v naslednjih letih na področju migracijskih študij v posameznih državah pripravlja študij »transkulturalnih življenj v globaliziranem svetu«.