

# *Methodological Nationalism, the Social Sciences, and the Study of Migration: An Essay in Historical Epistemology*<sup>1</sup>

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The article examines methodological nationalism, a conceptual tendency that was central to the development of the social sciences and underpinned more than a century of migration studies. Methodological nationalism is the naturalization of the global regime of nation-states by the social sciences. Transnational studies, we argue, including the study of transnational migration, is linked to periods of intense globalization such as the turn of the twenty-first century. Yet transnational studies have their own contradictions that may reintroduce methodological nationalism in other guises. In studying migration, the challenge is to avoid both extreme fluidism and the bounds of nationalist thought.

Methodological nationalism is the naturalization of the nation-state by the social sciences. Scholars who share this intellectual orientation assume that countries are the natural units for comparative studies, equate society with the nation-state, and conflate national interests with the purposes of social science. Methodological nationalism reflects and reinforces the identification that many scholars maintain with their own nation-states.<sup>2</sup> We begin by reviewing the deep-seated nature of methodological nationalism in the social sciences. We then examine the way in which postwar migration studies were shaped by methodological nationalism. We add a historical dimension by

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<sup>2</sup>We owe the term to Herminio Martins (1974:276), who mentioned it *en passant* in an article on social theory. See also Smith (1983:26).

outlining how processes of nation-state formation, the creation of and response to migration flows by these states, and the social science description of these phenomena were interlinked in producing this mainstream post-war approach. In the last section we examine the conditions under which a transnational framework for the study of migration arose against this mainstream and show how far it supersedes and how far it merely refurbishes methodological nationalism in new ways.

Our argument focuses on what we perceive as the major, dominant trends in social science thinking of the past century that have shaped migration studies. We do not discuss coterminous currents that contradicted the hegemonic strands. Especially in times of intensified global interconnections, theories reflecting these developments appeared and provided tools for analysis not colored by methodological nationalism. The most obvious of these currents was political economy in the Marxian tradition, always devoting attention to capitalism as a global system rather than to its specific national manifestations, and especially the studies of imperialism by Rosa Luxemburg and others before World War I, when transnational movements of commodities, capital and labor first reached a peak. Wallerstein's world-system theory belongs to a second wave of theorizing that developed in the 1970s, when transnational connections again were intensifying and multiplying. A second and equally important line of development not included in our discussion is methodological individualism in its various forms where the analysis does not rely on explicit reference to larger social entities (such as the school of marginal utility and rational choice in economics and political science or interactionism in sociology).

These views remained heterodox, however, and did not shape the social science program in the same way as the currents discussed in this article. Rather, the epistemic structures and programs of mainstream social sciences have been closely attached to and shaped by the experience of modern nation-state formation. The global forces of transnational capitalism and colonialism that reached their apogee precisely in the period when social sciences formed as independent disciplines left few traces in the basic paradigmatic assumptions of these disciplines and were hardly systematically reflected upon.

### *THE THREE VARIANTS OF METHODOLOGICAL NATIONALISM WITHIN THE SOCIAL SCIENCES*

We have identified three variants of methodological nationalism: 1) ignoring or disregarding the fundamental importance of nationalism for modern soci-

eties; this is often combined with 2) naturalization, *i.e.*, taking for granted that the boundaries of the nation-state delimit and define the unit of analysis; 3) territorial limitation which confines the study of social processes to the political and geographic boundaries of a particular nation-state. The three variants may intersect and mutually reinforce each other, forming a coherent epistemic structure, a self-reinforcing way of looking at and describing the social world. The three variants are more or less prominent in different fields of inquiry. Ignoring is the dominant modus of methodological nationalism in grand theory; naturalization of "normal" empirical social science; territorial limitation of the study of nationalism and state building.

In the first variant of methodological nationalism, ignoring, the power of nationalism and the prevalence of the nation-state model as the universal form of political organization are neither problematized nor made objects of study in their own right. This variant has marked especially the sociological tradition of social theory. As a host of scholars have argued repeatedly, the classic theory of modernity has a blind spot when it comes to understanding the rise of nation-states as well as of nationalism and ethnicity (A. Smith, 1983; Esser, 1988; Guiberneau, 1997; Imhof, 1997; Thompson and Fevre, 2001). In the eyes of Marx, Durkheim, Weber and Parsons, the growing differentiation, rationalization and modernization of society gradually reduced the importance of ethnic and national sentiments. Most classic grand theory was constructed as a series of socio-structural types (from feudalism through capitalism to communism, from *Gemeinschaft* to *Gesellschaft*, organic to mechanic solidarity, traditional to modern society, etc.). Nationalism was attributed to middle stages in the continuum of social evolution, a transitory phenomenon on the way to the fully modern, rationalized and individualized class society based on achievement (*see* A. Smith, 1983; Guiberneau, 1997; Weber, 1895).

The failure of social theory until the 1980s to address the significance and sources of nationalism in the modern world in part can be attributed to the disciplinary division of labor that was established at the beginning of the twentieth century (Wimmer, 1999). The study of the rise of nationalism and the nation-state, of ethnonational wars of nineteenth- and early-twentieth-century Europe was relegated to history.<sup>3</sup> Anthropology, and, later, modern-

<sup>3</sup>There are a few exceptions, such as a small essay by Durkheim written immediately after World War I. French and German social scientists have pointed to the blind spot in their respective literatures (*see* Hondrich, 1992; Radtke, 1996; Taguieff, 1991:46). In the Anglo-Saxon world, the early works on nationalism of historical sociologists such as Deutsch, Kedouri, Gellner and Smith had little impact until recently on mainstream social theory.

ization and development theory in political science took on the study of communal identities and nation building processes outside of Europe and the United States. Sociology focused its attention to the study of modern industrial nations and defined the limits of society as coterminous with the nation-state, rarely questioning the nationalist ideology embedded in such a founding assumption.

Thus, even the most sophisticated theorizing about the modern condition accepted as a given that nationalist forms of inclusion and exclusion bind modern societies together (Berlin, 1998). Nation-state principles were so routinely structured into the foundational assumptions of theory that they vanished from sight. Whether Parsons and Merton or Bourdieu, Habermas and Luhmann: none of these authors discusses in any systematic fashion the national framing of states and societies in the modern age. Interestingly enough, such nation-blind theories of modernity were formulated in an environment of rapidly nationalizing societies and states – sometimes, as was the case with Max Weber and Emile Durkheim, on the eve or in the aftermath of nationalist wars that profoundly structured the course that the modern project has taken in the West.

Empirically oriented social science has displayed what can be understood as a second variant of methodological nationalism, naturalization. They have systematically taken for granted nationally bounded societies as the natural unit of analysis. Naturalization produced the container model of society that encompasses a culture, a polity, an economy and a bounded social group (*cf.* Taylor, 1996). To cast this in an image borrowed from Giddens (1995), the web of social life was spun within the container of the national society, and everything extending over its borders was cut off analytically. Assuming that processes within nation-state boundaries were different from those outside, the social sciences left no room for transnational and global processes that connected national territories.

Naturalization owes its force to the compartmentalization of the social science project into different “national” academic fields, a process strongly influenced not only by nationalist thinking itself, but also by the institutions of the nation-state organizing and channeling social science thinking in universities, research institutions and government think tanks. The major research programs of funding bodies address the solution of national problems in economics, politics, and social services. In most states, universities are linked to national ministries of education that favor research and teaching on issues of “national relevance.” Add to this the fact that almost all statistics and

other systematic information are produced by government departments of nation-states and thus take the national population, economy and polity as their given entity of observation (*cf.* Smith 1983:26; Favell, forthcoming a), and we understand why naturalizing the nation-state has become part of the everyday routine of postwar social sciences, in international relations as much as in economics, history or anthropology.

International relations assumed that nation-states are the adequate entities for studying the world. While the anarchical nature of this interstate system and the changing dynamics of hegemony and polycentrism have been discussed at length, it was only very late that a counter-trend calling for the study of connections forged by nonstate institutions emerged (Nye) or that scholars began to wonder why the global political system emerged as an international one (Mayall, 1990). Similarly, post World War II scholarship on the newly independent states approached nation building as a necessary, although somewhat messy aspect of the decolonization process (*see, e.g.*, Wallerstein, 1961). Nation building and state formation made natural bedfellows in the works of modernization theorists such as Lerner or Rostow, since the nation-state model represented the only thinkable way of organizing politics.

Economics followed a similar trajectory in studying the economy of nationally bounded entities or their relations to each other through trade, capital flows and the like. Since the publication of Adam Smith's "An Inquiry into the Nature and Causes of the Wealth of Nations" (1776 [1789]) and Friedrich List's masterpiece, "Das nationale System der politischen Ökonomie" (List, 1794 [1856]), the distinction between internal economy and external relations has become a guiding principle for the evolution of the discipline. Maynard Keynes and other major political economists of the twentieth century remained faithful to this perspective and took the distinction between national, domestic economy and international, external economy for granted.

Historians also reflect the methodological assumption that it is a particular nation that provides the constant unit of observation through all historical transformations, the "thing" whose change history was supposed to describe (Bender, 2001; Rodgers, 1998). Modern mainstream history was largely written as a history of particular nation-states or of their relations to each other. When in the 1990s the newly reconstituted states of Eastern Europe began to organize their historiography, art history and archaeology, most accounts continued this form of historical narrative.

When anthropology abandoned diffusionism as an explanatory paradigm, it also began to be shaped by variants of methodological nationalism.

The anthropology of ethnic groups within modernizing or industrial nation-states focused on cultural difference from the “majority” population – thus mirroring the nation-state project to define all those populations not thought to represent the “national culture” as racially and culturally different, producing an alterity which contributed to efforts to build unity and identity (Williams, 1989; Glick Schiller, 1978, 1999c; Wimmer, 2002).

Most interestingly, methodological nationalism, often in the form of territorial limitation, also shaped the social science analysis of the nation-state building process itself. Historically, the concepts of the modern state and of a national population have developed within transborder rather than territorially limited national spaces. In many cases, these transborder spaces were delimited by the practice and ideology of colonial and imperial domination, and ideas of popular sovereignty and republican independence were formed within transborder networks of literate circles. We have to think outside of the box of dominant national discourses to see such transborder foundations of particular nation-state building projects, to see the dynamics between English domination of Ireland and English national identity or the linkage between French ideas about citizenship and civilization and the French colonial project (Lebovics, 1992). Accepting the prevailing paradigm that divides a state’s affairs into internal, national matters and international affairs that have to do with state-to-state relations, the history of such transborder and transnational nation-state building becomes invisible. The writing of national histories compounds this invisibility by confining the narrative within state borders.

This tendency of territorial limitation has restricted our understanding of the rise of the modern nation-state in several ways. First, most current theories and histories of democracy have looked at the inner dynamics of the evolving democratic polities and lost sight of the nationalist principles that historically defined its boundaries.<sup>4</sup> As an effect of this segregation, nationalism appears as a force foreign to the history of Western state building. It is the ideology of nondemocratic, non-Western others, projected onto the ethnic violence of Balkan leaders or African tribesmen turned nationalists. Western state building was re-imagined as a non-national, civil, republican and liberal experience, especially in the writings of political philosophers such as Rawls

<sup>4</sup>Thus, with few exceptions, such as Snyder’s (2000) recent book or an essay by the Georgian philosopher Ghia Nodia (1992), it is only during the last decade that the blinders of methodological nationalism have been overcome by going beyond the dichotomy between state and nation without falling into the trap of naturalizing the nation-state (Mann, 1993; Breuilly, 1993; Wimmer, 1996, 2002).

(*cf.* Senn, 1999). However, what we nowadays call ethnic cleansing or ethnocide, and observe with disgust in the “ever troublesome Balkans” or in “tribalistic Africa,” have been constants of the Western European history of nation building and state formation, from the expulsion of Gypsies under Henry VIII and the Muslims and Jews under Fernando and Isabella. Many of these histories have disappeared from popular consciousness – and maybe have to be forgotten if nation building is to be successful, as Ernest Renan (1947 [1882]) suggested some hundred years ago.

State formation and nation building thus have become two separate objects of inquiry. Most scholars of nationalism discussed the nation as a domain of identity – far removed from the power politics of modern state formation. The nation is understood to be a people who share common origins and history as indicated by their shared culture, language and identity (*cf.* Calhoun, 1997; McCrone, 1998; A. Smith, 1998). In contrast, the “state” is conceived as a sovereign system of government within a particular territory (*see* Abrams, 1988; Corrigan and Sayer, 1985; Joseph and Nugent, 1994 for alternative approaches to nation and state). In political science, this has allowed a mainstream theory to emerge, which sees the state as a neutral playing ground for different interest groups – thus excluding from the picture the fact that the modern state itself has entered into a symbiotic relationship with the nationalist political project.

### *DEFINING THE OBJECT OF MIGRATION STUDIES*

In order to understand how methodological nationalism has influenced the study of migration, we will first describe in more detail the relation between nationalist thinking and the container model of society that had come to dominate post World War II social sciences. From this, it will be easy to see why migration has become an important object of inquiry for the social sciences. Modern nationalism fuses four different notions of peoplehood that had developed separately in early modern Europe but later became melted into a single concept of the people: 1) the people as a sovereign entity; 2) the people as citizens of a state holding equal rights before the law; 3) the people as a group of obligatory solidarity, an extended family knit together by obligations of mutual support; and 4) the people as an ethnic community united through common destiny and shared culture.

The isomorphisms between citizenry, sovereign, solidary group and nation entail a congruence of the corresponding boundaries. The state territory at the same time traces the frontiers of the sovereign population, delin-

eates the homeland of the citizenry, defines the borderline between social order and disorder, and distinguishes between the national home and the wilderness of the foreign. Nationalists thus make a fetish of national territory, a sanctuary that deserves to be defended with the blood of the people.<sup>5</sup>

It is easy to see the parallels between a nationalist vision of the social world and the container model of society that had developed in the social sciences and became dominant after World War II. The translation is almost one to one: The citizenry is mirrored in the concept of a national legal system, the sovereign in the political system, the nation in the cultural system and the solidary group in the social system, all boundaries being congruent and together defining the skin holding together the body of society. Borrowing from the image of the stability of the body, the idea of functional integration, so prominent in standard social science thinking up to the 1980s, paralleled the nationalist fusion of four notions of peoplehood into one national corpus. What the "People" is for nationalists, the "Society" is for postwar social scientists.

It should by now become clear why both for nation builders and for social scientists migrants became an object of special attention and inquiry. For both, immigrants must appear as antinomies to an orderly working of state and society, even in societies where past immigration constitutes the foundation myth of the nation. In the first place, immigrants destroy the isomorphism between people, sovereign and citizenry. Immigrants are perceived as foreigners to the community of shared loyalty towards the state and shared rights guaranteed by that state. In recent years, and with a renewed intensity that has increased after September 11, 2001, social science research has been interested in the political activity and loyalty of immigrants, a theme which parallels the nation-state's interest in the supervision, limitation and control of the immigrant population.

Second, immigrants destroy the isomorphism between people and nation. They appear as spots on the pure colors of the national fabric, reminding nationalist state builders and social scientists alike of the ethnic minorities that have been "absorbed" into the national body through the politics of forced assimilation and benevolent integration. Immigrants thus represented a renewed challenge to the nation building project and point to the fragility

<sup>5</sup>The shift to territorially fixed boundaries coincides with the establishment of centralized kingdoms, thus preceding the nationalization of modern states (*cf.* Guernée, 1986). However, the establishment of frontier posts, the physical demarcation of frontiers and the sacralization of the national territory are all linked to the emergence of nation-states (Nordman, 1996).



of its achievements – especially in places where the nation had never been imagined as plural and itself constituted of former immigrants.

It is this logic which has induced generations of migration studies to measure and scrutinize the cultural differences between immigrants and nationals and to describe pathways of assimilation into the national group; in short, to deliver a description of the mechanics of a successful nation-making process (*cf.* Favell, forthcoming b). The taken-for-granted assumptions of methodological nationalism preclude problematizing or researching the class and cultural diversity within the reference group of the national community (*cf.* Waldinger, 2000).

The different postwar theories of immigrant integration – from the Chicago school's assimilationism through multiculturalism to contemporary neo-assimilationism – all presuppose that the relevant entities to be related are a nation-state society on the one hand and immigrants coming from outside this nation-state society on the other. Integration is always thought of as being established, less problematic, less fragile among those belonging to the national people.

Third, immigrants destroy the isomorphism between people and group of solidarity. They are not meant to be part of the system of social security that the national community has developed in New Deals and Beveridge Plans, because they come “from outside” into the national space of solidarity. On the other hand, they cannot be completely excluded from the emerging welfare systems, because these are historically and institutionally tied to the work process for which many immigrants were recruited (*cf.* Bommes and Halfmann, 1994). Due to this tension, immigrants' integration into the welfare systems had a touch of illegitimacy and abuse. A whole branch of postwar immigration studies has, especially in Europe, studied the implications of immigration for national welfare systems, analyzed immigrant unemployment, traced the dynamics of slum development and ghettoization, tried to understand the culture of poverty in which immigrants were thought of as being trapped. In quantitative studies, following the logic of methodological nationalism, immigrants usually have been compared to “national means” of income, of children per family, of percentages of unemployment and welfare dependence, taking for granted that this would be the adequate unit of comparison (*cf.* Vertovec's [1999] review of studies on “social cohesion”). They are rarely compared to sectors of a national population which they resemble in terms of income or education. However, when such comparisons are made, immigrants often do better than the nonimmigrant population (*cf.* Rumbaut

and Cornelius, 1995 for the United States; Bolzmann *et al.*, 2000 for Switzerland).

Fourth, in the eyes of nation-state builders and social scientists alike, every move across national frontiers becomes an exception to the rule of sedentariness within the boundaries of the nation-state. A major branch of postwar migration studies and a whole series of specialized research institutes have developed analyzing such cross-border movements, the push-and-pull mechanisms driving them, the networks of chain migration sustaining them, the role of social and cultural capital in limiting and directing them. Only the migration of noncitizens is in the focus of this body of literature, not the “return” migration of co-nationals traced across several centuries, such as the *Aussiedler* (usually translated as ethnic Germans) in Germany. And only cross-national migration is the object of migration studies. “Internal” migration of citizens from one city to another, from deindustrializing areas to booming metropolises, is not considered a problem deserving special attention and either goes completely unnoticed or is seen as a part of the study of urbanization processes and thus dealt with in academic fields separated from migration studies. Cross-border migration, by contrast, appears as an anomaly, a problematic exception to the rule of people staying where they “belong,” that is, in “their” nation-state. Postwar migration studies thus naturalized this belonging, moving it into the background of social science reasoning and transforming it into one of its nonquestionable axioms.

### *PHASES OF NATION BUILDING AND DISCOURSES ON IMMIGRATION*

So far our argument has largely been conceptual and abstract, proceeding through analogies between the ideologies of nation-state building and the conceptual schemes of the social sciences and of postwar migration studies. We should now like to historically situate this relationship and sketch a broad picture of how different phases of nation-state formation have influenced both the state’s attitude towards migrations and the way that these have been conceptualized by the social sciences. We will see that the postwar situation, with nationalist closure paralleling container reasoning in the social sciences, is the result of a long history of interaction between nation-state building, migratory flows and social science discourse.

The scenario for telling this story is a world expanding and contracting in phases of globalization and nationalization, but still remaining – as a perspective not limited by methodological nationalism allows us to see – an

interconnected realm of cross-border relationships. From such a perspective, we may have a better view on how nation-state building, migration and the social science project are related to each other. We identify four periods, painting the changes that are of interest in broad strokes so as to gain an overview of the landscape and using dates as only approximate markers of global historical transformations: 1870–1918, 1919–1945, 1946–1989, 1990–present, the last phase being discussed in a section of its own.

### *Phase I: The Prewar Era*

Our historical portrait begins in a period that stems from the 1870s to World War I. The period was marked by two trends that were related to each other in complex ways that are rarely explored. This was a time that was simultaneously one of nation-state building and intensive globalization. While industries developed within the confines of these nationalizing states, protected by tariffs from competing capitalist interests, commercial competition tied to concepts of national interest launched a new period of colonialism. This was the epoch in which European states “scrambled” for Africa, as well as a time of heightened competition between European states and the United States for the control of raw materials produced in the Caribbean, Latin America and Asia. It was also a period in which, as part of this effort to monopolize sources of raw materials and obtain labor for their production, imperialism was practiced and theorized.

In response to these various and interactive developments, labor migration was widespread, spanning the globe. Free workers selling their labor force on a newly established world market for labor made up a section of this migration. Another section was composed of indentured laborers replacing slaves on the plantations or constructing railroads and other major infrastructure projects all around the world, especially in the colonies (Potts, 1990). Poles and Italians migrated to northern France, Switzerland welcomed diverse populations, England saw influxes from the continent, and German industrial development fueled migrations from the east and south. Brazil welcomed migrants from Europe, the Middle East and Japan. Indians and Chinese laborers went to the Caribbean and southern and eastern Africa. Mexicans, Turks, Syrians and populations from southern and Eastern Europe migrated to the United States.

The United States, now portrayed as historically a land of immigrants, unlike European states, was actually the first and for a time the only state to erect any significant barriers, when it passed the Chinese exclusion act in

1882. For a certain period, Germany, which contained within its borders land that had been part of an earlier Polish state, tightly controlled and supervised the movement of Polish speakers, but not of Italians and other immigrants. In general, however, this was a period when not even passports and entry documents were required. Most European countries abolished the passport and visa systems they had installed in the first half of the nineteenth century after France took the lead in eliminating such barriers to the free movement of labor in 1861 (Torpey, 2000). Some states tried to keep workers from leaving, fearing labor shortages, but these efforts were relatively ineffective. Switzerland, France, England, Germany, the United States, Brazil and Argentina built industrialized economies with the help of billions of labor migrants who worked in factories, fields, mills and mines.

Workers migrated into regions in which there was industrial development and returned home or went elsewhere when times were bad. Many maintained their home ties, sent money home to buy land, and supported home areas with remittances. At the same time, at the beginning of this period it was still easy for migrants to gain citizenship even in Germany. This easy access to citizenship reflected the fact that the term “the people” was still basically defined in terms of shared citizenship rights – the people as nation and as a group of mutual solidarity were important only in the coming period of nation-state building. Mirroring the lack of barriers to migration and the open citizenship regimes, E. G. Ravenstein (1889), in the first systematic analysis of migration, did not differentiate analytically between internal and international migration. Instead, Ravenstein treated all movements of people across the terrain as part of a single phenomenon, largely determined by the distribution of economic opportunities over physical space. He found that international migration followed the same “laws” as internal migration, maintaining that in all cases migration consisted of movements from country to town and from poorer to richer areas (Ravenstein, 1889:286)

Yet the nation-state building that emerged within this period of globalization eventually fostered conceptualizations of “the people” that would dramatically affect migration and alter the way in which social scientists thought about migration. An “ethnic” and/or “racial” concept began to replace the “civic” approach to peoplehood, initially articulated by Enlightenment philosophers and concretized in the course of the U.S., French and Haitian revolutions. “The people” began to mean a nation united by common ancestry and a shared homeland, no matter where its members might have wandered. This concept of people gave each nation its own national character, its peculiar

nature and homeland, and a claim to a place in the sun. This nationalized view of the people developed within a growing competition for political pre-eminence in Europe. National chauvinisms and racisms legitimated both the colonial empire building of the period and the culmination of this competition in World War I. It was in the context of this competition and of the salience of ideas about nation and race that nation-state builders, including elites, political leaders, state officials and intellectuals, initiated systematic efforts to erase, deny or homogenize the internal cultural and national diversity that existed within all of the industrializing states of Europe and the Americas.

In this paper we are particularly concerned with the role of the social sciences in this reconceptualization. The social sciences emerged as distinct intellectual enterprises during this period and were both shaped by and contributed to the transformation of concepts of nation and immigrant. In the transition from civic to nationalized concepts of the people, folklore studies in Europe and anthropology in both Europe and the United States played a crucial role. Increasingly, nations were seen as organic wholes, nourished by the pure lore, tradition or rural virtue of the peasant, yeoman or farmers. Ideas about nation as races based on blood were popularized globally, entering into the nation-state building projects and imperial ideologies used to legitimate colonial expansion (Dikötter, 1997). Meanwhile, sociology developed those grand schemes of progress – from tradition to modernity, community to society – that made the national framing of these epochal transformations invisible.

Distinctions drawn between natives and colonizers or between immigrants and natives served to homogenize and valorize the national culture of the colonizing country and popularize the notion that it was a unitary and bounded society, distinguishable from the subordinated peoples by a racial divide (Hall, McClelland and Rendall, 2000; Gilroy, 1991; Glick Schiller, 1999a, b; Lebovics, 1992; Rafael, 1995; Stoler, 1989). Nation-state building in France, England and even the United States (as it took on colonies and began to police the Caribbean) was shaped by distinctions popularized from social science. As nationalist concepts of people and society took hold, the conception of immigrants began to change. By the turn of the century, while the flow of migration generally remained unrestricted, migrants began to be conceptualized as continuing to have memberships in their ancestral homelands. Many actors contributed to popularizing this idea, and it was in many ways only the other side of the conceptualization of the world as divided up into peoples, each made up of a national citizenry and sovereign. The pres-

ence of non-national citizens thus became a major risk for national sovereignty and security.

On the other hand, and again conforming to the newly nationalized notion of peoplehood, emigrant-sending states, including Italy and Austro-Hungary, started to see their emigrants as still members of their home countries and expected them to return (Cinel, 1982; Harrington, 1982; Wyman, 1993). Remittances from abroad were understood to be a significant part of the economies of many regions. Emigrant-sending states established institutions to protect emigrants as well as police them. Areas of Europe in which nationalist struggles percolated dispersed political exiles, who continued to wage their struggles transnationally. In exile these leaders saw the dispersed workers of their region as compatriots and sought to engender within them nationalist identities and emotions through meetings, newspapers, and religious and fraternal organizations. Emigrant workers who moved back and forth between home regions and countries of immigration both within Europe and across the Atlantic to the Americas began to become engaged in these nation-state building projects in their homelands. Both European and Asian immigrants began to believe that the degree of respect they would be accorded abroad would be increased if the power and prestige of their motherland increased, and many became fervent nationalists (Cinel, 1982; Kwong, 1987).

All these transnational political activities and engagements seemed to justify the fears of nationalizing states that immigrants undermined the stability and territorial boundedness of the nation. By the end of this first period, immigrants had come to be seen as politically dangerous and nationally or racially fundamentally different others whose presence endangered the isomorphism between citizenry, sovereign and state. Meanwhile, in Europe, political leaders who faced the political repercussions of intensive industrialization, the vast disparities between rich and poor exacerbated by processes of globalization, and internationalist revolutionary workers movements fanned the wave of distrust and hatred to non-nationals that exploded with the outbreak of the Great War.

### *Phase II: From World War I to the Cold War*

The Great War ended the period of the free movement of labor and other aspects of intensive globalization. The disruption of economies, first by war and the reconstitution of many regions into newly independent states along national lines, contributed to the continuing closure of borders instituted as

part of national defenses of these newly nationalizing states. At the same time, the warlike process of nation-state formation, with all its ethnic cleansings and the mass denaturalizations it entailed, was (and still is) the major force producing refugees who seek to cross borders in search of security and peace (Zolberg, 1983; Sassen, 1999) – a paradox that constituted a major preoccupation of Hanna Arendt's *The Origins of Totalitarianism* (1951).

The mass slaughtering in the name of national honor and independence had given the idea of a national community of destiny an unprecedented plausibility, making national affiliations a question of life and death not only in the trenches but in the larger society as well. Distinguishing between friend and foe on the basis of national background had become commonsense practice and ideology. The success of the Russian Revolution fanned the surveillance of migrants as potential threats to national security and reinforced the differentiation between national and foreign ideas and ideologies. The political turbulence of the times, in which the Great Depression was countered by revolutionary politics with armed insurrection in Germany and the rise of Republican Spain, contributed to the efforts by nationalist states to police borders and limit the movements of political and labor activists.

Previous efforts at developing a system of migration control were revised and developed into historically novel forms of border policing. It now became necessary for a person to have a permit to enter a country and reside there, creating both the differentiation between nationals – who did not need such permits – and foreigners, as well as between legal and illegal residents of states. The power to issue permits became concentrated in the central government. In the United States, this power strengthened the position of the federal government and its role in the delineation of the nation from its enemies. In Europe, the new regime of visas began to link the right to reside in a country with a work permit, virtually defining a foreigner as a temporary worker. In short, an entire central state apparatus of overseeing, limiting and controlling immigration was institutionalized between the wars. Immigrants, by the logic of border control and rising security concerns, were now natural enemies of the nation.

Meanwhile, the devastation of the war in Europe had disrupted the transnational ties of family members abroad by impeding the sending of letters, money and packages. As refugees fled from war zones in Europe and borders changed, many transmigrants living in the United States lost track of their families, some permanently. The massive unemployment and poverty of the Depression also made it difficult to send remittances. People thrown out of work in the Americas returned to the homes they had been building in

their regions of origin. At the same time, limits on immigration in the United States effectively halted the back and forth travel that had been a mainstay of immigrant families, communities and nationalists before the war. Similar developments occurred for migrants within Europe.

The brief period between World War I and World War II was a turning point in the growth of methodological nationalism, and it is in this period that the mainstream concept of immigration – as discussed in the previous section – developed. The social sciences began to play an important role in this conceptualization. The Chicago School of sociology elaborated the first systematic approach to migration. Their models carried with them a series of national values and norms about the way in which immigration was to be understood. They established a view of each territorially based state as having its own, stable population, contrasting them to migrants who were portrayed as marginal men living in a liminal state, uprooted in one society and transplanted into another. They advocated assimilation, not by formulating plans for societal intervention but by proposing a “race-relations cycle” in which the process of acculturation and assimilation of immigrants occurred normally and naturally in the course of several generations (Park, 1950). Their casual use of the word race accepted the conflation of race and nation and placed together southern and eastern European immigrants, Jewish immigrants, and African Americans as all racially different from mainstream America, although with different degrees of distance that would affect their rates of assimilation. The movement of immigrants was counter-posed to the immigrant receiving state, whose society seemed fixed within a homogenous national culture. The placing of African Americans with immigrants within the race-relations cycle, portrayed them as outside of the nation, although they had been part of the Americas since the period of conquest. This discursive move marked the nation as white and normalized the color line (Williams, 1989; Lieberman, 1980).

Immigrants were now seen not only as a security risk, but also as destroying the isomorphism between nation and people and thus a major challenge to the ongoing nation building project, constantly forcing the machinery of assimilation to absorb new waves of cultural heterogeneity. The fact that nation-state building was an ongoing process and that the state contained within its borders significant differences between classes, cultures, genders and regions became more difficult to perceive. National integration and cultural homogeneity of the national society were taken as givens. While seemingly ahistorical, these concepts were very much a product of the col-



lapse of the globalized world during World War I and the Great Depression of the 1930s. In fact, it seems to us that it was the reduced degree of global economic integration during this period that prompted and facilitated the qualitative leap in nation-state building and the emergence of the container model in the social sciences that the Chicago School helped to propagate. Social order contained within the nation-state became the taken-for-granted premise of the new social science as well as of migration studies. Even the fact that there had been a period of free labor migration within previous periods of globalization was soon forgotten. As the new image of migration as threatening social order became dominant, the social movements that had so readily crossed borders and fueled political and intellectual life also faded first from view and then from memory, including the internationalism of labor, the first women's movement, pan-Africanism, and various forms of "long distance nationalism" (Gabaccia, 2000; Gilroy, 1993; Lemelle and Kelley, 1994; Rodgers, 1998). In point of fact, the actual data produced by the Chicago School and those influenced by this school demonstrated ongoing and significant transnational familial, religious, economic and political ties of most migrant populations. However, because their vision was limited by the container model of society, all evidence of transnational connections was defined as a transitory phenomenon that would disappear in the wake of a natural process of assimilation.

### *Phase III: The Cold War*

During the period known as the Cold War, the blind spot became a blindness, an almost complete erasure of the historical memories of transnational and global processes within which nation-states were formed and the role of migration within that formation. Modernization theory made it look as if Western Europe and United States had developed national identities and modern states within their own territorial confines rather than in relationship to a global economy and flows of ideas. The growth of the United Nations and the granting of formal independence to most former colonies popularized a vision of the world as divided into a host of nation-states of equal significance and sovereignty. The European postwar terrain of displaced persons and refugees was rapidly reordered by the insistence that everyone must belong somewhere. In the United States, schoolchildren read morality tales about the "man without a country" and sang patriotic songs that celebrated their "native land." Throughout the world, civic education had become equated with lessons in patriotism. People were envisioned as each having only one nation-state, and belonging to human-

ity was thought to require a national identity. The social sciences neither investigated nor problematized this assumption.

By recalling just briefly the Cold War context in which the social sciences grew to maturity, we can gain some additional insights into the way methodological nationalism of migration studies was shaped by this environment. In Europe, the competition with the Soviet Union spurred the development of social democratic ideologies and a form of social welfare capitalism. The people now comprised not only a nation, citizenry and a sovereign, but a group of solidarity as well. With the establishment of national welfare states, the nationalist project reached its culmination and fulfillment. Membership in this group of solidarity was a privilege, and state boundaries marked the limitation of access to these privileges (*cf.* Wimmer, 1998a).

In addition, Cold War tensions and suspicions called for an ever tighter policing of borders and a careful investigation of the motives of all those seeking to cross national borders. Immigration became ever more problematic. To cross the Iron Curtain, one had to be a political refugee. In the West, only those who fled communism were allocated the right to move and resettle permanently. Otherwise, the consensus held that national borders should limit the flow of populations and serve as vessels within which national cultures were contained and cultivated. Yet as industrial structures became reconstituted in the wake of war, and after depression and war had depopulated the old continent, new demands for labor arose in Western Europe and the United States.

In this conjuncture, England, France and the Netherlands turned to their own colonial populations, populations who had been educated to see the colonial power as the motherland, and shared language and a system of education with those motherlands. Germany sought to restrict and control influxes of workers by the use of labor contracts that recruited guestworkers. The United States used a bit of both strategies, utilizing its colonial Puerto Rican populations and developing the *Bracero* Program of Mexican contract labor. While seeming very different, both strategies provided for the needs of industry while minimizing the challenge to the concept if not the practice of national closure, naturalized and normalized by social science.

In the United States, despite massive efforts at assimilation, the previous waves of immigrants settled in urban areas maintained their national identities, even if their cultural practices were increasingly similar to their working class neighbors (Gans, 1982). These groups were designated "nationalities" in popular parlance, reflecting ideologies about national belonging of

the prewar period. Politicians campaigning in immigrant neighborhoods during this period recognized these connections, promising to develop or support American foreign policies to help the homelands of whatever nationality group they were addressing – Irish, Italian, Polish, Serbian or Greek (Glick Schiller, 1999a, b; Redding, 1958; Weed, 1973). But due to the limitations that the container model of society imposed on the social sciences, much of this history has yet to be recovered. In the United States, until Glazer and Moynihan's (1963) seminal statement to move "beyond the melting pot," the social sciences ignored these persisting identities and the ways in which U.S. urban political life was organized to give salience to competing ethnic groups, rather than respond to class-based discourse (*cf.* Steinberg, 1989). Instead, immigrants were portrayed as uprooted from their homelands, and much time and resources were invested in measuring rates and degrees of assimilation.

Much of this rhetoric changed abruptly in the 1960s in the United States, and the effects of these changes on the rhetoric of nation-state building and on social science resonated around the world, especially after the end of the Cold War. The catalyst for the changes was the U.S. civil rights movement that exposed the unstated but institutionalized equation of American identity with whiteness. As black activists strove to develop for themselves a differentiated and contestational political identity, they reached back to the pre-war pan-African movement and rekindled an African-American cultural politic (Ture and Hamilton, 1992 [1967]). In the wake of the Black Power movement, other populations, which had been excluded from the U.S. racialized nation building project with its normative whiteness, began to elaborate ideologies of cultural pluralism (Glick Schiller Barnett, 1975; Glick Schiller, 1977; Steinberg, 1989; Glazer and Moynihan, 1963). In this context, which included the Cold War implications of the exposure of U.S. racism, the racially construed national quotas embedded in the U.S. immigration law were finally eliminated in 1965.

### *BEYOND METHODOLOGICAL NATIONALISM?*

The contemporary period of globalization has transformed migration studies with the emergence of a transnational paradigm. The economic restructuring of contemporary globalization marked by new ways to organize and expedite the rapid flow of capital dates back to the 1970s. The worldwide recession and the oil crisis in the 1970s, which may have spurred the new period of globalization, stimulated anti-immigrant movements throughout Europe. By

now, it was an accepted response for nationals to blame foreigners for everything, although the very identification of a territorially-based population with a nation-state and with only one was a relatively new invention. The momentum to stop migration as a solution to problems that were in fact of a systemic nature took different forms in different locations and was implemented with increasing severity in the course of twenty years, limited the citizenship rights of former colonial populations and abruptly ended guestworker programs. The rhetorics of zero immigration masked the fact that the door was left open for continuing immigration of family members, highly skilled immigrants, and persons categorized as political refugees. In point of fact, the rapid pace of contemporary globalization, increased by the implementation of the economic reforms in Russia and Eastern Europe after the end of the Cold War and in Asia after the Asian economic crisis of the 1990s, increased the pace of migration. Migration is now structured, perceived and discussed under different categorizations in different locations: refugee flows, family reunification, the importation of skilled workers on special visas, contract domestic labor, and illegals.

Social scientists' theories of migration did not fundamentally alter until the Cold War had ended and lifted some of the barriers of methodological nationalism – parallel to the destruction of the Berlin wall. Scholars in a number of fields, together with political leaders and journalists, began to announce that the world was becoming qualitatively different and applied the term globalization to what they were observing, fascinated by various kinds of flows of people, ideas, objects and capital across the territorial borders of states.

In anthropology and cultural studies, the globalization fever led to what we could call the “dissing” of previous paradigms. We heard about disjuncture, dislocation, displacement, disengagement, disconnection, and the dismantling of the old stabilities, knowledges, conventions and identities (Appadurai, 1990, 1991, 1993; Featherstone, 1993; Rouse, 1991). Working independently of each other on the east coast and west coast of the United States, anthropologists and ethnographically inclined sociologists began to posit that a new form of migration was beginning which they entitled transnationalism (Glick Schiller and Fouron, 1991; Glick Schiller, Basch and Blanc Szanton, 1992; Kearney, 1991; Rouse, 1992; Goldring, 1996; Guarnizo, 1997; Levitt, 1997). Later, mainstream sociology joined the trend and forcefully contributed to its formulation and expansion (*cf.* Portes *et al.*, 1999). Even before the first statements about transnational migration had

been formulated, new data describing the transnational ties among recent migrants was presented, but methodological nationalism kept scholars from fully appreciating and theorizing what they were seeing (Chaney, 1979; Gonzalez, 1988).

The first wave of transnational studies produced a set of problematic assumptions. First, scholars tended to see communications technology – computers, telephones, televisions, communication satellites and other electronic innovations – as the motor of change. Suddenly, we could all visually experience the same war, the same concert, or the same commercial and share the information age. The power of the new technology, combined with the postmodern insistence on the stability of the past and the fluidity of the present, led to a rather crude technological determinism strangely contrasting with the otherwise constructivist impetus of much of this literature. This impeded discussion of the broader social and economic forces past and present, which had shaped the transnational ties that linked the globe together. In addition, the impact of past technologies, which facilitated previous leaps in global integration – including the steamship, the telegraph, telephone and radio – were dismissed or forgotten.

Second, the first wave of transnational studies tended to speak of globalization in terms of an epochal turn, characterizing the previous historical period as one in which our units of analysis were bounded and people lived within these bounded units of tribe, ethnic group and state. The past was static, the present was fluid; the past contained homogenous cultures while now we lived in a world of hybridity and complexity. Some scholars asserted that the increase in transborder activity signaled the demise of the nation-state as both a center of power and as a potent source of identity politics (Soysal, 1994; Kearney, 1991).

A second wave of global studies has emerged that addresses some of the misconceptions of the first few years. We will mention three moments of this transition. First, we now can acknowledge that globalization is not in itself a new phenomenon (Wimmer, 2001; Went, 2000). Our analysis should hopefully have made clear that while there are significant changes in the world since the end of the Cold War, we are at the same time also experiencing a paradigm shift. We have been able to begin to analyze and discuss transnational migration, diasporic identities, and long distance nationalism because we have changed the lens through which we perceive the world, putting aside some of the preconceptions of methodological nationalism. Raising questions about how new globalization and transnationalism really are, this new, more

sophisticated scholarship is disentangling long-term trends, periodic recurrences, and novel occurrences in the historical development of global connections (Jessop, 1999; Panitch, 1997, 2000; Wilson and Donnan, 1998; Went, 2000). There is a general consensus that contemporary globalization processes seem more potent in their degree of penetration into the rhythms of daily life around the world (Held *et al.*, 1999). In the field of migration studies, after the initial celebrations of the novelty of diasporic identities, more careful scholarship on the historical depth of diasporic experiences started to emerge (Cohen, 1997; Glick Schiller, 1999a, b, c; Morawska, forthcoming; Foner, 2001).

Second, much more attention is now being paid to the continuing role of the nation-state in transnational processes. It is becoming increasingly apparent that the nation-state has more successfully survived the upheavals that accompanied the end of the Cold War and the current period of intense global connection than scholars predicted during the early days of globalization research (Panitch, 2000; Sassen, 1996, 2001). Scholars also began to look at the past and contemporary role of nation-states in fostering continuing ties with populations settled abroad (Basch, Glick Schiller and Szanton Blanc, 1994; Guarnizo, 1997, 1998; Guarnizo and Diaz, 1999; R. Smith, 1998; Smith and Guarnizo, 1998; Mahler, 1998; Glick Schiller, 1999a, b, c).

Finally, concepts of diasporic identities and of long distance nationalism have developed that take up once again the observations of "home country" nationalism made but not theorized by the Chicago School and scholars of nationalism (Anderson, 1993, 1994; Cohen, 1997; Fuglerud, 1999; Glazer, 1954; Skrbîš, 1999; Tölölyan, 2001). Long distance nationalism links together people living in various geographic locations and motivates them to action in relationship to an ancestral territory and its government. Through such ideological linkages, a territory, its people, and its government become a transborder enterprise. Long distance nationalism may bind together immigrants, their descendants, and people who have remained in their homeland into a fragile, but vocal transborder citizenry (Glick Schiller and Fourn, 2001a). As in other versions of nationalism, the concept of a people comprising a citizenry, a sovereign, a nation and a group of solidarity remains salient, but these different embodiments are not thought of as congruent and territorially bounded.

Thus, a number of migration experiences that could not be addressed during previous periods are now possible to research and theorize (for further discussion of some of the new developments, *see* Glick Schiller, forthcoming;

Kyle, 2000; Mahler and Pessar, 2000; Bryceson and Vuorela, 2002). However, this does not mean that this transformed scholarship on transnational communities has broken free from the influence of methodological nationalism. We conclude this section with some areas where methodological nationalism is still visible. Diaspora studies often trace dispersed populations no matter where they have settled, focusing on the dynamics of interconnection, nostalgia and memory and identity within a particular population, relating them to a particular homeland. No longer confined to a territorially limited entity, the nation is extending across different terrains and places but nevertheless imagined as an organic, integrated whole. In this *modus operandi*, nation-state building processes that impinge upon diasporic populations in its various locations are usually overlooked. If the relationship between the diaspora and nation-state building is examined, it is uniquely and exclusively in terms of the diaspora's own homeland and its politics. Thus, the image and analytical techniques associated with describing a bounded national container society are reproduced, albeit in a different form. Networks of migrants and transnational cultural and religious connections that lead to other forms of identification than national constructions are only now beginning to be examined within migration studies.

Similar points have to be made with regard to the study of "transnational communities." Here many of the critiques of the past errors of community studies apply. Much of transnational studies overstates the internal homogeneity and boundedness of transnational communities, overestimates the binding power for individual action, overlooks the importance of cross-community interactions as well as the internal divisions of class, gender, region and politics, and is conceptually blind for those cases where no transnational communities form among migrants or where existing ones cease to be meaningful for individuals. Furthermore, the different meanings of a particular transnational identity are usually precluded, meanings which take actors in very different political directions and alliances. In short, approaching migrant transnational social fields and networks as communities tends to reify and essentialize these communities in a similar way that previous approaches reified national or peasant communities.

Strangely enough, the neo-communitarianism of transnationalism studies also reproduces the standard image of a world divided into nations and thus naturalizes this vision of the world in new forms. Transnational semantically refers us to the nontransnational or simply to the national as the entity that is crossed or superseded. Migrants are no longer uprooted or climbing

up the assimilative ladder to the national middle classes, but they are still the others, foreign and alien to the nationally bounded society. Studies that examine the connections between transnational migrants and actors within the various localities in which they settle and into which they move could carry us beyond the static, reified and essentialized concept of community and into the study of migrants and nonmigrants within social fields of differential power (*see, e.g., Nyiri, 1999; Ong, 1999; Wimmer, 1998b*).

### *OUTLOOK: SAILING BETWEEN SCYLLA AND CHARYBDIS*

Going beyond methodological nationalism requires analytical tools and concepts not colored by the self-evidence of a world ordered into nation-states. Increasingly, observers of the social sciences see this as one of the major tasks that confront us. We certainly are not able to offer such a set of analytical tools here. Instead, our objective has been to clarify the nature of the barriers which have stood in the path leading to a revised social theory. Confronting the manner in which our perceptions of migration, including some of the recent work on transnational migration, have been shaped by the hegemony of the nation-state building project is an important step. It may prevent us from running, enthusiastically searching for newness, along the most promising-looking road, without knowing exactly how we got to the crossroads where we actually find ourselves. Looking back may help us to identify the paths that will bring us right back to where we now stand. We described three modes of methodological nationalism that have shaped the social science program – ignoring, naturalization and territorial limitation – and we have identified the ways in which these have influenced mainstream migration studies. Describing immigrants as political security risks, as culturally others, as socially marginal, and as an exception to the rule of territorial confinement, migration studies have faithfully mirrored the nationalist image of normal life.

Our second aim was to sketch out, in admittedly rather audacious and broad strokes, a history of the past century that would help us to understand how this binding of the scientific eye to the body of the nation came about and how this relationship has evolved through different phases of nation building. For all these different phases, we have described how the process of nation-state building has generated, as one of its aspects, different stances towards cross-border migration and immigrant integration that were mirrored, if not sometimes sustained or even produced, by the basic concepts of migration research. We have taken the point of view of an observer of second



order, observing what professional observers observe and what they do not.

Such a historical approach does not provide the well developed conceptual tools that would allow us to elaborate this perspective more systematically. This remains a task for the future. However, a word of caution is in order here. It would certainly be naïve to think that we will ever develop a theoretical language not profoundly influenced by the social and political forces around us. Most of us have come to understand that any observation is shaped by the positionality of the observer – including the ones unmasking methodological nationalism. While we are still striving for an adequate terminology not colored by methodological nationalism, we can already predict that emerging concepts will necessarily again limit and shape our perspective, again force us to overlook some developments and emphasize others. Every clear conceptual structure necessarily limits the range of possible interpretations, as well as the empirical domains that can be meaningfully interpreted. The task is to determine what reductions of complexity will make best sense of the contemporary world and which ones are leaving out too many tones and voices, transforming them into what model builders call ‘noise.’

We note that many who have attempted to escape the Charybdis of methodological nationalism are drifting towards the Scylla of methodological fluidism. It makes just as little sense to portray the immigrant as the marginal exception than it does to celebrate the transnational life of migrants as the prototype of human condition (Urry, 2000; Papastergiadis, 2000). Moreover, while it is important to push aside the blinders of methodological nationalism, it is just as important to remember the continued potency of nationalism. Framing the world as a global marketplace cannot begin to explain why under specific circumstances not only political entrepreneurs, but also the poor and disempowered, including immigrants, continue to frame their demands for social justice and equality within a nationalist rhetoric (Glick Schiller and Fouron, 2001 a, b). Nor can we blithely take up the perspective of cosmopolitanism, either as a description of the post-national stage of identity or as a political goal to be reached (*cf.* Beck, 2000). Such a stance may be helpful for a deconstruction of nationalism, taking a very different tack than previous discussions of the invention or imagination of community. But it does not acknowledge that nationalism is a powerful signifier that continues to make sense for different actors with different purposes and political implications. Having hinted at the Scylla of fluidism and of the rhetorics of cosmopolitanism, the challenge remains to develop a set of concepts that opens up new horizons for our understanding of past and contemporary migration.

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