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TRANSNATIONAL MOBILITIES, MIGRATION RESEARCH AND INTERSECTIONALITY

Towards a translocational frame

Abstract

Transnational migration studies need to be framed within a contextual, dynamic and processual analysis that recognises the interconnectedness of different identities and hierarchical structures relating to, for example, gender, ethnicity, 'race' and class at different levels in society. This article looks at a range of problematic issues in migration studies while also engaging with migration as a gendered phenomenon. I propose a particular analytical sensitivity, which attends to the centrality of power and social hierarchy, building on the idea of intersectionality as a heuristic device. Finally, I consider the potential of using a translocational lens, which is also able to pay attention to the challenges posed by transnationalism.

Keywords

Mobilities • migration • transnational • intersectionality • translocational

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1 Introduction

Migration as an object of contemporary study has usually been identified with movements of people across nation-state and territorial borders with issues of ethnicity, and cultural and social dislocation, being prominent concerns. This article suggests the need for transnational migration studies to be framed within a contextual, dynamic and processual analysis that recognises the interconnectedness of different identities and hierarchical structures relating to gender, ethnicity, "race", class and other social divisions at local, national, transnational and global levels. I suggest that the transnational positioning of social actors is a complex process relating to social processes and outcomes of differentiation and the structure of social place in its broader sense. An interest in intersectional frameworks has grown, but as Knapp has argued, intersectionality often becomes a nomenclature without being concretised *"a formula merely to be mentioned, being largely stripped of the baggage of concretion, of context and history" and a "fast travelling concept"* (Knapp 2005: 255). I attempt to rethink intersectionality using a translocational lens, which is also able to pay attention to the challenges for intersectionality of transnationalism, and considers the importance of context, meaning and contradictory locations. I propose a particular analytical sensitivity, which attends to the centrality of power and social hierarchy, and build on the idea of intersectionality as a heuristic device (Anthias 1998a).

The article begins by looking at a range of issues that confront transnational migration studies, in terms of the object of reference (*e.g.* national/transnational), the focus on identity and diversity, and the issue of gender and migration. It then moves to looking at the intersectionality framework and how this can help in overcoming some of the difficulties identified.

2 The object of reference: migration, transnationalisms and globality

When migration is the object of study this presupposes questions being framed around a notion of "a migrant" – a category formulated as an abstract category (implicitly presupposing an undifferentiated human subject) relating to the prototype of the economic migrant. In recent years, there has been a concern to correct this tendency and therefore a growth of recognition about the multifaceted forms of population movement ranging from settler, sojourner, exile, asylum seeker, temporary worker and so on and these are not always mutually exclusive. Gendered forms of migration are also prominent. In addition, there are movements into cities from villages, from village to village, from town to village and from neighbourhood to neighbourhood. People are on the move with new communications and flows and with globalisation despite the increasing policing of borders. People are also on the move in other ways, relating to the increasing flows of information enabled by new communication modes such as the Internet.

One central issue that emerges relates to the boundaries of the social object under study and its specificity. There are thus issues

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of the spatial, temporal and conceptual frameworks within which the social object (however we define it) can be addressed. If the local and the translocal are taken as alternatives (or additions) heuristically to the national, then the issue becomes one of tracing movements and mobilities within a country as well as between countries and extends the scope of the area of study. The issue of the "spatial" is also raised because space is a socially constructed set of configurations, which extends beyond the notion of physical space. The spatial, political and economic locations need to be treated as contextual and temporal. In this sense the notion of "translocational" goes beyond the notion of "transnational" (or translocal used more recently in migration studies), since it refers to dislocations and relocations at a number of different levels, including those of class and gender, for example, instead of merely focusing on movements relating to physical place and their consequences.

I would like to argue against the polarisation between a national and a transnational perspective, often suggested in the critique of methodological nationalism (Wimmer & Glick Schiller 2002). Although a transnational lens corrects the worst excesses of methodological nationalism, using such a lens should not rule out of court the importance of the national context, no longer defined as a bounded space but as providing a node of position and place in a global landscape of inequality. The national boundary possesses important affective, discursive, experiential and political relations within a global context. So, in this sense a critique of methodological nationalism need not mean abandoning nation-based lenses for particular analytical purposes; for example, in terms of social policy, health or educational regimes that differ from one national context to another. Therefore, the lens we use should never be predetermined and depends on the types of questions that we ask.

The kind of transnational lens we use must pay attention to how different nations are hierarchically positioned and how actors themselves are positioned hierarchically through these global dimensions of power. This also includes ascriptions and attributions given to actors because of their provenance or country of origin, as well as forms of discrimination on the basis of "race" or cultural difference. Again the national cannot be ruled out of court here either.

It is true that if a transnational framing is adopted, the idea of people emanating from discrete national or indeed ethnic origins is problematised as all people, whatever the legal/national borders, inhabit transnational spaces in the modern world. This includes both those who continue to live in their countries or localities of origin, those who leave them for newer paths and those who are in flow, that is, who do not settle for a long time in one locality because of the exigencies of the modern labour markets and social formations. Alongside a transnational and national focus, therefore, we can refer to the local, the translocal and the translocational.

This is important because there is then a space to study trans-ethnic and transnational relations in a range of contexts that include the local and the national as well as at the transnational level of analysis. Trans-ethnic connections point to relations between different ethnically constructed groups building on similar experiences, goals and trajectories. For example, what are the networks across ethnic divides and what forms of solidarity exist outside those of ethnicity? This is a rather different set of questions to those raised by diaspora, which is essentially about how co-ethnics operate across national divides (and should not be conflated with transnationalism, which extends its focus beyond ethnic ties).
Globalisation has involved changing forms of governance and political participation, and changing identities, values, and allegiances and raises serious implications for the future of democracy, citizenship and nationalism. Some categories have emerged and have been excluded from society through new technology and new flexible employment patterns; most people affected by these processes are women. Despite globalisation, the reconfiguration of ethnic boundaries and exceptions (such as the European court of human rights), nation states are still the determinants of juridical, social and cultural citizenship and the ethno-national project remains central. The borders of the nation state are still policed against undesirable others in formal and informal ways, through migration controls, racism and the desire for the integration and management of minorities within, while excluding others on the outside and the inside.

By emphasising the importance of the transnational ties of migrants, early writings on the subject of transnationalism tended to emphasise their counter-hegemonic potential, in the sense of providing an alternative to the assimilative pressures of receiving societies and the disadvantage or exclusion involved (Glick Schiller *et al.* 1992). However, accounts have increasingly come to question celebratory versions of transnationalism by emphasising not only the social structures that condition engagement in transnational ties and networks, but also their usability in terms of gaining advantage. On a specifically gendered note, some research (*e.g.* Salih 2001) argues that the literature on transnationalism fails to take into account "how these structures operate in gendered ways". The transnational experiences of men and women are qualitatively different because women do not always have access to mobility and because their movements are framed within a set of normative and culturally gendered rules (ibid).

3 The second generation

Examples of some of the issues raised above are found in the study of the "second generation".

Traditionally, the forms of migrant incorporation, and particularly that of the children of migrants, have been seen as linked to the countries of destination and their structures of exclusion and inclusion, as well as to the cultural tendencies of the migrants themselves. Little attention has been paid to the ways in which migrants are constituted as ethnic, class and gendered subjects already in their countries of origin and the continuing importance of bonds with it and other countries where their relatives and friends have migrated. A truly transnational perspective needs to locate relations between nations and nation-based social hierarchies as well as those on a global level and then begin to think about how these are transformed when transnational processes are at work.

The whole notion of generation, which purports to make a clear distinction between "groups" (sic) on the basis of those who migrated originally (first generation migrants) and their children (the second generation) is problematised by a focus on the continuing transnational connections of both categories, and therefore the generational binary becomes less significant in terms of sociological understanding (Levitt & Glick Schiller 2004). A generational perspective, however, often retains a national paradigm for understanding migrant adaptation and incorporation, seeing the processes purely in terms of those encountered in the country of settlement and other influences linked to what has been accumulated in the "past" in their countries of origin. The continuing interactions and relations to these are either simply missing or under-explored.

Variation in the experiences of different generations should not be analysed only in terms of "where they were born". Instead, the differences that exist socially within migrant populations and their descendants may be linked to stages in the life cycle and age. Moreover, political and economic changes taking place over time may affect people differently at different stages of their lives. If people are seen to inhabit transnational spaces (like multicultural cities where global goods and cultures meet) as well as having continuing bonds with homelands and other localities, this makes it easier to see what is shared by migrants from different ethnic origins. These transnational spaces, particularly in cities, are also shared by those of the dominant ethnic group in the state, albeit in different ways (it is relevant to the asymmetrical power and economic resources here). These differences are not only connected to ethnicity or migration experience (or different migrant generations), but also to class, gender and life cycle.

However, for those who are embedded within two social milieus with different and at times competing normative systems, there are two sets of social relations, such as arrangements and expectations (say around gender, sexuality and behavioural norms, particularly for migrant women and younger migrants) that impact upon their lives. Generation is not a unitary category and is fractured by social differences of gender, class and racialisation as well as different opportunities and exclusions, which relate to international, national and local policies and institutions. The actors involved are themselves impacted in transnational and translocational contexts, often in contradictory ways. For example, gender values will vary in terms of what is expected and rewarded and what is criticised and disallowed in a range of different contexts (*e.g.* there may be a difference between the expectations and norms of parental culture and the host society). This reminds us of the importance of national context and the dynamic interactions between and within different social spaces. This is particularly the case for gendered norms and practices. These will vary depending on the destination of migrants (*e.g.* the position of Cypriot migrants is differently structured in the UK, America and Australia)

4 Identity and belongingness in migration studies

Ideas about the society or "the social collectivity" used by researchers include assumptions about the nature of a cohesive societal whole within which migrants are then problematised as social actors (within assimilationism and discussions of diversity and social cohesion). The idea of the "social collectivity" also involves the construction of a migrant or transnational social actor category (as a social collective or group), which relies on notions of "ethnic" origin, or consciousness/culture/identity (as in discussions of ethnic difference, diaspora, hybridity and cosmopolitanism) and involves the use of the notion of "groups" of different types.

Ideas about ethnic identity as a primary social marker and the forms of belongingness and cohesiveness it constructs underpin much research on migration and particularly research on hybridity, diaspora consciousness, cosmopolitanism and ethnic fundamentalism as well as the so-called second generation. In addition, we have seen an increasing focus on identity issues from states who regard the retention of diverse identities as synonymous with the failure to integrate, and therefore as an impediment to "social cohesion" and integration. This is not only linked to the role of ethnic markers, which become both visible and challenging in a globalising world, but also to the regulatory regimes of modern states and coalitions of power among states. These set up new frontiers and borders, which depend on categorising desirable and undesirable persons and groupings. The impetus lies in the threat from "hostile" identities, not only embodied both in the war against terror but also in fears of unskilled, dependent migrants, asylum seekers and refugees whose culture and ways of life are seen to be incompatible or undesirable within Western societies, and the fear of social breakdown and unrest attached to these. Debates on multiculturalism and social cohesion (*e.g.* in the UK; Yuval Davis, Anthias & Kofman 2005) are examples of this.

Therefore, it is important to interrogate how issues of identity and belonging have been addressed in relation to the migration process and particularly with reference to the descendants of migrants. It is important to interrogate the concepts of identity that underpin many accounts of migrant incorporation (including diaspora, hybridity and cosmopolitanism, which turn our attention to more transnational forms of identity). I argue that the analytical primacy given to identity in these discussions turns our attention away from issues relating to other social spaces, such as those of class and gender, and away from the importance of meaning and context as parameters of social life.

In more recent debates, it has been widely recognised that identity is indeed a slippery concept. Not only has it been over-inflated to incorporate too much – an argument made by Brubaker and Cooper (2000) very convincingly – but also it has come to say "both too much and too little" (for a development of this argument, see Anthias 2002).

The problem of "groupism" (Brubaker 2004) in discussions of identity refers to the assumption that identity derives from being a member of a group. A group is conceived as a thing rather than as something hailed or being "made" (grouping in the active sense might be a better formulation). Groups are seen as homogeneous; gender, class and other categories are also seen as groups instead of processes or social relations.

All aspects of differentiation and stratification involve socially constructed boundaries and hierarchies that produce population categories, which are then organised in terms of the idea of "groups". What happens is that the socially constructed nature of the categories becomes reduced to people belonging to groups, which are endowed with a given and inalienable quality thereby ignoring the crosscutting differences within them. Groups are treated as homogeneous categories of people with particular and given characteristics (*e.g.* groups relating to women or ethnic groups are defined as having particular needs, predispositions and strategies). Assumptions are thereby made in understanding how they are inserted into the labour market and society to which they have moved, both in terms of their role in the labour market and the reproduction of culture and traditions they are seen to be endowed with.

This is mirrored in the idea that migrants belong to ethnic groups and they bring with them given predispositions (which involve them in making particular choices in terms of labour market niches or familial and social organisation and mobilisation). Although this idea can certainly not be completely dismissed out of hand, it predisposes us to put people in these little boxes of cultural predispositions that are self-fulfilling. We then cannot recognise the crosscutting influence of other dimensions of their location, such as how ethnic categorisations, which produce the idea of ethnic groups cross cut with gender, generation, class, political values, experience,

opportunities and very importantly agency. It also under-emphasises the constraints of structural processes and contextual parameters such as those of opportunity structures.

Moreover, there is often a conflation between identity and culture. Identity is used co-terminously with the maintenance of traditions and customs. This is problematic partly because behaving in ways that conform to an ethnic pattern (as recognised by researchers or the subjects themselves) and participation within an ethnic context can be instrumental, rather than expressive of identity. People connect and engage not only in ethnic ways (indeed the saliency of ethnicity will vary contextually and situationally) but also in terms of other social categories and social relations, for example, those of class, gender, age, stage in the life-cycle and political beliefs and values, as well as trans-ethnically.

5 Diversity

Issues of diversity come into play when one recognises the multiplicity involved in disaggregating people away from their group boxes. Some critiques of multiculturalism have demonised diversity and cultural difference (often in unintended ways) so as to produce a paradigm that sees diversity as antithetical to social solidarity formation and the functionality of a modern society. In recent discussions, a strong national identity, requiring a diminution in too much diversity (whatever that means), is increasingly being hailed as a necessary prerequisite for a functioning and stable society (Goodhart 2006), and this has entailed a critique of "diversity", by which is meant both too much immigration, too many different religions and ways of life, and too much "threat" to "our nation" by undesirable others.

Paying attention to new realities, Steve Vertovec has recently (2007) introduced the notion of "superdiversity" that refers to the increasingly complex scenario with regards not only to ethnic and national differences on the British scene, but also the (ever increasing) multiplication of legal statuses. It is important to note, however, that diversity in society exists at multiple levels and not only in terms of minority ethnic or migrant groups, and therefore the recognition of differentiated and complex migrant statuses and locations is only one facet of social "diversity". Clearly, diversity and social solidarity are not incompatible. But of course all hinges on this slippery, and I believe unsatisfactory, concept of diversity that elides so much together and speaks with so many tongues.

Stuart Hall (2000) has argued that the multicultural question is the most important question facing the world today. This is defined as the problem of how people with very different cultural traditions, ways of life and different understandings can live together. Of course there is this question of difference in all sorts of ways and peoples' values, beliefs and indeed tastes will differ. However, they do not always differ in important ways, on the one hand (*i.e.* ways which lead to social conflict) nor is social conflict itself purely a question of a difference in beliefs and values. What lies behind conflict, which may manifest itself in terms of cultural differences, are conflicts and struggles over interests or resources or questions of rights and respect/representation and redistribution. The latter is not just a question of economic but also cultural, educational and other resources that make up the stratification system of modern societies. As Bourdieu (1990) has rightly reminded us, resources or capital takes forms which are cultural, symbolic and cultural as well as economic.

I should say bluntly that I personally do not feel married to the concept of diversity, although I am passionate about the complex and rich tapestry of human life. Diversity has become a term that disguises other concerns such as "difference" (there are a number of ways in which this can be conceptualised, and a number of ways it can be evaluated or regarded, *e.g.* positively or negatively). Diversity is a woolly notion that depends also on what it is preceded by – ethnic diversity, sexual diversity, value diversity and other types of ideas such as managing diversity, celebrating diversity or tolerating diversity. Diversity is not just about the other. It is everywhere and what is common to human life. And Gloria Anzaldua, the writer of Borderlands, tells us that it is not just something between us but within us (whatever the "us" is – whether the self or a construct of a group claimed or attributed). She says

> The struggle is inner: Chicano, indio, American Indian, mojado, mexicano, immigrant Latino, Anglo in power, working class Anglo, Black, Asian--our psyches resemble the bordertowns and are populated by the same people (Anzaldua 1987).

Therefore, ways of theorising diversity raise a number of different foci and give rise to highly normative and political arguments. Indeed present day discussions of diversity are a code for compensatory mechanisms to soften the edges of inequality, but do not enable radical transformations in the ways these are produced and sustained. There is a whole diversity industry currently, just as in the 1990s there was the construction of "equal opportunities communities" (Anthias & Yuval Davis 1992).

6 Gender

In this part of my paper, I will follow the gender and migration debate quickly in order to set the ground for exploring an intersectional framing. Gender is one of those parameters of difference that is often seen to be about groups of people (in this case men and women). However, as is now evident, gender is not just about denoting a category of people who perform difference of a particular type (as females or males). Gender is about relational processes around particular types of social differentiation (we can think about this as involving the organisation and reproduction of sexual difference) and social stratification, hierarchy and social division. While migrant women remained absent in the literature on migration (apart from "as dependants of men") until three decades ago, a significant amount of work on the issue has emerged since.

The push–pull model, based on neo-classical economic theory, which provided for a long time the classic explanation for migration to Europe, did not pay attention to gender, but was a deeply gendered approach as men were the prototype migrants, being regarded as the decision makers (making individual rational choices) and bread winners. Some of the important work of Marxists on the other hand, sought to emphasise the role of the mode of production, an analysis (despite some of the important merits of historical materialism) that proved to be in this case not only economistic but also gender blind. Neither of these approaches considered how decision making takes place within the family and broader social networks, both within the sending and receiving countries, and the ways in which knowledge and communication channels and opportunities for work are mediated by social actors in specific social locations.

In Britain, in particular, "race relations" and "ethnic studies" dominated the field up to the 1990s (Anthias & Yuval Davis 1992; Miles 1989). More recently, there has been a concern with identity, with new ethnicities, and with difference and diversity. Theories of diasporisation and new diasporic social forms, including consciousness, have emerged (Anthias 1998b; Cohen 1997). The paradigms used to explain earlier forms of migration, with their focus on economic migrants from poorer sectors of their communities, primarily men or families led by men, could no longer yield a fruitful conceptual basis for understanding migration as new migration was both more multiple in terms of ethnic origin but also in terms of forms and included large numbers of educated people from the old Eastern bloc (Rudolph & Hillman 1997). In addition, a large part of this migration was made up of women who migrated on their own, being involved in what can be termed a solo migration project. The variety of these new forms of migration can be seen not just in terms of the proliferation of "differences" amongst migrants but also in terms of different motivations – some people migrate for the purpose of family reunification; others migrate mainly for work; whereas a significant number are asylum seekers (Koser 1997). Yet another category refers to what Mirjana Morokvasic (2004) has called commuter and brain drain migrants.

Economic incorporation into particular sectors of the economy provides an important context for understanding gendered migration. For example (focussing here on migrant women), there is the issue of the flexibility that global capital needs and many migrant women fill particular functions in the labour market, being cheap and flexible labour for the service sectors and, in some countries, for small/light manufacturing industries. They are located within a secondary, service-oriented, and often hidden, labour market, which is divided into male and female jobs; their insertion produces and reproduces an ethnic and gender divided labour market. Moreover, ethnic/migrant groups can use women as an economic resource. For example, family labour was a central pattern for many migrant groups in the postwar period in Western Europe (Anthias 1983; Ward & Jenkins 1984). The survival of many small concerns was due to the unpaid labour of women and children within them.

In the light of the failures of migration theory to attend to gender and women, feminist theorists (Anthias 1992; Anthias & Lazaridis 2000; Indra 1999; Kofman 1999; Kofman *et al.* 2000; Morokvasic 1984; Phizacklea 1983; Phizacklea & Anderson 1997) proposed a more complex understanding of migration, attentive to the multiple gendered dimensions involved. Apart from highlighting the constraints within which migrants operate, these theories have also attended to the importance of agency – ways in which migrants, and in this case migrant women, make choices and plans for themselves and their families. For example, some of these choices may not be primarily economic but women may wish to escape violent and/or oppressive familial or marital relations. The constraints of gender roles and normative expectations more generally may act as powerful factors in women seeing migration in terms of emancipation and greater opportunities (Anthias & Lazaridis 2000). Whether it actually delivers this is another matter that I do not have time to discuss here.

One of the important contributions of a gendered perspective on migration is that it provides an alternative to the focus on the "rational (male) individual migrant", by taking the household as the unit of analysis. In addition, the idea of the family as a homogenous unit is problematised by the view that the family/household is composed of divergent interests and positions, and is a site of power and struggle of different kinds and not only those of gender.

The role that gender plays in the reproduction of national and ethnic boundaries is important for understanding the position of migrants (Anthias & Yuval Davis 1989; Charles & Hintjens 1998; Wilford & Miller 1998). This crucially takes account of differences among migrants and indeed among both men and women migrants, not only in terms of geographical origin, but also in terms of the differentiated social positions that they occupy in the receiving countries.

Important debates in the literature during the past three decades include that of gender and care (Kofman 2005; Kofman *et al.* 2005); domestic work (Anderson 2000, 2006; Cox 2006); sex work (Anderson 1997); gender in the manufacturing industry (Phizacklea 1983), notably the garment industry (which has declined in recent decades); and men and women's role in family or "ethnic" businesses (Anthias 1992; Anthias & Mehta 2003). Further, more recent debates concern on the one hand the growing service sector, and on the other hand, work in the agricultural and food processing sectors.

7 Intersectionality

Debates on intersectionality are central to the theorisation of gender and migration (Anthias & Yuval Davis 1983, 1992; Anthias 1992; Brah 1992). Broadly speaking, an intersectional approach emphasises the importance of attending to the multiple social structures and processes that intertwine to produce specific social positions and identities. From this perspective, we need to simultaneously attend to processes of ethnicity, gender, class and so on in order to grasp the complexities of the social world and the multifaceted nature of social identities and advantage/disadvantage. What is common to the approach is that it posits that each division involves an intersection with the others (Anthias & Yuval Davis 1992; Collins 1993; Crenshaw 1994). In this way classes are always gendered and racialised and gender is always classed and racialised and so on, thereby dispelling the idea of homogeneous and essential social categories.

By the early 1980s, anti-racist feminists (Anthias & Yuval Davis 1983; Carby 1982; Hooks 1981) had intervened in the gender debate, asking about the extent to which it was appropriate to speak of "women" as a unitary group with a shared experience, as proposed through the idea of patriarchy as a singular system of power and domination. These theorists highlighted divisions among "women" by pointing towards processes of racialisation and class and how the intersections involved produced specific forms of complex disadvantage. While highlighting differences in experience, they disrupted ideas about women as a homogenous collective in the sense of both understanding the world and mobilising for social change (an additional parameter disrupting the unitary conception of women was introduced by lesbian and gay studies and/or queer theory; Butler 1990).

Nira Yuval Davis and I have contributed to bringing to the fore the links between gender and nation (Anthias & Yuval Davis 1989; Yuval Davis 1997). We argued that gender intersects with ethnicity and men and women often play different roles (also in intersection with class and life-cycle) in the reproduction and transmission of ethnic culture. Women are central transmitters of ethnic culture in their child-rearing role and in migration; they reproduce cultural traditions (having a special role to play in ceremonial and ritual activities, keeping in touch with families and so on) and religious and familial structures and ideologies. They not only reproduce the group biologically but are also used as symbols of the nation or ethnic group. They are important as "mothers" of patriots, and represent the nation (Anthias & Yuval Davis

1989). For example, in both Bosnia and Cyprus, the rape of women involved the project of forcing them to bear the children of the enemy, and women were violated as "mothers of the national enemy".

Gender processes may therefore be regarded as important in understanding how nationhood and belongingness are retained, and reconstituted, particularly through the role of women as ethnic actors (Anthias & Yuval Davis 1989; Yuval Davis 1997). However, it could be argued that women function as objects of discursive practices and social relations, whereas men are its active agents. Anthias and Yuval Davis (1992) and Wetherell and Potter (1992) argue that men are given the authentic voice to represent their communities.

While nationalism, as Benedict Anderson (1983) notes, constructs imagined communities with a sense of belonging, it also requires an "other" from which it can imagine itself as separate. The migrant "other" is gendered as well as racialised and classed. Gender is a significant component of ethnic landscapes. Men and women are socially constructed as particular objects of national and ethnic discourses and policies in terms of the biological reproduction of the group/nation, as well as its social and cultural reproduction and symbolic figuration.

Some intersectional theorists have tried to classify different approaches, which use an intersectionality framework (Choo & Ferree 2010; McCall 2001). The main approaches which McCall refers to as anti-categorical and intra-categorical have been, according to her, "enormously effective in challenging the singularity, separateness and wholeness of a wide range of social categories (McCall 2001: 8)".

There are differences between poststructuralist feminists who oppose categorisation per se and refuse to countenance the possibility of talking about categories, and others like black feminists who are not so much against categorisation per se but the homogenising tendencies of existing categories of gender and race. Choo and Ferree (2010) make a useful distinction between group-centred, process-centred and system-centred approaches.

There are a number of different ways of theorising intersectionality. Differences can be found in the work of Crenshaw (1994), Collins (1993) and Anthias and Yuval Davis (1983, 1992), to name a few important theorists, but there is now a broad church denoting a highly variable framing and making it difficult to think of intersectionality as a theory as such (cf. Hancock 2007).

According to Crenshaw (1994), the location of women of colour at the intersection of race and gender makes their experiences structurally and qualitatively different to that of white women. Hill Collins, on the other hand, treats gender, race and class (and potentially other social divisions such as sexuality and age) as different ideological (*e.g.* in the seminal work of Patricia Hill Collins 1993) or discursive practices that emerge in the process of power production and enablement (Foucault 1972). Treating them as historically contingent, as Foucault's work suggests, arguably could lead to under-emphasising the most persistent and universally salient features of the processes involved.

A position that I have developed with Nira Yuval Davis is that social divisions are underpinned by social ontologies denoting different material processes in social life, all linked to sociality and to the social organisation of sexuality, production and collective bonds, all features which arguably societies entail (Anthias & Yuval Davis 1992; Anthias 1998a, 2001a, 2001b). One characteristic of this approach is that it leaves space for the development of different and changeable forms that relate to wider social relations in terms of overall structures of dominance and conflict over resource allocation more generally. Such an approach also relates to struggle around the socially constructed boundaries of the ontological spaces.

We need to think the concept of intersectionality away from the idea of an interplay in peoples' group identities of class, gender, ethnicity, racialisation and so on, to intersectionality being seen as a process. It is important to locate the discussion in terms of structures on the one hand (broader economic and political institutional frameworks) and processes on the other hand (broader social relations in all their complexity including discourses and representations). Intersectionality is a social process related to practices and arrangements, giving rise to particular forms of positionality for social actors. There is also a construction of "contradictory locations" (where dominant and subordinate ones intersect; Anthias 1998a, 2002) thus placing actors as subordinate in some times and places and more dominant in others.

Despite some difficulties which can be identified with the intersectional approach (such as the danger of taking the categories as given, the potentially limitless number of interconnecting categories, the confusion between intersectional identities and intersectional structures and so on), the main insight is useful, that is, that social relations cannot be neatly packaged into those of class, gender, ethnicity and so on. Indeed as long as there is a clear operationalisation of the terms in substantive analyses such as that in Browne & Misra (2003), the delineation of connections between ethnicity/race or gender and class has yielded important insights. It provides an important corrective to essentialising identity constructs that homogenise social categories hailed by various dimensions of social life (*e.g.* women) and which do not attend to differentiations within. It is able to make visible particularly disadvantaged groups who inhabit inferiorised positions within a range of social categories such as, for example, unemployed black-working-class women but is also more generally applicable. Indeed it could be argued that it has made visible the highly differentiated nature of disadvantage and advantage. What it has not done enough of, however, is to chart some of the contradictory processes at work leading to subjects being placed within contradictory social locations on the basis of the grids of gender, ethnicity and class (Anthias 1998a).

Intersectionality has begun to be applied to transnational actors. For example, Bose (2012) argues that

> Theoretical developments over the past several decades have been able to show the different intersections between primary-organising principles of social division internationally….Just as there is diversity among individual women, based on their intersecting axes of age, race, ethnicity, class, marital status, sexual orientation, religion, or other characteristics, there is diversity across countries in their national-level gender inequalities based on intersecting axes of transnational, regional, cross-cutting, and unique national issues that structure gendered differences and concerns (Bose 2012: 71).

The transnational dimensions become clear also using what I have called a translocational lens.

8 A translocational lens

I have developed the notion of "translocational positionality" (Anthias 2002, 2008) as a tool for making sense of the positions and outcomes produced through intersections between a number of different social structures and processes, including transnational

ones. This gives, importance to the broader social context and to temporality and is useful as an accompaniment to the notion of intersectionality. If social locations can be thought of as social spaces defined by boundaries on the one hand and hierarchies on the other hand, then we are forced to think of them in relation to each other and also in terms of some of the contradictions we live in. The notion of "translocation" recognises the importance of the context, the situated nature of claims and attributions and their production in complex and shifting locales and the contradictory processes in play. Within this framework, difference and inequality are conceptualised as a set of processes, and not possessive characteristics of individuals:

> positionality … combines a reference to social position (as a set of effectivities; as outcome) and social positioning (as a set of practices, actions and meanings; as process) … translocational' … references the complex … interplay of a range of locations and dislocations in relation to gender, ethnicity, national belonging, class and racialization (Anthias 2002: 501–502).

Using this framework, it is possible to analyse intersections of social relations as at times mutually reinforcing (*e.g.* minority, working class woman may live in the worst social space, in many different political, economic and cultural contexts) and at times as contradictory (*e.g.* working class man is in a relation of subordination to his employer, whereas in a relation of domination to his wife). In the first case, social divisions articulate to produce a coherent set of practices of subordination, whereas in the second, social divisions lead to highly contradictory processes in terms of positionality and identity. Also, it is possible to understand these intersections as varying in different national contexts and in the transnational field. For example, a Ghanaian worker in the UK may be positioned very differently than when he visits Ghana or in relation to co-ethnics in the diaspora.

To summarise, the term "translocational" denotes the ways in which social locations are products of particular constellations of social relations, and in terms of relationality and experience at determinate points in time; it considers them within a spatial and temporal context. It points to the existence of contradictory and shifting social locations where one might be in a position of dominance and subordination simultaneously on the one hand or at different times or spaces on the other. This is not to deny that some individuals and groupings of individuals are not more unequal than others – indeed quite the opposite. It is rather to suggest that such locations also have parameters that open up, potentially, ways in which they can be transformed.

In this article, I have argued that we need a new imaginary for studying the complex mobilities in the modern era of transnationalism and the new emerging forms of power involved. I have argued that one useful lens is that of a particular type of intersectionality, which uses the notions of "translocation" and "translocational positionality" and relates to both structures of power and how these impact on people's lives and identifications in complex and often highly contradictory ways.

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