

Transnationalisation and development - methodological issues

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Transnationalisation and Development – Methodological Issues

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1. Introduction

Our history of development research in Bielefeld fits well in a new trans-concept of bridging towards migration and transnationalism. Development and developers are certainly constituting a transnational, transcultural space and a transdisciplinary epistemic community working on and negotiation concepts and policies of cooperation. This very visible international world has so to speak recently discovered, as Thomas Faist has shown, very explicitly the contributions of migrants to development, mainly in the form of transfers. Migration now could be looked at constituting a transnational space and a (rather hardly visible, so to speak shadow) cooperation. These translocal interactions leading to social transformation are forming an everyday life activity of these famous transmigrants whose concepts of development, of societal well-being are very probably quite different from the mainstream development ideas into which they are supposed to be captured, maybe very modernistic, or traditionalistic in other concerns, not so democratic but with a high degree of ownership.

We are glad that these two social spaces are being linked with the institution of a Transnationalisation and Development Centre in Bielefeld where we can on the one side consider migration and transnationalism as one field of globalisation theory of which of course migrants are actors, including their quality of carriers of ideas and concepts, in which concepts and ideas are localised and globalised in the sense of feeding back to the North. Of course, and this has been stressed during the whole conference, in particular in Nina Glick Schiller's paper, the power structuration of these translocal spaces, interfaces and interactions is one of the main challenges for our new epistemic community of 'transis'. Our approach should be transnational, overcoming methodological nationalism (although looking e.g. as one interface at the state and i.a. its development policy) and methodological ethnicity (by looking at diversity and intersectionality in the social and cultural construction of reality) in a transcultural approach.

In a research project which we are just finishing in Bielefeld on "negotiating development in translocal gendered spaces in Muslim societies"¹ we might have thought that women's movements which we studied in their own society, referring to global concepts such as CE-

¹ Financed by Volkswagen, see www.uni-bielefeld/trdc

DAW, family law, with regard to translocality ascribed to their local and regional activities, were one of the early transnational actors of globalisation but migrants of course are the earlier ones.

It is very important to see that although there is a global regime in development with very dominant conceptualisations, the interactions and transfers, like in migration, are not mainly North – South any more, the South – South relations are often invisible, like the migrant's transnational world, with trading networks (see Bielefeld concept of traders' dilemma) developing into transnational S – S firms, transnational women's and other social movements and civil society constituting new transnational public spheres.

When doing, as we are aspiring to in Bielefeld, to empirically ground globalisation theories (in the sense of grounded theory by Anselm Strauss) and doing transcultural comparison and research in the sense of "global ethnography" (Burawoy et al. 2000), "multi-sited" (i.a. Marcus 1998),² we are studying the social spaces constituted in different arenas, platforms, considering different flows and fields, such as development, with the agency and perspective of migrants being one of the most important interest. The constitution of social interactive spaces e.g. through networks, especially through IT in a virtual space, is a very interesting concomitant feature of migrations which transcends the division of everyday life and lifeworld, middle level organisations and national boundaries (as has been shown by the paper given by Jean-Baptiste Meyer). It constitutes certainly one feature of a new research programme which Thomas Faist in his introduction alluded to and for which Ludger Priess in his paper pleaded mainly with regard to organisation processes in transnationalisation.

From our point of view we would like on the one hand to widen the epistemological and theoretical approach to embrace translocal social spaces in general, using the concept of overlapping and interfaces of knowledge systems in different arena, in order to broaden migration approaches and to generalize development studies, but in very clear cut fields.

The cultural and social turn in development policy implies many aspects which have to be globally and locally connected to migration and transnationalism. E.g. the issue of local encounters, governance and decentralisation has to be studied with regard to challenging the

² Cf. Michael Burawoy et al., eds., 2000, *Global ethnography. Forces, connections, and imaginations in a post-modern world*, Berkeley etc.: Univ. of Calif. Pr.; George E. Marcus, *Ethnography through thick and thin*, Princeton, N.J., Chichester WS: Princeton Univ. Pr.

meaning of participation ownership. The dimension of local, expert and global knowledge has to be newly posed with regard to nationalization of experts in the light of migration.

The papers reviewed (Glick-Schiller, Priess, Salzbrunn, Amelina)³ of all speakers of the panel take recourse to phenomenological social theory and interpretative methodology share the assumptions of methodological deficits to be overcome

- by looking at renegotiating and overcoming frontiers and constituting crosscutting and overlapping social spaces and institutions

which brings into focus

- negotiation of meaning
- constitution of social spaces

This leads, according to our view, to a methodological approach of

- structuration, hybridisation
- with a focus on negotiation of development in translocal / transnational spaces
- and looking at new forms of social cohesion and collective agency of society, social movements and civil society organisations,
- constitution of crosscutting spaces for negotiating meaning
- systematically looking at (encounters ad) interfaces (of knowledge systems)
- and interconnectedness or redrawing of boundaries between different sites and spaces.

We think thereby we could overcome in our analysis

- that institutions tend to be conceptualised in very formalistic and modernistic ways in the sense of “seeing like a state” (Scott),

³ The quotes refer to the papers distributed for the conference; for official versions see Amelina 2007; Glick-Schiller 2007; Salzbrunn 2007

- distinguishing between formal and informal institutions and sectors as well as social security, public and private, traditional and modern forms of governance, civil society and the state,
- implying drawing strict frontiers without taking into account
 - interfaces, crosscutting knowledge and resource transfers
 - social embeddedness of institutions
 - permanent renegotiating of social identities, i.e. the enormous flexibility of structures and agency.

Whereas we would look at

- processes of formalisation, organisation-building
- development in translocal / transnational spaces
- of participation, ownership, cultural embeddedness
- formalisation of „traditional“ institutions
- knowledge transfer and management.

Methodological deficits are to be overcome by

- looking at renegotiating and overcoming frontiers and constituting crosscutting and overlapping social spaces and institutions
- migrants as carriers of knowledge
- migrants as carriers of “informal” or ‘shadow’ economy linking to the formal sector
- asking whether formalizing of networks is possible without bureaucratising.

A big deficit in all papers and I think in mainstream transnationalism in general is of course the missing of the very pertinent and fruitful perspective the gendered structuration which seems not to be present in transnational research. Mostly, only traditional counting or comparing men and women takes place, and, maybe looking at the very statically conceived “role of women” in “households” without taking into account research on translocal gender rela-

tions and their renegotiation, construction of gender in institutions and organisations, including policies, and societal gender order.

There are gendered translocal social spaces, there is an instrumentalization of women in migration policies, the construction of gender being often very strange, with gender constructs influencing to a great extent the orientalisation of migrants, through concepts such as vulnerable groups, forced marriage, oppression of women, thereby characterizing the sending countries as underdeveloped and culturally inferior. On the other side, absurd implications about what these suppressed women should do are implied in policies (e.g. wives, officially spouses, of possible green card receivers, i.e. foreign professionals, are not allowed to work – in Germany it used to be three years, now one -, the permit is always limited in time – so what does this mean for children being brought up here?). Also the gendered structure of transnational migration and the very big gender differences and interesting gendered networks are hardly taken account of.

2. Ad Nina Glick Schiller, Univ. of New Hampshire, USA; Univ. of Manchester, UK, Beyond the nation-state and its units of analysis: towards a new research agenda for migration studies

N.G.Sch. in her paper gives a very convincing follow up and argument about the methodological traps of recent ‘new’ approaches to migration theory: migration scholars are “accepting the terms of the debate”, thereby perpetuating “the foundational essentialism”. There is a “born-again assimilationism” (4) implying that the ‘good’ migrants become part of the national fabric, separating nation-state and migrants “as separated by essential cultural difference”. In quintessence: none of the methodological criticism against the “essentialist fix and racialized concepts of nation” (2) has been overcome, with the migrant being, I call it, constructed as “the other” of the nation-state, following “methodological nationalism” which assumes homogenization of national culture and uses “ethnic groups” and “transnational communities” as pre-conceived units of analysis (as does the state).

This position should not be equalized to the assumption (sometimes made in the conference debates) that the nation state should or does lose certain functions. Here, I think, the difference in methodology to refer to certain dimensions of analysis such as interfaces with state authorities, politicise, institutions etc., but not as unit of analysis. Her main conclusion is to develop a global perspective on migration, developing a framework on global power struc-

tures, researching social processes, transnational fields of power and “multiple pathways of local and transnational incorporation”.

She refers to approaches, such as from (the important theoretician of dependency theory, some of whose implications should not be forgotten I think even if the global hegemonic structures have changed) Hanibal Quijano, asking what is new in the “coloniality of power” (p. 31) and maintaining that “race and racism becomes the organizing principle that structures all of the multiple hierarchies of the world-system”.

And, what is very important to development and localisation, she very much stresses the necessity to study localities within the global “new economy” (overcoming the ethnic economy approach). For doing so she suggests a scaling approach to transnational migration research, including the positioning of nation-states and global cities “within global fields of power” affecting “the processes through which migrants move, settle, and maintain transnational connection” (4).

I very much agree to the necessity of a global perspective (4), with one argument: we need to strengthen the methodological links between localities, localising processes, interfaces at different levels and I would call it crosscutting and overlapping social spaces. We want to empirically ground globalisation theory and consider migration theory as one very important methodological perspective (another would be, respectively this one needs combination with gender).

Of course it would be cynical to consider migrants as ‘actors of globalisation’ (in the sense political scientists often doing) without looking at underlying power structures, but agency and (power) structuration of translocal fields are constituting globalisation which is also ‘made by migrants’ in the sense of ‘social worlds’, establishing relations and institutions, seems also worthwhile stressing (apart from concepts of “impact” implying methodologically the complete differentiation between structures and agency). Apart from life-worlds (“how migrants live their lives”, p. 33) and – on a more complex, middle range theoretical level, what she calls “multiple pathways of local and transnational incorporation” (p. 3).

We here would refer to modes of structuration, dimensions, even think of strategies. A methodological consequence is to overcome the stated dichotomies by showing that in social spaces (conceived of as operationalisation of life-world, negotiating meaning) new cultural spaces are created – what could be called “migrant spaces” (intersecting at many borders and internally structured) - as against a concept of container culture.

I think the constitution of spaces can lead to formation of communities, but the interesting approach of global ethnography would be to analyse negotiation within, e.g. between concepts of culture, development and obligations, gender relations etc. between migrants and people at home. Otherwise there is the danger that one refers to a frame of “global capitalism” and “impact of imperial powers” without showing how combined power structures work on a local level. This is what we conceive as a paradigm of ‘translocality’.

N.G.Sch. very convincingly reviews historical roots of methodological nationalism (pp. 4 – 10), showing the “developing of ‘scientific essentialism’” (pp. 10 – 13) in relation to nation-building, denouncing “the ethnic lens” or “ethnogenesis” even in cultural pluralism and multiculturalists, following the term of “nationalities”.

Regarding the theories she reviews I would like to add

- concerning migration theories in Europe there were a lot of political economy studies in the 1970s which were criticised by bringing in agency and transcultural reflections
- can we talk about new assimilationism also with regard to Europe? There is a methodologically useful approach of “integration through difference” (Schlee etc.), and I think the debate on diversity and difference as political rights i.a. in gender theories as well as in global women’s movements is quite fruitful.

Regarding the theories of imperialism and the global framework N.G.Sch. calls for, the suggested framework of Hanibal Quijano’s “colonial power matrix” (p. 31) might not capture the entangled power fields about which N.G.Sch. rightly talks. However, I do think we should not completely forget concepts developed by dependency theory and widely studied by us development sociologists such as Hanibal Quijano’s marginalisation theory in ‘dependant development’. The same can be said about processes of peripherisation which we analysed in the 70s and new economic world order in the 80s. These have given very good explanatory power for what N.G.Sch. calls “scalar perspectives on locality” – a very convincing concept. In development studies this would mean e.g. to look at the translocality of oil or diamond trade or gold mining in Africa intrinsically linking Chinese straight forward power action (bringing e.g. migrant labourers to rehabilitate British railways in Sudan) or internal war economies to translocal processes.

When talking about “uneven globalisation”, as N.G.Sch. does, we have to refer to theories of “uneven development”. This can certainly not be stopped by mainly referring to the high amount of transfers coming from migrants as development instrument. What is appropriate

however is to imply that development is not made in a unilateral way by governments or donors, but by local and translocal actors.

Also ‘development’ should not be conceived in a narrow sense but – as in dependency theories – be linked to structures of investments, labour etc. We should add, following globalisation theories, flows of concepts and visions of society / or of structuration of the world in a hierarchical (call it “racialising” sense) which however is largely contested in wide social spaces.

The “North-South” perspective is not complex enough any more, but we should link to these theories and look at more complex structuration of power fields. E.g. there are hardly any African investments in Africa, Chinese transmigrants taking over formal local trade pushing aside former translocal ‘ethnic’ trade. Theories about conditions in industries have to be taken up and globalized by looking e.g. at “migrating labour patterns” (Petra Dannecker).

Also, in development theory there are useful approaches which are not ethnicising but looking at translocal relations which are underlying e.g. translocal trade (e.g. dissertations done in Bielefeld by George Amponsem on Ghana, Mirjam Laaser on Nairobi). There are studies about the transformations going on in trading networks or “ethnic” firms regarding management styles etc. Can “ethnic economy” (which often is not ethnic at all) become formal business, not based on exploitation of family labour etc.?

Even the hierarchisation of global positions is not so clear when thinking of Zimbabwe being voted head of UN commission on climate change lately. African state governments are, it is true, in a desperate situation, following strange power plays.

Development, in a framework of globalisation, is to be conceived of as “transformation” in a broader sense – including concepts of “multiple modernities”, othering, looking at institutional solutions, informalisation processes etc., and to be defined in terms of knowledge production, use, arena of negotiation in a scalar sense on different levels.

In general, transnationalisation including migration studies should be more complex, overcoming tendencies of becoming more and more closed shop communities. Following a translocal paradigm, our questions with regard to development and migrants as carriers of flows would be e.g. what concepts do they carry, can they overcome the “stranger”-“natives” divide which is followed in development co-operation, addressed by all these social concepts such as local knowledge, participation, ownership etc. We are bringing in methodological approaches to do analysis based on sociology of knowledge, including authority of knowledge,

dominant knowledge etc. (e.g. a Bielefeld PhD on Tamil diaspora cooperation in Sri Lanka by Eva Gerharz 2007).

We also have studies showing that with the type and status of individual education received in Northern countries, the bad governance in development is pre-conceived and many returned migrants complain that they cannot fully use their capacities. There is a strong hierarchy of development knowledge brought back. Indeed this dominant knowledge is situated within global power structures.

3. Ad Ludger Pries, Bochum, Transnationalism: trendy catch-all or specific research programme?

L.P. makes the strong argument to restrict / make “transnationalism” more conceptually precise in a methodological and theoretical sense, in order to be able to formulate a clear research programme. I am, however, less pessimistic and see already quite some empirical and methodological work having been done, often not directly with the label of transnationalism and migration theory. Regarding “advances and challenges” L.P.’s main preoccupation is on the one side the “definition of units of analysis and units of reference for transnational social phenomena and studies” (p. 1); on the other suggesting to mainly address the meso-level of transnational organisations.

I very much support the phenomenological approach of structuration (Alfred Schuetz is quoted) or structurization (also later forwarded by Anthony Giddens), connected to a theory and methodological approach of theory of social action – going beyond an “actor” theory.

I am not sure whether this can be done with the quest for looking mainly at transnational organisations. I consider that agency, negotiating of meaning leading to structuration must be the basis of looking at social (rightly often societal as called by L.P.) spaces. But I doubt whether different ideal types of social spaces could be named in the sense of actors, and one being “everyday life”. I consider social space as operationalization of the life-world concept, in which L.P.’s preoccupations with “borders” or “boundaries” are necessarily implied. However, I do not share the opinion that research done up to now considers “either micro-level of everyday life or (on) the macro-level of social institutions” with “the meso-level of transnational organisations lack[ing] attention” (p. 15).

L.P. conceives of “transnational societal units .. (as) relatively dense and durable configurations of transnational social practices, symbols and artefacts” (p. 2) and implies a definition in a narrow sense “spanning interaction frameworks” in these “dimensions”. He tries to find which different types “actually exist” (p. 3) and wants to compare them in a classical sense between transnational companies and non-transnational types of societal units of analysis. This we find problematic as reproducing dichotomies when looking at systematical variations, asking for “circumstances” under which migrants assimilate etc. (p. 4).

Regarding “ideal types of [transnational] social spaces, mixed with different dimensions” (sic!) (p. 12 ff.), I consider the relationship socio-technological as missing (internet). E.g. at Berlin Tegel airport there is a sign “Welcome in Oberursel” (the most boring place at the outskirts of Frankfurt) – so far deterritorialisation is concerned.

The concept of “relations of entanglement”, the bringing in of the term “dense” is very fruitful. In the graphic on “types, dimensions and spatial reach of societal spaces” I miss the methodological concepts of relations, order, structuration, interaction etc.

Instead of conceptualising fixed units of analysis, we suggest analysing dynamic interfaces of systems of knowledge in social spaces by showing how they are constituted by agency. If globalisation and localisation are produced in a constructivist sense i.a. by migrants, everyday life and organisational life and links between these have to be brought together (I agree the network society approach often does argue in a very redundant way). We conceive the micro-macro relation as to be captured through the structuration and institutionalisation approach. Regarding defining levels, we can indeed distinguish different complexities of societal organisation, but the linkages and interactions seem to become more and more important. Very interesting are indeed the crossing of levels and the multiple entanglements.

Given the global and translocal phenomena of connectedness, methodological challenges are indeed to overcome classical comparison because units of analysis cannot be distinguished as independent ones any more. We analyse how social spaces are constituted by social actors (e.g. Peleikis 2003, Lebanon – Ivory Coast migrants) and we can formulate certain dimensions and perspectives in order to look at processes and dynamics in other cases. I do not so easily share N.G.Sch.’s critique of these relational studies, it depends on how deep systematic contextualisation is done. Thereby one should overcome the methodological nationalism by considering e.g. the interaction with the state, negotiating concepts in different spheres as only one of several dimensions.

When LP. suggests to compare social spaces as units of analysis, he takes as examples profit and non-profit organisations. He does not mention social movements which are actors

in social spaces with blurred boundaries between formal and informal contexts. We see that the relevant social spaces can be constituted by organisations, but they are not social spaces themselves. We look at crosscutting spaces, multiple social worlds, not as concentric circles but overlapping, also regarding everyday life in and with economy (its social organisation and transnational embeddedness) and organisations. It is not an alternative to either look at organisations, or at everyday social relations. Thereby the methodological imperative of structuration has to be taken seriously.

I am thinking of Bielefeld studies such as “Traders’ dilemma” (Evers, Schrader 1994), or “Doing IT in the Philippines” (Saloma-Akpedonu 2006), where the everyday life / organisational boundaries are blurred, i.e. translocal interaction amongst actors within organisations or individually takes place. E.g. exchanging knowledge and contracts with Philippino migrants to US; elaborating new designs of export ceramics from Tunisia to France (Bacha); in apartheid Africa social spaces for negotiating new social relations, in post-independence Kenia new interethnic relations were constituted by churches (Achieng ...). But I would not call church a social space.

We assume that this blurring of relations with organisations is one of the phenomena of globalisation which has to be understood. The way the global economy is structured, e.g. “cama dentro” (Anna Spiegel 2005 on Bolivian migrants in private sweat shops in Argentina). All forms of outsourcing, privatising, precarious working relations, cleaning staff, housemaids in global cities... Here concepts of modes of transformation can be used, processes of institutionalisation and of organisation building.

Phenomenological methodology would help to overcome the society = nation state syndrome; we can render more visible relational and interactive approaches by systematic dense methodology including trajectories (again, I do not consider biographies as a unit of analysis but as a methodological tool). Also contextualisation can be done systematically according to structures of relevance in the field, in order to fill in what L.P. calls “unit of reference”.

I am afraid there is still the trap of territorial reference if cross-cutting worlds and boundaries are not looked at; we have to study how they are permanently (re)produced and negotiated. This can be done with the help of concepts such as arena, platforms, public sphere(s).

We are using the concept of ‘translocal’ social spaces in a broader sense, looking i.a. at processes of “othering” and negotiating e.g. on multiple feminisms, Islams, Islamic feminism, African feminism etc.⁴ (I rather consider African not as an ethnic but a political concept, contrary to what is implied by N.G.Sch.) In these debates ‘migrants’ from the respective countries play a decisive role. We talk about “cosmopolitan epistemic community” e.g. in bringing together gender researchers, activists and experts on different levels of international organisations and links between their social movement / organisations base and regional regimes (e.g. peasant leaders from Westafrica – EU). This approach would not be included in the matrix presented by L.P. (p. 7). I think the concept of translocality should be added.

4. Ad Monika Salzbrunn, Localising transnationalism: Researching political and cultural events in a context of migration

M.S. very pertinently takes up different approaches of “theory of locality in migration studies”, “local-global embedding processes”, “globalization from below” (a term used quite early in gender research). Following these approaches she very convincingly suggests to study certain “political and cultural events in a context of migration” in order to “recognize the rooting of transnational networks”. Her epistemological focus “considers them as “platforms for negotiation of inclusion/exclusion and transformation processes” (i.e. boundary drawing regarding power of definition). She avoids conceptualising “ethnic” essentialized communities, using the ‘neutral’ definition of “minorities”, looks at processes of communitarization. In this process she sees the formation of “new identity” referring to “experience of circulation”.

I think these are very interesting directions of “localisation” approaches, to be connected to concepts of ‘politics of the place’ and ‘translocality’, in the sense of constitution of social spaces where new / hybrid social worlds, identities, interactions, modes of transformation, gender order are negotiated, showing how they are constructed in “translocal social spaces” (p. 4 ff.).

The dimension of comparison applied in the above mentioned sense, when looking at agency in public spheres, is the relationship and the location in a secular state, thereby ap-

⁴ Cf. Gudrun Lachenmann, Introduction to Workshop “Negotiating development in gendered translocal spaces in Muslim societies”, 2005, www/university of Bielefeld/trdc)

plying a situational approach, elaborating arrangements, modes of interaction etc. as methodological dimensions, and doing systematic contextualisation.

The instrument applied is event analysis with the first being the organisation of the Murid Parade of the in New York showing “how Muslims from different turuq (brotherhoods) take into consideration the specific cultural and religious practices in their different countries of residence”. Thereby new forms of comparison concern dimensions such as “religious references in the public sphere”.

This I consider indeed a meso level of social organisation, about which L.P. is reflecting, as well an approach of middle range theorizing. Also phenomena of societization (Vergesellschaftung) – M.S. talks about “communitarization” - are shown when pointing e.g. at gaining support of recruited converts, combining trade relationships with social security issues. Methodologically this implies institutionalisation processes and social change.

M.S. also looks at changing constructions in a political sense of ethnicity, e.g. claiming “blackness” by the Murids, who at the same time distance themselves from AfroAmericans. This can be considered as new form of Panafricanism, showing often quite reactionary developments, as presented in the quote from the Muride magazine regarding the “great women” being hidden behind “great men” – a very conservative concept of gender relations. Muridism, as well as Pentecostalism, indeed would constitute translocal social spaces in a deterritorialised relationship between multi-territorial places and “multitude of frames of reference” to be studied (p. 15).

The second example of an event in Paris, district Saint Marthe, is the reinvented ritual of carnival. This example shows very clearly the overlapping of diverse social spaces, creating new social spaces and worlds which are very important for social change. This corresponds to what has been called neo-communitarization (“Neo-Vergemeinschaftung”, Ronald Hitzler).

This is clearly multi-sited fieldwork which M.S. does not restrict to one predefined group of migrants”, or “systematic comparison of localities” (p. 20).

5. Ad Anna Amelina, Bielefeld: A civilizational perspective on the research of transnational formations: a methodological proposal

A.A. looks at “intercivilizational encounters” and “cross-cultural configurations” using sociology of knowledge as well as configurations of civilizational complexes, with the intention of overcoming the “‘container-oriented’ model of research” – as we all strive at.

However, in her own critique, I am afraid there is still the risk of using some concepts which correspond to dichotomic approaches when studying certain entities, such as “context(s), civilization(s)” etc., only specifying that they go in two directions. Concepts of “adaptation, impact, diffusion” etc. should certainly be discarded as they are never implying interactivity.

This means she criticizes concepts like hybridity etc. which are supposed to overcome these dichotomies, as with our approach in Bielefeld of showing how in translocal spaces hybridity comes about, is produced through interactions, economic, cultural, social structures / institutions.

However A.A. de facto goes further in her paper by using the plurality of civilizational contexts as frames of reference of analysis. Her main endeavour is the “theoretical description of the global social context .. to specify the transnational context”. She elaborates the transformation of ‘both sides’, taking as main concept of analysis “intercivilizational encounters”. An interesting question raised by A.A. is “.. to ask how plural (or multiple) meaning patterns are reproduced through transnational practices and how they change under transnational conditions” (p. 6).

Here the methodology of translocality in an interpretative approach would provide instruments of looking at interfaces, encounters at the interface (Norman Long) overlapping social spaces, constitution of spaces, negotiating of meaning.

A.A. interestingly refers to followers of phenomenological sociology (Johan P. Arnason following Maurice Merleau-Ponty) in the sense of assuming “a plural and ambiguous structuring of a global context, implying “the plurality of political, economical and cultural patterns” (p. 2). Later on, however, she uses the concept of “embeddedness” which of course is implied in the analysis of different frames of interpretation and meanings.

I think Arnason’s approach is still too mechanistic when making clear distinctions between religious, non-religious, cultural aspects especially regarding global flows etc. Also A.A. uses

“intercivilizational”, which might still imply clear boundaries of civilizations as units of analysis. We would prefer to look at transcultural construction of social reality.

The concept of ‘pattern’ refers still to closed entities, whereas we use e.g. “modes of transformation” (Elwert), different constructs, images of e.g. gender etc. The concept of “horizon of horizons”, like used by L.P., on the other side suggests the concept of structuration of the life-world, worlds within reach and their enlargement – which I think is absolutely fruitful for our endeavour.

The second part of A.A.’s paper is the methodological endeavour with regard to consequences for empirical research, referring to

- a “cross-cultural version of the hermeneutic sociology of knowledge”
- and a multi-sited fieldwork strategy (Marcus).

When doing so, A.A. suggests “combining the hermeneutic sociology of knowledge with cultural studies” (p. 6). This is certainly fruitful as regards opening up to stocks of knowledge on non Western societies, however I think sociology of knowledge has laid the necessary methodological foundations rather earlier through Alfred Schuetz / Peter Berger / Thomas Luckmann/ Jörg Bergmann, and Hans-Georg Soeffner (quoted), which are still very relevant. Also I think it is a misunderstanding to consider these hermeneutics, contrary to cultural studies, aiming only at “the reconstruction of a singular interpretive model” (p. 8). However, it is clear that cultural relativism has to be avoided.

In our Bielefeld group we try to do systematic contextualisation, in transcultural global social research, elaborating on translocal social spaces etc., referring to these foundations in sociology of knowledge, trying to come up with different possible interpretations of meaning (which have always been implied in Clifford Geertz, Ulrich Oevermann, Ronald Hitzler, Hubert Knoblauch etc.). We are basing our methodology on “grounded theory”, coming up with key categories and working (hypo)thesis, showing the explanatory power of different concepts. The idea of “different meanings” referred to by A.A. has always been implied in constructivism, logics of actions, interfaces of systems of knowledge, multiplicity of social worlds etc.

“Multi-sited ethnography” (Marcus 1998) has indeed influenced social anthropology a lot where, I would claim, the “sociological” view had to be brought in with a more explicit approach. We have been using it in several forms, combining “dense and complex methods” such as trajectories, multi-level analysis (i.a. Lang 2005 etc.), mobile research (Schlee 1985),

complex designs etc. Also we have developed new forms of comparison, where it is not the same researcher who has to do all the different studies, but working with collectively elaborated dimensions, typologies etc. as developed in interpretative sociology.

6. Methodological conclusions

In the meantime we have ‘discovered’ Michael Burawoy and research group in California, also debates in social anthropology and referring to global power structures and how to take them into account in new power structuration, in what they call “global ethnography. Forces, connections, and imaginations in a postmodern world” (et al. 2000). I.e. they want to overcome the restrictedness of the ethnographic site (Chicago school). “Within any field, whether it had global reach or was bounded by community or nation, our fieldwork had to assemble a picture of the whole by recognizing diverse perspectives from the parts, from singular but connected sites” (B. 2000, p. 4 f.), striving at a “historically grounded, theoretically driven, macro ethnography” (p. 24).

This approach can be combined with systematizing structuration, translocality, contextualization, in the sense of empirically grounding globalization theory.

With regard to the question of institutionalisation of agency in social spaces mainly addressed by L.P., thereby contributing to the analysis of the migration / development nexus, we suggest to study interfaces e.g. between formal and informal institutions (such as social security or finance) crosscutting boundaries of formal institutions, formally employed persons including migrants overcoming distances, creating innovative forms of linking, conceiving and combating poverty taking into account

- social networks, livelihoods, cooperation between genders regarding exchange of resources and labour
- boundary crossing between different logics of economic agency such as reproductive and productive field e.g. between business women interacting with men in institutions and the other way round
- frontiers drawn between local governance and civil society organisations to be analysed by social spaces of negotiating public issues or conceiving formal institutions, e.g. social forestry (diverse concepts of frontiers)

- or informal institutions e.g. rehabilitation of irrigation schemes; male / female groups and organisations

In order to empirically grounding globalisation theories

- questions of methodology and design have to be asked in quite a new way than has been the case up to now in development research, sociology and social anthropology
- scepticism regarding the adequacy of doing comparative research between different societies, first world and third world, between different cultures or civilisations, given the very heterogeneous and context specific developments has to be taken seriously
- given the long tradition of regional studies, case studies in social anthropology and fear of transfer of eurocentric concepts in development research, there is a necessity of fundamental methodological reconsidering approaches within a process of globalising social science
- concepts connected to specific cases and regions should enter more and more into generalizing debates, following a methodology of transcultural ‘comparative global’ social research

Therefore, there is increasing interest in strengthening qualitative methodology and empirically grounding certain theoretical fields such as sociology of Islam, gender, social movements, etc. which can be made fruitful for migration / development studies which can be considered to be basic features of globalisation ‘in the making’.

There are three different approaches:

- qualitative analysis of concepts and phenomena considered to be constitutive of globalisation, such as social movements, networks, civil society within a framework of transcultural sociology, thereby avoiding dualisms of blocks, cultures etc.
- globalisation studied through its constitutional element of interlinking, global flows, translocal social spaces, networks and movements
- globalisation looked at by its building up from below, making use of knowledge accumulated by regional studies and looking at glocalisation and localisation. The paradigm of translocality referring to the interactive construction of social reality; boundaries of negotiating multiple social worlds, identities, communities

In our a.m. research project we argued that globalisation was constituted through new social forms of organisation and epistemic communities, with the development world as a global knowledge framework. Within a framework of theory of agency, relationality and dynamics, we are analysing the constitution of social spaces which are structured through gender, looking at othering and fundamentalisms as globalizing forces negotiated locally at different interfaces. We want to contribute to deepening globalisation theory by looking at how spaces, knowledge, structuring through agency and networking of women in the development field are constituting flows and landscapes in a translocal way – in the sense of empirically grounding approaches from Appadurai, Robertson or Hannerz etc.. Structuration of social fields is being engendered, and female negotiation of development and constitution of trans-local and transnational spaces are very pertinent cases to look at. Migration is another important dimension of structuration and agency.

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