



# Settlement, Transnational Communities and Citizenship

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## Settlement, transnational communities and citizenship

Riva Kastoryano

International migration has given rise to emerging communities which may be described as 'transnational'. This term refers to communities made up of individuals or groups, settled in different national societies, sharing common interests and references – territorial, religious, linguistic – and using transnational networks to consolidate solidarity beyond national boundaries (Faist, 1998).

The emergence of transnational communities is a 'global phenomenon', principally concerning post-colonial immigration. Immigrants are involved in networks based on economic interests, cultural exchanges, social relations and political affiliations. Their action is de-territorialised. Transnational communities may thus be considered as a new kind of migrant community. Clearly, migrants have always lived in more than one setting, at least for one or two generations, maintaining ties with a real or imagined community in the state of origin (Anderson, 1983). But in the recent years they have also taken into account "the context of globalisation and economic uncertainty that facilitates the construction of social relations that transcend national borders" (Rivera-Salgado, 1999). Increasing mobility and the development of communication have contributed to such relations, and create a transnational space of economic, cultural and political participation.

The emergence of transnational communities is also a post-national phenomenon. That is, emigration took place after the age of nationalism, and the immigrants involved in constructing transnational communities do not refer to a 'mythical' **quote and quote rather to mythical** territorial state, but come from and refer to a territorialised nation-state. In some cases, such as Turkey, the state of origin is centralised with unified national and political culture. In other cases, such as India or China, it has a federal structure maintaining cultural and political heterogeneity. In all cases, it is the chosen identity – linguistic, religious, regional - that constitutes a basis for transnational organisation.

Transnational organisation allows the immigrant populations to escape national policies, and generates a new space of socialisation for immigrants involved in building networks beyond national borders (Appadurai, 1996; Gupta and Ferguson, 1997, Hannertz, 1996). The cultural and political specificities of national societies (host and home) are combined with emerging multilevel and multinational activities in a new space beyond territorially delimited nation-states, inevitably questioning the link between territory and nation-state. Moreover,

transnational networks linking the country of origin to the country of residence and promoting participation in both spaces, challenge the single allegiance required by membership in a political community, and lead to a redefinition of the balance between community structures and the state. Multiple membership and multiple loyalties lead to a confusion between rights and identity, culture and politics, states and nations - in short question the very concept of citizenship. It may be asked whether transnational communities can be considered as the institutional expression of multiple belonging.

In Europe, an important number of transnational networks of immigrant workers have arisen in order to claim recognition of a collective identity. Their members may have the status of permanent residents or legal citizens of the host country, according to its legislation on citizenship. The networks are formal or informal, based on identity or interest or both. They transcend national borders, linking the home country to the country of residence and to a broader European space.

Such networks, like those of professional bodies, form a spider's web covering the European space - a space without internal frontiers in which, according to the Single European Act of 1986, the free movement of goods, of property and capital is safeguarded. With the construction of a political Europe, transnational organisations also seek representation at the European level, leading to recognition beyond the nation-states. This evolution underlines the multiple interactions between national societies (home and host) and the wider European space, between national and supranational institutions, and among nation-states members of the European Union. It leads to a new concept of citizenship shared by the countries of origin and of residence and Europe.

### **Transnational solidarity and identity**

Transnationality is not really a new phenomenon. Economic migrants, who usually perceived immigration as temporary, have spontaneously maintained ties with their country of origin. What is new about transnationality is its organisational aspect: constructed networks and structured communities. Its institutionalisation requires a co-ordination of activities based most of the time on common references – objective or subjective - and common interests among members (Held et al 1999).

Many factors influence the nature and structure of transnational communities. They include geographical proximity and historical ties between the sending and receiving countries, economic and political opportunity structures of the host country, as well as the size and degree of local concentration or dispersion of immigrant groups.

Geographical proximity gives rise rather to a transborder community linking the country of origin to the country of settlement. Case studies in American social sciences focused on Mexicans in California, Porto-Ricans and Dominicans in New York, Cubans in Florida and their familial, economical, social, cultural and political networks linking their two countries, establishing this way a transborder social space. They argue that such flows affect the economic development as well as political structures and values of the home countries, even giving rise to new kinds of practices and symbols resulting from transnational practices (Basch et al 1997; Levitt, 1998, forthcoming; Portes, 1996).

Geographical proximity and transnationality are often combined with historical ties, sometimes going back to a colonial past, affecting the size of the community and the density of relationships with the home country. That is why in Europe, immigrants from some areas are more involved in building transnational networks than are others. For example, Algerians are among the less involved: their main references remain France and Algeria, and, to some extent, all of North Africa. Some more dispersed immigrant groups, for example the Turks, seem to be better armed to build a transnational network with a common identity, despite internal diversity, crossing the boundaries of many States. This example appears to follow the path of the Chinese diaspora characterized by its cultural, regional, ethnic diversity within the same national reference (Chan Kwok Bun, 1999).

On the other hand, economic and political contexts favour institutional structures and their transnational extension. Economic liberalism has encouraged 'ethnic business'. Its extension beyond a local setting is the result of the dispersion of immigrants with similar regional and/or national backgrounds throughout a continent or even across the world. Indian and Chinese immigrant communities, despite their cultural, linguistic heterogeneity of the population, provide the best examples. The flux of capital and goods is linked to economic norms and a culture of consumption carried from one country to another by transnational actors.

Political liberalism privileging ethnic pluralism encourages cultural activities through migrants' associations, where identities are organised and redefined. Multiculturalism and 'identity politics', applied in Western democracies since the 1980s, sustain the emergence of transnational communities. On the national level, community organisations claim cultural recognition and political representation within state institutions. The home country provides the emotional factor, and the country of settlement the legal and political support for their action which, by definition, leads to political participation in both spaces, carrying political norms and values from one culture to another. Such transnational communities aim at acting as pressure groups for political recognition in both political spaces. Often this action structures the community. For example, the Haitians of New York and Montreal organised a

transnational community on the basis of a political struggle against the regime of Duvalier in Haiti on the one hand, and against discrimination and unemployment of second generation youth in Canada or the United States, on the other (Labelle and Midy, 1999). In Europe the Kurdish movement, which finds a legitimacy within the framework of European supranational institutions such as European Court of Human Rights, seeks recognition in receiving countries as well as in Turkey.

Thus transnational communities produce 'social remittances', with ideas, behaviours, identities and social capital flowing from one country to another (Levitt, 1998). In order to be influential in both countries, their construction requires the settlement and integration of actors into the host society, and a knowledge of the 'rules of the game'.

### **Emerging transnational structures in Europe**

In the European Union, transnational communities may transcend the boundaries of the member states, relating a vast European space to the country of origin. Some of the transnational networks are based on local initiatives, some come from the country of origin, some are encouraged by supranational institutions. In this way, the supranational institutions function as transnational lobbies or interest groups, acting among many other such groups at the European level (Smith et al 1997). They play an important role in the diffusion of social, cultural, political and even juridical norms in different European countries as well as in the country of origin.

All European countries have accepted the permanent settlement of immigrants as a reality. Each country has developed a specific position regarding immigration and the presence of immigrant populations, based on its founding principles as a nation states. National particularities that emerge in official rhetoric are echoed in the political claims of the immigrants themselves, influencing their own collective identities (Kastoryano, 1996).

But at the same time on the European level, policies on the integration of immigrants tend to converge. The passage from economic and temporary immigration to immigration with permanent residence has given rise to the emergence of new actors among immigrants, with new economic and political force. Similar situations give rise to similar political reactions, and the leaders of migrants' associations tend to converge in their political strategies. Whether states define themselves as republican and integrationist like France, or exclusivist in terms of citizenship like Germany (up to January 2000), or as promoting the formation of ethnic communities in the public sphere, like the United Kingdom, immigrants develop strategies that look towards Europe as a new political arena for political participation and representation (Kastoryano, 1997).

One ground for emergent ethnicity in Europe is Islam, which provides a basis for transnational organisation based on a common identity generated by the experience of being Muslim in Europe. The Muslim presence goes back to the migration of the 1960s, and the statistics estimate their present number at approximately eight million. They are settled in almost all European countries, in both members of the Union and other countries, such as Switzerland. Muslims in Europe are as diverse as Christians in their origin, language, nationality, ethnicity and even denomination (Sunnites, Shiites, or Alawites). Loyalties to the state of origin, therefore to national identities of home countries, characterise social and ethnic relations among Muslim populations in Europe and limit their identity boundaries. Within the national groups, sects, brotherhood and regional allegiances and political ideologies provide identity repertoires for community organisations dedicated to language teaching, folklore, or religion. Such organisations, subject to immigration policies and to legislation concerning social activities of migrants in host countries, have proliferated in all European countries since the 1980s. Even if Islam also appears fragmented from within by national identities, it represents a unifying force among Muslim immigrants.

The absence of religion from the political projects of the European Union, on the one hand, and the abundance of resources that European institutions allocate to non-religious social activities on the other, have led Muslim organisations to extend their network from the local to the national and transnational levels. This situation brings the countries of origin and, in some cases, international Muslim organisations, into the system (Hoeber and Piscatory, 1997). While cultural networks are supported by European institutions for democratic purposes, Muslim organisations have recourse to the countries of origin (via official or unofficial institutions), or to international Islamic organisations or both. They finance activities that transcend national, ethnic, linguistic cleavages and religious divergences with the goal of promoting a common identity: to be Muslim in Europe. The elaboration of transnational structures thus reveals multiple references, and multiple allegiance: to the host country, to the home country and to a constructed transnational (or diasporic) identity (Laguerre 1998).

### **Transnational civil society and citizenship**

Transnational networks have introduced a new mode of participation on national and European levels. In this perspective, citizenship derives principally from political participation in public life. It is expressed by the engagement of individuals in politics and their direct or indirect participation in the “public good” (Leca, 1986). In Germany for example, the lack of legal citizenship does not prevent foreigners from taking part in political life. They develop strategies of indirect participation by way of influencing the public opinion. The expression of their engagement implies a ‘civil citizenship’, as opposed to a ‘civic citizenship’ as in the case

of the young generations of North African origin, born and socialised in France, who participate directly in community life by voting as citizens (Kastoryano, 1996).

The increasing political participation of immigrants through various migrants' associations has provoked an identification with the political community through collective action on a national level. A new supranational political identification is now being created on the European level in a similar manner. (Kastoryano 1998).

Transnationalism is inevitably bound up with dual or multiple citizenship, insofar as it relies on more than one national reference as well as on at least two arenas of social participation. But dual citizenship concerns different conceptions of a community's moral and political values, as well as the civic duties demanded of those residing within it (Pickus, 1998). Some see in dual citizenship a source for 'democratic influence', that is, the application of Western democratic values in the country of origin (Spiro, 1997). But dual citizenship does not necessarily imply a simultaneous direct participation in two political arenas. Citizens are only citizens of the state in which they fully exercise their rights and obligations.

Transnationalism leads, in any case, to an institutional expression of multiple belonging, where the country of origin becomes a source of identity, the country of residence a source of rights, and the emerging transnational space, a space of political action combining the two or more countries.

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