

Migrants unbound? Theorizing transnational and return migration with evidences from the field

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The contemporary features of international migration have resulted into an increasingly blurred distinction between migrants' countries of origin, transit and destination. Circular and return patterns of migration and mobility have a leverage on integration practices and pose several challenges for migration scholars and stakeholders. In this regard, the introduction of a transnational approach allows to go beyond an essentialist and/or purely ethnic perspective on return migration.

The transnational perspective does view return not at the end of migration cycle but with return the migration process continues. The binary structuralist vision of cross border movements is thus questioned, taking into account the circularity of migration movements, which facilitates migrants' mobility (Chapman and Prothero, 1983-84). Time-space compression is what make "communities without propinquity" possible (Faist, 2000). These spatial configurations are a paramount feature of the current era if compared with the unidirectional and permanent migration of the former centuries. They do possibly allow migrant rights and identity negotiation and re-negotiation across borders.

Pertinent research questions include the following: First, what is the unique contribution of transnationalism and social networks to comprehend return migration? Secondly, do the current spatial configurations make the contemporary "migrants unbound"? (Ruspini, 2019). At last, what migration theory can learn from empirical research? This paper aims at elucidating some of these aspects by linking migration theory with relevant examples from fieldwork on return and transnational migration.

References

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