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# Transnationalism – Migration – Integration

## Migration and nation state in the modern world order through the prism of the concept of transnationalism



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The rise in the diverse forms of cross-border migration is a topical and significant question against a backdrop of economic, social, cultural and political internationalisation. Alongside the predominant division of research interests into countries of origin and countries of destination, in recent years and even decades<sup>1</sup> the transnational component of migration has emerged as a new area of research.<sup>2</sup> This article looks at the theory of transnationalism as a sub-field of migration theory, which in turn has evolved as a field of international relations. Anyone dealing with transnationalism as a subject of research and as a sub-field of migration studies, will inevitably encounter topics such as “nation”, “nation state”, “citizenship” and, increasingly since the beginning of the millennium, the “security aspect” of migration movements (the latter has attracted greater attention as the concept of security has grown in scope<sup>3</sup>). The foregoing raise questions about various and changing concepts of identity, diaspora politics and hybrid cultures and have implications for integration and assimilation models. Covering all of the above would be beyond the bounds of this article. Nevertheless, certain interactions between the topics will be discussed, without going into all the concepts in detail. The article will look first at where research into the subject stands and the theoretical concept of transnationalism. Based on this foundation, overlaps with other concepts and necessary implications for the understanding of the nation state and of the significance of identity for the population of the nation state will be explored. One of the focal points of interest is the EU, as the largest transnational area, and the question of the impact of such developments on the transformation of statehood.<sup>4</sup> That train of thought leads inevitably to taking a critical look at and reflecting on the concept of methodological nationalism, i.e. the assumption that the nation state presents the logical and natural framework for social life and identities.<sup>5</sup> Next, the attempt is made to move from a general to a more individual approach to the question of identity by looking more closely at the ways in which the concepts of transnationalism, circular migration, diaspora and hybrid culture intersect.

### 1. TRANSNATIONALISM AS AN OBJECT OF RESEARCH IN MIGRATION STUDIES

The first use of the term “transnationalism” dates back to an essay by Randolph Bourne entitled “Trans-National America”<sup>6</sup>, published in 1916, in which he describes “(...)

the utopia of a pluralistic America that sees cultural and ethnic differences not as hurdles, but as making possible a future defined by ‘cosmopolitan internationalism’”.<sup>7</sup>

From the 1960s, the term “transnationalism” was primarily adopted by political scientists as a way of describing those

processes for which a nation state classification seemed neither possible nor meaningful. However, since the 1990s, the use of the term, including in political science, has reverted to the original meaning given to it by Bourne.<sup>8</sup>

The 1990s saw an increasing shift from a view of migration that took the ideology of the nation state as its starting point towards a “transnational” perspective. Traditional migration research focuses/focussed chiefly on the various reasons for migration movements. The theoretical concept of transnationalism, by contrast, deals with the question of “how”. The emphasis is not on migration in itself, but rather on the cross-border actions of migrants and their descendants. Here the boundaries between the definitions of transnationalism, hybrid cultures and diaspora become blurred and are used differently from author to author.

The key assumption underlying the concept of transnationalism is that migration can no longer be seen as a one-dimensional journey, i.e. as a simple change from living in one country to another. Instead, many migrants continue to maintain strong ties with their country of origin in their new living environment, whether in an economic, political or cultural sense. A further dimension is the role of the sending country: it too can become increasingly involved in the “migrant community” of the receiving country, set priorities and pursue its own interests.

The anthropologists Nina Glick-Schiller et al.<sup>9</sup> were among the pioneers in defining the concept of transnationalism and investigating the phenomenon. They described transnational migration as the cross-border processes of migrant groups whose social relations and practices form a connection between two or more states.<sup>10</sup> Their major achievement was that they opened up a new perspective on migration movements

away from the binary model of “push” and “pull” factors or simple distinctions of/ based on emigration and immigration towards a more holistic approach to the cross-border actions of migrants.<sup>11</sup>

An important question arises in this context as to whether or not the phenomenon is in fact a new one. Is it not the case that migrants maintained contacts that spanned national borders in the context of earlier migration movements as well? To put the question more pointedly, is transnationalism a new phenomenon or is it an old concept that is given impetus by modern communications technologies, such as the internet, Skype and satellite television, and by new possibilities for mobility (such as budget airlines)?

When transnationalism began to be established as an area of research in the 1990s, transnationalism was considered by many, not least by those in academia, to be the answer of the “little man” to globalisation, which tends to be perceived as the preserve of economic “big players”. As such, the concept was enthusiastically received and acquired an established place in migration research, despite (or perhaps precisely because of) clear difficulties in delimiting its scope and conceptual imprecision, which will be discussed later in the text. Today, the majority of researchers take the view that transnationalism is less a new phenomenon than a new perspective on a social phenomenon, which social scientists, because of their “natural” tendency to think in terms of nation state categories, had not recognised earlier.<sup>12</sup> According to Glick-Schiller et al. (Glick-Schiller et al. 1995), “(t)he resulting analysis (...) are building toward a new paradigm that rejects the long-held notion that society and the nation state are one and the same.”<sup>13</sup>

It was not least in response to the question about the novelty of the phenomenon – one

significant motivation was that of giving research in this field a conceptual and theoretical framework (as late as in 1999) – that Portes<sup>14</sup> advanced a typology of transnationalism, designed to enable a distinction to be made between transnationalism and other (and earlier) forms of cross-border actions and to establish transnationalism as an independent phenomenon. The characteristics of transnationalism set out by Portes were as follows:

1. The process involves a significant proportion of persons in the relevant universe (in this case, immigrants and their home country counterparts)
2. The activities of interest are not fleeting or exceptional, but possess a certain stability and resilience over time.
3. The content of these activities is not captured by some pre-existing concept, making the invention of a new term redundant.

With regard to the last of these three points, the need arises to set limits on that undefined spectrum of various activities. Here too Portes provides us with suggestions:

“For purposes of establishing a novel area of investigation, it is preferable to delimit the concept of transnationalism to occupations and activities that require regular and sustained social contacts over time across national borders for their implementation”.<sup>15</sup>

While occasional contact, remittances etc. by members of the expatriate community contribute to strengthening the “transnational field”<sup>16</sup> in their countries of origin, such forms of contact do not match the characteristics described above and as such are not to be understood under “transnationalism”.

Based on the individual as the point of departure for further research in this area, Portes and associates distinguish three further typologies of transnationalism (see Figure 1, page 7):

1. The economic initiatives of transnational entrepreneurs who mobilise their contacts across borders in search of suppliers, capital and markets. The countries of origin of migrants and their descendants (dependent on the extent to which they can profit from social capital<sup>17</sup> such as contacts, language and the parental culture, since membership in a group can be perceived as a resource that enables an individual to achieve positive results both for themselves and for the member of the group [Bourdieu 1983<sup>18</sup>]) offer privileged conditions for such activities.
2. Political activities among party officials, government functionaries, or community leaders whose main goals are the achievement of political power and influence in the sending or receiving countries<sup>19</sup> (the concept can operate in both directions).
3. The manifold socio-cultural enterprises oriented towards the reinforcement of a national identity abroad (for example, through joint cultural activities, music from the home country etc.).

A further important point when addressing this topic is the necessity of distinguishing between transnational activities “from above” (initiatives of powerful institutional actors) and those “from below” (initiatives of immigrants and their counterparts in the country of origin).<sup>20</sup>

### **1.1 SOCIAL CAPITAL AND THE CONCEPT OF THE SOCIAL FIELD IN THE CONTEXT OF MIGRATION AND INTEGRATION RESEARCH**

According to Dahinden (Dahinden 2009), “(m)igrants turn geographically distinct spaces into a single arena, by moving back and forth between different cultural, social, political and economic systems”.<sup>21</sup>

According to Pries, transnational social spaces can be understood as “pluri-local

Source: Portes et al. 1999

frames of reference that structure everyday practices, social positions, biographical employment prospects and human identities and simultaneously exist above and beyond the social contexts of national societies”.<sup>22</sup>

The concept of the social field goes back to Bourdieu. He describes the social field as the whole spectrum of social interaction, which in turn is divided into individual sub-fields, with the political, economic and cultural fields being of greatest significance. He thereby draws attention to the various ways in which power gives structure to social relations.<sup>23</sup> The term was first applied to migration research by Glick-Schiller and Levitt, who explicitly dissociate it from nation state borders; in this context they understand the social field as “(...) a set of multiple interlocking networks of social relationships through which ideas, practices and resources are unequally exchanged, organised and transformed”.<sup>24</sup>

In applying the concept of the social field as an alternative means of explaining modern forms of society and the affiliation with those forms, Glick-Schiller and Levitt also distinguish between “ways of being” and “ways of belonging”: “Ways of being refers to the actual social relations and practices that individuals engage in rather than to the identities associated with their actions. (...) In contrast, ways of belonging refers to practices that signal or enact an identity which demonstrates a conscious connection to a particular group”.<sup>25</sup>

With regard to the choice of emphasis, parallels can certainly be recognised here – in particular with respect to the typology by Portes et al. described above. It should be noted that the concept of the social field also goes together with the power to define: the power of persons, institutions and mechanisms to establish what the content of the specific field is.

		Sector		
		Economic	Political	Socio-cultural
Low	Informal cross-country traders	Home town civic committees created by immigrants	Amateur cross-country sport matches	
	Small business created by returned immigrants in home country	Alliances of immigrant committee with home country political association	Folk music groups making presentations in immigrant centres	
	Long-distance circular labour migration	Fund raisers for home country electoral candidates	Priests from home town visit and organise their parishioners abroad	
High	Multinational investments in Third World countries	Consular officials representatives of national political parties abroad	International expositions of national arts	
	Development for tourist market of locations abroad	Dual nationality granted by home country governments	Home country major artists perform abroad	
	Agencies of home country banks in immigrant centres	Immigrants elected to home country legislatures	Regular cultural events organised by foreign embassies	

**Figure 1: Transnationalism typology according to Portes et al.**

A further level of debate is provided by the term “social capital”<sup>26</sup>, also coined by Bourdieu, which has since come into vogue among sociologists. The concept of “social capital” has also gained attention in (more recent) migration research. To date, researchers have primarily explored phenomena such as chain migration, circular migration or return migration – in other words, the role of social networks in prompting migration movements or the choice of destination country.<sup>27</sup> A further component, which so far has only been given sporadic attention, is the importance of social capital and social networks for the “integration”<sup>28</sup> of immigrants. This approach focuses on “afterwards”, i.e. on what happens once the migration process (one’s own or that of one’s parents) is already completed.

Sonja Haug and Sonja Pointner point very aptly to the wide-ranging analytical problems that arise when the (still heterogeneous) theory of social capital is applied directly to the field of migration or integration research. In short, it is important “(...) in order to analyse the functioning of social capital in a more sophisticated way (...) to distinguish between social capital specific to the place of origin and social

capital specific to the place of destination”.<sup>29</sup> Essentially, it can be established here that social capital is a significant influence factor for migration decisions.<sup>30</sup>

The significance and relevance of social networks and social capital to the migration process, and above all the integration process, represent largely “untrodden academic territory”, and significant social potential would lie in a closer consideration of the relevant causes and effects.

## 1.2 FORMS OF ACTIVITY – NEW FORMS OF POLITICAL ACTION

According to Kastoryano (Kastoryano 2003), “(s)ome transnational networks are based on local initiatives, some come from the country of origin, and some are encouraged by supranational institutions (...). Initiatives at all levels help activists develop political strategies and mobilisation beyond states”.<sup>31</sup>

Here reference should be made to the various political components of transnationalism. Different actors, patterns of action and fields of action can be observed: the politics of immigrants with regard to their country of origin<sup>32</sup>, the politics of immigrants with regard to their country of destination, the politics of the country of origin through the migrant community or individual politicians of the country of origin in another country<sup>33</sup> and the politics of the state through its treatment of a certain group with respect to its country of origin (for example the way in which the US behaves towards Cuban exiles in Florida in view of the impact, symbolic or actual, that this could have on Cuba).

Even persons lacking legal legitimacy enjoy options to mobilise themselves politically and exert pressure by using means of political articulation. However, a hurdle exists here, since political activity entails a greater risk (because of the insecure personal living situation of such persons).

Examples of such political mobilisation are the “sans papiers” protests in Western Europe or demonstrations by people with illegal residency status in the USA, which have repeatedly resulted in phases of illegal immigrants being legalised. Another form taken by political action from the perspective of transnationalism is the Spanish-language version of the “The Star-Spangled Banner”, titled “Nuestro Himno”, recorded by a US record label, which attracted great attention when it was aired on the radio. This illustrates how sensitive the question of identity is and how closely it is tied to particular symbols.

In these observations, the nation state is nevertheless the point of reference. In view of the examples described here, which present the main possibilities and directions of political action in a transnational context, it is difficult to escape from that reference point.

In general, the question arises as to where exactly the border can be drawn between transnational community and diaspora.

In this context, Pries attempted a (rough) division of different migrant groups, whereby variations can be found in the wide-ranging grey areas (see Figure 2, page 9).<sup>34</sup>

## 1.3 DIASPORA/DIASPORA POLITICS<sup>35</sup>

Sökefeld (Sökefeld 2006) defines diasporas as “imagined transnational communities, which are unique segments of people that live in territorially separated locations”.<sup>36</sup> He points out that not all migrants automatically become members of a diaspora and not all groups of migrants become diaspora or transnational communities. Rather, such awareness depends on a corresponding self-view and mobilisation. Sökefeld deals explicitly with the imagined community and points to its significance since ultimately states are also “imagined communities” and yet, or precisely for that reason, real.<sup>37</sup>

“The fact that nations are imagined communities does not mean that they are fictitious or unreal. Imagined communities – nations, ethnic groups or other communities – are real because they are imagined as real, because they are taken as real and because they therefore have very real effects on social life”.<sup>38</sup>

If the previously described concept of the transnational social field is applied, that distinction is at least simplified, since a space is created, in which networks of migrants/non-migrants or persons from different countries of origin exist. In other words, this is a space that goes beyond nation state borders and geographical circumstances. The binding element is a self-defined one that results from the field and is influenced by the actors of the field.

Barber escapes from the purely geographical use of the term “Raum” (in the “deutscher Sprachraum” [= German-speaking area]) and instead claims the term as a metaphor for civil society.<sup>39</sup>

A sharp line cannot be drawn between the transnational social field and the diaspora. “Diaspora” tends to describe a more homogenous group. The question must at least be raised as to whether or not diaspora identity assumes forced migration (which can certainly be “inherited” by subsequent generations), the longed return to a homeland either self-experienced or “fictive/idealised” (since it no longer exists in the current form)<sup>40</sup> or represents at least a significant driving force behind such a form of collective identity.

For example, many Jews across the world see themselves as a diaspora. The return to

Israel, although most of those concerned and their ancestors have never lived there, is collectively idealised and included in their life plans at least theoretically (as illustrated by the well-known expression “next year in Jerusalem”).

It follows, as mentioned above, that not all migrants are part of a diaspora and not all migrants feel that they belong to a transnational or diaspora community.

As early as 1991, William Safran<sup>41</sup> attempted to make an appropriate characterisation. According to that typology, members of a diaspora are primarily distinguished by their preserved memory of and sustained attachment to their “original homeland”, idealising that homeland, being committed to the maintenance and restoration of the homeland, and maintaining contacts in the homeland.<sup>42</sup> Diaspora strategies have an intrinsic dual aspect: the development of strategies with regard to the given country of destination (that is, questions of integration and assimilation) in balance with the relationship to the country of origin.

Often, the transnational actions of migrants (migrant groups) are economically focused. This finds expression in a multitude of smaller business relations (such as the typical import-export trade) as well as in remittances to relatives in the home country. In many cases, however, the activity goes beyond this economic level to a political level. In that case we can speak of diaspora politics.

The scope of diaspora politics includes:

- ▶ Political activity in the receiving country in order to increase political influence there.

Source: Pries 2001b

Migration as a one-way street	Emigrants/ immigrants	Return migrants
	Transmigrants	Diaspora migrants
Migration movements on the basis of networks and circulations		

Figure 2: Ideal types of migrants in the age of globalisation according to Pries

- ▶ Exercising pressure on the home country, especially in fields of politics that are relevant to the interests of the diaspora.
- ▶ The transnational diaspora community can also enter into interaction with other (third) states and international organisations. As a result, they form lobby groups that extend beyond nation state structures.<sup>43</sup>

The concept of the transnational space<sup>44</sup> includes varying realities. If we consider Faist's definition of transnational space, we can cast a look at the dividing line between diaspora and transnational community: "Transnational communities or families are only one kind of transnational network. In transnational spaces migrant families can operate, diasporas can exist or new diasporas can form, and ethnically defined networks, in which there is intensive economic and cultural exchange, can also take effect. Common to those different forms (...) are a number of fundamental integration mechanisms (solidarity with a small group or community of reference, formation of a specific network), while many other factors, such as the character and the intensity of the ties, the characteristics of the people involved and the type of exchange processes can be very different".<sup>45</sup>

That definition shows that an "and/and" rather than "either/or" approach to the two terms is possible, but does not remove the necessity of considering the two as independent social phenomena in a more sophisticated way.

## 2. NATIONAL STATE, NATION AND SOCIETY AGAINST THE BACKGROUND OF TRANSNATIONAL SOCIAL NETWORKS

As mentioned above, the transnationalism debate makes clear that the concept of the nation state, whereby it is considered synonymous with society, is increasingly

regarded as obsolete based on the change in general circumstances.

The work of Benedict Anderson, who formulated in his book "Imagined Communities"<sup>46</sup>, published in 1983, a concept to analyse the phenomena of nationalism and the formation of the nation state, together with the related connotations and meanings, cannot be left unmentioned here. The approach is constructivist; according to Anderson, rather than being realities in themselves, nations are historical and culturally specific projections, but with very real consequences and implications.<sup>47</sup>

A central element of transnational migration studies is the call for the concept of society to be reformulated on the grounds that it makes only limited sense for national frontiers in particular to be the focus of interest and of academic analysis: family, citizenship and the nation state need to be rethought. The nation state is still regarded as the norm, and social identities and actions that cut across national borders are seen as being outside the norm. Changing that pattern of thinking is the aim of the work of Glick-Schiller et al.<sup>48</sup>, among others.

However, the authors go further than that and, against this theoretical background, require that the whole social system, which is focused on national frontiers, be rethought, since they believe that it no longer reflects the current situation and the reality of the lives of an increasing number of people. However, Levitt and Glick-Schiller (Levitt/Glick-Schiller 2004) note, "if we remove the blinders of methodological nationalism, we see that while nation states are still extremely important, social life is not confined by nation state boundaries. Social and religious movements, criminal and professional networks and governance regimes as well as flows of capital also operate across borders. (...) we locate our approach to migration research within

a larger intellectual project (...) to rethink and reformulate the concept of society such that it is no longer automatically equated with the boundaries of a single nation state".<sup>49</sup>

The authors' approach is a visionary one and can be agreed with to a large extent. However, it should be noted that despite increasing mobility and a growing number of people who relocate the focus of their life beyond national frontiers, the vast majority of people, for a wide range of reasons, nevertheless remain settled and, if they do move, do so only within a relatively regional circumference.<sup>50</sup>

Overall, the call for a reformulation of the concept of society that properly reflects phenomena of the time such as globalisation and the cosmopolitanisation of the individual, is the focus of interest of an increasing group of researchers.<sup>51</sup>

If we go one step back in this, admittedly philosophical, analysis of the topic, in dealing on a theoretical basis with transnationalism, globalisation and the increase or expansion of supranational organisations and associations, we inevitably reach the point where the nation state in its current form is called into question.<sup>52</sup>

Kastoryano (Kastoryano 2003) puts it as follows: "If we define nation states as political structures 'invented' in eighteenth-century Europe based on the coincidence of territorial, cultural, linguistic, and even, to some extent, religious unity, then new global structures, such as supranational institutions and transnational networks, challenge them".<sup>53</sup>

The academic debate regarding the European integration process from an economic to a political community is marked by the key question of whether the nation state model should be maintained and the difficulties associated with breaking with this model. Ultimately, concepts such as post-

national, cosmopolitan or transnational affiliations, identities and networks are none other than an expression of that academic discourse<sup>54</sup>, which is bolstered worldwide by increasing migration movements and general mobility. According to Guarnizo and Smith (Guarnizo/Smith 1998), "(t)he nation state is seen as weakened, 'from above' by transnational capital, global media, and emergent supra-national political institutions. 'From below' it faces the decentring 'local' resistances of the informal economy, ethnic nationalism, and grassroots activism".<sup>55</sup> Or, in Soysal's words: "At the beginning of the twenty-first century the nation state's capacity for social integration is losing ground. We are moving towards postnational membership".<sup>56</sup>

On the question of the definition of citizenship, the respected migration researcher Rainer Bauböck (Bauböck 2007) responded that citizenship "(...) is first of all a formal status. But citizens also need to feel that they belong. But to what? Not to a nation, not to culture and not even to religion. It needs to be something like a minimal basic understanding of democratic community in which we are all subjects of the same state and therefore have the same rights".<sup>57</sup>

In addition, the question can at least be raised as to whether membership in or descent from the same ethnic group or having a common country of origin is a prerequisite or reference point for a transnational network or whether social, political or religious movements – we can think here, for example, of the "queer community", which uses its own flag as symbol (the rainbow flag, which has become established internationally), or the umma in Islam (as an alternative to the secular concept of the nation state) can also be understood as transnational networks. However, this idea is only mentioned in passing here.

### 3. INTEGRATION (POLICY), ASSIMILATION AND IDENTITY – FROM THE PERSPECTIVE OF TRANSNATIONALISM

In the course of the transnationalism debate, another important question arises beyond the vagueness about whether transnationalism is a new phenomenon or an old one in a new guise. Does the increasing formation of transnational networks hinder or encourage the integration of immigrants. The relevance of this question is also evident in the academic debate. It is clear that current integration concepts are coming up against the limits of what they are capable of explaining.

There is certainly room for further attention to be paid in social science research to the (possible) association between the formation of transnational networks and how readily immigrants integrate. If we accept here the premise that concepts of integration and transnationalism can be evaluated using categories like “low” and “high”, three possible associations can be posited:

First, a negative connection, whereby a high degree of integration goes with a low degree of transnational embeddedness (and also transnational capital) and vice-versa; second, the possibility of a positive connection: for example, well-integrated migrants may be more likely to have the necessary resources to travel regularly, keep two homes etc. The last version is the possibility that there is no correlation between the two. This question is only mentioned briefly here in order to point to the need for research and possible research approaches.

Despite the increased mobility of the people, which results from the ease of overcoming long distances, local living spaces are not necessarily losing relevance as references for people’s psycho-social identification processes. “People today are oscillating much more between cosmopo-

litanism and localism. That prompts the question of the association between geographical mobility on the one hand and people’s affiliation and integration on the other hand”.<sup>58</sup>

As we consider the phenomenon of transnational mobility, it becomes clear that integration approaches to date, with all their differences, have lost their validity here and need to be rethought. It is not that traditional forms of migration no longer exist. Of course, people continue to emigrate permanently without maintaining fixed points of reference and contact in their former homeland in the form of a network or something similar. However, transnational migration<sup>59</sup> is an addition to the spectrum. It can be increasingly seen that past integration approaches, which are based on the clear and lasting orientation of immigrants to the receiving society, no longer reflect the reality of the lives of a growing number of people. However, that finding is not fundamentally new; it is far more the case that transnational migration describes in part supposed “integration shortcomings” among members of the guest worker generation. Basic assumptions and (political and social) expectations were long based on rather narrow and therefore superficial prerequisites.

Fassmann points to the inadequacy of the wide-ranging integration (or assimilation) approaches in this respect: “The new transnational mobility renders all those integration concepts obsolete that are based on the clear orientation of migrants to the ‘target society’. (...) Yet even those concepts that do not assume perfect assimilation, and instead offer room for cultural (‘multicultural’) freedom, work on the basis of long-lasting assimilation”.<sup>60</sup> Based on the nature of the individual factors, it can be assumed that this development is generally on the increase.

As the four most elementary conditions or factors for transnational mobility, Fassmann first names permeable borders, which first enable circular migration movements, second “shrinking” distances (see above), third an existing ethnic network at the place of immigration and finally, the fourth conditions, which concerns the actors themselves, the global usability of their qualifications.<sup>61</sup> In that light, it would make sense to reformulate outdated academic theories<sup>62</sup>, to adapt to the changing social processes and – as a logical and necessary consequence – to take appropriate political measures.

Here, there is a need for social scientists to articulate their findings more loudly and in a more targeted way towards civil society and political decision makers, and thereby to assume their responsibility<sup>63</sup> as the first “observers” of processes of social change. However, it can also be observed that there is a positive tendency for political decision makers to place greater emphasis on actively involving academics. In the case of the Austrian Federal Ministry of the Interior, this development is reflected, for example, in the conception of the National Action Plan for Integration and an associated board of experts.<sup>64</sup> In Europe today (especially in former guest worker countries, but also, for example, in the Netherlands and France), accusations are made of largely “failed” integration policies, as was demonstrated in autumn 2010 during the debate stirred up by German politician (SPD) Thilo Sarrazin<sup>65</sup> and others, and not least by the German chancellor Angela Merkel, when she commented that the “multicultural approach” has failed.<sup>66</sup> The reason for this is not least because the models of heterogeneity to date have not reflected sufficiently the reality of the lives of those concerned.

### 3.1 EXCURSUS: HYBRID CULTURE AND HYBRID IDENTITY

In the 19<sup>th</sup> century, when the term “hybrid identities” was coined, it had an unambiguously negative meaning.<sup>67</sup> Although the expression “hybridity” became common in the humanities and social sciences, beginning with postcolonial studies<sup>68</sup>, it has retained that connotation, if only to a limited degree. Immigrants were and are too often maligned as having a kind of “dual” loyalty and hidden agenda.<sup>69</sup> In scholarly terms, the term denotes a wide spectrum that deals with forms of cultural affiliations.

In the framework of a research project at the “Freie Universität” that addressed this question, the following definition was put forward: “Hybridity occurs in situations of cultural overlap; that is, partially contrary meanings and logics of action deriving from separate spheres of action join to form new patterns. Traditional criteria of affiliation are questioned and identity becomes delocalised”.<sup>70</sup>

Here too it becomes clear that a strict division and contrast of the concepts (hybridity, transnationalism, diaspora etc.) make little sense; it is far more the case that the development of hybrid identities, which requires the appropriate structural conditions and the creation of one’s own socio-economic and cultural space, are a feature of people’s increasing transnational orientation.

Fundamentally, hybrid cultures mainly denote groups of former immigrants whose identity is an autonomous fusion of features of their original culture and the culture of the receiving country that differs from both. Not all members of the ethnic community of the (former) country of origin are automatically part of the hybrid culture. On the contrary. For example, Americans of Mexican descent proudly describe themselves as “Chicanos” and deliberately seek to distinguish themselves from newly arrived, often illegal immigrants from Mexico.

Unlike diaspora (“diaspora politics”), which is strongly politically loaded, the term “hybridity” tends to be used by academics to refer to a cultural space.

In dealing with hybrid identities, i.e. when the feature of identity is placed in the foreground, a basic question can be formulated that is inherent to the topic: Is having a migrant background an advantage, because it lets the individual move more easily between two cultures? Does it allow the given person to act as an “intermediary” between the cultures, or is migrant background a burden, which in many cases goes hand in hand with discrimination, marginalisation and disadvantage, and which decreases with increasing assimilation?

Answering this question is not the purpose of this article, but it may be surmised that the question of advantages and disadvantages depends strongly on the given origin of the person in question and the observed society of origin, without forgetting here the aspect of the strong heterogeneity of individuals and repeating the error of traditional integration research by assuming an “ideal type” of migrant.

Time is also a decisive factor with regard to the question of identity. The often made comparison between immigrants with a migrant background in Europe with those in (traditional immigration) countries, such as Canada, the USA or Australia, where transnational networks and communities have existed for a longer time and there is a different history of migration movements, needs to be given serious consideration.

#### 4. CONCLUSION

The greater depth in which one studies transnationalism, the more its complexity comes into focus. The topic of transnationalism has diverse overlaps with other concepts, which need to be taken into consideration. These range from the question of identity (identities) and possibilities of political participation to the question of the validity of the concept of the national state as a point of reference in a globalised world, especially against the background of the integration process of the European Union, as well as the causes and catalysts of transnationalism and the way in which it differs from other concepts, such as diaspora and hybrid cultures. Attention should also be paid to highlighting the limits and misunderstandings of existing integration concepts.

Several points were touched on in this article and the attempt was made to provide an insight into the complex field of transnationalism in the awareness that many other important aspects have not been covered.

Although here and there imprecise aspects of the model can be detected, overall the concept of transnationalism, which is relatively young, provides the necessary theoretical framework for studying migration movements and their effects on the sending and receiving communities and states, as well as on the “global community” in the post-Westphalian world order.

Ultimately, the question must be asked whether transnationalism is a way of life (with all the ideological dimensions this involves) or simply a de-territorialisation of the nation state.<sup>71</sup>

- <sup>1</sup> Note: The phenomenon of transnationalism has been a subject of relatively intensive academic study since the early 1990s.
- <sup>2</sup> Cf. <http://www.sowi.rub.de/forschung/profil/trmigr.html.de>, on 12 April 2011.
- <sup>3</sup> For example, the concept of “human security”.
- <sup>4</sup> Levitt/Glick-Schiller 2004, 1.
- <sup>5</sup> <http://hsozkult.geschichte.hu-berlin.de/forum/2005-04-003>.
- <sup>6</sup> Bourne 1916, 86–97.
- <sup>7</sup> Mayer 2005, 11.
- <sup>8</sup> Cf. *ibid.*
- <sup>9</sup> Glick-Schiller et al. 1995, 48–63.
- <sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*
- <sup>11</sup> Lüthi 2005.
- <sup>12</sup> Dahinden 2009, 2.
- <sup>13</sup> Glick-Schiller et al. 1995, 1.
- <sup>14</sup> Portes et al. 1999, 219.15
- <sup>15</sup> *Ibid.*, 219.
- <sup>16</sup> Levitt/Glick-Schiller (Levitt/Glick-Schiller 2004) propose an approach based on the concept of the “social field” in migration studies. Further detail is given later in the article.
- <sup>17</sup> Cf. Gehmacher (n.d.)
- <sup>18</sup> Bourdieu 1993, 183–198.
- <sup>19</sup> See further comment later in the text.
- <sup>20</sup> Cf. Guarnizo/Smith 1998, 1.
- <sup>21</sup> Dahinden 2009.
- <sup>22</sup> Pries 2001a, 34.
- <sup>23</sup> Bourdieu 1982, 171–210.
- <sup>24</sup> Bourdieu 1982, 171–210.
- <sup>25</sup> *Ibid.*, 11.
- <sup>26</sup> Cf. Section 3 of this article.
- <sup>27</sup> The concept of transnationalism/transnational migration, i.e. the establishment and related effects of global social networks, is also of analytical interest in this context.
- <sup>28</sup> This is an important component to consider despite all the problems associated with the term, on which cf. Hansen/Spetsmann-Kunkel 2008, 30.
- <sup>29</sup> Haug 2000, 113 ff.
- <sup>30</sup> Cf. Massey et al. 1993, 699–749.
- <sup>31</sup> Kastoryano 2003, 67.
- <sup>32</sup> For example Iran, Kurds etc.
- <sup>33</sup> Reference can be made here, for example, to the speech given by the Turkish Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdogan in Berlin in February 2008.
- <sup>34</sup> Pries 2001b.
- <sup>35</sup> On political participation and diaspora politics, cf. Sökefeld 2006, 265–284.
- <sup>36</sup> Sökefeld 2006, 275.
- <sup>37</sup> Cf. here also Anderson 1991.
- <sup>38</sup> Sökefeld 2006, 265–284.
- <sup>39</sup> Barber 1998, 3.
- <sup>40</sup> Cf. Safran 1991.
- <sup>41</sup> *Ibid.*
- <sup>42</sup> Note: which again bring us back to transnationalism.
- <sup>43</sup> Note: The influence should not be underestimated, but caution should also be exercised here since there is the risk of arriving too quickly at models such as the “international Jewish conspiracy”.
- <sup>44</sup> Note: see above; in German this is somewhat problematic, since the term is usually used in a spatial sense.
- <sup>45</sup> Faist 1999, 189–222.
- <sup>46</sup> Anderson 1991.
- <sup>47</sup> Cf. [http://www.transcript-verlag.de/ts311/ts311\\_1.pdf](http://www.transcript-verlag.de/ts311/ts311_1.pdf).
- <sup>48</sup> Note: as well as other scholars after them who have addressed the topic over the past ten years.
- <sup>49</sup> Levitt/Glick-Schiller 2004, 7.
- <sup>50</sup> Note: internal migration accounts for the majority of migration movements worldwide.
- <sup>51</sup> Cf. Beck 2000; Faist 2000.
- <sup>52</sup> Cf. Oberndörfer, D. (2009). The end of the nation state as the opportunity for an open European republic, in: Butterwegge, C./Hentges, G. (eds.) *Zuwanderung im Zeichen der Globalisierung*, Wiesbaden, 237–252.
- <sup>53</sup> Kastoryano 2003, 65.
- <sup>54</sup> *Ibid.*, 75.
- <sup>55</sup> Cf. Guarnizo/Smith 1998, 1.
- <sup>56</sup> According to Soysal 1994. 1.
- <sup>57</sup> Bauböck 2007.
- <sup>58</sup> Cf. Pollini 2002; Angelli 2002, 13–70.
- <sup>59</sup> Fassmann argues, for example, for the use of the term “mobility” instead of “migration” in this context, cf. Fassmann 2003, 435.
- <sup>60</sup> *Ibid.*
- <sup>61</sup> Cf. Fassmann 2003, 429–449, in particular from 436.
- <sup>62</sup> Note: Although this has been a topic of scholarly debate since the beginning of the 1990s.
- <sup>63</sup> Note: Opinions differ with regard to this role of the social sciences.
- <sup>64</sup> Note: The National Action Plan was designed by renowned Austrian academics and other experts under the patronage of the Austrian Federal Ministry of Interior. A specially established expert committee addresses the individual topics, cf. [http://www.integrationsfonds.at/fileadmin/Integrationsfond/NAP/nap\\_bericht.pdf](http://www.integrationsfonds.at/fileadmin/Integrationsfond/NAP/nap_bericht.pdf).
- <sup>65</sup> Sarrazin 2010.
- <sup>66</sup> [http://diepresse.com/home/politik/aus-senpolitik/602605/Merkel\\_Multikulti-in-Deutschland-absolut-gescheitert](http://diepresse.com/home/politik/aus-senpolitik/602605/Merkel_Multikulti-in-Deutschland-absolut-gescheitert), 29 November 2010.
- <sup>67</sup> Cf. Young 1995.
- <sup>68</sup> Cf. Bhabha 1994.
- <sup>69</sup> Note: this is in fact a common anti-Semitic argument. During the training sessions run by the Freedom Party of Austria (FPÖ)’s Party Academy, the content of which was uncovered by the weekly *News*. *News*, Edition 48/2009.
- <sup>70</sup> <http://polsoz.fu-berlin.de/polwiss/forschung/international/vorderer-orient/forschung/projekt/index.html>.
- <sup>71</sup> <http://hsozkult.geschichte.hu-berlin.de/forum/2005-04-003>, 07 December 2009.

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