
Organizing the Transnational

*Edited by Luin Goldring and
Sailaja Krishnamurti*

Organizing the Transnational:
Labour, Politics, and Social Change



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Organizing the Transnational

Introduction: Contextualizing Transnationalism in Canada

Luin Goldring and Sailaja Krishnamurti

It has become a cliché to note that we live in an increasingly interconnected world. What happens in a Canadian metropolis such as Toronto or Montreal, or in smaller cities such as Sudbury, Moncton, or Prince George, is likely to have repercussions in a wide array of countries: from Hong Kong, Sri Lanka, and China to Sudan, Somalia, and Ghana; from Haiti, Guyana, and Jamaica to Colombia, El Salvador, and Peru; or from Afghanistan, Pakistan, and India to Poland, Portugal, and England. Similarly, what happens “over there” can have a strong impact on people and communities in Canada.

How do we understand the interconnectedness of people and localities around the globe? Most of us are aware that macrolevel processes and institutions such as international trade, international relations, and multilateral trade agreements are somehow responsible for orchestrating many of the economic, political, and cultural connections between countries, regions, organizations, and communities around the world. Many of us are also aware that technology plays an important role in helping people to stay in touch with people whom they do not see on a regular basis and that the media also help people to keep up with news and trends “back home.” Globalization is a term we often use to describe this collection of processes, although we may have only a general idea of what the word means. What is becoming increasingly clear to more people, including activists, politicians, and social scientists, is the fact that international migration, and the personal and institutional networks and practices that people forge as they move, settle, and perhaps move again, is also deeply implicated in the social, cultural, political, and economic dimensions of how people and places are interconnected across space and time.

In Canada, we see evidence of these migrant-led or migrant-related connections or transnational engagements in news reports covering a wide range of events and processes. They include fundraising for natural disasters that affect immigrants’ homelands; immigrant or native-born Canadians returning

to a personal or ancestral homeland to take on political office; the rising popularity of “foreign” films or musical genres associated with particular immigrant or so-called ethnic communities; the periodic arrival of religious leaders who travel to minister to groups in the multilocal diaspora; the earnings that workers send home; political campaigns that include stops in Canadian cities by aspiring candidates running for office outside Canada; or visits by foreign political authorities who, in addition to meeting with their official counterparts in Canada, make time to meet with members of their expatriate communities.

Canadian academics in a number of disciplines have taken up the conceptual challenge of analyzing newcomers both as immigrants and refugees intent upon settling and as people with varying intensities and kinds of ties to their homelands¹ and other regions outside Canada.² This is a relatively recent shift, compared to a longer history of scholarship on transnationalism and diasporas in other immigrant receiving countries, such as the United States. In Canada, there is certainly an established body of research on migration, immigrants, and subsequent generations. Much of the early work was framed in the language of ethnic studies or ethnic and race relations, adopted paradigms of assimilation or cultural pluralism, and focused on the assimilation or integration of newcomers into Canadian society.³ After changes in immigration policy, citizenship legislation, and settlement policies during the 1970s, Canadian immigration patterns shifted from a narrow and racist policy-driven concentration on European source countries to include a wider range of source regions and countries.⁴

The entrance of *new* newcomers, a majority of whom would come to fall under the Canadian label “visible minorities,” expanded the coverage of ethnic studies to include non-European ethnicities. As part of the promotion of Canadian multiculturalism, ethnic customs and practices were certainly deemed worthy of study. However, the immigrant experience continued to be studied within the Canadian context and generally did not include “home” other than as a site of history, origin of cultural practices, or nostalgia. The language of race, antiracism, racialization, and diaspora studies came later still, as more scholars from racialized and diasporic groups, particularly South Asian and Caribbean, entered academia. This necessarily sketchy outline of migration and immigrant studies provides the context for situating the relatively recent entrance of transnational studies, diaspora studies, and cultural studies in Canadian work on migrants, refugees, immigrants, and their children.

This collection is intended as a contribution to the emerging body of empirically based and theoretical scholarship on transnationalism and diasporas in Canada. The volume has several features that make it unique in the current Canadian context. First, it attempts to articulate a cultural

politics of transnationalism rather than focus separately on economic, political, or social aspects of transnationalism. Second, the concentration on Asian and Latin American migrants in Canada adds depth as well as breadth, as the literature on Latin American transnationalism is scarce compared with that on immigrants from Asia (and other parts of the world). Third, the chapters cover a wide array of institutions, institutional actors, and forms of mobilization that contribute to shaping transnational engagements and spaces. This goes beyond the literature's focus on migrants and states as key actors and institutions shaping transnational spaces. Fourth, and perhaps most uniquely, the book presents a diverse set of perspectives by including work by activists from the immigrant advocacy and NGO sectors as well as academics.

Alejandro Portes and József Böröcz (1989) use the term "context of reception" to describe the wide array of policies and institutions that shape the incorporation of newcomers.⁵ This volume contributes to conceptual discussions about transnationalism and diasporas in the Canadian context of reception in several ways. First, the book broadens discussions of citizenship and legal status and their relationship to transnational engagements. Current discussions concerning social exclusion and transnationalism that include attention to legal status rarely consider the case of temporary workers.⁶ Second, the collection does not make assumptions about whether transnational identities and practices are widely prevalent, desirable, or to be celebrated. Rather, we include work that raises critical questions about transnational engagements from a variety of perspectives, including those of immigrant advocates, activists, academics, and others. Third, the volume contributes to comparative discussions regarding the role of different contexts of reception in shaping transnational engagements. This is accomplished, for example, in a chapter that examines one group (Salvadorans) in more than one context. More generally, the chapters offer material for subsequent comparative analyses.

We hope that attention to the Canadian context and the specificity of Canadian policies will contribute to Canadian discussions and policy making in the areas of immigration policy, immigrant settlement, and the relationship between incorporation and homeland ties. Finally, we hope to contribute to dialogue between communities (immigrant, ethnic, national, and transnational communities), activists, scholars, and policy makers in Canada.

This introduction proceeds with a section that provides a discussion of terminology and background on the literatures on migrant transnationalism and diasporas. The last section situates the key contributions made by the volume's authors in the context of questions and debates found in the literature on political and sociocultural transnational engagements.

Transnationalism as a Field of Study and Conceptual Approach

Social scientists and theorists use terms such as transnational social fields, transmigrants, transnational communities, diasporas, transnational citizenship, transnationalism from below, diaspora politics, and long-distance nationalism to describe multisited social networks, practices, organizations, and communities that span national borders. Related terms, such as deterritorialized nation-states and transnationalism from above, point to nation-state responses to im/migrant and civil society transnational engagements.⁷ These terms cut across disciplinary boundaries and genres; many of them have been taken up in literature, activist discourse, popular writing, government documents, policy papers put out by international financial institutions, and so forth. The terms invoke identities, belongings, memberships, networks, forms of social organization, social processes, and state policies aimed at citizens, all of which, rather than being contained by national borders, spread out beyond national boundaries and territories. Such processes may originate with migrant organizations, federal governments, local governments, parties, or other institutional actors. Regardless of their origin, they generate responses and tend to become multiscalar, multisited, multidirectional, and transnational.

The concepts of diaspora on the one hand, and transnationalism and transnational communities on the other, have distinct origins and trajectories but are now converging. In the contemporary context, use of the term *diaspora* has centred on the humanities, cultural studies, and political science, while the term *transnationalism* first gained currency among anthropologists and sociologists before spreading to other disciplines. Contemporary usage finds them used almost interchangeably, in a wide range of disciplines, fields, and settings. A brief sketch of the different origins and convergence of the concepts is in order. Diaspora is the older term (Tölölyan 1991; Cohen 1997; Van Hear 1998). Some have argued for a narrow application of the term to “victim diasporas” – people displaced and then dispersed from a real or putative homeland, through ethnic or religious persecution or conflict – but it has come to be used for other “scatterings” of people. Typologies of diasporas include, but are not limited to, groups that originated in or were formed by trade, slavery, indentured labour, colonialism, and political exile (Cohen 1997).

Other theorists have rejected such typologies and use diaspora as a broad theoretical lens to focus on migration, culture, and identity (Safran 1991). As a result, diaspora now refers to collectivities of people living in multiple national contexts who identify as having a common history or identity based on language, ethnicity, racialization, and/or religion. Thus, we now hear references to the Caribbean, African, Indian, Philippine, Hindu, Muslim, Chinese, South Asian, Kurdish, Tamil, Mayan, and Mexican diasporas as well as the classical Jewish and Armenian diasporas. In some cases, diasporic

identities are framed as hybrid, creolized, or in other ways “mixed,” the product of movements and exchanges between peoples. In other cases, the concept retains a primordialist connotation, although the ethnicity in question may have become a panethnicity. The term usually applies to multiple generations, so that people may identify with a particular diaspora without having active ties to a homeland. Furthermore, people may identify as members of a particular diaspora and live lives firmly rooted in and confined to a single nation-state.

In their agenda-setting book *Nations Unbound: Transnational Projects, Post-colonial Predicaments, and Deterritorialized Nation-States*, Linda Basch, Nina Glick Schiller, and Cristina Szanton Blanc (1994) defined transnational migration as “the process by which immigrants forge and sustain multi-stranded social relations that link together their societies of origin and settlement” (6). While additional and more specific definitions have been developed (see below), the term *transnationalism* is generally used to describe people who feel that they belong to and/or organize their daily lives around more than one nation-state. Thus, in contrast to diaspora, transnational communities, transnationalism, and transnational living are terms that generally emphasize more tangible and contemporary connections between people in societies of destination and origin and perhaps transit. Recent work also emphasizes the importance of including nonmigrant members of transnational social spaces (Levitt and Glick Schiller 2004).

The term *transnational communities* is used somewhat loosely to describe national as well as subnational collectivities. The term could refer to migrants from the same town, region, ethnic group, or country.⁸ The concept of transnational social spaces is more general and emphasizes identities, relationships, exchanges, practices, and institutions that arise in the process of transnational migration (Pries 1998; Faist 2000). Peggy Levitt and Nina Glick Schiller (2004) proposed a further distinction between *ways of belonging* transnationally and *ways of being* transnational in order to distinguish transnational identities (ways of belonging) from specific transnational practices (ways of being). They point out that people may feel a sense of transnational belonging without engaging in transnational practices and vice versa. This distinction becomes particularly important when we consider that mobility is not always possible, depending on constraints associated with social location (gender, class, racialization) (Pratt and Yeoh 2003), political affiliation, or the political situations in homeland regions – all factors that may make contact or return difficult for refugees, exiles, and others (Al-Ali, Black, and Koser 2001; Nolin 2006).

This discussion of terminology is not aimed at establishing clear boundaries between diasporas and things transnational. Rather, it draws attention to the potentially large overlap between the two terms. Diasporas may or may not have active transnational communities. For example, overseas

Chinese do not experience their diasporic identities in a uniform fashion, nor do they all feel that they belong to, or act as though they belong to, Chinese transnational communities. Similarly, Jews express their identities in diverse ways, and second- and third-generation black Canadians may share experiences of racialization but may or may not feel connected to transnational communities or social fields, and if they do, these may be rooted in different “home” lands. At the same time, active transnational communities from various origins may or may not have sufficient historical depth, geographical breadth, and ongoing production of identity and solidarity to warrant being called diasporas.

The chapters in this volume focus largely on “the transnational,” although the language of both transnationalism and diaspora is used by the contributors. The authors examine a multiplicity of institutions and actors involved in shaping and organizing the transnational. Together they generate a set of analyses showing that a wide variety of actors and institutions organize transnational spaces; some social actors do so in the pursuit of livelihood, others work directly for social change, while others search out avenues for affirming identity and status. Institutional actors include states and organized migrants, but they also include international law, the media, NGOs, organized labour, and immigrant advocates. As such, the volume joins Levitt and Glick Schiller’s (2004) call for a reconceptualization of society using the lens of transnational studies. This approach involves understanding society in general, and not only immigrants, as constituted by transnational engagements at various levels and scales. For the purpose of this volume, it involves framing the study of Canadian-based transnationalism beyond the study of im/migrants and states to include a broad set of networks, practices, policies, and institutions.

Situating Transnational Studies

The growing literature on migrant transnational engagement reflects several interrelated transformations, of which we highlight three. The first involves qualitative and quantitative changes in migrant practices; a second is related to changes in sending and receiving country policies that affect the membership or citizenship status of emigrants in the former and immigrant settlement in the latter; a third rests on conceptual shifts in the study of international migration and includes scholarship on transnationalism and diasporas. Of course, these three kinds of changes must be understood as taking place in the broader context of macrostructural changes commonly referred to as globalization, which includes but is not limited to changes in the role of nation-states, including their relationship to international financial institutions and multilateral organizations; the growth of supranational governance structures of various sorts (from the EU to the WTO); transformations in civil society responses (antiglobalization movements, transnational

advocacy networks, etc.); and sometimes unpredictable changes in the mobility of capital, the international organization of production, and patterns of circulation and consumption – not only of goods but also of images, identities, values, and practices.

Changes in Migrant Practices

The first set of changes rests on transformations in what Manuel Orozco describes as the five Ts of transnationalism: telecommunications, transportation, tourism, trade (especially for home-country goods consumed by immigrants), and money transfer mechanisms (2003, 2005). Changes in these sectors make it easier and cheaper for more people to be in touch with and maintain active relationships with individuals and institutions in personal or ancestral homelands (Vertovec 2004). They also facilitate transnational business activity, which may be an important economic strategy for im/migrants (Landolt 2001; Wong and Ng 2002; Portes, Haller, and Guarnizo 2002). Noting these changes does not imply any claim about the novelty of transnational engagements, as scholars have documented the historical depth of these processes (Foner 1997; Smith 2003b). Rather, it highlights that these processes have become more widespread, dense, and frequent, to the point of becoming institutionalized at various levels. It also means recognizing that one feature of the current context of globalization is that it is marked not only by the increasing mobility of capital and people but also by changes in the facility with which people develop and maintain social, economic, and political relationships across borders. Migrants at the turn of the twentieth century wrote letters home, and many migrated back to their countries of origin. However, letters and passengers took time to cross the ocean, as did news. The simultaneity of visual, audio, and text-based contact offered by contemporary technologies, and the speed of travel, are simply unprecedented.

Changes in State Policies

Largely in response to the changes just outlined, nation-states with high proportions of emigrants, immigrants, or both have instituted policies and regulations aimed at redefining membership in the nation. In the case of sending countries, particularly worker-exporting countries, there is a trend toward adopting double nationality and/or citizenship legislation, thus expanding membership in the nation beyond the territorial boundaries of the state (Basch, Glick Schiller, and Szanton Blanc 1994; Itzigsohn 2000). A growing number of countries allow their overseas citizens to vote in federal elections. The right to vote gives emigrants a concrete way of expressing ongoing attachment to their homeland. It also allows states to benefit from the expertise of the diaspora and perhaps an ongoing flow of remittances. The latter, of course, can contribute to the balance of payments.

In the case of destination countries, responses to immigration have been more mixed and contradictory. Most destination states have heightened border control (Heyman and Cunningham 2004). Some, such as the United States, have built fences, invested more in enforcement, and formally and informally militarized the border. Others, such as Canada, have made modest increases in enforcement while using immigration policy to exercise greater control and selectivity over “who gets in.” In this way, Canada maintains relatively high immigration targets while in practice reducing the number of refugees and immigrants allowed to enter and increasing the number of temporary workers who are not considered immigrants or members of the nation (Simmons 1998; Sharma 2001).

Policies regarding citizenship, dual citizenship, the settlement of immigrants, and the management of cultural difference also vary in receiving countries (Castles and Miller 2003; Reitz 1998). Canada has relatively high naturalization rates and allows naturalized citizens to hold dual citizenship (i.e., to retain their prior citizenship). In contrast, the United States has been more suspicious of the dual loyalties of the foreign born. Legally, naturalized citizens are supposed to renounce their prior citizenship when they swear their new citizenship oath (Bloemraad 2005). Irene Bloemraad argues that Canadian openness to new citizens retaining dual citizenship, and other policies such as official multiculturalism, has actually facilitated their incorporation.

Canada has had official multiculturalism policies and programs in place since the 1970s. They have sought to affirm a certain amount of cultural difference while at the same time managing it by channelling it through approved avenues such as government support for panethnic and other immigrant organizations, cultural festivals, “heritage language” classes, and so forth. Multiculturalism has been critiqued from several perspectives, including the argument that it inhibits immigrant incorporation and instead ghettoizes immigrants based on ethnic or cultural groupings (Bissoondath 2002), the antiracist position that multiculturalism “can’t end racism” (Philip 1992), feminist critiques of how state policies label, discipline, and limit the power of racialized women (Carty and Brand 1993), the argument that multiculturalism is more ideology than policy (Kallen 1995), and analyses that point to the way in which multiculturalism and diversity are used to market Canada and the Canadian workforce (Abu-Laban and Gabriel 2002).

The Netherlands and other northern European countries have implemented their own versions of multicultural policies, some quite different from the Canadian version (Østergaard-Nielsen 2001b). Other countries, such as the United States, have experienced long-standing tensions between ideologies of cultural pluralism (and related metaphors such as the cultural mosaic or the “salad bowl”) and cultural assimilation and Anglo-conformity (Americanization or the melting pot). In countries characterized by emigration

and immigration, policies in these areas may be extremely contradictory, with active policies in one area, usually emigration, and absent or weak policies in the other. Italy, for example, went from the denial of immigrant settlement to a steep learning curve in terms of immigration policy, while Mexico continues largely to ignore its southern border while at the same time militarizing it in ways that contradict critiques raised about the US treatment of Mexicans at the northern border. Other cases may be less well known. For example, India is prominent in the literature as a country of emigration (see Bose in this volume). However, there are also immigrants from Bangladesh, Kashmir, and other nearby countries who lead precarious and marginal lives in India (Samaddar 1999; Sujata Ramachandran, e-mail, June 2005).

Conceptual Shifts in Migration, Immigration, Transnationalism, and Diaspora Studies

While empirical realities are changing in complex ways, the field of migration studies, and the related areas of immigrant and ethnic studies, have attempted to capture these changes through several conceptual shifts. First was a shift during the 1980s away from Marxist or neo-Marxist structural models as well as orthodox neoclassical economic models of international migration. The former approach was criticized for ignoring human agency, while the latter approach downplayed or disregarded history and political economy.

Second is the move away from seeing migrants as people who sever ties or simply lose contact with their homeland and toward recognizing the multiple and sometimes contradictory loyalties, identities, practices, and forms of belonging that people may have, whether they are migrants or nonmigrants, mobile or immobile members of transnational collectivities and arenas of engagement. This recognition of the “transnational” also draws on contributions from postmodern and postcolonial theories that not only questioned fixed and primordial ethnic and other identities but also opened up the possibility of recognizing cultural and other commonalities among postcolonial subjects in disparate geographical locations.

Third is a recasting of “ethnic” and “ethnic and racial” studies, as well as traditional area studies, into frameworks and language that recognize transnational and diasporic formations and identities and postcolonial legacies. In the United States, ethnic and racial studies moved first toward the study of specific national, ethnic or panethnic, and sometimes hyphenated groups (Native-American, African-American, Chicano, Boricua, Italian-Canadian, Latino, or Asian-American studies) and then to the more recent diasporic, transnational, and postcolonial framing of ethnic studies. However, tensions remain between advocates of broader versus narrower labels (e.g., Dominican studies versus Latin American and Latino studies). In Canada,

where British scholarly trends have been followed more closely, the shift was reflected in a move away from “Commonwealth studies” toward postcolonial and cultural studies during the late 1980s and early 1990s. This change also drew upon critiques of multiculturalism. Despite these differences, there is some convergence in that ethnicity is increasingly framed in relation to historical and diasporic processes and identities, current transnational connections, and attention to postcolonial legacies and racialization. This turn is reflected in the recent establishment at universities in Canada and around the world of departments and research centres devoted to diaspora and transnational studies.

Two Key Approaches

These empirical and conceptual changes lie at the root of the literature of migrant transnationalism and related work on diasporas. However, these literatures are not monolithic. In addition to disciplinary variation, there are differences in definitions employed, methodological approaches, conceptual and theoretical orientations, and findings. It is worth distinguishing two distinct “schools” within the field of transnational studies, mainly in North America.⁹ The first approach follows the lead of Basch and her colleagues in the analysis of transnational social fields, spaces, and flows (Basch, Glick Schiller, and Szanton Blanc 1994). This approach has tended to be interpretive, qualitative, institutional, and often historical and comparative. Work in this tradition provides analyses of transnational collectivities at local (transnational villages) and national (transnational social formations) levels, generally through an interweaving of individual narratives with multisited transnational “case” studies developed through participant observations, interviews, and analyses of existing documents, including archival material. As Peggy Levitt and Ninna Nyberg-Sorensen (2004) note, the “transnational turn” in migration studies calls for shifting the focus of research away from sending or receiving contexts per se and toward an examination of the processes and networks used in structuring and maintaining transnational social spaces (2, 3). Focusing on transnational social fields and social spaces (Pries 1998; Faist 2000; Levitt and Glick Schiller 2004) and how they are constituted has the advantage of including migrants as well as nonmigrants and a wide array of institutions. Furthermore, it encourages grounded empirical research that attempts to recognize and analyze transnational engagements (rather than either ignoring or assuming them).

The second approach is exemplified by the work of Portes and his associates. They define transnationalism as occupations and activities that “require regular and sustained social contacts over time across national borders for their implementation” (Portes, Guarnizo, and Landolt 1999, 219), and

they measure it largely at the individual level. These authors have grouped transnational activities as falling into three broad categories: sociocultural, political, and economic. From this approach, individual-level data grouped by national origin (and other variables) can be analyzed to determine variation in types and levels of transnationalism and to test hypotheses regarding the determinants of particular kinds and levels of transnationalism (Itzigsohn and Giorguli Saucedo 2002; Portes, Haller, and Guarnizo 2002).

Scholars working in both of these traditions have contributed to clarifying the terminology of transnationalism. Transnational activity can be described as broad or narrow depending on prevalence, frequency, and intensity. Broad transnationalism describes the case when a large proportion of people (from a given country or locality) engages in a particular practice upon occasion (e.g., attending fundraising events organized by hometown associations), while narrow transnationalism refers to situations in which a small proportion of people is involved in a regular, frequent, and intense activity (e.g., long-term participation in the leadership of a hometown association) (Itzigsohn et al. 1999). Levitt (2001b) notes that people may engage in some but not all or necessarily the same constellation of transnational activities. Thus, for example, one might be in contact with family members and send money home but not engage in political transnationalism. Similarly, a person may hold dual nationality, vote from abroad, and attend rallies by homeland politicians but not send remittances or be involved in other forms of sociocultural or economic transnationalism.

Both of these approaches have contributed to shaping Canadian-based research on transnationalism, although in terms of methodology the social spaces approach has been more widely used. Few surveys have been designed to explicitly examine immigrant transnationalism and incorporation (Hiebert and Ley 2003), but surveys that include items on homeland contact do exist (StatsCan 2003). For the most part, scholars have produced interpretive case studies on a growing number of national and ethnic groups.¹⁰ While most focus on a group in a single Canadian setting, some studies, such as Catharine Nolin's (2004, 2006) work on Guatemalans and Audrey Kobayashi et al.'s (2000) collaborative project on immigrants from Hong Kong, involve research on a particular group in several Canadian locations.

Transnationalism and Interdisciplinary Cultural Studies

Research on diaspora and transnationalism has generated interest in interdisciplinary approaches to these areas of study. In the humanities, analyses of transnational and diasporic cultural productions have generally been routed through literary studies and cultural studies. In literature, interest in diaspora is often understood as a kind of natural outgrowth of postcolonial theory's interest in the migrant and "cosmopolitan" subject. Theorists such

as Rey Chow (1993), Homi Bhabha (1994), and Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak (1996) have connected concepts of diaspora and cultural hybridity to post-colonial migration and self-expression. The theorization of diasporic hybridities in literature and feminist studies has also been strongly influenced by theorists such as Gloria Anzaldúa (1987) and Chela Sandoval (2000), who write about cultural, spatial, and ethnic hybridities of *mestizaje* in the Americas.

Cultural studies as a field of inquiry greatly contributed to interdisciplinary studies of diaspora, particularly through the research of thinkers such as Stuart Hall (1990) and Paul Gilroy (1992) on the middle passage, Caribbean migration, and black cultures in the United Kingdom. Cultural studies draws on theories of film, literature, and semiotics to understand the complex ways in which diasporic people negotiate life and produce culture “in between” cultural and geographical boundaries. These boundaries intersect and operate at multiple scales and levels (identity, the body, the social), with attention focusing on postcolonial subjectivities and collectivities in global cities and landscapes.

The unique Canadian context of migration and multiculturalism has provided a rich backdrop for exploration of diasporic literature and culture. A large number of acclaimed diasporic writers such as Rohinton Mistry, Dionne Brand, and Austin Clarke are situated in Canada, which has led to a focus in Canadian literary studies on diasporic literatures. Canadian diaspora and transnational studies has been inspired by the critical issues raised by these writers and their critics; these questions have prompted or informed significant research on Canadian immigration, antiracism, and critiques of multicultural social policy (Dei 1996; Bannerji 2000).

Interdisciplinary research on diaspora and transnationalism has in this way been concerned with connecting the analysis of cultural representations with the lived social and historical contexts of migrant people's lives. Avtar Brah's book *Cartographies of Diaspora: Contesting Identities* (1996) is situated in the discipline of sociology but draws a great deal on theorizations in literature and cultural studies. More recently, literary theorist Shalini Puri (2006) has argued that studies of diasporic and migrant culture and literature should incorporate social scientific approaches such as fieldwork and that a strong historical and social context is necessary.

The interplay between social scientific and humanist methodologies in approaching diaspora and transnationalism has resulted in provocative contributions to the theorization of these subjects. These analyses ask questions about how migrant people experience diaspora or transnationalism with longing, memory, and ambivalence (Agnew 2005) and about how transnational people reflect on and represent their experiences of racism, work, and family and community life.

Organizing the Transnational

This volume has been prompted by some of the key questions and insights raised by the literature on transnationalism and diaspora. What is the relationship between immigrant incorporation and transnational engagements? Do transnational practices and identities end with “successful” incorporation? Are social exclusion, racism, and alienation the main explanations for diasporic identities, transnational engagements, and/or continued nostalgia and desire for “home”? What roles do sending country and receiving country policies play in generating or sustaining various forms of transnational engagement? How do class, education, gender, racialization, occupational trajectory, time in the host country, life cycle, and other social locations and variables interact to shape transnational ways of being and belonging?

These are the kinds of questions that research on transnationalism in the United States has been addressing and that work in other contexts, such as Europe and Canada, has examined as well. The chapters in this volume address these questions. They also broaden the range of discussion by analyzing the role of nonmigrant and nonstate actors in shaping transnational spaces and engagements. This move brings other institutions, policies, regulations, and processes into the analysis. For example, several authors examine the role of civil society organizations in host countries, as well as that of institutions such as the media and international law, in shaping transnational engagements.

Institutions, Policies, and Identities

Research on migrant transnationalism and diaspora has demonstrated the importance of state policies and migrant agency in shaping transnational spaces (Basch et al. 1994). While globalization and capital flows provide an overarching context (Kearney 1995), states and their policies (or lack of policies) (Itzigsohn 2000; Goldring 2002; Smith 2003a), and im/migrants, particularly their organizations, social networks, remittances, and business activities, have occupied a privileged position in the literature (Portes, Guarnizo, and Landolt 1999; Landolt 2001; Portes, Haller, and Guarnizo 2002).

We join Levitt and Glick Schiller (2004) in arguing that transnational studies should include a broad set of institutional actors and processes.¹¹ The field will undoubtedly retain a focus on immigrants and state policies. However, just as Levitt (1998a, 2003) has argued for increased attention to religious life, the field can be pushed to include other institutional actors and more attention to contested meanings, identities, and the cultural politics of transnational life. Consistent with this agenda, the first part of this book raises theoretical questions and provides empirical analyses of state and nonstate institutional actors, arenas, and processes and the ways that they contribute to organizing identities within transnational spaces.

In the opening chapter, Myer Siemiatycki and Valerie Preston examine state and media constructions of Hong Kong–Canadian transnational spaces. Their analysis incorporates an overlooked institutional actor: the media. While the media and representations of immigrants have been prominent in cultural studies and diaspora studies, they have been less prominent in analyses of transnational social spaces. Siemiatycki and Preston analyze the English- and Chinese-language press and compare their representations of Hong Kong–Canadian transnationalism in Vancouver and Toronto during the period preceding and following Hong Kong's 1997 return to Chinese sovereignty. Siemiatycki and Preston find that “transnationalism ‘reads’ differently in the mainstream and newcomer community press.” Their analysis shows the complex relationship between changes in immigration legislation, press coverage, and responses in the Hong Kong and mainstream communities. Here we see the contradiction between policies that attract a select group of immigrants and a mainstream public response that is not very welcoming. In the midst of this, immigrants cope with living in two worlds while they try to *fit in* in Canada.

Shifting to a supranational level, Susan Henders argues that international law is an arena where state-bound citizenship is being contested. She analyzes four types of postnational citizenship and considers their implications for transnational living and organizing. Henders shows that international law concerning human, indigenous, and minority rights and European citizenship may be incipient, but she demonstrates multiple ways that people make substantive citizenship claims, thereby pushing to expand citizenship in and through institutional arenas not bound by the state.

Sarah Wayland examines Tamil ethnic conflict and argues in favour of expanding the concept of political opportunity structure to include transnational actors. Her analysis shows that transnational networks have enabled the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) to continue their insurgency against the Sri Lankan army. She also shows how immigrants and refugees settled in liberal democratic states such as Canada can play active roles in the international scene given their freedom of movement and their ability to raise funds and channel them and other resources. In an innovative move in the post-9/11 security context, Wayland closes with the suggestion that diasporas can become effective partners in the management of homeland conflict.

Uzma Shakir, an immigrant advocate, analyzes Canadian immigration and settlement policies. She argues that these policies, together with Canadian racism, have led to transnational engagements that are not only reactive (a response to marginalization) but also somewhat involuntary. Although she does not use this phrase, *forced transnationalism* would be an apt way to describe the homeland connections maintained with family members whose entry was made impossible by exclusionary and racist

immigration laws, including the head tax and the continuous journey stipulation (as was the case for Chinese and South Asians in the first half of the twentieth century). While not so forced, there is also a degree of involuntary transnationalism when professionals maintain ties because of difficulties with credential recognition or employment or because social exclusion and racism make one feel a perpetual longing to go “home.” Shakir’s view that contemporary South Asian immigrants’ engagement in Canadian politics is limited by transnational commitments differs from that of other contributors to this volume. Sarah Wayland, Aparna Sundar, and Philip Kelly argue that the Asian immigrant groups whom they work with or write about are, in diverse ways, actively engaged in community politics in Canada and with Canadian political institutions. Shakir’s position as a community-based activist offers a different perspective on political and social engagement and a unique way of interpreting the concept of the transnational.

The last chapter in this section, by Leela Viswanathan, offers the perspective of someone who crosses the boundaries between activist and researcher in her daily life. Viswanathan raises provocative questions about academic research and ethics. For example, she questions the use of terms such as transnationalism, arguing that immigrants in the racialized communities with whom she has worked are more interested in incorporation than in homeland ties. With respect to research ethics, Viswanathan’s experiences as a community social planner and then doctoral student confirm her advocacy for greater effective collaboration between community organizations and researchers in all phases of the research process.

States, Transnational Labour, and Diasporic Capital

Part 2 of this volume focuses on emerging dynamics and relations between state actors and policies, migrants and their organizations, and Canadian civil society. Three chapters analyze the experiences of women and men admitted to Canada on temporary work visas (Díaz Barrero’s chapter on exotic dancers and chapters by Kerry Preibisch and Ofelia Becerril on the Seasonal Agricultural Workers Program). One chapter presents an interview with Stan Raper, a labour organizer who works on campaigns regarding noncitizen workers. The other two chapters in this section provide analyses of labour and refugee-exporting states (Pablo Bose on India) and migrant organizations (R. Cheran on Sri Lanka).

The three chapters on temporary workers show that women and men choose to enter Canada in one of the few legal means available to them in order to support themselves and their families. Because economic and social conditions in their places of origin do not offer them opportunities to earn enough to lead lives with dignity, they endure separation from children and partners. Because they enter legally, but on limited-term visas that are only good for the individual worker, their social marginality is produced

through immigration and employment policies that prevent family migration and limit their rights and then reproduced through employment relations and conditions that frame them as temporary and not needing or deserving protection equal to that of citizen workers. These three authors' findings are consistent with work on domestic and temporary workers in Canada (Bakan and Stasiulis 1997; Sharma 2001; Basok 2002). In addition, they offer methodological innovations and theoretical insights. Preibisch broadens the customary analytical lens of both Canadian labour and transnational studies to include workers from Mexico and the Caribbean as well as Canadian civil society. Her analysis goes beyond findings of social exclusion to show that community organizations have begun to organize with and for the workers. In doing so, Preibisch challenges conceptions of isolated agricultural workers with little or no connection to Canadian society. Instead, we see the emergence of transnational social fields that include not only the workers and their families back home but also the communities in which they spend significant parts of their working lives.

Díaz Barrero adds to this literature by examining the relatively unknown and short-lived temporary worker program for "exotic dancers." She identifies the strong transnational familial commitments maintained by the women, because the only way that they can enter Canada is through a program that does not permit them to bring their families. At the same time, she provides evidence of their desire to organize to change their living and working conditions, and she offers recommendations for those wishing to engage in such organizing. Becerril's contribution lies in her gender analysis of both employer strategies and worker responses as well as her incorporation of organized labour and other civil society responses to the macrolevel political economy of agricultural production and labour supply in the horticultural sector in southwestern Ontario. Her framing around the concept of "cultural struggle" recasts class-based approaches to worker responses by emphasizing the cultural terrain in which practices are given meaning.

Raper's account of the Canadian labour movement's response to seasonal migrant agricultural workers provides insights into the development of this civil society response to state efforts to support the industry through the temporary workers program. Raper describes how organized labour has pushed the Canadian state to expand the rights and benefits available to seasonal workers through a series of court challenges and, at the same time, worked with other civil society actors to provide services to these workers in southwestern Ontario. This is obviously an ongoing story, one worth watching as the state expands and modifies temporary worker programs to other countries, such as Guatemala, and other sectors outside agriculture (e.g., construction).

The chapters on the state and capital's construction of temporary workers, and the various transnational social fields generated by people living

transnational work lives, are interspersed with two chapters that examine another node in the state-capital-labour nexus. The chapters by Cheran and Bose illustrate different sets of relations between states and emigrants. Both chapters emphasize the important contributions made to development activities by transnationals. However, in Bose's analysis of Indian policy, the state's initiatives are aimed at courting the overseas population, whereas in Cheran's discussion of Tamil networks it is clear that they operate against the state. These chapters serve to drive home the importance of distinguishing between cases in which migrants leave as refugees opposed to the regime and those in which migrants are not in opposition to the state. Both chapters draw attention to the costs and challenges associated with diasporic investment and engagement.

Cheran's chapter on Tamil community networks in Canada (and beyond) analyzes the social capital and other resources that these networks mobilize for development activities in their politically contested homeland. His analysis echoes findings from work on Mexican hometown organizations that emphasizes the social capital of transnational migrant associations and their ability to mobilize resources to help finance roads, schools, and other community infrastructure. However, as he points out, Tamil village and alumni networks do not work with the Sri Lankan state or other institutions. Rather, they avoid the state and generally work with the opposition. His chapter provides an alternative conceptualization of the social capital of transnational Tamil networks as including not only financial flows sent by diasporic organizations but also all the expertise, equipment, and other elements involved in reconstruction, relief, and development work. Cheran's discussion shows how, in this diaspora, transnational engagement is shaped primarily by shared political minority status, politicized collective identities, opposition movement networks, and the political context in the homeland rather than by social exclusion in Canada or Europe, homeland state policies courting emigrants, or other factors.

Bose analyzes a very different state-diaspora relationship that gives rise to a particular form of transnational engagement: the involvement of Indians in the diaspora in several development activities in India. He examines national and subnational (Gujarat and Kerala) efforts to attract diasporic capital for development, and he provides a case study of an urban development project in Kolkata that has substantial ownership by nonresident Indians (NRIs) and persons of Indian origin (PIOs). His work shows how investments by Indians in the diaspora may have negative outcomes from a social injustice perspective. Diasporic capital invested in hydroelectric dams may displace local populations, and housing developments may offer amenities to the wealthy but further marginalize the rest of the population.

Bose's work makes two important contributions. First, it provides evidence of transnational engagements among relatively well-off immigrants. In

addition to noting socioeconomic and regional differences within the Indian diaspora, Bose demonstrates that economic exclusion is not the only explanation for transnational engagement among Canadian immigrants – although, read together with Shakir’s and Viswanathan’s chapters, we must remember that wealth does not necessarily mitigate racism. Second, it joins scholarship that questions the celebratory tone of some of the literature on transnationalism by pointing to some of the real costs of this engagement, particularly for less geographically and economically mobile sectors of the population.

Transnational Organizing and Social Change

The chapters in the third section of this volume examine a variety of ways in which transnational networks and diasporic communities in Canada (and elsewhere) organize to effect social change in various geographical and institutional sites and scales. In many ways, this section continues themes that are present in the second section. However, the chapters in this section deepen the discussion by drawing attention to the comparative analysis of different contexts of reception, transnational civil society organizing, and diverse challenges associated with the transnational and “national” political participation of migrants and refugees.

Patricia Landolt’s analysis of Salvadoran refugees in Los Angeles and Toronto provides an excellent model for studies that compare how different receiving contexts, particularly their immigration and refugee policies, and the institutional landscape in general, produce distinct patterns of network development, settlement, incorporation, and transnational engagements among apparently similar refugee populations. Differences between the two countries and the two cities contributed to the development of strong transnational organizations and identities in Los Angeles, whereas in Toronto Salvadorans became involved in different types of organizations, and institutionalized transnational engagements were not long lasting.

Aparna Sundar addresses the theme of difference *within* diasporic or transnational communities in the context of an activist organization. She describes the activities of the South Asian Left Democratic Alliance (SALDA), an organization of people from different parts of the region who share a political agenda: organizing for democracy and human rights and against the Hindu nationalist political party in India. The group organizes transnationally (regarding India) and does a great deal of “local” work among South Asians in Canada in an effort to educate youth and others. Sundar’s analysis pushes the usual boundaries of “the transnational” by focusing on another form of locally and translocally engaged transnational community. The group itself, and the region with which members identify, present opportunities as well as challenges, which Sundar analyzes with critical reflexivity. In particular, she notes the challenges of working with

a “community” that is divided in terms of generation, religion, politics, national origin, political culture, et cetera. This chapter and the earlier one by Bose provide excellent antidotes to romantic views of transnational engagements.

Philip Kelly analyzes the political participation of Filipinos in Toronto. He argues in favour of using a broad definition of political participation that includes nonelectoral activism and takes into account homeland political involvement and affiliation. His chapter shows how political divisions related to homeland politics (pro- and anti-Marcos positions) generated divisions among Filipino immigrants in the Toronto area, limiting opportunities for broad-based mobilization and electoral representation. At the same time, these positions fostered alliances among people who later worked in the context of Canadian political institutions. Thus, his work shows that transnational political engagement may have mixed effects with respect to political integration in the society of settlement. It also shows the importance of understanding class, political, and other divisions within a “community” that is usually treated as homogeneous.

Rusa Jeremic shows how a Canadian coalition of labour, churches, students, international development NGOs, and other social organizations joined the Hemispheric Social Alliance (HSA), a broad-based network of national coalitions and regional networks from many countries in the hemisphere. Together these groups have organized transnationally to challenge the Free Trade Agreement of the Americas (FTAA). Jeremic’s chapter convincingly shows that civil society organizations can operate at local and national levels, as well as transnationally, to work to prevent international trade agreements considered to have negative consequences for civil society in all of the affected countries. These activists are embedded in a form of transnational community that is based not on common nationality, ethnicity, religion, et cetera but on a common social and political agenda. While some might argue that these groups are best seen as social movements and discussed in a separate literature, we argue that, if we are seeking an understanding of Canadian transnationalism as complex and multilayered, then there must be room to include the transnational engagements of civil society, not only those of immigrant communities.

The last chapter in this section presents the experiences of two Peruvian immigrants living in Toronto who have participated in the Peruvian government’s Council for Peruvians abroad. This council is an example of the institutions being created by some emigrant-producing countries to channel the participation of emigrants – some would argue in order to foster good relations and maintain remittance flows. The firsthand account of the two Peruvians’ experiences with this council speaks to the interest that migrants have in participating in home country institutions as well as to the tensions that arise in that process.

Conclusion

The range of countries from which newcomers come to Canada is extremely diverse.¹² There is consensus regarding the crucial role of contexts of departure and reception in shaping immigrant incorporation. If we extend the argument to include transnational engagements as well as incorporation, then it should not be surprising that there is variation in the transnational and diasporic engagements and identities of immigrants from Asia and Latin America in Canada. Taken together, chapters that present case studies of immigrants or temporary workers from countries such as India, Sri Lanka, the Philippines, El Salvador, or Mexico demonstrate the variety of reasons and opportunities for, and constraints on, transnational engagements. Landolt's chapter makes the additional contribution of showing how changes in different receiving country contexts shape different patterns of incorporation for people from the same country.

These chapters make several contributions to the literature on transnationalism. First, the book presents analyses of more and less voluntary forms of transnational engagements among several groups of migrants and immigrants in Canada. Read alongside the existing literature, the chapters highlight the continuing presence of transnational communities and diasporas in Canada. Historically, Chinese and South Asian immigrants kept in touch with family members who could not emigrate to Canada. Currently, temporary workers in precarious labour markets do the same thing. At the same time, middle-class Filipinos, Tamils, successful Indian immigrants, and activist South Asians are involved in a variety of transnational engagements.

This suggests that it is important to go beyond binary questions such as whether transnationalism is more prevalent among groups that experience systematic social and economic exclusion or whether transnational engagements are associated with successful immigrant incorporation.¹³ The alternative is to develop complex, multi-path, and multi-outcome models that take into account the contexts of departure and reception, including refugee policies, political relations with the home state, media portrayals, interaction between civil society and im/migrants, and so forth.

Second, the chapters point to the importance of taking into account institutions and institutional actors that include, but are not limited to, states and migrants. The media, international law, NGOs, unions, and other civil society organizations can play important roles in the construction of transnational social fields and spaces and in the process of incorporation.

Third, it is useful to balance academic analyses with work produced by activists, particularly immigrant activists. They may have a less sanguine view of transnationalism as they work to reduce social exclusion and make a more secure and meaningful "place" for themselves in Canadian society.

Fourth, the specificity of the Canadian context, and that of other contexts of reception, needs to be taken into account in discussions about diaspora and transnationalism.¹⁴ US and northern European contexts of reception differ from the Canadian context, not only in terms of policies, but also in terms of “who gets in” and under what conditions. The diversity of source countries and not sharing a border with a poorer country, as the United States does with Mexico, make for different configurations of immigrant and diasporic communities. Further research is needed in order to compare pathways to incorporation and transnationalism in the Canadian context. This volume is one contribution toward that goal.

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Notes

- 1 In many cases, transnational activities are oriented toward a real or putative homeland. However, conflict, migration patterns, and other factors may contribute to a decentring of transnational engagements to other regions of settlement of diaspora populations. Examples include the experience of Guyanese whose main corridors of activity are in the United States and Canada, with little return to or involvement in Guyana, and Kurds in various countries in Europe who, despite organizing politically around the project of establishing a Kurdish homeland, engage with several states of settlement and origin.
- 2 See Winland (1998) and Hyndman and Walton-Roberts (2000) for early articles on Canadian-based transnationalism, and see Satzewich and Wong (2006) for a recent compilation on the topic.
- 3 The journal *Canadian Ethnic Studies* began publication in 1969 and is indicative of these trends.
- 4 Simmons (1998) refers to this change as a shift from racist to neoracist immigration policy. He argues that changes introduced under Pierre Trudeau in the 1970s reflected Canada's concern with its standing in the world system of states, which pushed Canada to adopt colour-blind immigration policies. He also argues that the policies did not go as far as being antiracist since they did not involve measures to explicitly work toward eliminating racism from immigration and settlement policies and related practices. Vilna Bashi (2004) makes a similar argument.
- 5 The context of reception can include immigration, citizenship, and settlement policies; education systems and policies toward immigrant children and youth; prevailing attitudes, practices, and legislation regarding racism; access to language training; access to services such as health; patterns of residential concentration; and so forth (Portes and Boröcz 1989).
- 6 See Basok (2002) and the work of Díaz Barrero, Preibisch, and Becerril in this volume and elsewhere for examples of work that addresses issues of transnationalism among temporary workers. Authors such as Sharma (2001) and Ruth Magali San Martin (2004) analyze the experiences of temporary workers and their rights but not in the context of the literature on transnationalism or diaspora.
- 7 See the introduction to Michael Smith and Luis Guarnizo's (1998) collection on *Transnationalism from Below* for an excellent discussion of transnationalism from above and transnationalism from below, which are distinguished by differences in power and agency. While this distinction is quite useful, scholars also recognize the interrelationship between state- and migrant-led initiatives as well as the roles of other institutional actors.
- 8 Bridget Anderson (2001) used “transnational community” to describe a London-based association of domestic workers from several countries. This innovative use of the term

stretches the often single-country or monoethnic use of the term *transnational*, a semantic problem not lost on some critics of transnationalism (Waldinger and Fitzgerald 2004).

- 9 While it is useful to distinguish between these traditions, it is important to note that some individuals have engaged in both kinds of work. Work conducted in Europe has followed a different trajectory.
- 10 The number of studies is not large; however, the range of national and ethnic groups covered by transnational studies in Canada is impressive. For example, see Winland (1995, 1998) on Croatians, Hyndman and Walton-Roberts (2000) on Burmese, Walton-Roberts (2001) on Punjabis, Waters (2002) and Wong and Ng (2002) on Chinese, Nolin (2004) on Guatemalans, Wong (2000, 2003) and Owusu (2003) on Ghanaians, Duval (2004) on Eastern Caribbeans, Sherrell and Hyndman (2006) on Kosovars, and Landolt (in this volume) on Salvadorans.
- 11 We are mindful of the concerns raised by Glick Schiller's (2005) critique of methodological nationalism: assuming that nation and nationality are key in organizing migrants' identities and forms of social organization and using nationality as a taken-for-granted starting point and unit of analysis in migration and immigration research. At the same time, we consider it important to study how nation and nationality become significant in organizing the transnational. This approach allows our contributors to analyze the organization of the transnational through Canadian policies aimed at specific countries of origin, such as the Seasonal Agricultural Workers Program, as well as sending state policies, for example in India and Peru. Levitt and Glick Schiller (2004) clearly resonate with our insistence on considering the role of nonstate actors and institutions in organizing the transnational.
- 12 The foreign-born population in the United States is dominated by a single group: Mexicans account for nearly one-third of this population. In Canada, the country that leads the "top ten" list of source countries is the United Kingdom. Approximately one-tenth of all immigrants come from there (MPI 2004d).
- 13 Hiebert and Ley (2003) conducted one of the few surveys of Canadian immigrant transnationalism in Vancouver, documenting varying levels of economic and sociocultural transnationalism. They found that transnational activity was more likely to be found among respondents with lower indicators of incorporation in Canadian society (e.g., less time in Canada, lack of identification with Canada, and citizenship only in the country of origin). Overall, the longer respondents had been in Canada and the more they identified with Canadian society, the less likely they were to engage in transnational activities. The authors concluded that, unlike in the United States, where transnational engagement can occur alongside incorporation and can thus be interpreted as a subset of incorporation, in Canada transnationalism is an alternative to incorporation since it is associated with a lack of incorporation.
- 14 Hiebert and Ley's (2003) findings suggest that there is something about the Canadian context that, over time, discourages transnationalism or attenuates the need for it. It was not within the scope of their study to investigate *why* transnationalism appeared to decline with incorporation, but the findings imply either that immigrant selection, settlement policies, attitudes toward immigrants, and/or other aspects of the Canadian context of reception encourage the entry of people who are less likely to engage in transnational activity in the first place or that newcomers experience incorporation in Canada in a way that reduces transnational tendencies over time. It is also possible, however, that the overwhelmingly East Asian sample is not generalizable to localities where the immigrant population differs in terms of national origin concentrations, recency, immigrant class, or other factors. (The ethnic origin of Hiebert and Ley's sample had the following breakdown: 42 percent East Asian, 28 percent European/Canadian, 17 percent South Asian, 7 percent Southeast Asian, and 2 percent each for Latin American and Arab/West Asian.)