

Faist, Thomas and Eyüp Özveren (eds): *Transnational Social Spaces. Agents, Networks, Institutions*, UK/USA: Ashgate, 2004, 237 pp., ISBN 7546-3291-1

The concept of *transnational migration* has come a long way from its initial studies in the early 90s that focused on new migration patterns in the United States, Latin America and the Caribbean. Scholars argued that these new migration patterns are not unilinear as in earlier days, when most migrants left one place to move to another for good. Empirical studies showed that a (supposedly growing) number of migrants moves back and forth between different places and inhabit life-worlds that span across national boundaries. It was argued, that these new migration patterns ask for new theories and research methods.

Since then, a lot has been written in favour of the new paradigm, conducting ever more case studies of *transmigrants*. Furthermore, several scholars have taken up the task of developing coherent theoretical concepts of transnational migration. Not surprisingly, the new paradigm has also triggered much criticism within the field of migration research. A central critique has ever since been the question, whether the described phenomena were really so new. Many claimed that maybe the concepts and focus of *description* changed rather than the *phenomenon* itself. Furthermore, a lack of sound theoretical underpinnings and a problematic dominance of qualitative case studies, delivering merely low range theories was identified by critics. As for the European context, doubts were cast whether the transnational paradigm, developed elsewhere, could legitimately be applied to describe current migration processes.

In presenting analysis of contemporary social spaces that stretch from Germany to Turkey, the book *Transnational Social Spaces* tackles all of the above mentioned criticism. Jointly edited by Thomas Faist and Eyüp Özveren with contributions of doctoral students from Germany and Turkey, the book itself is the outcome of a transnational enterprise.

In an introductory chapter by the renowned theorist of transnational migration Thomas Faist, he presents 'concepts, questions and topics' to study transnational social spaces. It serves as the theoretical framework for the nine case studies conducted by doctoral students that make up the rest of the book. These case studies are grouped in three thematic fields: 'Rights and Struggles', 'Entrepreneurship and Management' and finally

two studies that are grouped under the somewhat fuzzy header of: 'Culture, Media and Everyday Social Life'.

In the preface the editors claim that the book 'represents a further step towards an operationalisation' of transnational social spaces. Unfortunately, most of the theoretical ideas are confined to the introductory chapter of Faist. Here, theoretical and methodological guidelines for studying 'transboundary social and symbolic ties' are presented. Whereas earlier studies in the field have focused on transmigrants' pluri-local life worlds, the focus of this book is on 'transboundary exchanges and transactions in networks, [non-state] organisations and communities'. The focus is thus changed from transmigrants to processes of institutionalisation of interaction across state boundaries.

In talking about transnational social spaces, the very concept of 'space' transcends a traditional geographical understanding of a localised set of physical features. In the book 'space denotes cultural, economic and political practices of individual and collective actors within territories or places'. By recurring symbolic and social interaction, transnational 'links' between actors are created. Building on these assumptions, Faist develops the overarching definition of transnational social spaces as understood in the book as being 'relatively stable and dense sets of ties reaching beyond and across the borders of sovereign states'.

In order to conceptually and empirically grasp transnational spaces, Faist proposes to study their main dimensions, namely the 'time-space compression' of ties and the organisation of ties that make up a certain transnational social space.

Following this conceptualisation, the time-space compression of ties can be analysed by studying their 'extensity' – the location of activities, the actors involved and the social fields affected by the ties – and the 'intensity' of social ties, described as the number and frequency of connections as well as the speed of transactions.

According to Faist, the organisation of ties should be studied by analysing the infrastructure at disposal within a certain transnational space as well as the informal and formal regulation of ties by law, policies, hierarchies, etc. Furthermore, a strong case is made for studying the historical evolution of transnational social spaces.

Thus the reader is presented with some analytical tools, applicable for studying social phenomena that are, by definition complex and hard to grasp with traditional research strategies. Strengths and possible weaknesses of analyses borne by the application of these tools can be found in the case studies presented in the book.

In the group of 'Rights and Struggles', the case study by Zeynep Kadirbeyoglu deals with the topic of transnational social movements. A transnational campaign against a multinational gold-mining company in

Turkey is analysed using qualitative research methods. Interviews with local Turkish peasants as well as environmental experts and activists in Germany and Turkey are used to describe the structure of the transnational space and to explain why it was so effective.

Quite contrary to this, the second case study in the book by Hanife Aliefendioğlu shows how few ties could so far be developed between women's NGOs in Germany and Turkey in order to strengthen the situation of Turkish migrant women in Germany. She also presents ideas on what should be done in order to foster transnational ties between these NGOs.

The 'other side', namely German migrants in Turkey are the focus of Bianca Kaiser's case study. She discusses the merits of German groups in Turkey in improving the life of Germans living there. Activities of the most important of these groups – 'die Brücke' – are analysed in depth. In forging ties between Germany, Turkey and the EU, the group has opened up political space for activities in the sectors like education or citizenship laws.

The final contribution within the thematic group is Emre Arslan's analysis of a Turkish ultra-nationalist group in Germany. He describes how these activists resolve their contradictory situation of being Turkish nationalists outside Turkey, how ideological currents are 'imported' from Turkey and how, in spite of everything, these activists become more and more part of the social life in Germany.

Two case studies are presented dealing with the realm of transnational entrepreneurship and management. In his study of the small Anatolian city of Çorum, Cem Dişbudak investigates the role of return migrants and their transnational social spaces in the economic boom of the city. On a more socio-psychological level, Marita Lintfert studies problems of intercultural interaction and communication in Turkish-German joint ventures.

Within the final thematic cluster, Kira Kostnick studies the 'good guys' and 'bad guys' of Turkish migrant broadcasting in Berlin. In her analysis of different programmes run by Turkish migrants on the 'Open Channel Berlin', her analysis focuses on differing concepts of migrant identities underlying these programmes. She argues that the supposedly 'bad guys' such as Turkish and Kurdish nationalists combine local and transnational topics and create transnational (media) spaces. These are denounced as hindering integration by simplistic views of the 'good guys' on air.

The final chapter deals with a topic rarely discussed within transnational studies – the children of migrants. By means of statistical and qualitative analysis of marriage patterns of second generation Turks in Germany, Gaby Straßburger tries to track changes in the nature of transnational social spaces over generations. She argues that 'old' personal

transnational ties to kin and community of origin lose relevance for the young women and men. But parallel to this, 'new' transnational ties that are built on a more voluntary basis to friends in Turkey gain importance. Alongside this, new forms of solidarity come to play a role in the development and maintenance of transnational ties of the second generation.

Most of the case studies presented are good examples of how complex phenomena such as transnational social spaces can be studied. As the majority of them stick to the central features of the guidelines developed by Faist, they serve as good indicators of what we can expect when applying the guidelines. We see that the specific form of analysis can grasp relevant aspects of the described transnational social spaces. But while the case studies are proper analyses, little more than the cases themselves are presented in most of them. Theoretical analyses that go beyond the already-known are seldom in the book and the application of Faist's guidelines might be a reason for that.

To sum up, Faist's guidelines presented in the book can be valuable tools for scholars of transnational phenomena and the case studies reveal some interesting stories. But scholars who stick to Faist's guidelines too rigorously might end up with analyses of rather little groundbreaking potential.

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