

SOC585 Migration and Transnationalism: Final exam

5. “Methodological nationalism is a tendency to accept the nation-state and its boundaries as given.” What are the consequences of this tendency in migration research? Provide Examples

The question of methodological nationalism has been assigned importance in contemporary social sciences over the past couple of decades. It was first recognized as a problem in early 1970s (Martins 1974), however it only became central and salient issue with the rise of globalization theory, when questions about the nation state and its position in modernity entered the debate (Beck 2000, Wimmer & Glick Schiller 2002, Chernilo 2007). However, clear understanding on what actually methodological nationalism is has not been reached yet, nor have we systematically inquired into social theory’s methodological nationalism (Chernilo 2006).

Methodological nationalism is often seen as a result of the historical formation of modernity and the social sciences that was linked together with the processes of nation-state formation (Calhoun 1999; Wagner 1994). As such, methodological nationalism is deeply seated in social sciences and shaped and continues to shape migration studies.

Modern nation-state was built upon the idea of unity of its citizens (Wagner 1994). The very concept of people crossing the borders of nation states and challenging their ethnic and/or political unity (no matter the fact, that such a unity is for the most part just imagined) destroys the congruence between people, sovereign and citizenry (Wimmer & Glick Schiller 2003) which central to the notion of nation-state and therefore also the starting point of methodological nationalism. Migrants are disruptions in the fabric of society – they stands outside the community that (presumably) shares the loyalty towards the state¹ and group solidarity. Nationalists’ rhetoric often points out that migrants, i.e. non-nationals, participate or want to participate on national social welfare. However, social sciences helped to sponge off this rhetoric by concentrating **on topics of migrants’ unemployment, implications for national welfare system or poverty rates in comparison to the mean of national population**. Cross-border migration is therefore perceived as un-natural, in opposite of people staying in one place and/or one state, where they belong.

This tendency also affected the level of scientific inquisition. Researches focused on macro-level (as mentioned above) **obscuring the intimate and personal experience** of migrants. The shift of focus (from nation-state container to more flexible transnational social fields concept and from macro-level analysis to personal experience) started only recently and is still struggling to overcome the methodological nationalism infused model of social sciences.

- WIMMER, A. & N. GLICK SCHILLER. 2003. „Methodological Nationalism, the Social Science, and the Study of Migration: An Essay in Historical Epistemology.“*International Migration Review* 37 (3): 576 – 610.
- WAGNER, Peter. 1994. *A Sociology of Modernity: Liberty and Discipline*. London, New York: Routledge.

¹ Questioning the loyalty of immigrants became once again hot topic after the 9/11.

- CHERNILO, Daniel. 2006. "Social Theory's Methodological Nationalism: Myth and Reality". In *European Journal of Social Theory*. 9 (1). Pp 5-22.
- MARTINS, H. 1974. "Time and theory in sociology." In: Rex J (ed.) *Approaches to Sociology*. London: Routledge & Kegan Paul.
- BECK, U. 2000. *What Is Globalization?* Cambridge: Polity Press.
- CALHOUN C. 1999. Nationalism, political community and the representation of society: Or, why feeling is not a substitute for public space. *European Journal of Social Theory* 2(2): 217–231.

6. Design a research project with these keywords: 'transnational families' and 'Central and Eastern Europe'. Formulate research question(s) and justify your methodology.

Being mother while working abroad: Ukrainian women migrant and their transnational motherhood

Background:

Migration is gendered and gendering process and every year many women around the globe enter the so-called global care chain (Hochschild 2000a), as they migrate abroad to take care of somebody else's children while leaving theirs at their homeland. Also other women join migratory flows as demand for not-very-well paid care takers arises in West (Williams 2010). Parrenas (2001) uses the term international division of reproductive labor when addressing this issue. While global paid care is often conceptualize in term of South/North distinction (global South as "supplier" of domestic workers, global North as "demander" for domestic work/paid care), we can currently trace migratory flow from Ukraine (Eastern Europe) to the Czech Republic (Central Europe), which increasingly consists of women, even though men still make up for the majority of Ukrainian migrants in the Czech Republic (around 60%, according to the Czech Statistical Office). Ukrainian migration to the Czech Republic is specific because of its temporal and circular character.

As some researchers shows (for example Petra Ezzedine 2012), many of these women migrate alone, leaving their family behind in Ukraine. Around 55% of women migrant from Ukraine live in the Czech Republic without their children (Ezzedine, Kocourek 2006). Therefore, they constitute the biggest group of transnational parents, who live and work in the Czech Republic. The root of the high level of transnational mothers in the Czech Republic lies not only in the geographical distance between Czech Republic and Ukraine, but can also be directed to state migrant and integration policy of the Czech Republic which does not observe the right to family reunification (Ezzedine 2012).

Proposed research will address the topic of transnational families, where mother is "missing" – she is not physically present, however remains in close contact with the family and children.

Research questions:

Main question: *How do migrant women from Ukraine construct and negotiate their transnational motherhood while working abroad?*

Supporting questions:

What are their motivations to migrate?

What strategies they use to “do” their mothering?

What practices they employ to help them cope with transnational motherhood?

How do children of transnational mothers experience such arrangement?

Methodology:

The main objective of proposed research is to understand the practice of transnational motherhood and experiences migrant women undergo through the whole process of migration. For this purpose qualitative methodology with focus on personal biography seems the most convenient as it allows seeing women migration as lived experience. I will use the method of biographical interview, conducted several times in different stages of migratory process. I also want to conduct with children (and rest of the families), as I believe their experience is also important part of the puzzle.

Proposed methodology has some potential problematic aspects. One is the fact, that it is time-consuming and long-termed research. It is also research where the role of researcher is more visible, as s/he becomes part of the story told. Albeit the mentioned problematic aspects I believe that such method will help to reveal lived experiences of transnational mothers.

EZZEDDINE, P.2012. „Mateřství na dálku: transnacionální mateřství ukrajinských migrantek v České republice“. Gender-rovné příležitosti-výzkum 13(1):24-33

EZZEDDINE, P., KOCOUREK J. 2006. Internal Restriction on Czech Labour Market. Prague: IOM, Global Development Network.

HOCHSCHILD, Arlie Russell. 2000. “Global Care Chains and Emotional Surplus Value.” Pp 130-146 in Will Hutton, Anthony Giddens (eds.). On the Edge: Living with Global Capitalism. London: Jonathon Cape.

PARRENASS, Rhachel Salazar. 2001. Servants of Globalization: Women, Migration, and Domestic Work. Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press.

7. Discuss the relationship between nationalism and cosmopolitanism using the example of arts and museums.

Museum, especially those, which have ‘national’ in their title were for a long time (and to some extent still are) considered to be the showroom of a nation – its history, discoveries and artistic expressions, all stored under one roof in the capitol city. Through museums and exhibition they display we can study the imaginary of nation. However, in many cases, the idea of who constitute nation is strictly bound with the idea of nation-state as unity of citizens who share the same history, language and values in the same geographical space. They are places of collective memory of a nation (McDonald 2013). Museums are placed where different narratives about who is allowed to be part of the nation and who is not, are articulated (Levitt 2012: 30). Therefore, they are one of the institutions who play crucial role in creating the idea of nation and its citizens. They are also places, where newcomers who

want to become part of the nation, can find out the story of the nation and therefore their im/possibility of becoming its members.

Conversely, with growing migration and need for more open notion of citizenship in many western countries, the need to become museums for all the country citizens and inhabitants (even those who do not fit into the older idea of national citizens) has raised.

As Levitt (2012) shows, museums worldwide started to realize their possible influence as well as the need to reconsider the way they deal with their exhibitions and become more open and perhaps cosmopolitan. Picking out examples from several countries, Levitt point out that even though some museums are regional (in the sense of what they display) they might be able to connect local history with global issues and thus become more cosmopolitan.

The collective memory does not have to be bound with concrete nation or territory, it can become deterritorized (Macdonald 2013). Macdonald (2013) shows the example of Holocaust, as 'the paradigmatic case' of such cosmopolitan memory, where the story of holocaust is increasingly been decontextualised from its historical time and space and turned into a moral story of the fight between good and evil. Holocaust is shared, collective history open to everyone. The example of such collective memory can be seen in Yad Vashem Memorial and Holocaust History Museum in Jerusalem, where the exhibition, based on personal stories, allows everyone to enter and share this collective memory no matter what nationality.

LEVITT, Peggy. 2012. "The bog and the Beast: Museums, the Nation, and the Globe." *Ethnologia Scandinavica*. 42: 29-46. Web. 14 Jan. 2014.

MACDONALD, Sharon. April, 2013. "Cosmopolitan Memory Holocaust Commemoration and National Identity" In Macdonald, S. *Memorylands: Heritage and Identity in Europe Today*, pp. 188- 215.