Juggling jargons : "Italians everywhere", diaspora or transnationalism?

JUGGLING JARGONS

"ITALIANS EVERYWHERE",
DIASPORA OR TRANSNATIONALISM?

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Whether angered or energized by the development, historians in the 1990s could scarcely ignore the decade's fascination with globalization. Historians who were comfortable with nation-centered analyses of either emigration or (more commonly) immigration often experienced as downright annoying the new analytical terms – trans-migrants, im/migrants, transnationalism and diasporas, ethnoscapes and nomadism generated by interest in globalization. Such negative reactions were to some degree understandable. The new terminology was implicitly critical when not overtly dismissive of the methodological nationalism[1] of earlier scholarship of studies of – for example – immigration and emigration as distinctive phenomena (instead of differing national perspectives on the same humans).

Still, scholarship does evolve and change and most historians of international migration have begun to come to terms with global analysis of international border-crossing. In this paper, I briefly describe how one group of historians – collaborating to analyze the migration of 27 million Italians around the world in the years between 1800 and 1970 – responded critically to new theoretical developments in the social sciences and cultural studies and to the *Zeitgeist* of the decade that made globalization a concern of scholars across the disciplines. For 15 years, this "Italians Everywhere" collaboration has offered rich opportunities to test the usefulness of terminology that many have dismissed as jargon, global babble or globaloney. Increasingly, I characterize cross-disciplinary exercises that critically query theoretical terminologies through historical research as "weighing theory on the scales of history". In this paper I "weigh" three partially overlapping yet nevertheless difficult and distinct terms – transnational, transnationalism and diaspora – that have been particularly attractive to students of international migration in the past decade.

THE "ITALIANS EVERYWHERE" PROJECT: ITALY'S "WORKERS OF THE WORLD"

As scholars have now come to appreciate, migrations out of Italy truly were world-historical in their duration and volume. Although apparent already in the late 18th century, these migrations assumed epic proportions in the years between 1870 and 1970, when over 26 million persons – roughly the population of Italy in 1861 – left home to work or live abroad, if only temporarily. Contrary to popular belief, the U. S. was not the destination for the majority: a third of Italy's migrants went to the U. S. and Canada, a quarter to Latin America, over 40 percent to other European countries and smaller but still significant numbers to Australia and to Africa. Humble male workers, the human steam shovels and brick masons who built the infrastructure of capitalism around the world, made up the majority of this migration. At least half of them returned home again and some migrated many times over the course of their lives.

As this suggests, the global labor markets within which Italian migrants moved were thoroughly gendered. Abroad, men worked in construction, commercial, or plantation agriculture, mining and in a number of heavy industries; women, when they migrated, more often took jobs as machine tenders in the so-called light industries. Most women and children, however, remained in Italy to feed themselves and their children through subsistence agriculture while men migrated. Men's foreign wages subsidized reproduction of family patrimonies and improvements in family consumption in Italy. Men and women occupied different class position within the global economy but their ties of intimacy and finance linked pre- and capitalist workplaces within that world economy.

"Italians Everywhere" was a collaborative project, engaging scholars with expertise on particular nations – Italy, Argentina, Brazil, Australia, France, Belgium, the U. S. and Canada – but bringing them into dialogue in order to ask comparative questions. A long-term migration of the magnitude of Italy's offered almost endless possibilities to compare nation-building in many lands and to analyze cross-culturally the ways in which international migration figured in nation-building, in the development of national self-concepts, and in the shaping of gender, class, and ethnic identities in a wide variety of settings. In probing Italian workers' border-crossing and migratory lives, we hoped to avoid the problem of replicating the provincialism of localized ethnic nationalisms on a global stage; in particular we were determined to use our analyses of mobile workers to problematize nation-building in Italy as well as in the nations where Italy's migrants worked, ultimately settled,

and became citizens.[2]

HISTORIANS IN AN ERA OF GLOBALIZATION

When Fraser Ottanelli (University of South Florida) and I initiated the "Italians Everywhere" project in 1990, terms such as transnational, transnationalism, globalization and diaspora were – with a single exception (the study of the scattered populations of the Jewish and Africans diasporas) – little known or used. Although I was certainly aware of new theoretical developments in anthropology and sociology and in regular touch with scholars of migration in those fields, at the time that we initiated "Italians Everywhere", we drew our initial inspiration not from other disciplines or from scholarly theories but instead from the internationalist ideals of 19th and 20th century workers and from men and women who proclaimed (as we did also at times) "for us there are no frontiers".

In planning our project, we were struck by how often, how long ago and in how many ways, earlier students of Italy's migrations had rejected methodological nationalism. We clearly benefited from the existence of a rich (if often gender-blind) literature on the comparative and global dimensions of Italy's migrations. As early as 1919, American economist Robert Foerster had compared Italy's migrants in over half a dozen different countries. In 1962, Italian scholar Ernesto Ragionieri's Marxist, internationalist analysis of Italy's migrations made them a central theme in global labor history. By the mid-1960s, Latin Americanist Samuel Bailey was comparing Italian laborers in Argentina, Brazil, and the U. S., and in the early 1980s, Italian colleagues extended that comparison to four continents. From the mid-1970s and throughout the 1980s, immigration and labor historians Ferdinando Fasce (in Italy), Donna Gabaccia (in the U. S.), and Bruno Ramirez (in Canada) had scrutinized Italian laborers' multiple and connected work sites and I had had experimented with a methodology that Sam Baily had baptized earlier as "village outward" – following migrants from a single village to their many destinations abroad and exploring connections between the village and foreign worksites and communities. Already in the 1980s, too, Dirk Hoerder and his Labor Migration Project at the University of Bremen conceptualized Italy's migrations as part of the proletarian migrations of the Atlantic economy, encouraging a comparative labor history of migrants that could acknowledge the power of national states and their boundaries while focusing on the laborers who crossed them.[3]

In short, we easily and quickly found earlier models for global histories of migration within our own discipline, diminishing the felt need to turn toward theoretical work in the social sciences. In fact, our response to social scientists' discoveries of globalization in the 1990s was somewhat guarded: like many historians, we felt there was nothing truly new under the sun and ■ 51

that ahistorical theorists exaggerated both the novelty of the present and the newness of their insights. We recognized that many of the main features of contemporary globalization – notably economic inequality, the massive international circulation of capital and laborers, ideologies of free trade, and new, cheaper and speedier, technologies of transportation and communication – were important factors that shaped the lives of the mobile Italians we studied in the 19th century, too. Nevertheless, by the mid-1990s, as we began to report the first results of the research of "Italians Everywhere" collaborators, we could not fail to notice that many of the multi-disciplinary group of scholars who expressed interest in our work – scholars who shared our concerns with mobility, migration, and nation-building – were working with analytical concepts – of transnationalism, trans-migrants, and diasporas – we had not engaged in our own project.

Perhaps because my earliest education had been in sociology and because my dissertation research had involved a collaboration "in the field" with anthropologists, I was especially intrigued by the dialogue between history and the social sciences opened by these new concepts. Terms such as transnational, transnationalism, and diaspora focused scholarly attention – positively, I believed, for scholars still focused exclusively on immigration or emigration - on migration as a spatial but border-crossing phenomenon. In the intervening years, I had come to see historians' role in the interdisciplinary dialogue about transnationalism and diasporas as quite specific. Our discipline's insistence upon the importance of time fundamentally challenges social scientists who (at least in the 1990s) had become enthusiastic about theorizing about space and place (as their interest in globalization necessarily required) but who had not accepted temporality as an element of their theories, weakening their power to interpret and to explain.

DISCOVERING THE TRANSNATIONAL

Already in the 1970s, younger historians of U. S. immigration were abandoning methodological nationalism. But at that time, transnational analysis was limited to studies of transnational business or of transnational relations among nation states; it was not applied to studies of international migration. Immigration history projects begun in the 1970s and published in the 1980s had titles like Dino Cinel's *From Italy to San Francisco*, my own *From Sicily to Elizabeth Street*, or Walter Kamphoefner's *Westfalians: From Germany to America*.[4] Their titles signaled a dawning view of migration as a lived connection between two geographical spaces – in this case Europe and North America – rather than as

an element in the national history of a single nation such as the United States. These titles also carried within them more than a small degree of skepticism of the Chicago School of Sociology's theories of straight-line assimilation into an American "mainstream". They instead captured immigrants' experience of being connected and of moving back and forth between two places over the course of a single lifetime.

Only in the late 1980s and early 1990s was the term "transnational" applied to migration, and it was anthropologists, not historians, who re-worked the term and put it on the scholarly agenda of the social sciences. Most of the anthropologists who wrote about migration from transnational perspectives were specialists on contemporary Caribbean or Mexican migration to the U. S. They developed an interest in immigrant life in the U. S. largely as a consequence of their fieldwork in countries of emigration. Much as historian Sam Bailey had suggested years earlier, they viewed migration to the U. S. and immigrant life there from "the village outward", bringing to the study of U. S. immigration a thorough knowledge of the languages and pre-migration worlds of those "emigrants" who became "immigrants" only when viewed from a U. S.-centered perspective. Like the immigration historians of the 1970s and 1980s, furthermore, they were skeptical that straight-line assimilation theory best summarized the lives of the migrants they studied.

Thus in *Towards a Transnational Perspective on Migration* – the most frequently cited early anthropological work that used the term in new ways – editors Nina Glick-Schiller, Linda Basch, and Cristina Blanc-Szanton argued that the social practices of many migrants' lives occurred, almost simultaneously on the territories of more than one national state.[5] They defined this way of life – presumably the sum total of migrants' transnational practices – as transnationalism. In their earliest writings, Glick-Schiller and her collaborators (with the lone historian, Barry Goldberg, as a dissenting voice) suggested that transnationalism was a new development: whereas immigrants of the past had broken with their home countries in order to migrate and had sought and quickly achieved assimiliation, contemporary "trans-migrants" used new technologies of air travel, telephones, satellites, and digital communication to maintain ties to their homelands. In more recent publications, however, Glick-Schiller and her co-author Georges Fouron, at least, have acknowledged the existence of a long history of transnational practices among migrants to the U. S.[6]

As an historian focusing on a very particular, if large and important, migration, I came to see all three components of the term transnationalism – the "trans", the "national" and the "ism" – as worthy of both further discussion and refinement.[7] I also came to appreciate how analysis of transnationalism ■ 53

and of diasporas, while clearly overlapping, diverged in ways that mattered a great deal for our historical study of Italy's migrants.

First, there was the troubling issue of the meaning of the prefix "trans" in transnationalism. Today, when I write about Italy's transnational migrations, I am quick to explain that I mean simply migrations that cross an international border, whether they move into ("immigration") or out ("emigration") of the territory of a particular nation state. I have become increasingly aware that the "trans" in "transnational" strikes many listeners as meaning not "across" or "crossing" a national boundary but rather meaning "above" or "beyond" the territory or power of a single national state. Used in the latter way, "transnational" seems to suggest that the significance of national states, of national territories, and of national identities and loyalties ("nationalism") are diminished by transnational migration. In fact, some theorists of globalization (notably Arjun Appadurai) did view the rising international migrations of the last decades of the 20th century as indicators of the declining importance of national states; others such as Saskia Sassen suggested that national states were threatened in their sovereignty not only by multinational corporations and border-crossing flows of capital but by migration, too.[8]

For millenarians who may have anticipated the imminent collapse of the international system of national states in the face of the transnational migrations of the new century, "Italians Everywhere" provided a necessary corrective. For one thing, it reminded today's theorists that massive and global migrations are neither new nor an unprecedented phenomena. Our project demonstrated that national states have been far more committed to restricting and far more effective in limiting and controlling the migrations of ordinary laborers since World War I than was the case in the previous century when national restrictions on migration were often quite limited. (In fact, contemporary levels of international labor and refugee migrations – as opposed to tourist and businessmen's mobility – are probably somewhat lower, relative to total world populations, than was the case between 1880 and 1930.) In short, high levels of international migration have historically not much impeded nation-building. They may even have encouraged it: the so-called proletarian mass migrations of the 19th century certainly overlapped with the rise of modern nationalism in many part of peripheral Europe and the Americas. Modern nations, in other words, were not built in the absence of human mobility, or on national territories occupied by sedentary persons; instead, the intensity of the mass migrations of the 19th century may actually help to explain the intensity of nationalist movements and the focus of national states on ideological nation-building in the years prior to World War I.

Precisely because massive international migration and nation-building were

so closely linked in the 19th century, the "Italians Everywhere" project also raised questions about the "national" element of "transnational" migration. While contemporary theorists in the social sciences accepted the existence and hegemony of the national until our own supposedly "post-modern" moment in the 1990s, we as historians were more interested in exploring the construction of nations and the consolidation of their power through time. Italianists have long recognized there was no nation of Italy that preceded or gave birth to the independent Italian national state. On the contrary, one of the main challenges of the Italian state created in 1861 was to build a nation of Italians. Specialists disagree about when ordinary peasants and workers in Italy acquired firm national loyalties but most students of Italy's migrants agree that they left home as familists, localists, and regionalists – not as nationalists with a strong attachment to an Italian nation. *Campanilismo* (attachment to the local church tower), not nationalism, shaped their experiences of movements through space. If Italy's migrants lived simultaneously in two places, and if their mental maps encompassed two spaces on opposite sides of the Atlantic, those spaces were most assuredly not coterminous with national territories; it might even be more accurate to refer to the translocalism or transregionalism of Italy's mobile millions, rather than to their transnationalism.

At the same time, however, there can be little doubt that moving out of Italy and encountering the nation-building strategies of national states such as France, the U. S., Argentina, Brazil, and Australian, encouraged migrants to develop national and Italian identities while living and working abroad. Crossing national boundaries – for example transnational or international migration – can easily encourage rather than undermine nation-building, although it would seem to as easily encourage attachments to the nation of emigration as to the nation of immigration – a phenomena that anthropologist theorists have now termed the "deterritorialization" of nation states or the "long-distance nationalism" of pre-existing nations.[9] Certainly, the ruling elites of Italy – both under the liberal regimes of the early 20th century and the fascist regime of Mussolini in the 1920s and 1930s – used the financial and ideological power of the Italian national state to encourage long-distance nationalism and to encourage Italy's "de-territorialized nation" to support the political governors of the homeland, especially in its pursuit of national aggrandizement through empire-building in Africa.

Finally, historical analysis and a focus on the creation and spread of nationalism historically made us particularly aware contemporary theorists's disturbing tendency to equate the existence of transnational practices with something larger they termed transnationalism. Transnational practices among migrants have been easy to document in both the past and the present. But ■ 55

do transnational practices inevitably or collectively create transnationalism? Anthropologist theorists have mainly posited "transnationalism" as a "way of life", comparable perhaps to "consumerism". But consumerism can be and is analyzed as both a way of life and as a bundle of specific assumptions about the proper relations of human desires, economies and societies. Those who invented the term transnationalism have rarely assigned an ideological content to it, unlike the ideology of nationalism, against which the newer term clearly resonates. Should we not at least consider the possible that the "ism" of "transnationalism" requires us to understand its ideological content along with its relationship to nationalism or to nationalism's historical mirror images, "internationalism" or "cosmopolitanism"? Is transnationalism merely an expression of long-distance nationalism and of the de-territorialization of nation states or is it instead a critique of nationalism and a way of life or an ideology that undermines the power of national states and national identities? It seems to me this question remains unresolved both theoretically and empirically and that the usefulness of the term transnationalism itself will not be settled until this question is resolved.

In my own work on Italy's humble migrants around the world I searched hard for an Italian-language equivalent to either anti-nationalist sentiments (such as internationalism or cosmopolitanism) or to expressions of long distance nationalism. I found good evidence that Italy's elites by the first decades of the 20th century referred to emigrants as the *italiani al estero* (Italians abroad, a term that is still widely used in Italy today). But the best expression I found of proletarian migrants' understanding of the relationship between their experiences outside of Italy and within Italy was instead a proverb that existed in a dozen dialect versions and that stated simply, *tutto il mondo e paese* – "all the world" (or "everybody") "is a village". The proverb is not clearly hostile toward the nation or the nation state but neither is it a patriotic expression of love of country or co-nationals. If anything the proverb appears to ignore the nation to focus instead on linkages between the global or worldly and the local or village experience.

To summarize, anthropologists' theories of transnationalism proved somewhat helpful for conceptualizing Italy's mass migrations. There can be little doubt that migration forged a connection between home village and workplaces and communities abroad and that for many of Italy's male migrants, in particular, the existential frame of reference encompassed at least two places, not just one. Whether or not men understood those two places as nations was not at all clear but, in any case, constant movement and simultaneous experience of life in the two did not undermine the spread of national identities or the eventual, 20th-century-rise of intense nationalism among Italians at home and abroad.

With their limited interest in temporality, finally, theorists of the transnational assumed too readily the permanence of transnational practices and expressions of transnationalism in today's world. Exploring these phenomena historically, "Italians Everywhere" suggested that the intensity of transnational practices quickly faded among subsequent generations. The draconic restrictions imposed on international migrations by nations throughout the world, beginning in the 1920s, followed by a half century of hot and cold wars and a global depression, rather effectively suppressed transnationalism as a working-class way of life among the children and grandchildren of the migrants both in Italy or abroad.

Most problematically for the "Italians Everywhere" project, theoretical work on transnational practices and transnationalism analyzed migration almost exclusively as a connection between only two places. Yet perhaps the most fundamental reality of migrations from Italy was their multi-directionality. Even relatively small villages in Italy typically lost inhabitants to many sites on several continents. And even individual migrants might, over the course of their peripatetic lives, live and work in more than one country, sometimes on more than one continent. Transnational social practices and networks thus typically linked individuals to many foreign places. It was precisely this characteristic of Italy's migrations that forced the "Italians Everywhere" project to consider seriously the competing theoretical literature, and quite different perspectives offered by theorists of global diasporas – those global "scatterings" of persons out of their homelands to many foreign places.

TYPOLOGIZING DIASPORAS

When I was first approached by editors in two widely different scholarly fields (Khach Tololyan from literature and Robin Cohen from sociology) to consider Italy's internationally mobile millions as a diaspora, I responded with considerable skepticism. Knowing a bit about the use of the term for the study of forced migrations, I insisted that the best we could do would be to pose the question "Was there an Italian diaspora?"[10] The answer to that question, as every beginning student knows, would be determined by the definition of the term itself. And that, I quickly learned, was in considerable flux.

In the original Greek term, "diaspora" had meant simply a scattering of seeds – of Greek merchants, colonizers, and sailors – around the Mediterranean. By the 1970s, however, the term diaspora had become associated with a tiny number of forced migrations and with exiles' longing for their lost homes. In the 1990s that traditional association was collapsing. Last time I checked ■

it, Harvard's online catalog (HOLLIS) listed over 1200 monographs with the term "diaspora" or "diasporas" in their titles. Astonishingly, almost two-thirds of monographic diaspora studies listed were published after 1990, and fully 15 percent of them have appeared in only the past four years. Whereas once English-speakers had once referred mainly to a Jewish, African or Armenian diaspora (all groups forced from their homelands) studies of diasporas now include studies Arab, British, Chinese, Filipino, German, Gypsy, Huguenot, Haitian, Iranian, Latino, Lithuanian, Korean, Mexican, Russian, Sikh, South Asian, Tatar, Tibetan, Turkish, and Ukrainian diasporas.

The meaning of the term diaspora has widened as scholars sought a more global, and geographically capacious metaphor for the study of mobile persons. The result, some critics claimed, was that the term had become meaningless as it has been applied to expatriates, refugees, aliens, immigrants, and ethnic and racial minorities. As anthropologist Steven Vertovec concluded recently, diaspora is "used today to describe practically any population which is […] living outside the space designated as its cultural homeland".[11] To this, I might add that – contrary to the initial appeal of diaspora to "Italians Everywhere" as a paradigm for multi-sited analysis – many studies of diasporas now focus on only a single location. Thus, diasporas have more often been asserted than demonstrated. One result is that theorizing about diasporas has not advanced through vigorous critique and debate as it has, to some degree, among the interdisciplinary group of scholars using the theoretical terminology of transnationalism.

In asking "was there an Italian diaspora?" my work within the "Italians Every-where" project chose to "weigh" the typologies of diaspora created by Robin Cohen on the "scale" of our historical research. Cohen distinguished between the classic "victim" diasporas, of peoples forced from their homes, and other migratory groups – laborers and merchants, for example.[12] At the same time, he insisted on defining diasporas as scatterings that exhibited many of the same characteristics as the exiled Jews or enslaved Africans once abroad. Borrowing from Cohen's short list of the defining characteristics of all diasporas, it was easy for me to characterize Italy's migrations as an expansion "to two or more foreign regions" "in search of work" – the foundations for the formation of what Cohen called a labor diaspora. Italy's labor migrants also had "a troubled relationship with host societies" – attacked as wage-depressors in the 1870s and 1880s, and excluded or restricted as racially undesirable from the U. S. and some other nations after World War I. Like the typology of diasporas Cohen describes, Italy's migrants also developed "a return movement". Finally, it seemed indisputable that Italy's migrants abroad developed both what Cohen called a "collective memory and myth about the homeland" and an "idealization of the supposed ancestral home".

But other characteristics that defined Cohen's diasporas were harder to demonstrate for Italy's migrations, especially when viewed from historical perspective. In fact, it became apparent that some of the same problematic assumptions made about transnationalism applied to diasporas. Like some theories of transnationalism, Cohen's typology of diasporas had little to say about the relationship between diasporas and nation-building or the creation of national states over the course of historical time. The memories and myths of the homeland – an essential feature of diasporas, according to Cohen – were among Italy's migrants more often memories and myths of the native village than of an Italian nation or national territory. Precisely because Italian nation-building developed alongside massive migration, it was impossible to identify a single or "Italian" diaspora until well into the 20th century. Instead, there were many diasporas – of Sicilians and *piemontesi* (regional groups), of *sambucari* and *biellesi* (inhabitants of particular towns) and of Italian-speaking anarchists and, later, anti-fascist *fuorusciti* (exiles or "exiters"). Throughout a century of migration from Italy, nationalists worked hard to build or in the case of the radical internationalists to undermine the development of what Ernest Gellner has called "diaspora nationalism" among the mobile. Especially under the fascist regime of Benito Mussolini, consuls sought to guarantee that the diaspora of *italiani al estero* served from afar the needs of its national state.

This proliferation of Italy's "many diasporas" did not necessarily produce yet another characteristic shared by all diasporas, or what Cohen terms "a sense of solidarity with co-ethnic members in other countries". The most important ties of solidarity and economic assistant ran through Italy's villages, circulating from there to multiple "satellites" abroad; *biellesi* in Argentina were more likely to be in touch with the home village and to learn news from there of their friends and family in the U. S. Finally, diasporas of fellow-villagers did not typically persist over time. Practically alone among an otherwise ahistorical group of theorists, Cohen, to his credit, insisted that diasporas could be said to exist only when "a strong ethnic group consciousness (was) sustained over a long time". "One does not immediately announce the formation of a diaspora at the moment of arrival", Cohen wrote in 1997, and he criticized some scholars for doing just that.[13] In *Italy's Many Diasporas,* I demonstrated that many village-based diasporas faded with the rise of Italian nationalist sentiments; after World War I, in particular, former villagers "became Italian" while living abroad. But even the development of Italian diaspora nationalism and the persistence of this new form of diasporic or group consciousness persisted over several generations of immigrants' descendants in only a few places. It was far more prevalent in the English-speaking world than in Europe or Latin America, for example. In some places, in other words, diasporic consciousness ■ 59

had disappeared; its disappearance in turn called into question the power and centrality of the network of social and familial connections that otherwise seemed to closely resemble diasporas as Cohen has defined them.

In writing *Italy's Many Diasporas* I had started with the simple question "was there an Italian diaspora"? Having answered that question, at least in part, in the negative, I continue to believe that the now wildly burgeoning literature on diasporas would be strengthened considerably if more scholars would begin with this question and would treat their empirical research as an effort to answer it. Even more important, those who evoke diasporas should consider adopting, if not historical methodologies, than at least Cohen's awareness that a defining characteristic of a diaspora is its ability to reproduce itself over a long time period.

DIASPORAS AND TRANSNATIONALISM: SOME CONCLUDING OBSERVATIONS

Although this was not my original intention for the project, "Italians Everywhere" allowed me, and some of my collaborators, to explore the usefulness of new theoretical developments in the social sciences for our own disciplinary ends. The 1990s provided us with many options and in this paper I have pointed to two of the most useful theoretical developments of that decade for historians of international migration. This exercise has also pointed to some fascinating and also troubling parallels between theories of transnationalism and of diasporas as they developed in the 1990s.

Both theoretical terminologies grew in appeal in the 1990s precisely because they offered scholars across several disciplines a way to escape the methodological nationalism implicit in terms such as "emigration" and "immigration" and to analyze human mobility and mobile individuals and groups from more global perspectives. Both also focused attention on migration as a linkage between geographical spaces – whether local, regional, or national – that might earlier have been viewed as bounded and self-contained. Regardless of the events that set migrants into motion – whether warfare or persecution, hunger, ambition, or love – transnational practices created the network of connections that some theorists have termed "migration systems" and that others have recently preferred instead to call diasporas. Anthropologists' concept of "deterritorialized nations" also seem to share much in common with the concept of diaspora as sociologist Robin Cohen has defined it. Similarly, what anthropologists Nina Glick Schiller and others have termed "long distance nationalism" shares much in common Ernest Gellner's "diaspora nationalism".

One might even argue that what one group of scholars call "diasporic con-sciouness" forms the spiritual and sentimental if not the ideological content of what others call "transnationalism".

From the perspective of history, however, both bodies of theoretical work have proved fatally disinterested in temporality. The result is that neither is likely to prove completely satisfying when "weighed" on the "scales" of historical inquiry into particular migrations, especially those that persist – as Italy's did – over decades and even centuries. It is striking that exactly the same questions – about the timing of nation-building, about the developing impact of national states and nationalism on supra-national practices and forms of consciousness, and about the temporal persistence of forms of border-crossing consciousness among the mobile – emerged from our historical critique of theories of both diasporas and transnationalism among Italy's mobile millions.

Is there a way for historians to urge their theoretically-inclined colleagues in the social sciences to theorize temporality as well as space? We might begin by asking, as some anthropologists already have, "when does a diaspora come into existence"?[14] Similarly, we can ask when, in a developing sequence of transnatnioal practices, does transnationalism come into existence? Working with the concepts of transnationalism or diasporas, we might in our historical explorations describe a kind of migratory or generational life cycle of dispersal, settlement and identity formation[15]; it is also possible to focus on perceptions of return and attempt to identify which events in this cycle determine the emergence or disappearance of diasporic characteristics or transnationalism among the mobile. In other words, we can begin to analyze historically and comparatively the particular conditions that facilitate or discourage the con-struction, representation and subsequent reproduction of diasporas and of the transnational practices that constitute them. Among these conditions, we might want to attend to the character of transnational family and community networks, to the technologies of communication that facilitate lived connections among the mobile, to the gendered and classed demographics of migration, and to the timing of any coalescence of national or ethnic intelligentsias who seem to play special roles in creating and reproducing diasporic consciousness as they seek an audience for their scholarly and cultural productions.

Most urgently, however, I believe that both historians and theorizers of contem-pory diasporas and transnationalism need to attend to the temporal contingencies of nation-building (and the creation of national states) on the one hand, and the dynamics of mobility within formal historical time. Our historical analysis of Italy's migrations suggested that the homelands that generate diasporas and transnational practices need not be national but that nation-building and the creation of nation states, occurring as they do at particular moments in the ■ 61

histories of migration, can transform the foundations and course for the crea-
tion and maintenance of diasporas and transnationalism. Diasporic movements
and long-distance nationalism can actually create national states. But these
movements too have occurred at very particular times, for example, in the long
histories of the African and Jewish diasporas. In both these case, too, diasporic
consciousness and the types of connections between homelands and diasporas
– the very nature of their transnationalisms, we might argue further – changed
rather dramatically with the creation of national states in the homeland. How
diasporas of stateless nations differ from scatterings of peoples without pre-
existing national identities, or from diasporas of those possessed of national
states prior to migration are worth exploring theoretically and comparing
historically. Presumably, too, transnationalism – whether as a way of life or
as a type of consciousness with distinctive ideological content – develops in
historical relationship to nations, nationalism, and national states.

Arguing for the necessity of temporality in theories of diasporas and trans-
nationalism is not the same thing as asserting a disciplinary faith that there
is "nothing new under the sun". Neither the international system of national
states nor the global economy of our own times is the same as the political
and economic landscape through which Italy's migrants traveled in the 1880s
or the 1920s. What has most changed in our world are, of course, the techno-
logies of transportation, communication and media, and thus the possibilities
for mobile people to remain connected to more than one place on earth. Even
theoretically, however, these technical changes can as easily facilitate the
expansion of nations and the reproduction of national consciousness as they
can the creation of transnational social networks or non-national forms of
diasporic consciousness. The question of whether new technologies will result
in the waxing or waning of nations and national states through de-territoriali-
zation and the rise of diasporic "stateless" power cannot be resolved through
theoretical work. We will know the answers to our questions about the pre-
sent only when time has elapsed and when diasporas and transnationalism
have – or have not – emerged as alternatives to or underwriters of national
consciousness.

Notes

1   Andreas Wimmer, Nina Glick Schiller, "Methodological Nationalism and Beyond: Nati-
    on State Formation, Migration and the Social Sciences", *Global Networks. A Journal of
    Transnational Affairs* 2/4 (2002), 301–334.
2   The major publications of the project have been Donna Gabaccia, *Italy's Many Diasporas*,
    London 2000; Donna Gabaccia, Fraser Ottanelli (ed.), *Italian Workers of the World: Labor,
    Migration and the Making of Multi-Ethnic States,* Urbana 2001; Donna Gabaccia, Franca

Iacovetta (ed.), *Women, Gender and Transnational Life: Italian Workers of the World,* Toronto 2002.

3 For a fuller discussion and complete citations to this earlier literature, see Gabaccia, *Italy's Many Diasporass* (see note 2), 1–12, 192–196.

4 Dino Cinel, *From Italy to San Francisco,* Stanford 1982; Donna Gabaccia, *From Sicily to Elizabeth Street,* Albany 1984; Walter Kamphoefner, *Westfalians: From Germany to America,* Princeton 1987.

5 Nina Glick-Schiller, Linda Basch, Cristina Blanc-Szanton (ed.), *Towards a Transnational Perspective on Migration: Race, Class, Ethnicity, and Nationalism Reconsidered,* New York 1992.

6 Nina Glick-Schiller, Georges Fouron, *Georges Woke up Laughing: Long-Distance Nationalism and the Search for Home,* Durham 2001.

7 I do not have space to discuss sociologists' critique of the early anthropological work on transnationalism. Although they will want to read these works critically, too, readers can usefully consult Alejandro Portes, Luis E. Guarnizo, Patricia Landolt, "The Study of Transnationalism: Pitfalls and Promise of an Emergent Research Field", *Ethnic and Racial Studies* 22/2 (1999), 217–237; Roger Waldinger, David Fitzgerald, "Transnationalism in Question", *American Journal of Sociology* 109/5 (2004), 1177–1195.

8 Arjun Appadurai, *Modernity at Large: Cultural Dimensions of Globalization,* Minneapolis 1996; Saskia Sassen, *Losing Control? Sovereignty in an Age of Globalization,* New York 1996.

9 Linda Basch, Nina Glick Schiller, Cristina Szanton Blanc, *Nations Unbound: Transnational Projects, Postcolonial Predicaments and Deterritorialized Nation-States,* Amsterdam 1994.

10 The published results were Gabaccia, *Italy's Many Diasporas* (see note 2) and Donna Gabaccia, Fraser Ottanelli, "Diaspora or International Proletariat? Italian Labor Migration and the Making of Multi-ethnic States, 1815–1939", *Diaspora* 6/1 (1997), 61–84.

11 Steven Vertovec, *The Hindu Diaspora: Comparative Patterns,* London 2000, 141.

12 Robin Cohen, *Global Diasporas: An Introduction,* Seattle 1997.

13 Ibid., 186.

14 Verne Dusenbery, "A Sikh Diaspora? Contested Identities and Constructed Realities" in Peter van der Veer (ed.), *Nation and Migration: the Politics of Space in the South Asian Diaspora,* Philadelphia 1995, 18.

15 Khalid Koser (ed.), *New African Diasporas,* London 2003, 1.

ZUSAMMENFASSUNG

MIT DER SPRACHE JONGLIEREN: «ITALIENER ÜBERALL», DIASPORA ODER TRANSNATIONALISMUS?

Begrifflichkeiten wie «Transnationalismus» und «Diaspora» haben innerhalb der Migrationsforschung den Fokus weg von einem «methodologischen Nationalismus» hin zu Migration als einem räumlichen, aber auch grenzüberschreitenden Phänomen geführt. Während aber die theoretischen Auseinandersetzungen der meisten SozialwissenschaftlerInnen mit diesen Phänomenen um die Konzepte von Ort und Raum kreisen, sieht die Autorin die Funktion von HistorikerInnen gerade darin, die «Temporalität» als ein weiteres wichtiges ■ 63

Element migratorischer Bewegungen in die Forschung mit einzubeziehen. Basierend auf ihrer Erfahrung als Mitinitiantin des länderübergreifenden, interdisziplinär durchgeführten Projektes zur weltweiten italienischen Migration zwischen 1800 und 1970 («Italians Everywhere») zeigt die Autorin auf, wie sich daraus ein kritische Auseinandersetzung mit den Begriffen «Transnationalismus» und «Diaspora» entwickelt hat. Entgegen gängigen Forschungsergebnissen der Transnationalismus- und Diasporaforschung kommt die Autorin zum Schluss, dass gewisse Annahmen hinterfragt werden müssen: etwa die von der abnehmenden Wichtigkeit des Nationalstaates im Zuge der globalen Migrationsbewegungen oder auch die Frage nach der «Dauerhaftigkeit» von transnationalen Praktiken.

(Übersetzung: Barbara Lüthi)