

# **Methodological nationalism and beyond: nation-state building, migration and the social sciences**

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*Abstract* Methodological nationalism is understood as the assumption that the nation/state/society is the natural social and political form of the modern world. We distinguish three modes of methodological nationalism that have characterized mainstream social science, and then show how these have influenced research on migration. We discover parallels between nationalist thinking and the conceptualization of migration in postwar social sciences. In a historical tour d'horizon, we show that this mainstream concept has developed in close interaction with nation-state building processes in the West and the role that immigration and integration policies have played within them. The shift towards a study of 'transnational communities' – the last phase in this process – was more a consequence of an epistemic move away from methodological nationalism than of the appearance of new objects of observation. The article concludes by recommending new concepts for analysis that, on the one hand, are not coloured by methodological nationalism and, on the other hand, go beyond the fluidism of much contemporary social theory.

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After the first flurry of confusion about the nature and extent of contemporary processes of globalization, social scientists moved beyond rhetorical generalities about the decline of the nation-state and began to examine the ways in which nation-states are currently being reconfigured rather than demolished. That nation-states and nationalism are compatible with globalization was made all too obvious. We witnessed the flourishing of nationalism and the restructuring of a whole range of new states in Eastern Europe along national lines in the midst of growing global interconnections. The concomitance of these processes provides us with an intellectual opening to think about the limitations of our conceptual apparatus. It has become easier to understand that it is because we have come to take for granted a world divided into discrete and autonomous nation-states that we see nation-state building and global interconnections as contradictory. The next step is to analyse how the concept of the nation-state has and still does influence past and current thinking in the social sciences, including our thinking about transnational migration.

It is our aim in this article to move in this direction by exploring the intellectual potential of two hypotheses. We demonstrate that nation-state building processes have fundamentally shaped the ways immigration has been perceived and received. These perceptions have in turn influenced, though not completely determined, social science

theory and methodology and, more specifically, its discourse on immigration and integration. We are designating as *methodological nationalism* the assumption that the nation/state/society is the natural social and political form of the modern world.<sup>1</sup>

The article is organized into four sections. The first discusses four modes of methodological nationalism and shows their importance in social science thinking. We then demonstrate how the study of transnational migration was influenced and limited by the constraints of methodological nationalism. Third, we sketch out a historical perspective that allows us to see how nation building, the control and restriction of immigration and the rise of a social science preoccupation with migration are interlinked processes developing in a transnational field of social forces. The fourth section focuses on the last phase in this process and describes the recent waves of research on globalization and transnational migration.

Only now that nation-states have lost some of their power to transnational corporations and supranational organizations can we see, looking backward, what shape modernity has taken during the last 200 years. It was cast in the iron cage of nationalized states that confined and limited our own analytical capacities. Reflecting the current conceptual liberation, the influence of methodological nationalism has begun to be examined in history (Bender 2001; Rodgers 1998), geography (Taylor 1996), sociology (Beck 2000) and anthropology (Glick Schiller 2000; Glick Schiller et al. 1992, 1995; Wimmer 1996a). Perhaps it was more difficult to see the world in three dimensions when the sun stood at its zenith. In the evening, shadows grow and allow us to perceive the environment in clearer contours.

What we discover in this twilight is how transnational the modern world has always been, even in the high days when the nation-state bounded and bundled most social processes. Rather than a recent offspring of globalization, transnationalism appears as a constant of modern life, hidden from a view that was captured by methodological nationalism. Thus, the value of studying transnational communities and migration is not to discover ‘something new’ – though this represents a highly rewarding strategy of research in our contemporary intellectual environment – but to have contributed to this shift of perspective away from methodological nationalism. A thorough reflection on the history of transnational social relations and their recent ‘discovery’ may thus be an appropriate starting point for rethinking the history of the social sciences in general. It may help us develop the perspective of an ‘observer of second order’, as Niklas Luhmann once said, from which we can observe both the social scientists observing the social world as well as the effects that this has on this world and how, at the same time, the forces of the social world shape the outlook of the social scientists.

### **Three modes of methodological nationalism**

Our argument focuses on what we perceive as the major, dominant trends in social science thinking of the past century. We do not discuss coterminous currents that contradicted the hegemonic discourse. Especially in times of intensified global interconnections, theories reflecting these developments appeared and provided tools for analysis not coloured by methodological nationalism. The most obvious of these currents was political economy in the Marxian tradition, always devoting attention to capitalism as a global system rather than to its specific national manifestations, and

especially the studies of imperialism by Rosa Luxemburg and others before the First World War, when transnational movements of commodities, capital and labour reached a first peak. Wallerstein's world system theory belongs to a second wave of theorizing developing in the 1970s, when transnational connections were again intensifying and multiplying. A second and equally important line of development not included in our discussion is methodological individualism in its various forms where the analysis does not rely on explicit reference to larger social entities (such as the school of marginal utility and rational choice in economics and political science or interactionism in sociology).

These views remained heterodox, however, and did not shape the social science programme in the same way as the currents discussed in this article did. The epistemic structures and programmes of mainstream social sciences have been closely attached to, and shaped by, the experience of modern nation-state formation. The global forces of transnational capitalism and imperialism, that reached their apogee precisely in the period when social sciences formed as independent disciplines, left only few traces in the basic paradigmatic assumptions of these disciplines and were scarcely reflected upon systematically.

Our starting point is the classical social theory that has marked the sociological tradition especially. As a host of scholars have repeatedly argued, the classic theory of modernity has a blind spot when it comes to understanding the rise of nation-states as well as of nationalism and ethnicity (Esser 1988; Guiberneau 1997; Imhof 1997; A. D. Smith 1983; Thompson and Fevre 2001). In the eyes of Marx, Durkheim, Weber and Parsons, the growing differentiation, rationalization and modernization of society gradually reduced the importance of ethnic and national sentiments. Most classic grand theory was constructed as a series of socio-structural types (from feudalism through capitalism to communism, from *Gemeinschaft* to *Gesellschaft*, organic to mechanic solidarity, traditional to modern society, and so forth). Nationalism was attributed to earlier stages in the continuum of social evolution. As a traditional, communitarian, ascriptive, bourgeois or pre-rational phenomenon, nationalism was thought to be a transitory stage on the way to the modern, rationalized and individualized class society based on achievement. Nationalism and patriotism were soon to be wiped out by proletarian internationalism (Marx and Engels) or by a post-patriotic '*idéal humaine*' (Durkheim) (see A. D. Smith 1983; Guiberneau 1997; on Max Weber's rather more differentiated later view A. D. Smith 1983: 31–3).

These schemes were shielded from the overwhelming and obvious fact that nationalist politics and conflicts have shaped the history of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Grand theory was immunized thanks to a hierarchical division of labour between academic disciplines. The study of the rise of nationalism and the nation-state, of ethno-national wars of nineteenth- and early twentieth-century Europe was delegated to history – with few exceptions such as a short essay Durkheim wrote immediately after the First World War. Communal identities and nation-building processes outside Europe and the United States were made the domains of anthropology and later of political science. The much-deplored failure of social theory until the 1980s to address the significance and sources of nationalism in the modern world can in part be attributed to this disciplinary division of labour that was established at the beginning of twentieth century (Wimmer 1999).

It is particularly marked in the social sciences of France (Taguieff 1991: 46) and Germany, where the sociologist Otto Hondrich (1992) felt moved to deliver a public *nostra culpa* for having neglected nationalism as an object of social theory (see Radtke 1996). In the Anglo-Saxon world, the early works on nationalism by Deutsch, Kedouri, Gellner and Smith and others developed, from the 1980s onwards, into a well-established research tradition, especially in the field of historical sociology (cf. Thompson and Fevre 2001), without, however, having much influence on mainstream social theory.

More fundamentally, however, this silence about the continuing importance of national principles stemmed from a methodological problem, as Anthony Smith suggested two decades ago (A. D. Smith 1983: 26). That nationalist forms of inclusion and exclusion bind our societies together served as an invisible background even to the most sophisticated theorizing about the modern condition. The social sciences were captured by the apparent naturalness and givenness of a world divided into societies along the lines of nation-states (Berlin 1998). What Billig (1995) has shown for everyday discourse and practice holds true for grand theory's encounters with the social world as well: because they were structured according to nation-state principles, these became so routinely assumed and 'banal', that they vanished from sight altogether.

Methodological nationalism has thus inhibited a true understanding of the nature and limits of the modern project. It has produced a systematic blindness towards the paradox that modernization has led to the creation of national communities amidst a modern society supposedly dominated by the principles of achievement. Whether Parsons and Merton or Bourdieu, Habermas and Luhmann, none of these authors discusses in any systematic fashion the national framing of states and societies in the modern age. Interestingly enough, such nation-blind theories of modernity were formulated in an environment of rapidly nationalizing societies and states, sometimes, as was the case with Max Weber and Emile Durkheim, on the eve or in the aftermath of nationalist wars.

Ignoring the national framing of modernity, however, is just one form of methodological nationalism. A second variant, typical of more empirically oriented social science practices, is taking national discourses, agendas, loyalties and histories for granted, without problematizing them or making them an object of an analysis in its own right. Instead, nationally bounded societies are taken to be the naturally given entities to study. Here are some illustrative examples of the naturalization of the nation-state from different disciplinary traditions.

International relations assume that nation-states are the adequate entities for studying the *international* world. While the anarchical nature of this interstate system and the changing dynamics of hegemony and polycentrism have been discussed at length, almost no research was done on why this international system has become an *international* one (one exception is Mayall 1990). Similarly, scholarship after the Second World War on the newly independent states thought of nation building as a necessary, although somewhat messy, aspect of the decolonization process (see for example Wallerstein 1961). The task of building a viable national culture was seen as an evident corollary to the other tasks of modernization, projecting as a model a vision of Western nation-state building. Nation building and state formation made natural bedfellows in the works of modernization theorists such as Lerner or Rostow,

since the nation-state model represented the only thinkable way of organizing politics.

Economics studied the economy of nationally bounded entities or their relations to each other through trade, capital flows and the like. Since the publication of Adam Smith's *An inquiry into the nature and causes of the wealth of nations* (A. Smith 1983/1789) and, on the continent, of Friedrich List's masterpiece, *Das nationale System der politischen Ökonomie* (List 1974/1856), the distinction between internal economy and external relations has become a guiding principle for the evolution of the discipline. It is significant that List called the economic processes bounded by a national state a *Volkswirtschaft*, literally the economy of the people. Smith made clear in the introduction to his three-volume *magnum opus*, that he was about to explain the employment of labour and capital in different, more or less civilized nations. John Maynard Keynes and other major political economists of the twentieth century remained faithful to this perspective and took the distinction between national domestic economy and international external economy for granted.

Methodological nationalism even characterized later attempts at overcoming these limitations of perspective and to describe larger, cross-national economic systems. While dependency theory was supposed to overcome the one-nation focus of American modernization theory, it replaced it with a model of exploitation and dominance between nation-states, thus implicitly reproducing the national state as a basic unit of analysis (cf. Luton 1976).

Modern history was largely written, up to the 1990s and, with notable exceptions such as Immanuel Wallerstein's (1974) or Eric Wolf's (1982) work, as a history of particular nation-states or of their relations to each other – often no longer with the obviously nationalist aim of legitimizing a particular nation-building project, as had been the case up to the Second World War, but still deeply influenced by the methodological assumption that a particular nation would provide the constant unit of observation through all historical transformations, the 'thing' whose change history was supposed to describe. This continues to be the dominant perspective in the newly revived historiography, art history and archaeology of many Eastern European academics, including those of Greece (Karakasidou 1994; Niculescu forthcoming).

In anthropology, methodological nationalism had various and insidious effects, especially once the discipline abandoned diffusionism and turned towards functionalism as its leading paradigm. Anthropologists often assumed that the cultures to be studied were unitary and organically related to, and fixed within, territories, thus reproducing the image of the social world divided into bounded, culturally specific units typical of nationalist thinking (Basch et al. 1994; Wimmer 1996a). Moreover, early anthropologists defined their field of enquiry by negatively extrapolating from the nation-state building experiences of the West: tribes without modern states and ethnic groups before nations became their privileged objects, systematically 'overlooking' the influence of the colonial regime or of nation-building agendas on the subject peoples they studied.

When anthropologists worked in complex societies, including industrialized Western countries, methodological nationalism again shaped what they saw. The anthropology of ethnic groups within modernizing or industrial nation-states tended to describe them as culturally different from the 'majority' population because of their different historical origin, including their history of migration, rather than see these

differences as a consequence of the politicization of ethnicity in the context of nation-state building itself. Yet it was a central part of the nation-state project to define all those populations not thought to represent the 'national culture' as racially and culturally different, producing an alterity that contributed to efforts to build unity and identity (Glick Schiller 1999a, 1999b, 1999c; Williams 1989; Wimmer 2002). Anthropology thus reproduced and naturalized the view from the centre of the emerging national state.

Thus, we can find naturalization of the nation-state in different disciplines and many intellectual variations. Naturalization owes its force to the compartmentalization of the social science project into different 'national' academic fields, a process strongly influenced not only by nationalist thinking itself, but also by the institutions of the nation-state organizing and channelling social science thinking in universities, research institutions and government think-tanks. It is telling that funding for cross-country comparative research is extremely difficult to mobilize even nowadays, as a recent report has shown for the field of migration studies (Henke 2001). The major research programmes of funding bodies are directed to contribute towards the solution of national problems in economy, politics and the social services. In most states, universities are linked to national ministries of education that favour research and teaching on issues of 'national relevance'. Academies are – with exceptions such as in Germany – usually 'national ones' and sometimes play important roles, most prominently in France, in maintaining the cultural treasures of the nation. Add to this the fact that almost all statistics and other systematic information are produced by government departments of nation-states and thus take the national population, economy, polity as their given entity of observation (Favell forthcoming), and we can understand why naturalizing the nation-state has become the most prominent form of methodological nationalism in the postwar social sciences.

Another variant of naturalizing the nation-state consists in downplaying nationalism's role in modern state building by analytically separating the rise of nationalism from that of the modern state and of democracy. In this way, the national framing of the modern state building experience and of democratization become almost invisible. State and nation become two separate objects of enquiry. Most scholars of nationalism discussed the nation as a domain of identity. The nation is understood to be a people who share common origins and history as indicated by their shared culture, language and identity (Calhoun 1997; McCrone 1998; A. D. Smith 1998). In contrast, the 'state' is generally understood to be a sovereign system of government within a particular territory. In political science, this has seen the emergence of a mainstream theory that sees the state as a neutral playing ground for different interest groups – thus excluding from the picture the fact that the modern state itself has entered into a symbiotic relationship with the nationalist political project. This even holds true for sophisticated accounts of state modernization such as Giddens's (1995) *Nation-state and violence*.

Where this segregation was overcome and the relations between nation building and modernizing states were systematically examined, many authors fell into other modes of naturalizing the nation-state. Thus, for Ernest Gellner, the rise of the national state is a necessary corollary to the industrialization of society, providing for the culturally homogenous and communicatively integrated space that a dynamized economy 'needs' (Gellner 1983). For Anthony Smith (1995) only nations and national

states are apt to provide the feelings of security, identity and cultural comfort that we need in a rapidly changing and globalizing world. It is only during the last decade that these blinkers of methodological nationalism have been overcome by going beyond the dichotomy between state and nation without falling into the trap of naturalizing the nation-state (Breuilly 1993; Mann 1993; Wimmer 1996b and 2002).

Methodological nationalism also segregates democracy from nationalism. The historic and systematic logic tying both together has become eradicated from our historical memories. Most current theories and histories of democracy, especially the treatises of political philosophers, neglect this link. They look at the inner dynamics of the evolving democratic polities and lose sight of the nationalist principles that historically defined its boundaries – with few exceptions such as Snyder's (2000) recent *From voting to violence* or an essay by the Georgian philosopher Ghia Nodia (1992).

As an effect of this double segregation, nationalism appears as a force foreign to the history of Western state building. Instead, it is projected to others, to bloodthirsty Balkan leaders or African tribesmen turned nationalists. Western state building was reimagined as a non-national, civil, republican and liberal experience, especially in the writings of political philosophers such as Rawls (Sen 1999). Segregation and dislocation are thus closely related. The ethno-nationalist wars and violence suppressed from the history of one's own state reappear in the contemporary scenery of far-away places. However, what we nowadays call ethnic cleansing or ethnocide, and observe with disgust in the 'ever troublesome Balkans' or in 'tribalistic Africa', have been constants of the European history of nation building and state formation, from the expulsion of gypsies under Henry VIII or of Muslims and Jews under Ferdinand and Isabella to Ptolemy's night in France or the 'people's exchange' (as it was called euphemistically) after the Treaty of Lausanne between Turkey and Greece. Many of these histories have disappeared from popular consciousness – and maybe have to be forgotten, if nation building is to be successful, as Ernest Renan (1947/1882) suggested over a hundred years ago.

Let us now address a third and last variant of methodological nationalism: the territorialization of social science imaginary and the reduction of the analytical focus to the boundaries of the nation-state. The social sciences have become obsessed with describing processes within nation-state boundaries as contrasted with those outside, and have correspondingly lost sight of the connections between such nationally defined territories. To cast this in an image borrowed from Giddens (1995), the web of social life was spun within the container of the national society, and everything extending over its borders was cut off analytically – similar to the way a pancake takes on a discrete shape, separated from the batter, once it is laid on a hot griddle, to switch to a kitchen metaphor. The container society encompasses a culture, a polity, an economy and a bounded social group (Taylor 1996). Major theoretical debates evolved around the relative weight of each of these dimensions in structuring the entire social fabric – Parsonians voting for culture while Marxists favouring economy – and whether society determined individual actions or the other way round, with social structures emerging from individual agency. Almost no thought was given to why the boundaries of the container society are drawn as they are and what consequences flow from this methodological limitation of the analytical horizon – thus removing trans-border connections and processes from the picture.

It is interesting that this also holds true for social scientific analysis of the nation-state building process itself. The concepts of the modern state and of a national population have historically developed within trans-border rather than territorially limited national spaces (Glick Schiller and Fouron 2001a). In many cases, these trans-border spaces were delimited by the practice and ideology of colonial and imperial domination and ideas of popular sovereignty and republican independence were formed within trans-border networks of literate circles. We have to think outside the box of dominant national discourses to see such trans-border foundations of particular nation-state building projects, to see the dynamics between English domination of Ireland and English national identity or the linkage between French ideas about citizenship and concepts of civilization and the French colonial project (Lebovics 1992). Accepting the prevailing paradigm that divides a state's affairs into internal national matters and international affairs that have to do with state-to-state relations, the history of such trans-border and transnational nation-state building becomes invisible. The writing of national histories compounds this invisibility by confining the narrative within state borders.

The three variants of methodological nationalism that we have discerned in our *tour d'horizon* across disciplines and times are thus ignorance, naturalization and territorial limitation. The three modes intersect and mutually reinforce each other, forming a coherent epistemic structure, a self-reinforcing way of looking at and describing the social world. The three variants are more or less prominent in different fields of enquiry. Ignorance is the dominant modus of methodological nationalism in grand theory; naturalization of 'normal' empirical science; territorial limitation of the study of nationalism and state building.

What does all this have to do with migration studies and the growth of studies of transnational migration? The next section shows how methodological nationalism influenced the postwar definition of international migration and immigrant integration. In section three we will set this static picture in motion and see how scholarship after the Second World War actually developed and how it related to the process of nation-state building.

### **Defining the object of migration studies**

In order to understand how methodological nationalism has influenced the study of migration, we will first describe in more detail the relation between nationalist thinking and the container model of society that came to dominate postwar social sciences. From this, it will be easy to see why migration has become an important object of enquiry for the social sciences.

Modern nationalism fuses four different notions of peoplehood that had developed separately in early modern Europe. These are: the people as a sovereign entity, which exercises political power by means of some sort of democratic procedure; the people as citizens of a state holding equal rights before the law; the people as a group of obligatory solidarity, an extended family knit together by obligations of mutual support; and the people as an ethnic community undifferentiated by distinctions of honour and prestige, but united through common destiny and shared culture. These four notions of peoplehood are fused into one single people writ large. Democracy, citizenship, social security and national self-determination are the



vertexes of the world order of nation-states as it matured after the Second World War.

Once this order is established, the nationalist imaginary can be projected on the surface of the earth and become territorially inscribed. For the isomorphisms between citizenry, sovereign, solidarity group and nation entail that all corresponding territorial borders become coincident. This border congruence implies a much stricter definition of what pertains to the realm, and what falls outside it. The shift to territorially fixed boundaries, to be sure, concurs with the establishment of centralized kingdoms, thus preceding the nationalization of modern states (Guernée 1986). However, the establishment of frontier posts, the physical demarcation of frontiers and the sacralization of the national territory are all linked to the emergence of nation-states (Nordman 1997) because the national territory at the same time traces the frontiers of the sovereign population, delineates the homeland of the citizenry, defines the borderline between social order and disorder and distinguishes between the national home and the wilderness of the foreign. Nationalists thus make a fetish of national territory, a sanctuary that deserves to be defended with the blood of the people.

It is easy to see the parallels with the container model of society that had developed in the social sciences and became dominant after the Second World War. The translation is almost one to one: the citizenry is mirrored in the concept of a national legal system, the sovereign in the political system, the nation in the cultural system and the solidary group in the social system, all boundaries being congruent and together defining the skin holding together the body of society. Borrowing from the image of the stability of the body, the idea of functional integration, so prominent in standard social science thinking up to the 1980s, paralleled the nationalist fusion of the four notions of peoplehood into one national corpus. What the People is for the nationalist is what the Society is for postwar social scientists. Both share a set of basic assumptions about how the social world is constituted.

It should by now become clear why, for both nation-builders as for postwar social scientists, migrants constitute an object of special attention and for enquiry. In nationalist doctrine as well according to the container model of society, immigrants must appear as antinomies to an orderly working of state and society, even in societies where past immigration constitutes the foundation myth of the nation. We see four reasons why migrants become a special object of policy-making as well as of a specializing body of research. First, they destroy the isomorphism between people, sovereign and citizenry. Immigrants are perceived as foreigners to the community of shared loyalty towards the state and shared rights guaranteed by that state. Transnational migrants presumably remain loyal to another state whose citizens they are and to whose sovereign they belong, as long as they are not absorbed into the national body through assimilation and naturalization. In recent years, and with a renewed intensity that is likely to increase after 11 September 2001 social science research has been interested in the political activity and loyalty of immigrants, a theme that parallels the nation-state's interest in the supervision, limitation and control of the immigrant population.

Second, immigrants destroy the isomorphism between people and nation. They appear as spots on the pure colours of the national fabric, reminding nationalist state builders and social scientists alike of the ethnic minorities that have been 'absorbed' into the national body through a politics of forced assimilation and benevolent

integration. Immigrants thus represented a renewed challenge to the nation-building project and point to the fragility of its achievements – especially in places where the nation had never been imagined as plural and itself consisted of former immigrants.

Even in immigrant societies, the major preoccupation of postwar migration studies was to measure and scrutinize the cultural differences between immigrants and nationals and to describe pathways of assimilation into the national group, in short, to deliver a description of the mechanics of a successful nation making process (Favell forthcoming). The taken-for-granted assumptions of methodological nationalism preclude problematizing or researching whether immigrants *de facto* reduce rather than increase cultural heterogeneity because the reference group of the national community may be heterogeneous in class and culture and thus contain greater diversity compared with a migrant population (Waldinger 2000).

The different postwar theories of immigrant integration – from the Chicago School's assimilationism to multiculturalism to racialization and ethnicization theory to neo-assimilationism – all presuppose that the relevant entities to be related are a nation/state/society (not necessarily a homogenous one) on the one hand, and immigrants coming from outside this nation/state/society on the other. This conception of the basic problem owes its strength not only to functionalist tradition – defining integration as a major problem to be researched – but also to methodological nationalism: integration is always thought of as being established, less problematical, and less fragile among those belonging to the national people.

Third, immigrants destroy the isomorphism between people and solidarity group. They are not meant to be part of the system of social security that the national community developed in New Deals and Beveridge Plans, because they come 'from outside' into the national space of solidarity. But they cannot be completely excluded from the emerging welfare systems because these are historically and institutionally tied to the work process for which immigrants were recruited (Bommes and Halfmann 1994). Due to this tension, immigrants' integration into the welfare systems had a touch of illegitimacy and abuse. A whole branch of postwar immigration studies has, especially in Europe, studied the implications of immigration for national welfare systems, analysed immigrant unemployment, traced the dynamics of slum development and ghettoization, and tried to understand the culture of poverty in which immigrants were thought of being trapped. Not being a member of the national family, the immigrant was seen as prone to become a marginal man exposed to the risks of loneliness and starvation. In quantitative studies, following the logic of methodological nationalism, immigrants have usually been compared with 'national means' of income, with children per family, with percentages of unemployment and welfare dependence, taking for granted that this would be the adequate unit of comparison (see Vertovec's (1999) review of studies on 'social cohesion'). They are rarely compared with sectors of a national population that they resemble in terms of income or education. However, when such comparisons are made, immigrants often do better than the non-immigrant population (Rumbaut and Cornelius 1995 for the USA and Bolzman et al. 2000 for Switzerland).

Fourth, in the eyes of nation-state builders and social scientists alike, every move across national frontiers becomes an exception to the rule of sedentariness within the boundaries of the nation-state. The exceptionality of cross-border settlement is, evidently enough, linked to the territorialization of the nationalist imaginary and the

parallel emergence of the container model of society discussed above. A major branch of postwar migration studies and a whole series of specialized research institutes have developed analysing such cross-border movements, the push–pull mechanisms driving them, the networks of chain migration sustaining them, the role of social and cultural capital in limiting and directing them.

The focus of this body of literature is only on the migration of non-citizens, not the ‘return’ migration of co-nationals such as the *Aussiedler* (usually translated as ethnic Germans) in Germany. Until 1989, the *Aussiedler* were studied by folklorists and historians – not by migration specialists who focused exclusively on the immigration of *Ausländer* (foreigners). And only cross-national migration is the object of migration studies. ‘Internal’ migration of citizens from one city to another, from deindustrializing areas to a booming metropolis, is not considered a problem deserving special attention and either goes completely unnoticed or is seen as a part of the study of urbanization and thus dealt with in academic fields separated from migration studies. Cross-border migration, by contrast, appears as an anomaly, a problematic exception to the rule of people staying where they ‘belong’, that is, to ‘their’ nation-state. Postwar migration studies thus naturalized this belonging, moving it into the background of social science reasoning and transforming it into one of its incontestable axioms.

These four points make it clear how much migration studies are a child of the postwar era, when nation-states had reached their zenith of power to direct, limit and influence both migratory movements and social science thinking about these movements. Describing immigrants as potential security risks, as culturally others, as socially marginal and as an exception to the rule of territorial confinement, postwar social sciences mirrored and, as we will see in the next section, at the same time legitimized the project of nation-state building aimed at establishing a sovereign citizenry, a homogenous nation, a community of solidarity and a territorially-bounded state.

### **Phases of nation building and discourses on immigration**

So far our argument has largely been conceptual and abstract, proceeding through analogies between the ideologies of nation-state building and the conceptual schemes of the social sciences (the first section) and of postwar migration studies (the second section). In the following section, we should like to situate this relationship historically. We will sketch a broad picture of how different phases of nation-state formation have influenced both the state’s attitude towards migration and the way that these have been conceptualized by the social sciences. We will see that the postwar situation, with nationalist closure paralleling container reasoning in the social sciences, is by no means the only form that this relationship took.

The scenario for telling this story is a world expanding and contracting in phases of globalization and nationalization, but still remaining, as a perspective not limited by methodological nationalism allows us to see, an interconnected realm of cross-border relationships. It is hoped that our story contributes towards a new, integrated view on how nation-state building, migration and the social science project are related to one other.

*Phase I: The prewar era*

We identify four periods, painting the changes that are of interest in broad strokes so as to gain an overview of the landscape and using dates as only approximate markers of global historical transformations: 1870–1918, 1919–45, 1946–89, 1990–present, the last phase being discussed in a section of its own.

Our historical portrait begins in a period that stems from the 1870s to the First World War. The *belle époque* was a time of dramatic growth with high demands for labour, punctuated by economic crashes as well as important periods of stagnation and decline. These fluctuations marked the industrial development of both Europe and the United States, with ramifications and connections in Mexico, Brazil, Argentina, China, Japan, Russia and Turkey. It was in this period that industrial capitalists searching for higher rates and new sources of profits, turned to new forms of global financing and investment. Corporations emerged as important public actors with rights protected by the states in which they were based. They formed monopolies and cartels and launched what we now are able to recognize as an intensive period of globalization (Held et al. 1999; Mittleman 1996a, 1996b; Wimmer 2001a).

The period was marked by two trends that were related to each other in complex ways that are rarely explored. First of all, this was a time of intense nation-state building. Railroads helped develop national markets for agricultural and manufactured goods. National postal services contributed to the development of the national economy. Legal equality of citizens abolished the last corporate and feudal restrictions on economic activity. Public education and public health contributed to the public's embodied experiences of the nation-state as young people found themselves within the confines of classrooms that taught national rituals and members of the public found their private consumption and bodily habits topics of public education and discussion. In many states, voting rights were extended to this newly educated mass of adult males. In short, a citizenry, a sovereign and a nation were created, thus realizing to a large extent the nationalist dream outlined in the previous section.

While industries developed within the confines of these nationalizing states, protected by tariffs from competing capitalist interests, commercial competition tied to concepts of national interest launched a new period of colonialism. This was the epoch in which European states 'scrambled' for Africa, as well as a time of heightened competition between European states and the United States for the control of raw materials produced in the Caribbean, Latin America and Asia. It was also a period in which, as part of this effort to monopolize sources of raw materials and obtain labour for their production, imperialism was practised and theorized.

The result of these various and interactive developments, in a period that was simultaneously one of nation-state building and intensive globalization, was widespread labour migration that spanned the globe with little or no restriction in most states. Free workers selling their labour power on a newly established world market for labour made up a section of this migration. Another section was composed of indentured labourers replacing slaves on the plantations or constructing railroads and other major infrastructure projects all around the world, especially in the colonies (Potts 1990). Poles and Italians migrated to northern France; Switzerland welcomed diverse populations; England saw influxes from the continent; and German industrial development fuelled migrations from the east and south. Brazil welcomed migrants

from Europe, the Middle East and Japan. Indian and Chinese labourers went to the Caribbean and southern and eastern Africa. Mexicans, Turks, Syrians and populations from southern and Eastern Europe migrated to the United States (Wyman 1993). The United States, currently portrayed as the land of immigrants unlike European states, was actually the first, and for a time the only, state to erect any significant barriers when it passed the Chinese exclusion act in 1882 for a ten-year period (it was renewed in 1892). For a certain period Germany, which contained within its borders land that had been part of an earlier Polish state, tightly controlled and supervised the movement of Polish speakers (but not of Italians and other immigrants), including those holding German passports. German officials doubted the loyalty of Polish speakers to the German national state and saw Polish nationalism as a major risk to the integrity of the newly unified German state.

In general, however, this was a period when not even passports and entry documents were required. Most European countries abolished the passport and visa system they had installed in the first half of the nineteenth century, after France took the lead in eliminating such barriers to the free movement of labour in 1861. By 1914 all such documents had been virtually eliminated in Europe (Torpey 2000). Fearing labour shortages, some states tried to keep workers from leaving, but these efforts were relatively ineffective. Workers migrated into regions in which there was industrial development and returned home or went elsewhere when times were bad. Switzerland, France, England, Germany, the United States, Brazil and Argentina built industrialized economies with the help of billions of labour migrants who worked in factories, fields, mills and mines.

The fact that migrants came and went, maintained their home ties, sent home money to buy land and supported home areas by remittances was understood as common practice. At the beginning of this period it was still easy for migrants to gain citizenship even in Germany, where many immigrant labourers acquired German citizenship (cf. on pre-1913 citizenship laws Borneman 1997: 98–102). This easy access to citizenship reflected the fact that ‘the people’ was still basically defined in terms of shared citizenship rights and democratic inclusion – the people as nation and as a group of mutual solidarity were important only in the subsequent period of nation-state building. Mirroring the lack of barriers to migration and the open citizenship regimes, E. G. Ravenstein (1889), in the first systematic analysis of migration, did not differentiate analytically between internal and international migration. Instead, Ravenstein treated all movements of people across the terrain as part of a single phenomenon, largely determined by the distribution of economic opportunities over physical space. He found that international migration followed the same ‘laws’ as internal migration. More precisely, he maintained that in all cases migration consisted of movements from country to town and from poorer to richer areas as the latter. The fact that in international migration migrants crossed a national boundary caused inconvenience for the researcher compiling statistics but did not produce different social dynamics.

Yet the nation-state building that emerged within this period of globalization eventually fostered conceptualizations of ‘the people’ that would dramatically affect migration and alter the way in which social scientists thought about migration. A concept of ‘ethnic’ and/or ‘racial’ peoplehood began to replace a ‘civic’ conception initially shaped by Enlightenment philosophers and concretized in the course of the

US, French and Haitian revolutions. The people now primarily meant a nation united through common ancestry and a shared homeland, no matter where its members might have wandered. This concept of the people gave each nation its own national character, its peculiar nature and homeland, and a claim to a place in the sun. This nationalized view of the people developed within a growing competition for political pre-eminence in Europe. It can be observed in all nation-building histories, despite the much-commented differences between France and Germany (Brubaker 1998; Silverman 1995). National chauvinisms and racisms legitimated both the colonial empire building of the period and the culmination of this competition in the First World War. It was in the context of this competition and of the salience of ideas about nation and race that nation-state builders, including elites, political leaders, state officials and intellectuals, initiated systematic efforts to erase, deny or homogenize the internal cultural and national diversity that existed within all the industrializing states of Europe and the Americas.

In this article we are particularly concerned with the role of the social sciences in this reconceptualization. The social sciences emerged as distinct intellectual enterprises during this period and were both shaped by and contributed to the transformation of concepts of nation and immigrant. In the transition from civic to national concepts of the people, folklore studies in Europe and anthropology in both Europe and the United States played a crucial role. Nations were increasingly seen as organic wholes, nourished by the pure lore, tradition or rural virtue of the peasant, yeoman or farmer not yet afflicted by cosmopolitan modernity. Ideas about nation as races based on blood were popularized globally, entering into the nation-state building projects and imperial ideologies used to legitimate colonial expansion (Dikötter 1997). Meanwhile, sociology developed those grand schemes of progress – from tradition to modernity, community to society – that made the national framing of this epochal transformation invisible. However, Durkheim and Weber, to mention just two of the intellectual giants of this period, took it as self-evident that it would be their own nationally framed society that would advance on this road to the future at the fastest speed and in competition with other candidates to the status of the most civilized nation.

Within this growth of scholarship coloured by different modes of methodological nationalism, there was no conceptual space to examine the way in which the forging of each nation-state was not confined to its territorial borders but took place in a complex dialectic between a state and its colonies or between the population within a national territory and its political exiles and transmigrants living abroad. Only recently has the scholarship of colonialism begun to illustrate how the nation-state building of such countries as France, England and even the United States (as it took on colonies and began to police the Caribbean) was shaped by distinctions drawn between colonizer and colonized or between immigrants and natives (Gilroy 1991; Glick Schiller 1999a, 1999b; Hall et al. 2000; Lebovics 1992; Rafael 1995; Stoler 1989). These distinctions served to homogenize and valorize the national culture of the colonizing country and popularize the notion that it was a unitary and bounded society, distinguishable from the subordinated peoples by a racial divide.

As nationalist concepts of people and society took hold, the conception of immigrants began to change. By the turn of the century, while the flow of migration generally remained unrestricted, migrants began to be conceptualized as continuing to

have memberships in their ancestral homelands. Many actors contributed to popularizing this idea and it was (in many ways) the obverse of the process of conceptualizing the world as divided up into peoples, each made up of a national citizenry and sovereign. The presence of non-national citizens thus becomes, as discussed in the previous section, a major risk for national sovereignty and security.

By contrast, and again conforming to the newly-nationalized notion of peoplehood, emigrant-sending states including Italy and the Austro-Hungarian ones started to see their emigrants as still members of their home countries and expected them to return (Cinel 1982; Harrington 1982; Wyman 1993). Remittances from abroad were understood to be a significant part of the economies of many regions. Emigrant-sending states established institutions to protect emigrants as well as police them. Political exiles dispersed from areas of Europe in which nationalist struggles percolated. They continued to wage their struggles transnationally. In exile these leaders saw the dispersed workers of their region as compatriots and sought to engender within them nationalist identities and emotions through meetings, newspapers, and religious and fraternal organizations. Emigrant workers who moved back and forth between home regions and countries of immigration both within Europe and across the Atlantic to the Americas began to become engaged in these nation-state building projects in their homeland. Both European and Asian immigrants began to believe that the degree of respect they would be accorded abroad would be increased if the power and prestige of their motherland increased and many became fervent nationalists (Cinel 1982; Kwong 1987).

All these transnational political activities and engagements seemed to justify the fears of nationalizing states that immigrants undermined the stability and territorial boundedness of the nation. By the end of this first period, immigrants had come to be seen as politically dangerous and in national or racial terms fundamentally different. Their presence was seen to endanger the isomorphism between citizenry, sovereign and state. In Europe meanwhile, political leaders who faced the political repercussions of intensive industrialization, the vast disparities between rich and poor exacerbated by processes of globalization, and internationalist revolutionary workers movements fanned the wave of distrust and hatred to non-nationals that exploded with the outbreak of the First World War.

### *Phase II: From the First World War to the cold war*

The First World War ended the period of the free movement of labour and other aspects of intensive globalization. The disruption of economies, first by war and then by the reconstitution of many regions into newly-independent states contributed to the continuing closure of borders instituted as part of the national defences of these newly-nationalizing states. At the same time, the warlike process of nation-state formation, with all its ethnic cleansings and the mass denaturalizations it entailed, was (and still is) the major force producing refugees (Sassen 1999; Zolberg 1983).

Mass slaughter in the name of national honour and independence had given the idea of a national community of destiny an unprecedented plausibility, making national affiliations a question of life and death not only in the trenches but in the larger society as well. Distinguishing between friend and foe on the basis of national background had become common-sense practice and ideology. The success of the

Russian Revolution fanned the surveillance of migrants as potential threats to national security and reinforced the differentiation between national and foreign ideas and ideologies. The political turbulence of the times, in which capitalist depression was countered by revolutionary politics with armed insurrection in Germany and the rise of republican Spain, contributed to the efforts by nationalist states to police borders and limit the movements of political and labour activists.

Previous efforts at developing a system of migration control were revised and developed into historically novel forms of border policing. It now became necessary for a person to have a permit to enter a country and reside there, creating both the differentiation between nationals – who did not need such permits – and foreigners, as well as between legal and illegal residents of states. The power to issue permits became concentrated in the central government. In the USA this power, initially contested by various states, strengthened the position of the federal government and its role in the delineation of the nation from its enemies. In Europe the new regime of visas began to link the right to reside in a country with a work permit, virtually defining a foreigner as a temporary worker. In short, an entire central state apparatus of overseeing, limiting and controlling immigration was institutionalized between the two world wars. Immigrants, by the logic of border control and rising security concerns, were now natural enemies of the nation.

Meanwhile, the devastation of the war in Europe had disrupted the transnational ties of family members abroad by impeding the sending of letters, money and packages. As refugees fled from war zones in Europe and borders changed, many transmigrants living in the United States lost track of their families, some permanently. The massive unemployment and poverty of the depression also made it difficult to send remittances. People thrown out of work in the Americas returned to the homes they had been building in their regions of origin. At the same time, limits on immigration in the United States effectively halted the back and forth travel that had been a mainstay of immigrant families, communities and transnational nation-state building before the war. Similar developments occurred for migrants within Europe.

Transnational politics and long distance nationalism, the ideology of belonging that extends homeland politics into transnational social fields, however, did continue during this period. The German, Italian and Japanese governments were among those active in monitoring their nationals abroad and nurturing their loyalties to their homeland (Cinel 1982; Harrington 1982; Lesser 1999).

The brief period between the First and Second World Wars was a turning point in the growth of methodological nationalism and it is in this period that our contemporary concept of immigration develops. The social sciences began to play an important role in this conceptualization. The Chicago School of Sociology linked to Robert Park, Louis Wirth, William I. Thomas and Florian Znaniecki, and St Clair Drake elaborated the first systematic approach to migration.

While they were convinced of the virtues of a value-free sociology, their models carried with them a series of national values and norms about how immigration was to be understood. They established a view of each territorially-based state as having its own, stable population, contrasting them to migrants who were portrayed as marginal men living in a liminal state, uprooted in one society and transplanted into another. They advocated assimilation, not by formulating plans for societal intervention but by proposing a 'race-relations cycle' in which the process of acculturation and assimilation



lation of immigrants occurred normally and naturally in the course of several generations (Park 1950). Their casual use of the word 'race' accepted the conflation of race and nation and placed together southern and Eastern European immigrants, Jewish immigrants and African-Americans as all racially different from mainstream America, although with different degrees of distance that would affect their rate of assimilation. The movement of immigrants was counter-posed to the immigrant-receiving state, whose society seemed fixed within a homogenous national culture. The placing of African-Americans alongside immigrants within the race-relations cycle portrayed them as outside the nation, although they had been part of the US population since the period of conquest. This discursive move marked the nation as white and normalized the colour line (Lieberson 1980; Williams 1989).

Immigrants were now seen not only as a security risk, but also as destroying the isomorphism between nation and people and thus a major challenge to the ongoing nation-building project, constantly forcing the machinery of assimilation to absorb new waves of cultural heterogeneity. The fact that nation-state building was an ongoing process and that the state contained within its borders significant differences between classes, cultures, genders, and regions became more difficult to perceive. National integration and cultural homogeneity of the national society were taken as givens.

While seemingly ahistorical, these concepts were very much a product of the retreat from globalization of the period after the First World War and the great depression of the 1930s. In fact, it seems to us that it was the reduced degree of global economic integration during this period that prompted and facilitated the qualitative leap in nation-state building and the emergence of the container model in the social sciences that the Chicago School helped to propagate. Social order contained within the nation-state became the taken-for-granted premise of the new social science as well as of migration studies. Even the fact that there had been a period of free labour migration within previous periods of globalization was soon forgotten. As the new image of migration as threatening social order became dominant, the social movements that had so readily crossed borders and fuelled political and intellectual life also faded first from view and then from memory, including the internationalism of labour, the first women's movement, pan-Africanism and various forms of long distance nationalism (Gabaccia 2000; Gilroy 1993; Lemelle and Kelley 1994; Rodgers 1998).

In point of fact the actual data produced by the Chicago School and those influenced by this school demonstrated ongoing and significant transnational familial, religious, economic and political ties of most migrant populations. Park specifically documented patterns of social control and gossip that extended transnationally from peasant villages to the streets of New York City, the role of the immigrant press in fuelling what we would today define as long distance nationalism within US immigrant populations and emigrant sending countries, and the patterns of regular return and the flow of remittances (Park 1974/1925; Schermerhorn 1949). However, because their vision was limited by the container model of society, all evidence of transnational connections were defined as transitory phenomena that would disappear in the wake of a natural process of assimilation.

### *Phase III: The cold war*

During the period after the Second World War known as the cold war the blind spot

became blindness, an almost complete erasure of the historical memories of transnational and global processes within which nation-states were formed and the role of migration within that formation. Modernization theory made it look as if Western Europe and the USA had developed national identities and modern states within their own territorial confines rather than in relationship to a global economy and flows of ideas. The growth of the United Nations and the granting of formal independence to most former colonies popularized a vision of the world as divided up into a host of nation-states of equal significance and sovereignty. The European postwar terrain of displaced persons and refugees was rapidly reordered by the insistence that everyone must belong somewhere. In the United States school children read morality tales about the 'man without a country' and sang patriotic songs. Throughout the world civic education had become equated with lessons in patriotism. People were envisioned as each having only one nation-state and to belong to the world people were thought to require a national identity. The social sciences neither investigated nor problematized this assumption but took it for granted in the conceptualizations we described at length in the preceding section.

By recalling just briefly the cold war context in which the social sciences grew to maturity, we can gain some additional insights into the way migration studies were shaped by this environment. In Europe, the competition with the Soviet Union spurred the development of social democratic ideologies and a form of social welfare capitalism. The people now comprised not only a nation, citizenry and a sovereign, but a group of solidarity as well. With the establishment of national welfare states, the nationalist project reached its culmination and fulfilment. Membership in this group of solidarity was a privilege, and state boundaries marked the limitation of access to these privileges (Wimmer 1998a).

In addition, cold war tensions and suspicions called for an ever tighter policing of borders and a careful investigation of the motives of all those seeking to cross national borders. Immigration became ever more problematic. To cross the iron curtain, one had to be a political refugee. In the West, only those who fled communism were allocated the right to move and resettle permanently. Otherwise, the consensus held that national borders should limit the flow of populations and serve as vessels within which national cultures were contained and cultivated. Yet, as industrial structures became reconstituted in the wake of war, and after depression and war had depopulated the old continent, new demands for labour arose in Western Europe and the USA.

In this conjuncture, England, France and the Netherlands turned to their own colonial populations, populations who had been educated to see the colonial power as the motherland, and shared language and a system of education with those motherlands. West Germany sought to restrict and control influxes of workers by the use of labour contracts that recruited guest workers. Face to face with the competition of a socialist East Germany, West German postwar leaders confronted with particular urgency the necessity of forging national consensus and labour peace on the basis of generous social welfare benefits to citizens. Guest workers were seen as an apt solution to the need for malleable labour for postwar reconstruction and industrial development, since they would contribute their labour and not disrupt either the cultural or economic pact that German leaders tried to forge with their citizenry. The USA used a bit of both strategies, utilizing its colonial Puerto Rican population and

developing the Bracero Program of Mexican contract labour. While seeming very different, both strategies provided for the needs of industry while minimizing the challenge to the concept if not the practice of national closure, naturalized and normalized by social science.

In the USA, despite massive efforts at assimilation, the previous waves of immigrants settled in urban areas maintained their national identities, even if their cultural practices were increasingly similar to their working-class neighbours (Gans 1982). These groups were designated 'nationalities' in popular parlance, reflecting ideologies about national belonging of the prewar period. There is some evidence that families and organizations within these nationality groups began to reconstitute transnational connections disrupted by two world wars. Politicians campaigning in immigrant neighbourhoods during this period recognized these connections, promising to develop or support American foreign policies to help the homelands of whatever nationality group they were addressing, Irish, Italian, Polish, Serbian, or Greek (Glick Schiller 1999a, 1999b; Redding 1958; Weed 1973). But due to the limitations that the container model of society imposed on the social sciences, much of this history has yet to be recovered. In the USA, until the Glazer and Moynihan's (1963) seminal statement to move 'beyond the melting pot', the social sciences ignored these persisting identities and the ways in which US urban political life was organized to give salience to competing ethnic groups, rather than respond to class-based discourse (cf. Steinberg 1989). Instead, immigrants were portrayed as uprooted from their homelands and much time and resources were invested in measuring rates and degrees of assimilation.

In the 1960s much of this rhetoric changed abruptly in the USA and the effects of these changes on the rhetoric of nation-state building and on social science resonated around the world, especially after the end of the cold war. The catalyst for the changes was the US civil rights movement that exposed the unstated but institutionalized equation of American identity with whiteness. As black activists strove to develop for themselves a differentiated and contestational political identity, they reached back to the prewar pan-African movement and rekindled an African-American cultural politics (Ture and Hamilton 1992/1967). In the wake of the Black Power movement, other populations, which had been excluded from the US racialized nation-building project with its normative whiteness, began to elaborate ideologies of cultural pluralism (Glazer and Moynihan 1963; Glick Schiller 1975, 1977; Steinberg 1989). In this context, which included the cold war implications of the exposure of US racism, the racially construed national quotas embedded in US immigration law were finally eliminated in 1965.

Let us now turn to Europe. In West Germany, the postwar project of reconstructing a nation-state sought to renew a national culture while repudiating Nazi ideologies. The people continued to be defined primarily as a nation of shared culture and history, now including the horrors of the Nazi period and the historic responsibility flowing from these, which became a major element of collective consciousness of the educated elites. The social scientists of the time did not challenge this concept of the German people as constituted by shared historical destiny and culture, accepting the view that outsiders could become German only with great difficulty, even though data on the history of Germany clearly demonstrate the widespread absorption of immigrants before the First World War.

Since immigrant workers, according to this conceptual divide between autochthons and aliens, were supposed to return home, they were not initially a topic of social science research or theory. However, when it became clear that many had settled and become incorporated in Germany, German researchers began to track their numbers and impact. Their main concern was the consequence for the national class system, more specifically, how elements of a caste-like stratification were introduced setting apart immigrant-aliens from the national population (see the pioneering work by Castles and Kosack 1974, or, from a functionalist point of view, Hoffmann-Nowotny 1973). Migrant distinctiveness and home ties were taken for granted. The contrast with the USA is impressive and confirms our hypotheses about the shaping of scholarship by the specific experience of nation-state formation: German scholars produced neither models nor measures of inevitable assimilation and political incorporation comparable to American sociology, which in the postwar years first produced increasingly refined measures and scales of assimilation and then models of cultural pluralism.

British social scientists, in the midst of incorporating newcomers who were defined as black but British, turned to theories of race relations to describe and problematize migrants – echoing the importance of racial categories in the nation-building experience of Britain in the context of its imperial expansion. Here as elsewhere, the bounded view of the nation and the ideology of territories containing distinct national cultures precluded a study of the continuing home ties of the ex-colonials. At the very same time, the transnational populations from India, Pakistan, the Caribbean and Africa helped to maintain British influence in its former colonies at a time when competition for political hegemony and access to raw materials developed both with the Soviet Union and the United States. But methodological nationalism precluded a post-colonial scholarship that would examine the continuities of empire during the era of formal sovereignty.

French scholars resembled their colleagues of other states in accepting their own state's view of the link between nation, citizenry and sovereign (Silverman 1995). The French people were primarily seen as a political community held together by the democratic process, by an act of auto-constitution that transforms citizens into members of a nation, to echo Renan's famous formula. Consequently, immigrants are politically incorporated through naturalization, which implies and presupposes cultural assimilation, becoming a member of the French nation. Political incorporation and cultural assimilation guarantee that the spots of foreignness are coloured as fast as possible in tricolour.

Following this philosophy of integration, anthropologists refused to form a branch studying immigration because they did not want to build up cultural barriers between new and old citizens of the Grand Nation (Meillassoux 1980). It was sociologists who provided a reflection and at the same time a justification for integration *à la française*, describing how naturalization and political incorporation would create, through identification and social mixing, a new group of true Frenchmen (this is the canonical position of Schnapper 1991). Even if they had wanted to, social scientists would face enormous difficulties in describing and underlining differences between new and old Frenchmen. The national census systems do not distinguish between newly made citizens and the *français de souche*. Michèle Tribalat's (1995) study on the assimilation of immigrants, based on data that contained these distinctions, produced a

scandal, although her results reported, to the great relief of policy makers and academics alike, that French assimilationism worked and effectively turned immigrants into Frenchmen.

In short, at the height of the cold war and of the power of nationalized states, the specific style of nation building also led – through the mirror effects of methodological nationalism – to different modes of social science reasoning about immigration. Everybody who witnessed the difficulties of cross-national communication during conferences, yet alone of collaboration in joint research projects, experienced this mutual estrangement and sometimes even bewilderment (on the relation between styles of nation building and philosophies of immigrant integration see also Brubaker 1992; Castles 1995; Favell 1998).

### **Beyond methodological nationalism?**

The current period of globalization has transformed migration studies with the emergence of a transnational paradigm. The economic restructuring of current globalization dates back to the 1970s, marked by the end of Bretton Woods, the movement of industrial production from the USA and Europe to sites with lower labour costs, and the development of new ways to organize and expedite the rapid flow of capital.

The worldwide recession and the oil crisis in the 1970s, which may have spurred the new period of globalization, stimulated anti-immigrant movements throughout Europe and a consensus to limit immigration severely to zero. By now it was an accepted response for nationals to blame foreigners for everything, although the very identification of a territorially based population with a nation-state (and with only one nation-state) was a relatively new invention. The momentum to stop migration as a solution to problems that were in fact of a systemic nature took different forms in different locations, and was implemented with increasing severity in the course of 20 years, limited the citizenship rights of former colonial populations and abruptly ended guest worker programmes. The rhetoric of zero immigration masked the fact that the door was left open for continuing immigration of family members, highly-skilled immigrants and persons categorized as political refugees. In point of fact, the rapid pace of globalization, increased by the implementation of the economic reforms in Russia and Eastern Europe after the end of the cold war and in Asia after the Asian economic crisis of the 1990s, increased the pace of migration. Migration is now structured, perceived and discussed under different categorizations in different locations: refugee flows, family reunification, the import of skilled workers on special visas, contract domestic labour and illegals.

Social scientists' theories of migration did not fundamentally alter until the cold war had ended and lifted some of the barriers of methodological nationalism – parallel to the destruction of the Berlin Wall. Scholars in a number of fields, together with political leaders and journalists, began to announce that the world was becoming qualitatively different and applied the term 'globalization' to what they were observing, fascinated by various kinds of flows of people, ideas, objects and capital across the territorial borders of states.

In anthropology, the globalization fever led to what we could call the 'dissing' of previous paradigms. We heard about disjuncture, dislocation, displacement, disengagement, disconnection and the dismantling of the old stabilities, knowledges,

conventions and identities (Appadurai 1990, 1991, 1993; Featherstone 1993; Rouse 1991). Working independently of each other on the east and west coast of the USA, anthropologists and ethnographically inclined sociologists began to posit that a new form of migration was beginning, which they entitled transnationalism (Glick Schiller and Fouron 1991; Glick Schiller et al. 1992; Goldring 1996; Guarnizo 1997; Kearney 1991; Levitt 1997; Rouse 1992). Later, mainstream sociology joined the trend and forcefully contributed to its formulation and expansion (Portes et al. 1999). Even before the first statements about transnational migration by anthropologists and sociologists had been formulated, new data describing the transnational ties among recent migrants were presented, but methodological nationalism kept scholars from fully appreciating and theorizing what they were seeing (Chaney 1979; Gonzalez 1988).

The first wave of global studies produced a set of problematic assumptions. First of all, scholars tended to see communications technology – computers, telephones, televisions, communication satellites and other electronic innovations – as the motor of change. Suddenly we could all visually experience the same war, the same concert, or the same commercial and share the information age. The power of the new technology combined with the postmodern insistence on the stability of the past and the fluidity of the present led to a rather crude technological determinism strangely contrasting with the otherwise constructivist impetus of much of this literature. This impeded discussion of the broader social and economic forces past and present, which had shaped the transnational ties that linked the globe together. In addition, the impact of past technologies, which facilitated previous leaps in global integration – including the steamship, the telegraph, telephone and radio – were dismissed or forgotten.

Second, the first wave of transnational studies tended to speak of globalization in terms of an epochal turn, characterizing the previous historical period as one in which our units of analysis were bounded and people lived within these bounded units of tribe, ethnic group and state. Many scholars asserted that the increase in trans-border activity signalled the demise of the nation-state as both a centre of power and as a potent source of identity politics (Kearney 1991). The past was static, the present was fluid; the past contained homogenous cultures while now we lived in a world of hybridity and complexity.

A second wave of global studies has emerged that addresses some of the misconceptions of the first few years. We will mention five moments of this transition. First, we now can acknowledge that globalization is not in itself a new phenomenon (Went 2000; Wimmer 2001a). Our article has made clear that while significant changes have occurred in the world since the end of the cold war, we are at the same time also experiencing a paradigm shift. We have been able to begin to analyse and discuss transnational migration and long distance nationalism because we have changed the lens through which we perceive and analyse the world, putting aside some of the preconceptions of methodological nationalism.

Raising questions about what new globalization and transnationalism really are, this new, more sophisticated scholarship is disentangling long-term trends, periodic recurrences and novel occurrences in the historical development of global connections (Glick Schiller 1999a, 1999b, 1999c; Panitch 1996, 2000; Smith 1997; Went 2000; Wilson and Donnan 1998). Actually, since the beginning of the expansion of Europe in the fifteenth century, the globe has been encompassed by various forms of economic activities and flows of objects and ideas. Colonization was a global process that

knit together disparate territories and peoples. Some scholars began to argue that the world was actually more globally integrated in the nineteenth century than it is now or that we are just now returning to the kind of integration the world experienced before the First World War (see Jessop 1999 for a summary of this debate). However, there is a general consensus that contemporary globalization processes seem more potent in their degree of penetration into the rhythms of daily life around the world (Held et al. 1999).

In the field of migration studies, after the initial celebrations of the novelty of diasporic identities, more careful scholarship on the historical depth of diasporic experiences started to emerge (Cohen 1997; Foner 1997, 2001; Morawska 2001). It allows us to evaluate the transnational practices out of which cultures such as those in the Caribbean and post-colonial societies from India to Samoa emerged.

Second, scholars of both Asia and Latin America have begun to examine the articulation of regions into global processes, thus overcoming another limitation of methodological nationalism and breaking up the national focus of the development and modernization paradigm. Anthropologists are playing an important role in examining local and regional variations in connecting the global and the local. They have also provided descriptions of Asian discourses about 'alternative modernities' and explored the particularities of transnational processes in China and Southeast Asia (Ong 1997; Ong and Nonini 1997; Smart 1997; Szanton Blanc 1997). Thus, the one-way road image of history and globalization, a heritage of the schemes of grand social theory, is slowly overcome by acknowledging multiple ways to and through modernity (Eisenstadt 2000; Therborn 1995; Wimmer 2001b).

Third, much more attention is now being paid to the continuing role of the nation-state in transnational processes. It is becoming increasingly apparent that the nation-state 'has been rather more successful in weathering the storms of post-socialism, post-colonialism, and globalization' than was the case in the early days of globalization research (Panitch 2000; Sassen 1996, 2001). Scholars also began to look at the past and contemporary role of nation-states in fostering continuing ties with populations settled abroad, thus relativizing earlier statements about the 'decline of the nation-state' (Basch et al. 1994; Glick Schiller 1999a, 1999b, 1999c; Guarnizo 1997, 1998; Guarnizo and Diaz 1999; Mahler 1998; R. Smith 1998; Smith and Guarnizo 1998).

Finally, a concept of long distance nationalism has been developed that takes up once again the observations of 'home country' nationalism made but not theorized by the Chicago School and scholars of nationalism (Anderson 1993, 1994; Fuglerud 1999; Glazer 1954; Skrbiš 1999). Long distance nationalism links together people living in various geographic locations and motivates them to action in relationship to an ancestral territory and its government. Through such ideological linkages, a territory, its people and its government become a trans-border enterprise. Long distance nationalism may bind together immigrants, their descendants, and people who have remained in their homeland into a fragile, but vocal trans-border citizenry (Glick Schiller and Fouron 2001a: 17–20). As in other versions of nationalism, the concept of a people comprising a citizenry, a sovereign, a nation and a group of solidarity remains salient, but these different embodiments are not thought of as congruent and territorially bounded.

Thus, a number of issues about transnational migration and long distance national-

ism that could not be addressed during previous periods are now possible to research and theorize. However, this does not mean that we have broken free from the influence of methodological nationalism. We are still struggling to understand how our vision is being shaped and distorted by our own location in the grid of nation-states and the constraints this places on our scientific perspectives. We conclude this section with some areas in which methodological nationalism is still visible.

Diaspora studies often trace dispersed populations no matter where they have settled, focusing on the dynamics of interconnection, nostalgia and memory and identity within a particular population, relating them to a particular homeland. No longer confined to a territorially limited entity, the nation is extending across different terrains and places but nevertheless imagined as an organic, integrated whole. In this *modus operandi*, nation-state building processes that impinge upon diasporic populations in various locations are usually overlooked. If the relationship between the diaspora and nation-state building is examined, it is uniquely and exclusively in terms of the diaspora's own homeland and its politics. Thus, the image and analytical techniques associated with describing a bounded national container society are reproduced, albeit in a different form.

Similar points have to be made with regard to the study of 'transnational communities'. Here many of the critiques of the past errors of community studies apply: much of transnational studies overstates the internal homogeneity and boundedness of transnational communities, overestimates the binding power for individual action, overlooks the importance of cross-community interactions as well as the internal divisions of class, gender, region and politics, and is conceptually blind to those cases where no transnational communities form among migrants or where existing ones cease to be meaningful for individuals. Furthermore, the different meanings of a particular transnational identity are usually precluded, meanings that take actors in very different political directions and alliances. In short, approaching migrant transnational social fields and networks as communities tends to reify and essentialize these communities in a similar way that previous approaches reified national communities or the Redfield school essentialized peasant communities.

Strangely enough, the neo-communitarianism of transnationalism studies also reproduces the standard image of a world divided into nations and thus naturalizes this vision of the world in new forms. *Transnational* semantically refers us to the non-*transnational* or simply to the national as the entity that is crossed or superseded. Migrants are no longer uprooted or climbing up the assimilative ladder to the national middle classes, but they are still the others, foreign and alien to the nationally-bounded society. Studies that examine the connections between transnational migrants and actors within the various localities in which they settle and into which they move could carry us beyond the static, reified and essentialized concept of community and into the study of migrants and non-migrants within social fields of differential power (see Nyiri 1999; Ong 1999; Wimmer 1998b).

### **Some final remarks**

Going beyond methodological nationalism in the study of current migration thus may require more than a focus on transnational communities instead of the nation and its immigrants. In order to escape the magnetism of established methodologies, ways of



defining the object of analysis and algorithms for generating questions, we may have to develop (or rediscover?) analytical tools and concepts not coloured by the self-evidence of a world ordered into nation-states. This is what we perceive, together with many other current observers of the social sciences, as the major task lying ahead of us. We are certainly not able to offer such a set of analytical tools here (Castles 2001; Wimmer 2002).

Rather, it was one aim of this article to describe with more precision than has hitherto been the case the obstacles to overcome on this road to a new social theory. Knowing more about how our perceptions of migration, including some of the recent work on transnationalism, have been shaped by the nation-state building project of the modern world is an important step. It may prevent us from running, enthusiastically searching for newness, along the most promising-looking road, without knowing exactly how we got to the crossroad where we actually find ourselves. Looking back may help us to identify the paths that will bring us right back to where we now stand. We described three modes of methodological nationalism that have shaped the social science programme: ignoring, naturalization and territorial limitation, and we have identified the ways in which these have influenced mainstream migration studies. Describing immigrants as political security risks, as culturally others, as socially marginal and as an exception to the rule of territorial confinement, migration studies have faithfully mirrored the nationalist image of normal life.

Our second aim was to sketch out, in admittedly rather audacious and broad strokes, a history of the past century that would help us to understand how this binding of the scientific eye to the body of the nation came about and how this relationship has evolved through different phases of nation building. We started this historical *tour d'horizon* from the period of unrestricted migration in an environment of a globalized economy and fierce competition between nationalizing states and ended it again in a period of intensified globalization, our contemporary epoch. During the period in between, the fabrics of economic, political and cultural life were more and more closed along national lines and the container model of society established its hegemony over the social sciences. For all these different phases, we have described how the process of nation-state building has generated, as one of its aspects, different stances towards cross-border migration and immigrant integration that were mirrored, if not sometimes sustained or even produced, by the basic concepts of migration research. Taking such a historically informed 'view from afar' allowed us to see what migration researchers saw, what they did not see and to explain why these varying blind spots have evolved. We have taken the point of view of an observer of second order, observing what professional observers do and do not observe.

Thus, we tried to give an example of how the methodological limitations of first order observations could be overcome. This example took the form of an anthropologically informed historical narrative. Such an approach does not provide the well-developed conceptual tools that would allow us to elaborate this perspective more systematically. This remains a task for the future. However, a word of caution is in place here. It would certainly be naive to think that we will ever develop a theoretical language not profoundly influenced by the social and political forces around us – most of us have given up the dream of reaching an Archimedean point of objectivity. Equally naive would be to maintain that methodological nationalism was inhibiting a

'true' understanding of the world now to be discovered. The days when such a mirror concept of reality and scientific description still hold are gone too.

While we are still striving for an adequate understanding of what is happening nowadays, we can already predict that the new concepts eventually emerging will necessarily again limit and shape our perspective, again force us to overlook some developments and overemphasize others. Every clear conceptual structure necessarily limits the range of possible interpretations, as well as the empirical domains that can be meaningfully interpreted. To understand means to reduce complexity. Going beyond this truism, however, the task is to determine what reductions of complexity will make best sense of the contemporary world and which ones are leaving out too many tones and voices, transforming them into what model builders call 'noise'. While we have devoted the body of this article to a description of the Charybdis of methodological nationalism, we should like to end it with a hint of the Scylla of methodological 'fluidism'.

This is where much contemporary theory currently seems headed. Where there were fixed boundaries, everything is now equally and immediately interconnected. Structures are replaced with fluidity. Being sedentary is replaced with movement. While the immigrant used to be portrayed as the marginal exception to the rule of staying at one's national home, the transnational life of migrants constantly on the move is now the prototype of the human condition. The territorial boundedness of analysis has been overcome by a spiralling rhetoric of deterritorialization and delocalization. Contemporary social theory, such as the works of Urry (2000) or Papastergiadis (2000) trenchantly criticized by Favell (2001), seems to be breathlessly hunting after the signifiers shooting around the globe, driven by new techniques of communication and globalized markets.

They tend to forget that production for these markets is embedded in concrete geographical locations and takes place within bounded, not necessarily territorially limited social environments (Sassen 2001). Moreover, while it is important to push aside the blinders of methodological nationalism, it is just as important to remember the continued potency of nationalism. Framing the world as a global market place can not begin to explain why, under specific circumstances, not only political entrepreneurs but also the poor and disempowered continue to frame their demands for social justice and equality within a nationalist rhetoric and why migrants sometimes embrace versions of long distance nationalism (Glick Schiller and Fouron 2001a, 2001b).

Stuart Hall's (1989) dramatic statement that 'we are all migrants now' is no more true in 2001 than it was in 1989 when he issued his challenge to think beyond the opposition of citizens with stable national cultures and migrants with their contested identities. Not only does it remain true that 95 per cent of the people of the world are not migrants but it is also true that, despite global media and rapid flows of information, national identities remain salient in many localities around the world.

Nor can we blithely take up the perspective of cosmopolitanism, either as a description of the post-national stage of identity or as a political goal to be reached (Beck 2000). Such a stance may be helpful for a deconstruction of nationalism, taking a very different tack than previous discussions of the invention or imagination of community. But it does not acknowledge that nationalism is a powerful signifier that continues to make sense for different actors with different purposes and political

implications (Fouron and Glick Schiller forthcoming; Friedman 1996; Glick Schiller and Fouron 2001a, 2001b). Having hinted at the Scylla of fluidism and of the rhetoric of cosmopolitanism, the challenge remains to develop a set of concepts for the study of migration that does more than reflect these preconceptions and taken for granted assumptions of our times.

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### **Note**

1. We owe the term to Herminio Martins (1974: 276f.), who mentioned it *en passant* in an article on social theory. He uses the term in a similar way as we do in this article. Anthony Smith (1983: 26) mentions the concept a decade later, referring to the fact that statistics and also social science research based upon them make national societies the natural unit of analysis. The term is certainly inspired by the notion of methodological individualism, which has been introduced by Schumpeter and popularized by Friedrich von Hayek and later Karl Popper. Methodological individualism – usually attributed to the sociological programme of Max Weber – means analysing a society as the effect of aggregated decisions and actions of individuals, which are the basic units of social science analysis. In the words of von Hayek methodological individualism stands for the conviction that ‘the concepts and views held by individuals ... form the elements from which we must build up, as it were, the more complex phenomena’ (von Hayek 1943: 38). Our use of the term methodological nationalism is somewhat broader compared with methodological individualism. We include not only positive and explicit affirmations that nations are the basic units of analysis, but also works that: (1) follow this principle without being explicit or even knowledgeable about it; and/or (2) neglect and overlook the importance of nationalist doctrine for the modern world. Overlooking and ignoring definitively represents a mode of methodological nationalism that finds no parallel in classic discussions of methodological individualism.

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