



## THINKING TRANSNATIONAL

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Transnational communication is one of the key factors in the present global transformational processes. Cultural globalization, as a consequence of migration, increasing flows of cultural commodities and global interconnectivity through ICTs, is rapidly transforming life-styles, social networks and forms of identification in the entire world. Yet both social sciences and humanities are still framed by the notion of the nation-state and a corollary national culture. Literary studies, in particular, are almost exclusively focused on domestic literature, but this observation applies in varying to degrees to all the fine arts and to cultural studies in general.

A specific area where the constraints of the national perspective are most limiting, yet hardly even reflected upon, is the field of international development cooperation. It is still largely organized at bilateral basis, government to government, while financial flows, remittances and – increasingly- non-governmental agencies are transnational. Even the over-arching multilateral system of the United Nations is founded on this basic assumption of the nation-state and inter-national relations. Transnational is, in the minds of many, a suspect notion, associated with global capital flows and irresponsible transnational corporations. Transnational human flows (migration) are generally regarded as a problem, not a resource.

How, then, does this apply to Communication for Development? I believe that the notion of 'transnationalism' is absolutely crucial, and a true challenge for both research and practice. Thinking transnational is a formidable challenge, because our entire imagination is so conditioned by this national mindset. I am well aware that the word 'our' here may disclose a Eurocentric perspective. The notion of the nation differs in different contexts and thinking beyond it is certainly easier at hand in for example India or Latin America than in Europe. And as in literature and the arts, the impulses for renewal will most probably come from the margins, not the centre, of the alleged world system.

Transnationalism is one of the strands of research that the Ørecomm Consortium for Glocal Change, based at the universities of Malmö in Sweden and Roskilde in Denmark, wishes to explore in the coming years. Until a presentation of this initiative is made in Glocal Times, take a thorough look at its website, <http://orecomm.net>

Transnationalism in practice, of sorts, was demonstrated at a recent joint ComDev seminar held simultaneously at Malmö University in Sweden and

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Guelph University in Canada, linking not only students and staff from the two partner universities, with a five-hour difference, but also participants scattered all over the world. The seminar's theme was "Media, Conflict and Development" and among the speakers were Gordon Adam, visiting in Malmö, Ricardo Ramirez in Guelph, and Wendy Quarry in Ottawa, connected via Skype. I briefly mentioned Ricardo and Wendy's resurrection of 'Alternative development' in my previous editorial, on "the development turn". In this issue, they speak about what they learnt at the seminar, and so does Gordon. Enjoy!

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