immediately reinvokes Kant’s paradigmatic definition of great music, which holds that it is utterly unencumbered with non-musical goals or structures, that it achieves “universalizing acontextuality” (p. 282), by virtue of originality and aesthetic force. Menger’s knowledge of previous studies and his impatience with their conclusions gives this chapter significant value, even if his alternative does not supplant them.

Some English-language readers will remember Menger’s final (Rodin) chapter because of its inclusion in Art From Start to Finish (2006), edited by Howard Becker and others. Art historians refer to a category of work known as non finito, wherein the artist seems intentionally to have stopped midway in the production process of an artwork, such that the interrupted condition becomes an essential part of the aesthetic statement. Menger lists the most famous instances (Schubert’s unfinished symphony, etc.; p. 285) and later asks, “Can’t we just place such artworks in the category of the non finito, to rid them of the stigma of unfinished sketches?” (p. 290). Rodin’s sculptures appeal to Menger because in them he sees “the role of chance or the unpredictable, and bringing fully to light the labor of creation in its most sinuous, most arduous, most uncertain aspects. Rodin’s aesthetic audacities highlight these two aspects’’ (p. 13). Menger becomes interested through Rodin’s incomplete work in “the groping process of invention: Trials, errors, corrections, pentimenti, new starts, and bifurcations [that] characterize, as we know, the artist’s everyday labor.” Rodin’s Clemenceau bust received over 30 iterations! (pp. 308, 385). In an effort to demystify “the creative act” for lesser mortals who do not live on the Olympian plane of artfulness—where “a superior form of narcissistic heroizing” flourishes—Menger pursues this conundrum with the same energy he applied to Beethoven. He wants to know if there is a sociological response to the fact that Flaubert rewrote his novels endlessly and Cézanne painted the same scene dozens of times.

The answer lies in finding a Rodin museum and studying his incomplete works while listening privately to one of Beethoven’s last piano sonatas (Op. 109, 110, or 111 would do). All will become clear—sociologically speaking.

Transnationalism Reconsidered: The Dialectic of Immigration and Emigration

CHENOA A. FLIPPEN
University of Pennsylvania
chenoa@sas.upenn.edu

The Cross-Border Connection, Roger Waldinger’s latest book on immigration, provides a cogent critique of transnationalism, with an eye toward advancing social theory. Waldinger credits transnational theory with challenging the view of societies as neatly contained within nations and celebrates its emphasis on the global processes linking social relations across political boundaries. However, he faults transnationalism for downplaying the opposing processes, most notably forces of adaptation, settlement, and state actions that tend to limit and curtail these same transnational ties. He argues that rather than merely noting the limitations of conventional assimilation theory, the transnational perspective must stretch to provide tools for analyzing the factors that promote and supplant cross-border involvements and how they vary over time and across different types of connections.

In this volume, Waldinger does precisely that: he draws on multiple methodologies and a vast array of data sources to examine the conditions that foster and those that impede transnationalism, with a careful

consideration of how contemporary flows compare to their historical predecessors. His main argument is that while technological change may seem to have revolutionized migration, enabling a degree and depth of connection previously unimaginable, the inherent tensions embodied by immigration are invariant. Immigrants are also emigrants, and powerful forces on both sides of the border make sustaining profound bonds “beyond the water’s edge” far more difficult than is often assumed.

Waldinger acknowledges the powerful ways that immigration promotes inter-societal convergence. Migrants invariably maintain ties to people and things back home. The cost and difficulty of crossing borders often renders family migration a multi-stage process, with family members on both sides of the border. Reliance on extended family for the care of children, cultivation of property and investments, and other necessities from home enhance connectedness between migrants and non-migrants. The burgeoning and growing complexity of these connections swell the size of the market, creating economies of scale and specialized services, further facilitating the maintenance of ties. Likewise, immigrant newcomers invariably turn to one another for help, developing networks of support that reinforce ethnic identities and solidarity, a process further enhanced by the continued arrival of newcomers. While these processes are remarkably similar for contemporary and historical migration flows, technological revolutions in communication and transportation have put maintaining frequent and deeper connections within reach of millions. Taken together, the reconstructed communities in host societies and ongoing engagement with home communities are powerful forces of inter-societal convergence.

However, Waldinger’s main objective is to elaborate on how the numerous social and technological forces nurturing intense connectedness compete with inexorable forces in the opposite direction, rendering place more important than scholars and migrants would like to think. In the receiving society, everyday efforts to fit in and succeed often increase the social distance between migrants and their families and communities left behind. Migrants cannot subordinate their own needs and direct all of their resources homeward indefinitely. Eventually they create new families and ties in the host society; and as their social center of gravity gradually shifts, the need for and rewards from connections to home lessen. Moreover, one of the great ironies of migration is that the same economic opportunities that propelled it in the first place also undermine transnational connections. Even though migrants are often at the bottom of the socioeconomic hierarchy in host societies, they nevertheless gain dramatically in access to goods and services compared to home. As they all too quickly adapt to abundance, it becomes harder to relate to home. Migrant belonging is also contested on both sides of the border. Destination countries are often more pluralistic and accepting than in previous eras; but prolonged focus on home countries can raise suspicion and resentment, and pressure to learn the host language and master the national culture is intense. At home emigrants are eyed for signs of disloyalty and abandonment and are often viewed as foreigners in spite of their emotional ties.

Waldinger also emphasizes the limits of technology for transnationalism. Although cheap calls, the internet, and air travel have dramatically extended the accessibility and frequency of communication, they cannot fully compensate for the loss of the frequent in-person contact and shared daily experiences that are the bedrock of intimate relationships. Physical distance generates coordination problems not encountered at home, substituting appointments to connect for spontaneous, routine interaction. And, as Waldinger wryly notes, “even if free and of the highest quality, no telephone will put Vancouver and Manila in the same time zone” (p. 42). In addition, the spread of technology has not been as complete as it might seem, with the stark digital divide closing only slowly. Migrants are generally the least connected to the internet in host societies, and a surprising number also lack access to cell phones. More importantly, the rural places from which many migrants hail often lack connectivity and household members with the know-how to install and maintain up-to-date technologies. Thus, just because migrant families could theoretically talk...
daily does not mean that they do. Indeed, Waldinger cites a wealth of diverse quantitative sources that show that even today only a relatively small share of migrants engages in sustained, intense transnational communication. Less intense linkages, while pervasive, are more fragile and fragmented than the transnationalism literature suggests and tend to erode steeply over time.

Waldinger also discusses states’ role in transnationalism and works to develop a political sociology of emigration. Once again celebrating transnationalism’s critique of simplistic popular and scholarly isomorphism between state and society, he nevertheless draws attention to how sending and receiving states’ vigorous efforts at controlling migratory movements can circumscribe cross-border connections. While also present during the last major wave of immigration, migrants’ combination of resources (both monetary and political) and vulnerabilities (precarious position and limited rights in host societies) has resulted in a recent proliferation of interventions by home states seeking to influence and protect nationals abroad, including efforts to cultivate loyalty, maintain cultural traditions and homeland language fluency, provide services, facilitate investment, and expand opportunities for expatriate political participation.

Although state actions help to maintain transnational connections, Waldinger makes case studies of the Mexican government’s efforts to provide emigrants with consular ID cards and its attempts to expand expatriate voting to highlight the stiff headwinds facing diaspora engagement. The Mexican government’s effort to provide identity documents to nationals abroad was a moderate success: more than eight million “matricula” cards have been distributed since the September 11 terrorist attacks heightened the need for more secure forms of official identity documents. More importantly, consular offices successfully implemented a strategy of “creeping legalization,” where lobbying efforts were combined with practicality and self-interest to persuade banks, city officials, police departments, and others to “recognize” the ID as an official document.

Efforts to engage expatriate voting, in contrast, were far less efficacious. While activists mounted a major campaign, using patriotic pride to construct a transnational community of Mexicans, the extension of voting rights was ultimately quite limited. Expatriate voting was limited to presidential elections and required electoral credentials that could only be obtained in Mexico. More important than procedural obstacles, however, was profound emigrant disengagement; most migrants were relatively detached from political and civic structures prior to migration, making it difficult to compensate for the inherent obstacles to participation posed by distance. In spite of considerable outreach from Mexican electoral authorities, emigrants displayed overwhelming ignorance of the basic aspects of the Mexican electoral system, and the number of actual votes cast was very small, representing a “boutique” form of primarily elite engagement.

Waldinger also devotes a chapter to the proliferation of hometown associations (HTAs). Celebrated by immigration scholars, the media, and politicians alike, HTAs have both multiplied and received increasing official recognition in recent years. However, the abundance of attention to HTAs belies the fact that they engage a relatively small share of the migrant population. Rank and file migrants tend to have little prior experience with civic participation, increasing the groups’ reliance on elites. Moreover, the groups tend to be relatively loosely knit with highly variable and unstable participation; the ties that bind groups together, such as common residential or occupational locations, tend to erode over time, and bi-localism competes with other loyalties and with the long hours most migrants spend working. There is also an inherent power dimension involved in HTAs that undermines their truly transnational nature. Emigrants’ priorities do not always match those of hometown residents, and friction can easily arise over the “undue” influence of non-residents over spending in the public sphere. On balance, Waldinger argues that all too often “efforts at homeland-oriented civic activity demonstrate how different the migrants are from the communities and people to which they are still attached and how often cross-border civic coordination founders on the shoals of dispersion, distance, and disconnection” (p. 178).

Ultimately the main contribution of this book is Waldinger’s articulation of a unified theory of transnationalism that recognizes

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the inherent tension involved in the dialectic between emigration and immigration. He argues that “the sociology of emigration demonstrates how the people crossing borders actively shape their own destinies, doing what neither home nor host state wants, getting ahead by making effective use of the resource that they almost all possess—one another. The sociology of immigration explains why a move to the territory of another richer state simultaneously improves the migrants’ lives but transforms them in ways that they could not have expected, often producing distance from the people, places, cultures, and loyalties left behind” (p. 183). By focusing on migration from the vantage point of one side of the border or the other, most research fails to recognize that these two sociologies are talking about the same person and thus cannot fully account for the opposing forces buffeting migrants and their home communities alike. By bringing together these disparate literatures and perspectives, The Cross-Border Connection helps to build a more unified and complete account of transnationalism.

A particular strength of the book is the dizzying breadth of data sources brought to bear on the topic at hand. Not only does Waldinger compare current Latin American, Asian, and African migration streams to the United States and Europe with previous waves of Eastern European, Irish, and Italian migration, he also presents data from a wide array of both nationally representative and local surveys in sending and receiving countries across the globe. For instance, he draws on numerous nationally representative surveys of Latino and Asian populations in the United States, but also on local studies of Arab American populations, immigrant entrepreneurship, and cellphone usage across immigrant neighborhoods in New York City. He also draws extensively on data from sending contexts, ranging from national surveys of public opinion in Latin America to surveys of Mexican expatriates to research on mobile phone usage in areas as diverse as El Salvador, Jamaica, Guatemala, Haiti, Nicaragua, and the Senegalese river basin. And finally, he weaves in findings from innumerable qualitative studies of diverse immigrants from around the world, adding nuance and deeper insight to survey statistics.

However, this strength can at times be a weakness. A book so sweeping in its scope inevitably runs the risk of over-generalization. Waldinger argues that, “The democratic countries of the developed world share much in common; consequently the encounter with the behaviors, institutions, and resources contained within those spaces yields similar effects, regardless of the precise point on the globe” (p. 45). Yet there are tremendous differences across receiving contexts in the treatment of immigrant-origin populations. Volumes have been written comparing the different approaches to immigration taken by settler-societies such as the United States and Australia relative to European states, as well as comparing differences within Europe between countries relatively new to immigration and those receiving immigrant populations for generations. Asian immigrant destinations such as Japan and Singapore likewise represent a stark departure from their occidental counterparts. Differential access to citizenship, for both immigrants and their children, can have a profound impact on the processes Waldinger describes. Likewise, immigration flows are incredibly diverse, and every country has a unique mix of skilled and unskilled immigration. A valuable extension of this work would be to explore differences by social class as well as region of origin and destination to assess variation in the forces promoting and constraining cross-border connections.

In addition, the generalizations regarding receiving societies are occasionally too forgiving and the depiction of sending countries at times too harsh. Waldinger argues that “as liberal democracies are relatively open societies in which persons with an unauthorized presence can nonetheless connect to citizens as coworker, neighbor, classmate, friend, or even lover, migrants develop close social ties to persons with political entitlements that are taken for granted” (p. 85). As such, “they also perceive that equal treatment, even if violated in practice, is the norm” (p. 46). These are relatively charitable statements, especially in light of the ever-deteriorating context of reception for non-
European, especially Muslim, immigrants across the developed world.

Likewise, Waldinger frequently asserts that “migration is an implicitly political act: migrants depart in response to the state’s betrayal of its people” (p. 117), particularly its failure to provide economic opportunities that would allow citizens to support their families at home. There is a similar tendency to imply that sending states are oppressive: “Passing from one political jurisdiction to the next, the migrants escape the long arm of the home state because its coercive capacity stops at the border” (p. 85). These statements are relatively uncritical of the global economic system that disadvantages developing nations and of the geopolitical context in which neoliberal policies, structural adjustment policies, and austerity programs are often imposed on governments of the global South by governments and financial institutions in the global North. These types of assertions also ignore the fact that much immigration is demand-driven: while low wages at origin are necessary for migration, they are hardly sufficient; and the insatiable demand for low-wage labor in advanced economies is a central force behind the ebb and flow of labor migration.

Despite these quibbles, the book represents an effective criticism of the simplistic notions of immigrant incorporation and globalization that take transnationalism as a given and is highly relevant to scholars and students of immigration. Like all important contributions to social theory, it also suggests promising avenues for future research. For instance, return migration has long constituted an important part of international population flows. The contemporary context of economic crisis and record levels of deportations have created new forms of complex border-straddling within families; and emigrant states not only attempt to engage with diasporas abroad, they also take steps to reverse brain drain and harness the human and financial capital potential of return migrants. Elaboration on how return migration factors in to the forces of inter-societal convergence and divergence would be an important extension of this work.