

**Social Transformation and International Migration: Challenges for
Social Theory and National Identities**

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**Report by the Social Transformation and Migration Research Group at Sydney
University**

(see: http://sydney.edu.au/arts/transformation_migration/)

International migration trends have become increasingly complex in the 21st century. Migration streams are more complex and are closely connected with macro-economic shifts. National and regional migration policies struggle to keep up with the varied trajectories of human mobility, shifting hierarchies of citizenship and transnational forms of belonging. Migration is part of social, economic, political and historical transformations that impact on the fabric of everyday life. Some of these dynamics are being investigated by the Social Transformation and International Migration in the 21st Century Project (STIM), which is an interdisciplinary, ARC-funded project based at the University of Sydney. The project looks at four case study countries that have experienced significant transformations in this period: namely, South Korea, Mexico, Turkey and Australia. The research is based on multilateral collaboration with local institutions in the four case study countries. The project is headed by Professor Stephen Castles (ASSA Fellow) at the Department of Sociology, University of Sydney.

In August 2013, the STIM Research Network held a two-day workshop to provide a forum for debating some of the key issues and research outcomes emerging from the project's fieldwork. The workshop was funded by the ASSA, the International Program Development Fund at the University of Sydney and the Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences, also at Sydney University. Thanks to the generous funding, it was possible to invite leading scholars from the overseas case-study countries to come to Australia to share their research findings and insights. The ASSA funding was used specifically to bring together prominent and emerging Australian scholars of migration and transnationalism, both as presenters and discussants.

The Workshop began with an outline of the objectives of the Workshop by Stephen Castles, who presented an overview of the ideas on which the STIM project is based, drawing attention to the importance of analysing international migration in the context of contemporary changes linked to the internationalisation of economic and social relationships. This means exploring the relationship between neo-liberal globalisation and human mobility in a range of societies. Castles outlined the national and local case studies carried out in each research area, and discussed the methodological problems of making comparisons across very different historical and cultural settings.

In the second session, focused on the theme of 'International immigration: global and regional perspectives', Raúl Delgado-Wise of the Autonomous University of Zacatecas (Mexico) discussed the consequences of the new international dynamics of labour in the context of the Mexico-US corridor, and the processes of expulsion and criminalisation being experienced by

migrants in the South. The question of whether the volume, diversity, geographical scope and overall complexity of international migration have increased as part of globalisation processes was discussed in a paper by Hein de Haas and Mathias Czaika of Oxford University. Mapping shifts in global migration patterns between 1960 and 2000, the authors contested the idea that international migration has accelerated. It was argued that migration has diversified only from a destination country perspective, but not from an origin country perspective. This has resulted in a 'skewed' and more asymmetrical global migration map.

The next session, touched on topics relating to the political economy, and legal and political regulation of migration. Jock Collins (University of Technology Sydney) used an analysis of 'ethnic precincts' in Sydney to demonstrate the politics of integrating economic agendas promoting entrepreneurialism with migrant incorporation processes. Dong-Hoon Seol (Chonbuk University, S. Korea) provided a macro-level overview of the migration transitions and political economy of migration from 20 sending countries to South Korea. Mary Crock (University of Sydney) scaled the discussion up to an overview of how policy and law have influenced international migration trends. Crock argued that there was evidence for increasing codification and complexity of migration policy as well as a clear trend towards greater stringency and responsiveness to international law.

A fourth session explored new methodologies for studying increasingly complex migration flows. Rebecca Williamson (doctoral student, University of Sydney) explored the possibilities of using 'multi-scalar' research methods that address the relationship between local, national and global dimensions of migration. Shanthi Robertson (University of Western Sydney) also outlined a multi-scalar perspective, exploring how migration methodologies can capture temporary, non-linear and diverse migration temporalities. She suggested using ethnographic conceptual tools such as 'timescales' to study both the macro and micro-temporalities that shape migrants' lives. Kevin Dunn (University of Western Sydney) discussed the benefits and challenges of comparative analyses of immigration, migrant incorporation processes and transnationalism, drawing on empirical studies carried out in various Australian cities, Canada and elsewhere. While noting the challenge of finding comparable indicators, Dunn argued that this approach captures both structural conditions and migrants' subjective experiences.

The Workshop then moved into thematic discussions on the case study countries. Ahmet İçduygu (Koç University, Istanbul) gave a broad perspective on Turkey's migration history, and showed how Turkey's migration policy-making processes are caught between the 'politics of the past' (nationalist legacies) and 'the politics of the future' (globalist trajectories). Derya Ozkul (doctoral student, University of Sydney) presented the findings from the fieldwork study conducted in Kumkapi, Istanbul. She explained the effects of rapid urban transformation projects in Istanbul, and argued that it is not the migrants that have caused all the changes, but that the change in Turkish society and politics has encouraged the arrival of international migrants. Mine Eder (Boğaziçi University, İstanbul), displayed the layers of additional vulnerabilities that irregular female migrant workers faced in Turkey. By focusing on female immigrants from post-Soviet countries in Turkey, Eder showed that globalization and neo-liberalisation do not translate into increased openness, inclusion and improved gender norms.

Mexico is one of the world's main emigration countries. In this session, Rodolfo García Zamora (Autonomous University of Zacatecas) looked at some of the current challenges faced by the country. He argued that the collapse of emigration, increasing deportations and return migration aggravate existing problems of unemployment, social crisis, violence and governance. García Zamora argued for the need to design a state policy on development, migration and reintegration of migrants based on a human rights approach. Magdalena Arias Cubas (doctoral student,

University of Sydney) analysed Mexican migration within a social transformation framework by looking at the initial findings of the STIM fieldwork in the community of Casa Blanca (near Zacatecas). Arias Cubas focused especially on emigration linked to the impact of neoliberal economic and social reforms and the ‘War on Drugs’.

The next session examined the way Australia has been transformed by its simultaneous opening to economic globalisation and to immigration of people from all over the world. Elsa Koletch (doctoral student, University of Sydney) focussed on changes in the City of Fairfield. Today, Fairfield is one of Australia’s most ethnically diverse but also most socio-economically depressed local government areas. Yet it is poised on the edge of a growing city that is aspiring to a global vision of prosperity. Ellie Vasta (Macquarie University, Sydney) examined ‘affinities’: values held in common across groups with diverse cultures and origins. Her results indicated two main issues: First young people often assert Australianness by constructing Australian values and identities as their own; second many younger ethnic minority Australians claim a strong respect for their parents’ cultural values, so that any differences between them are considered not as conceptual problems but as issues of circumstance and change. Andrew Jakubowicz (UTS) analysed shifts in the policies and attitudes that constitute Australian multiculturalism, in the context of perceptions of threats of communal dislocation and conflict on the one hand, and the representation of difference in narratives of the nation on the other. His case studies focussed on the official rejection of anti-racism in favour of diffuse notions of harmony, and on the representation of deviance in popular ideas about areas of migrant settlement, such as Cabramatta in Western Sydney.

In the session on South Korea, Hye-Kyung Lee (Paichai University) reviewed patterns of labour and marriage migration with particular emphasis on the changes that they are bringing about in society, culture and government policies. Hyun Mee Kim (Yonsei University) analysed South Korea’s recent transition toward a multicultural society by highlighting some of the key problems for migrants with regard to inequality, worker rights and human rights. She argued that the South Korean multicultural discourse remains within the framework of the hierarchical assimilation policies of the government. Chulhyo Kim (doctoral student, University of Sydney) examined the social transformation of the region of Ansan, from a rural town to an industrial city of migrants, by contextualising it in the nexus of neo-liberal globalization and international migration.

In a final Panel chaired by Stephen Castles, Farida Fozdar (University of Western Australia), Mine Eder, Hye-Kyung Lee, Raúl Delgado-Wise, Richard Manderson and William McClure (both Department of Immigration and Citizenship) discussed priorities for future research on social transformation and transnationalism, and possible consequences for government policies on migration and diversity. Multiple themes emerging from the papers were debated, however there was considerable agreement about the benefits of global comparisons of migrant experiences, and the need to use these to reshape ideas on human mobility and its relationship to economic and social change. This will in the long run have important consequences for research strategies and official policies.

Overall the Workshop sought to link local and national experiences to global trends. The unique migration history of each country was examined by scholars deeply engaged in those contexts. Factors such as that country’s insertion into the global economy, regional politics and contemporary cultures of migration and integration were investigated through the analytical lens of social transformation theory. Despite the contextual specificity of migration in these case studies, there were several points of convergence at different scales. The specific relationship between neoliberal restructuring and migration in each country had parallel – if very differently articulated – trajectories. Points of comparison emerging from discussions included contested

histories of migrant incorporation and activism, national securitisation agendas, the politics of urban space, the criminalization and economic marginalization of migrants, as well as emergent forms of translocal and cosmopolitan citizenship. These themes will be examined further in an edited volume resulting from the workshop (to be published by Palgrave-Macmillan).