Transnationalism and identity reconfigurations; the symbolic battlefield*

Transnacionalismo y reconfiguraciones de la identidad: el debate simbólico

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«Transnationalism as a social morphology; a type of consciousness; a mode of cultural production; an avenue of capital; a site of political engagement; and the (re)construction of place and locality»

Steven Vertovec.

«It is not the consciousness of men that determines their existence, but their social existence that determines their consciousness»

Karl Marx.

Resumen

Identidad y etnicidad son dos de las más importantes categorías en los estudios sociales y actualmente estos conceptos están en redefinición y reconstrucción, por cambios geopolíticos y sociocultura-

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les que han afectado el significado convencional de estas categorías, precipitadas por el proceso de globalización y la crisis del proyecto de modernidad. En este contexto, la cuestión clave es ¿cuáles son las implicaciones de la posesión y utilización de múltiples identidades étnicas y nacionales?

En una aproximación transnacional, esto tiene una crucial relevancia porque invita a revisar las categorías de ciudadanía, identificación y pertenecía en términos holísticos y proporciona enlaces con las categorías de poder, movilidad y clase. Este ensayo orienta esta cuestión focalizando en tres aspectos: primero, la relación entre identidad de estados –nación y ciudadanía, y como esta relación es afectada por prácticas transnacionales. Segundo, como el transnacionalismo y la migración amenazan las pertenencias fronterizas, produciendo nuevas confusiones en las identidades colectivas e individuales, y finalmente el conjunto de prácticas de resistencia que emergen de ciertos grupos de migrantes quienes poseen y usan múltiples identidades étnicas y nacionales –estatales, especialmente en relación con el poder y el significado simbólico en países anfitriones–.

Palabras clave

Identidad, etnicidad, transnacionalismo, múltiples identidades étnicas y nacionales, ciudadanía.

Abstract

Identity and ethnicity are two of the most important categories in social studies and contemporarily, these concepts are in re-definition and re-construction, cause geopolitical and socio – cultural changes affected the conventional meaning of these categories, precipitated by the globalization process and the crisis of the modernity project. In this context, the key question is *what are the implica-*

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tions of the possession and utilization of multiple ethnic and nation-state identities? In a transnational approach, this has a crucial relevance, because it invites a review of the categories of citizenship, identification and belonging in holistic terms, and provides linkages with the categories of power, mobility and class. This essay addresses this question focusing on three aspects: Firstly, the relationship between nation-state identities and citizenship, and how this relation is affected by transnational practices; secondly, how transnationalism and migration jeopardize "belonging borders", producing new "disorders" in individual and collective identity; and finally, the set of resistance practices that emerge from certain groups of migrants who possess and use multiple ethnic and nation-state identities, especially in relation with power and symbolic significance in host countries.

Keywords

Identity, ethnicity, transnationalism, *multiple ethnic and nation-state identities, citizenship.*

Introduction

Identity and ethnicity are two of the most important categories in social studies and contemporarily these concepts are in re-definition and re-construction, because geopolitical and socio – cultural changes affected the conventional meaning of these categories, precipitated by the globalization process and the crisis of the modernity project. According to scholars like Bauman (1998 & 2007), Castells (1997), Croucher (2004), Fenton (2003), Sassen (2007) and Jenkins (2004) the concepts "identity" and "ethnicity" denote a traditional modern perspective to understand the social world, and to classify social phenomena in dichotomies. However, this dualistic approach is not useful to recognize different types of individual and collective social actions and belongings. Moreover, one of the consequences

of living in "liquid times", "hybrid times" or in "the age of migration", is the recognition of pluralism, diversity and the emergence of multiple forms of political, social and cultural experiences (Bauman 2007). In other words, the current complexity of the social field needs more comprehensive categories and to reconsider heterogeneous points of view.

Likewise, some scholars like Vertovec (2009) and Beck (2002) argue that the "processes of globalization have affected the conventional nation – state model" (Vertovec 2009, p. 85) and that the nation- state is "transforming into a type of political organization or apparatus involving more multiple and overlapping jurisdictions, sets of identities and social orders no longer really contained by borders" (Beck 2002, p. 72); opening the door to rethink the implication of issues like immigration, transnationalism and political sovereignty in actual social structures. Thus, in his book "Transnationalism" (2009) Vertovec developed an interesting analytical triad, "Identities – borders – orders", to consider the implications of political challenges in the reconfiguration of identities. In Vertovec's words:

> As with the conventional model of the nation-state, some sense of identity is presumed to characterize a people; this identity/people is believed to be contiguous with a territory, demarcated by a border; within the border, laws underpin a specific social and political order or system; this social order – which is conceived to be different from orders outside the border – both draws upon and reinforces the sense of collective identity. 'Identities–borders–orders' are legitimated and reproduced through a system of narratives, public rituals and institutions, formal state bureaucracies and informal social relationships, written and unwritten regulations, sets of assumptions and expectations of civility and public behaviour (Vertovec 2009, p. 87).

Tying political regulations with socio - cultural representations.

In this context, the key question is *what are the implications of the possession and utilization of multiple ethnic and nation-state*

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identities? In a transnational approach, this has a crucial relevance, because it invites a review of the categories of citizenship, identification and belonging in holistic terms, and provides linkages with the categories of power, mobility and class. This essay addresses this question focusing on three aspects: Firstly, the relationship between nation-state identities and citizenship, and how this relation is affected by transnational practices; secondly, how transnationalism and migration jeopardize "belonging borders", producing new "disorders" in individual and collective identity; and finally, the set of resistance practices that emerge from certain groups of migrants who possess and use multiple ethnic and nation-state identities, especially in relation with power and symbolic significance in host countries.

Broken loyalties: Nation-state identities and citizenship in transnational times

Writes like Beck (2000), Croucher (2004), Vertovec (2009), Bauman (1998), Plummer (2003), Sassen (2007) and Yip (2008) share the view that the concept of citizenship is in reconfiguration, threat or "crisis", because new social characteristics, in particular migration and the globalization process, affected the original monolithic meaning of "citizenship" and its link with the nation - state. The traditional function of the nation – state to define senses of belonging with one territory, in part for its political and symbolical centrality, is now in dispute with different forms of social experience. In the same way, Croucher (2004) argues that "a declining role of relevance of the state is considered an indicator, or part and parcel, of the globalization process itself (…) emerging forms of belonging and citizenship connected from more familiar attachments to territories, identities or individual experiences" (Croucher 2004, p.36), encouraging a consideration of "another way" to think about the relationship between nation state and citizenship.

Traditionally, citizenship denotes "an individual's political membership or belonging to a nation-state, with the passport, for instance, as legal evidence of that membership. The state demands loyalty from the individual, and in return, the individual could expect duty of care and protection from the state. This conception of citizenship (…) prioritizes political belonging" (Yip 2008, p. 102), but as a result of the changes mentioned above, this approach was transformed, and now it is possible to find other types of "citizenship experience" and identifications, creating linkages with migration experiences, transnational practices, informative flows, political identities and subjective recognitions. Similarly, Croucher (2004) has argued that "On the one hand, citizenship as formal membership in a state seems to be declining as a central or salient form of belonging. On the other hand, there is ample evidence from around the world of individuals clinging to citizenship as a predominant method for separating "Us" from "Them"" (Croucher 2004, p. 70). As a consequence of that, terms such as "transnational citizenship" (Vertovec 2009), "cosmopolitan citizenship" (Held 2004), "media citizenship" (Castells 1997), "ecological citizenship" (Dobson 2004), "global citizenship" (Falk 1994), "cultural citizenship" (Stevenson 2003) or "intimate citizenship" (Plummer 2003), are some examples of these new forms of individual and collective citizenship experiences; and phenomena like mobility, migration and transnationalism have an enormous responsibility in the creation of these new social categories.

To underpin this part, it is important to make four assertions. Firstly, transnational practices help to create these new forms of citizenship and reconfigure nation-state identities (Vertovec 2009; Itzigsohn 2000), because migrant transnational practices jeopardize traditional forms of participation, representation, association and engagement in two ways: one, by incorporating new perceptions of political action (Vertovec 2009); and two, by using new techno-

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logies of communication to express these new political approaches, trying with this to transform homeland political representations (Castells 2006). The empirical cases of Haitians, Dominicans and Salvadorans in Itzigsohn's research (Itzigsohn 2000), the examples of Colombians, Dominicans and Salvadorans in Guarnizo, Portes and Haller's work (Guarnizo, Portes & Haller 2003), and the case of Ukrainian communities in GereÖffy and *Çağlar's* approach (GereÖffy and *Çağlar 2008)*; are a good example of that. Secondly, at the same time these new forms of citizenship have a territorial and geographical dilemma as result of transnational practices, because "Transnational migrants often live in a country in which they do not claim citizenship and claim citizenship in a country in which they do not live" (Fitzgerald 2000), Within this situation a tension between rights and identity emerges, in Kastoryano's words "The country of origin becomes a source of identity and the country of residence a source of right (…) the result is a confusion between rights and identity, culture and politics, state and nations" (Kastoryano 2002); this is an example of the direct consequences of possessing and using multiple nation – state identities, and assuming transnational conditions.

Thirdly, it is possible to establish that immigrant – based transnationalism causes a symbolic transformation in the notions of citizenship and imagined community (Anderson 1991), because the geographical category of "territory" has an implicit relation with the social category of "identification", producing different disputes and ruptures in this field. In other words, Itzigsohn (2000) argue that "The challenge of immigration to territorially based conceptions of citizenship has two sources: On the one hand, immigration poses the question of the terms of inclusion of immigrants within the imagined national community of the receiving state and its legal and political order. On the other hand, immigrants create social and political linkages with their country of origin, establishing ins-

titutions that transcend the political boundaries of the sending and receiving countries" (Itzigsohn 2000, p.1146). Itzigsohn establishes a relationship between identities and new forms of political action and citizenship that transcend the territorial and political boundaries of states. This tie is an implicit implication of the possession of multiple nation – state identities.

Finally, the sense of "loyalty" towards home country for some migrants has important reconfigurations in this context, because this symbolic tie presents two structural transformations: firstly, contemporary forms of disconnection "from above" from some transnational migrants to territorial social formations (Appadurai 1996; Bhabba 1990); and secondly, the emergence of symbolic "supraterritorial" loyalties that transcend the territory of the modern nation – state, especially in the construction of new forms of loyalties that are expressed through the revalidation of homeland cultural practices like dancing, cooking, life style, fashion; and reproducing homeland socio-cultural psyque in host countries (Scholte 2000). Moreover, in Pierre Bourdieu's approach, these transnational migrants' practices are an effort to try to preserve their "original/local habitus" (Bourdieu 1984) using symbolic and cultural loyalties. To sum up, one important implication of possessing multiple nation – state identities is the permanent symbolic confrontation between loyalty with "the home country" and loyalty with "the host country", but this tension is a subjective recognition and a social construction as well, and is in permanent change determined by specific socio-cultural conditions.

Habitus in tension: Individual and collective identity disorders

The second aspect to develop an approach to the question what are the implications of the possession and utilization of multiple ethnic and nation-state identities, is to create linkages with the ques-

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tion how transnationalism and migration jeopardize "belonging borders" and what type of new "disorders" it is possible to analyze in individual and collective identity. It is important to consider two aspects in these issues: on the one hand, the implications of adopting dual citizenship for some transnational migrants which is a conventional instrumentalization of the possession of multiple nation-state identities; and, on the another hand, the repercussions of using multiple nation – state identities in transnational migrants' habitus. Moreover, the relation of these aspects with categories like power and class is important, because these categories helps to shape social structures, cultural power relations and identities; in Castells's words (1997) "The social construction of identity always takes place in a context marked by power relationships" (Castells 1997, p.7) and issues like dual citizenship or habitus reconstruction are an expression of social hierarchy and power as well.

Some scholars like Vertovec (2009) and Croucher (2004) argue that dual citizenship/nationality is an alternative form and conception of belonging to a particular set of countries; increasing sophistication in communications and transportation technologies facilitating the practice of multiple memberships. Moreover, in transnational times the use of Internet, satellites, fax machines, mobile phones and new forms of communication derivative from them, like social networks (Facebook, Twitter), VoIP Phone Calls (Skype) or individual sites (Blogs, mini tweets, RSS), are crucial to reconfigure social relations and to build new forms of belonging between states and people. However, issues like loyalty, commitment, rights and duties challenge the concept of dual citizenship, or "Plural Citizenship" in Schuck's words (1998), because "dual citizenship violates the fundamental principle of citizenship as membership in one and only one state and the relationship of mutually exclusive rights and responsibilities between a state and its citizens and citizens and their state" (Croucher 2004, p.74). This start a discussion of the implica-

tions to assume this type "of bigamy" (Jones-Correa 2000) and the individual responsibilities to maintain different symbolic and legal ties with two or more territories.

In this context, the practice of dual citizenship has three implications in relation to individual and collective identity. Firstly, dual citizenship represents a contemporary threat to the concepts of *jus sanguinis*, *jus soli* and *jure matrimonni*, principal concepts to obtain one citizenship, and, at the same time, cause a tension between individual identity and citizenship recognition, because the "identification" with a specific country involves a long term social process, and obtaining citizenship means "to be part of" this set of cultural and social values. In other words, dual citizenship to create traditional "identification" meanings, a process that involves knowing "who we are, who others are, who they think we are" (Jenkins 2004, p.5), and suggests a power struggle between individual and collective social positions; in Jenkins's words "hierarchies of collective identification may conflict with hierarchies of individual identification" (Jenkins 2004, p.6) and transnational experiences are a example of that.

Secondly, following scholars like Bhabba (1990), Anderson (1991) and Appadurai (1996), there is the view that individual and collective identity are expressed through narratives, rhetoric, symbols and public rituals that to help to establish a "national narrative" between citizens and country, creating symbolical ties with the territory and sharing one dominant vision about history: winners, values, ethics, socio-cultural process, etc. One of the implications of possessing and using multiple ethnic and nation-state identities is a symbolical confusion or disorder in this "national narrative" (Gellner 1993), because the assumption of antagonistic historical points of view of specific historical causes, could produce a bewilderment of loyalties and identifications. For example, if a person has a Co-

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lombian citizenship for *jus sanguinis* and received Spanish citizenship through naturalization, what kind of individual national narrative is it possible to establish in issues like the American Conquest? Was it genocide? Was a legitimate conquest? Was it an interchange or a catholic massacre? What type of loyalty emerges? In this case, these kinds of questions remain open.

Finally, dual citizenship/nationality present a strong implication in individual political identities, especially in claiming rights and participatory practices in both countries, transforming with this collective identities and state policies. In Koslowski's words (2001) "the migrant's act of taking on two nationalities can be indicative of neither assimilation nor homeland political identification but rather of an ambivalent political identity, multiple political identities or even apolitical identity" (Koslowski 2001, p. 34). This focuses on political changes of this practice of plural citizenship. Likewise, there is a clear relationship with the category of "class" as well, because, is possible to determinate a "class disorder" when transnational migrants use dual citizenship to produce class mobility in their homeland country, promoting in some cases a kind of "citizenship of convenience" (Fritz 1998). In a nutshell, the possession of a second or third passport "has become not just a link to a homeland but also a glorified travel visa, a license to do business, a stake in a second economy, and escape hatch, even a status symbol" (Fritz 1998, p.1), showing with this how it is possible to obtain higher social status due to second citizenship and consequently class mobilization in the transnational migrants' homeland. The research: "Transnational orientations from home: constructions of Israel and transnational space among Ukrainian Jewish youth" by Rebecca Golbert (2001) about Ukrainian Jews in United States and Germany, and Pauline Gardiner's research (2008) of Philippine – Canada migration, are good examples of this "class disorder" in specific social contexts.

The second approach to analyze the repercussion of possessing and using multiple nation – state identities, in this section of this essay, is the relationship between transnational practices and "habitus disorder". According to Pierre Bourdieu (1977, 1984 & 1990) and Vertovec (2009), the concept of habitus refers "to a socially and culturally conditioned set of durable dispositions or propensities for certain kinds of social action. This set or repertoire is internalized by individuals in the course of their life experiences and in relation to their social positions. The dispositions of habitus selectively generate everyday social practices immediately and in the context of specific social fields. As a set of neither wholly conscious nor wholly non-conscious perceptions, outlooks, points of reference, habitus guides personal goals and social interactions" (Vertovec 2009, p. 66), showing how everyday practices has a relation with socio-cultural spheres. Moreover, Jenkins (1992) comments that "the power of the habitus derives from the thoughtlessness of habit and habituation, rather than consciously learned rules and principles. Socially competent performances are produced as a matter of routine, without explicit reference to a body of codified knowledge, and without the actors necessarily knowing what they are doing" (Jenkins 1992, p. 76). Finally, according to Bourdieu (1990) most practices can only be accounted for by relating them between "the social conditions in which the habitus that generated them was constituted, to the social conditions in which it is implemented" (Bourdieu 1990, p. 56), suggesting with these words a relationship between social behavior and socio-cultural structure.

In this context, transnational practices and using and possessing multiple ethnic and nation – state identities will produce a type of "habitus disorder", because migration experiences change everyday social practices, and individuals have to implement another type of habitus to adapt to new social contexts. This phenomenon has two considerations: on the one hand, migrants' have to reconsider cultu-

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ral values, narratives and socio-cultural beliefs to engage with host country culture, and, on the another hand, the tension with their cultural background is problematic and sometimes irreconcilable with the existence of "a dual frame of reference" (Guarnizo 1997). The example of how Dominicans constantly compare their situation in their "home" society to their situation in the "host" society abroad, in Guarnizo`s research (Guarnizo 1997), is a good example of this "habitus disorder" in specific contexts. Moreover, it is possible to find another example of this "habitus disorder" in Roger Rouse's research of people's daily rhythms and routines of life in Michoacán (Mexico) and California (United States), where this author establishes the category "bifocality" to comprehend habitus disorder in transnational experience in both countries for some Mexican migrants (Roger Rouse 1992). To sum up, habitus disorder is an expression of this cultural change produced by transnational practices, and the possession of dual citizenship presents socio-cultural implications in "home habitus" and in "host habitus", producing a new set of cultural configurations.

Resistance practices, power and symbolic significance

The final aspects to consider in this essay in relation to the question *what are the implications of the possession and utilization of multiple ethnic and nation-state identities*? Is to analyze the set of resistance practices of some migrants that emerge, especially in relation to power and symbolic significance in host countries. To develop this point it is important to make three assertions: Firstly, in resistance practice it is possible to understand an outcome of power relations that imply acceptance on the part of those involved in them in a specific social structure. This structure is shaped by socio- cultural elites who produce mainstream cultural values to reproduce a singular and particular status quo (Negri & Hardt 2000; Barbalet 1985; Hollander & Einwohner 2004). In this context it is possible

to define transnational migrants, on the one hand, and host countries, on the other hand, as subjects of asymmetric symbolical power relations, because transnational migrants try to alter power relations to be "integrated" or "assimilated" in different ways: from "below" or from "above" (Vertovec 2009), and host countries try to "preserve" mainstream values (Kastoryano 2002). In the same way, it is pertinent to recognize a power struggle between migrants and host countries to control the symbolic regime in specific contexts, as result of this power confrontation of particular cultural values, behaviors, ethics and social regulations; in Foucault word's (1978) "where there is power, there is resistance, and yet, or rather consequently, this resistance is never in a position of exteriority in relation to power" (Foucault 1978, p.95). To sum up, possessing multiple nation-state identities requires the identification of power relations between dominant and dominated (Bourdieu 1990) to access recognition and power in particular social fields.

Secondly, possessing and using multiple nation-state identities implicates a resistance practice against discrimination as well, because with this action migrants try to reconfigure symbolical regimes using "other ways" to be part "of Us"; and, finally, to alter political rules and exclusionary migration policies. Moreover, using multiple nation-state identities involves elements of resistance, as migrants aim to become "visible" again in public spheres where previously their presence was not accepted. In Hollander & Einwohner's point of view resistance is a question of visibility as well (Hollander & Einwohner 2004), and is an action that helps to rethink symbolic ties of recognition in particular social structures, where transnational experiences are a relevant phenomenon. Finally, resistance practices such as: cultural bricolage (Jamenson 1991); conforming social movements to claim migrants' rights and change migration policies in some host countries (Fitzgerald 2000); establishing cybercommunities to help with the process of naturalization or citizenship

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applications (Vertovec 2009); changing original "home names" for typical "host countries names" to be "engaged" or connected with the new culture (LaVigne 2007); transforming international activities through embassies, consulates, and missions to recapture the loyalty of expatriates whilst, at the same time, conserving and supporting dual citizenship for some immigrants (Portes 2001); and reconfiguring analytic, emotional, creative, behavioural and functional competences for some dual citizenship migrants (Koehn & Rosenau 2002); could be an indirect implication of using multiple nation-states identities and trying to change power relations between these social actors.

Conclusions

To conclude, it is necessary to make three final assertions. Firstly, answering the question *what are the implications of the possession and utilization of multiple ethnic and nation-state identities*? can be approached in a multitude of ways and it is necessary to explore the cultural, social *and* political implications of this question. Relations between categories of power, habitus, class and identity could be the clue to develop more comprehensive interpretations, and the three aspects addressed in this essay try to start this discussion. However, it is important to say that the implications of using and possessing multiple ethnic and nation-state identities are a social construction as well and are portrayed in symbolical regimes that it is necessary to analyze with special attention. In other words, having dual citizenship in the UK does not have the same significance as it does in Colombia, and there is always a power struggle between social actors. Secondly, the possession and utilization of multiple ethnic and nation-state identities is a contemporary example of the crisis of the traditional nation-state model and its reliance upon modern categories to understand the social world. In this context, it is necessary to develop more theoretical inclusionary approaches to understand

phenomenon like plural citizenship, and to start to think about so-cial aspects "in plural" such as citizenship (citizenships), transna-tionalism (transnationalisms), migration (migrations), and identity (identities). The challenge is to create contemporary social categories to comprehend new social phenomena and their implications, like multiple ethnic and nation-state identities.

Thirdly, following scholars such as Hansen (2002) and Weil (2002) it is possible to find five final arguments against dual citi-zenship and its implications: "1) it can produce competing loyalties; 2) it creates a security threat; 3) It impedes immigrant integration; 4) it increases international instability; and 5) it violates equality by giving dual nationalities" (Hansen & Weil 2002, p. 6). On the other hand, the same authors establish these five arguments in favour: "1) loyalty can indeed be multiple (e.g., the project of the European Union is based on this); 2) the security threat exists independently of dual citizenship/nationality; 3) far from impeding immigrant in-tegration, dual citizenship/nationality furthers it (policies tolerant of dual citizenship/nationality are shown to increase naturalization rates); 4) the instability problem – exemplified in matters of mili-tary service, taxation and inheritance rules – is lessening through bilateral negotiations; and 5) equality issues are a concern, but the additional rights and opportunities offered by dual citizenship/na-tionality are often not much greater than those already extended by permanent resident status" (Hansen & Weil 2002, p. 8). To sum up, implications and arguments in favor or against dual citizens-hip always depend on symbolical, political, cultural and social bac-kgrounds, and their instrumentalization is in narratives, practices and social positions in particular cultural fields for different social actors like migrants, governments, NGOs, etc. The final question is: what type of new "imagined communities" is it possible to create in this tension between transnational practices, identities and dual ci-tizenships? The answer, definitively, is in the symbolical battlefield.

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Vol. 3. N.° 2 p. 31-50. Julio-diciembre de 2010