

Migration and Mobility: Universality and Resulting Tensions

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Abstract

The aim of this paper is to contribute to the discussion on normative universals in theory and practice by debating the universality of migration and its consequences. For it is precisely the all-encompassing universal of mobility which is causing some of the tensions in the world that need in-depth reflection. Some of these will form the focus of this paper.

We will mainly concentrate on three such moments, or tensions, which are related to the universality of mobility: First, we aim to describe the tension which emerges between migrants and nation-states and which calls for global cooperation and solutions; second, transnationalism, as an effect of mobility and globalisation, will be discussed and we shall show how the transnational practices of migrants clash with current political ideas about integration and the social cohesion of societies; finally, we turn to the effects of the circulation of one specific idea of culture, that is, the idea of a reified culture that migrants carry with them—this raises serious questions about the mechanisms of social exclusion and inclusion and gives the impression that cultural conflicts are a universal destiny in the globalised world. The aim of this paper is, therefore, quite a modest one: to describe the tensions that emerge from the universality of mobility and to touch on some suggestions as to how to deal with them.

1. The universality of migration and mobility

The idea that the normal or natural condition of human beings is sedentari-ness and immobility is accurate only when taking a very superficial view. If one looks closer, one easily detects that human beings have always been

mobile; we could say they have been wandering and moving all over the world looking for better living conditions since the beginning of humanity. Even in the ancient world, for example during Roman times, as well as in the era of the Vikings, during the crusades, colonisation, and the mass European migration to North America in the 17th and 18th century, men and women have always been on the move. Some were escaping poverty or war, others looking for better lives, some were just greedy for adventure or wanted to discover new worlds. The American sociologist Robert E. Park, one of the first migration sociologists and a founder of the famous Chicago School, formulated at the beginning of the last century the hypothesis that evolution and progress in human history was (not only but) mainly caused by continuous migration movements and the incidental collision, conflicts and fusions of people and cultural systems which they occasion (Park 1928). One can decide either to adopt this pro-migratory stance and universal attitude or to negate it: there is, however, no way to avoid recognising that since the end of World War II migration and mobility have increased considerably all over the world. The development of modern means of communication, as well as transport technologies and globalisation processes have facilitated and enhanced mobility worldwide (Pennix et al. 2006). At the present time, there is no region left in the world which is not affected by mobility, be it as a destination, transit country or country of origin.

In 2005 there were nearly 200 million international migrants, counting only those who had lived outside their home country for more than a year and including 9.2 million refugees. This figure is—just to give a basis for comparison—equivalent to the population of the fifth largest country, Brazil. In other words, 1 in 35 persons is an international migrant, or 3% of the world's population; and half of these people are women (Global Commission on International Migration GCIM 2005).

An analytical glance reveals that migration and mobility can take on different morphologies: There is the first type of migrant, in the well-known sense of Simmel's (1992, p. 764) «stranger», «*who comes today and stays tomorrow*»¹. We are thinking of the settled «guest workers» like the Italians in Switzerland, or more generally of all the migrants in the Fordist sense of the term who constitute the group of classical working migrants. However, we can also find other types of migrants who are not sedentary in the new host country—they are much more mobile and even circulate. The economic and political transformations in the last decades, the weakening of the social state and globalisation processes in general have generated a new demand for workers in different economic sectors and new forms of mobility for women and men: the so-called «modern nomads», who do highly skilled work in IT or management and circulate globally from working

place to working place, are one example (Iredale 2001, Müller-Jentsch 2008). The demand for a feminine workforce in specific service sectors, like in the household, in the care of the elderly and children, or in the sex industry (Agustin 2007), are other examples of newer forms of mobility. With the entry of women into the labour markets in industrialised countries, the need for female migrants who do the reproductive work previously done by native women induced mobility (Hochschild 1983, Sassen 2003). These women often have families in their home countries and they are much less sedentarised than the traditional Fordist migrants. Finally, we find one type of mobility which is, by its nature, even farther away from the one-way migration which was typical of the classical working migrant, and that is durable circular mobility. In this case, mobility is not only a way of connecting a point of departure and a point of destination, but mobility is itself the strategy of these individuals. Instead of going away in order to establish themselves in another country, these migrants stay permanently mobile in order to improve or maintain their quality of life. Algerians who circulate between Algeria, France and Istanbul buying and selling their wares (Tarius 1993, 2002) are an illustration of this type of mobile person. But the phenomenon of the so-called «commerce à la valise» (business out of a suitcase) involving women in different parts of the world can also be classified within this category. Commerce à la valise is an activity which fundamentally rests on the competence in mobility of those concerned who buy and sell their products on the road, as shown by Peraldi (2007) for Morocco and by Schmoll (2005) for Tunisian women. This practice of mobility is also widespread among women from the former communist countries in Eastern Europe, where post-communist transformations have generated new migration processes (Morokvasic 2003). In order to escape the local economic conditions, many women, both qualified and unqualified, travel to countries in the European Union or the United States. They go for a weekend or from Monday to Friday in order to earn money through a whole range of different activities; they pendulate, and some of them go back to work in their regular jobs: some do business with pirate music recordings; others work as domestic employees or just over the weekends as prostitutes. Cabaret dancers from Eastern European countries who work in Switzerland also partially correspond to this type of migrant (Dahinden/Stants 2006). Some of them complete a real global *parcours*: they work in erotic night clubs in Japan, in Switzerland, and in the Lebanon and then they go back home on a regular basis in order to be with their families, to work in another job or to continue their studies.

The purpose of this short introduction was to elaborate on the fact that today mobility is a universal (see also Urry 2007); it can adopt different morphologies and implicates highly skilled as well as lowly skilled people,

men as well as women; migration movements go from south to south, from north to north or from south to north.

It is precisely this all-encompassing universal of mobility which is causing some of the tensions in the world that require in-depth reflection. This paper concentrates on three such moments, or tensions, which are related to the universality of mobility: First, the tension which emerges between migrants and nation-states and which calls for global cooperation and solutions will be described; second, transnationalism, as an effect of mobility and globalisation, will be discussed and we shall show how the transnational practices of migrants clash with current political ideas about integration and the social cohesion of societies; finally, we turn to the effects of the circulation of one specific idea about culture, that is, the idea of a reified culture that migrants carry with them—this raises serious questions about the mechanisms of social exclusion and inclusion and gives the impression that cultural conflicts are a universal destiny in the globalised world. The aim of this paper is, therefore, quite a modest one: to describe the tensions that emerge from the universality of mobility and to touch on some suggestions as to how to deal with them.

2. Tension one: Mobility and nation-states

Although different forms of mobility have been a universal since the beginning of human history, the idea of controlling and managing this mobility is quite new. In other terms, even though migration is a structural element of human history, the control of migration has mainly occupied policy makers since the formation and establishment of the modern nation-state.

Ernest Gellner (1983) demonstrated how the congruence, nowadays considered natural, between national, territorial, political, economic and social boundaries actually emerged in the course of nationalism and nation-building processes. For Gellner nationalism is primarily a political principle which holds that the political and the national unit should be congruent, thus, having a nation with its people and culture is not an inherent attribute of humanity, but it has come to appear as such (Gellner 1983, p. 6). That is what Gellner called the premises of nationalism.

As the nationalist conception of people and society took hold during the nation-building process, the conception of migrants also began to change and free circulation was replaced by historically new forms of border control. With the creation of the modern nation-state and its ideas of belonging (naturally) to a specific ethnic or national group, access to its territory, to specific rights and certain services—which the modern welfare state is supposed to guarantee to its citizens—began to be regulated in a very spe-

cific manner (Mackert 1999, Wimmer 2002). In this sense the formation of modern nation-states can be understood as a double process of closure: closure of the geographical domain by controlling borders and closure of the domain of membership through its codification. From then on, it became necessary for a person to have a permit to enter and reside in a country, creating the distinction between nationals who did belong and ‹foreigners› who did not.² Wimmer and Schiller (2002) showed conclusively how, according to those premises of nationalism, immigrants appear to be anomalies, destroying the isomorphism between people, sovereign and citizenry, but also between people and nation and between people and solidarity group. Immigrants are an exception to the rule of sedentariness within the boundaries of nation-states (Wimmer/ Schiller 2002, pp. 309–310). It follows that living as foreigners among a ‹host nation› means not having the same rights as other citizens and being deprived of a set of specific resources, both concrete and symbolic. This was the birth of migration control. Nation-states have the sovereignty to define which people are to be admitted into their territory, the states from which they can come and the rights they will receive. On the other side, a state also has the sovereignty to define which members of its national population may or may not leave its territory; it can try to regulate not only immigration but also emigration. For instance, emigration from Albania was forbidden during the whole communist period up to 1989.

Likewise, Switzerland implemented a law controlling immigration and defining the rights of the ‹foreigners› in its territory for the first time in 1931, thereby ending by law a phase of liberal circulation; liberal bilateral agreements were terminated as early as 1914. Since then, Switzerland has continually created new categories of immigrants with different rights through its ethno-national differentiation:³ for example, working migrants with residence permits or annual permits, or the category of asylum seekers known since 1979. In line with other European countries, from 1990 onwards Switzerland developed restrictive and defensive immigration policies to keep out migrants from outside the EU/EFTA. Today, people from outside Europe can no longer enter Switzerland legally unless they are highly qualified or have a right to family reunification (Efionayi-Mäder et al. 2003, Piguet 2005).

The point is that these efforts by nation-states (or conglomerates of nation-states as is the case with the EU) to control universal migration have different effects, some of them desired, others unintended: it seems obvious that, with a spiralling pattern of new measures to restrict and control migration to Western European states, ‹innovative› forms of immigration, new actors and new dynamics will also develop. Tougher regulation has by definition led to more illegality and irregularity, creating fresh opportuni-

ties for new actors like smugglers and traffickers. And we can also say that the new migration policy has created another important category of migrants: the «Sans Papiers», as they are commonly called in Switzerland, or undocumented migrants, referring to migrants living and working in Switzerland with no legal residence or work permits.⁴ Moreover, during the 1990s, the phenomenon of undocumented migrants linked to human smuggling—defined here as the facilitation of illegal entry into states for profit—gained a lot of attention in the international arena. Meanwhile, European states have accorded the fight against undocumented migrants and human smuggling highest priority. In the public debate there is widespread «moral panic» linking smuggling to organised crime, as well as to threats to sovereignty, the internal security of states and to the exploitation of human beings, thus intensifying the picture of the «enemy immigrant», which is based on the norms of nationalism. However, social scientists have found little evidence for the claims that organised crime is involved in smuggling (Laczko/ Klekowski von Koppenfeld 2000, Van Liempt/ Doornik 2006). They suggest that many smuggling operations take place within the respective ethnic communities, families or groups of acquaintances. Based on interviews with Kosovo-Albanians, Iraqis and Sri Lankans in Switzerland, Efnayy-Mäder et al. (2001) showed that all of these people, who had requested asylum in Switzerland in the 1990s, had been smuggled at some point along the trajectory that brought them to Switzerland, but most in quite an unorganised manner. This does not however detract from the fact that—as we can see almost every day on TV or in the newspapers—a lot of migrants lose their lives while trying to get to Europe. Furthermore, since 9/11, mobility has been very closely related to the question of internal security, and terrorism has reinforced the picture of the threatening alien.⁵

Obviously it will not be possible here to present solutions for overcoming the tension resulting from the universal of migration, on the one hand, and the logic of nation-states and their efforts to cut back unwanted migration on the other. One could propose that we abolish the nation-state and seek other forms of political communities, but we are all aware that this would be just an intellectual exercise without further consequences—although it could be an interesting one. We could also suggest that we return to the meaning of nation as a political community not associated with ethnicity, as postulated by Touraine (1997).

However, on a more practical level, today many people realise that this tension has high costs: on the one hand, the cost to the nation-states of establishing high security controls on their borders with all related issues, and on the other hand, the human cost on the side of the migrants. The fact that migration nowadays has a global character brings various consequences with it: one is that it seems difficult, if not impossible, for each nation-

state to control migration on its own. Migration, and this is emphasized by most specialists in this domain, is a phenomenon that needs global and interstate cooperation in order to avoid the costs which are the result of the restrictive immigrant policies described above (Aleinikoff 2002, GCIM 2005). Meanwhile, there have been some initiatives aiming at cooperation on this issue—the «Bern Initiative» or the recommendation of the Global Commission for Migration which emphasises interstate cooperation and collaboration are examples. Nation-states are as universal as migration and mobility; in the course of globalisation processes, the emergence of international political structures (EU, WHO, etc.) and the growing codification of a human rights regime, nation-states may have lost sovereignty and power with regard to their ability to regulate economic and other dimensions, as postulated by some authors (for instance Sassen 1996). However, when it comes to migration and its control, nation-states are not outdated, neither have they lost their power, so we cannot confirm this «post-nationalist» hypothesis. But we may have to think about new forms of the state and of possible interstate cooperation between the countries of immigration and emigration. We are therefore still left with the following questions: Can we globally establish a migration system respecting universal values and, if so, which values? Can we introduce universal and democratic values into the migration regimes of the industrialised countries?

3. Tension two: Transnationalism and the logic of nation-states

One of the side effects of migration and mobility is the development of transnationalism and transnational practices by the people on the move. Transnational migrant practices again challenge the logic of nation-states but in yet another way, which will be shown in the following.

More than a decade has passed since the idea of «transnationalism» was introduced into academic discourse. Nina Glick Schiller and her colleagues (Schiller et al. 1995) apparently had a finger on the «Zeitgeist», as this concept has evolved into one of the most popular among migration scholars. From then on, this new perspective on migration phenomena put the accent on how migrant networks were constructed and reconstructed in various societies and on the way in which transnational spaces evolve—as the notion implies—crossing *national* boundaries. Generally speaking, the idea of transnationalism emerged from the realisation that immigrants maintain ties with their countries of origin, making home and host society a single arena for social action by moving back and forth across international borders, as well as between different cultures and social systems, and by exploiting transnational relations as a form of social capital for their living

strategies (Vertovec 1999). One group of case studies showed how new interdependencies are built up in the migration process and how migrants are involved in creative social, economic and political activities in transnational fields all over the world (Levitt/ Jaworsky 2007, Pries 1997). Migrants send remittances and financially support their family and friends living in their home country (or in third countries). They might be involved in transnational business (Guarnizo 2003), or be politically engaged simultaneously in both their host country and in their country of origin (Ostergaard-Nielsen 2003). Last but not least, they maintain social relations with their friends and families at home (Dahinden 2005a).⁶

In this way, migrants can identify with more than one nation-state, but sometimes, if they come from nationalised states, their loyalty might remain with the state of origin—this is the point where the tension arises: Civil societies in both the emigration and immigration countries raise questions regarding the allegiance and political *bona fides* of people whose social identities are largely framed by their connections to the state. From the standpoint of the receiving states, international migrants are aliens, not just strangers. This view was incorporated into the first, classical integration or assimilation theory developed in the US and imported (with some adaptations) into the European context. Since 1920 the assimilation of migrants has been understood as a process which will result in complete assimilation and complete identification of the migrants with the host society (Gordon 1964, Park et al. 1967 [1925]). Only this outcome—so the hypothesis—will guarantee social cohesion: This is because a common reservoir of norms and representations is a condition of social cohesion. During this process migrants pass from <aliens> to nationals. However, in the middle of the last century, the scientific and political agenda changed fundamentally with regard to conceptions of assimilation: During the 1960s in the course of the so-called «ethnic revival» (Glazer/ Moynihan 1963), the ground was prepared for the politics of multiculturalism and cultural pluralism, as well as affirmative action and equal opportunities. A «differentialist turn», as Brubaker (2001) called the phenomenon, was the result. Particularistic ethnic and cultural identities became the basis for identity politics and were now evaluated as being important for integration—they were no longer seen as an obstacle to assimilation into the host country or its <core society>.⁷ At present we are entering the third phase of these debates, a phase which is characterised by a kind of <backlash> against excessive diversity caused by multiculturalism (Grillo 2007). In different countries the debate in politics and the public arena is centring on the question of whether our societies have become too diverse and heterogeneous, even in the scientific literature this question is more and more prominent. Following this line of reasoning, Putnam (2007) showed that too much ethnic diversity

leads to less social capital in societies. It does not come as a surprise, therefore, that we are witnessing, on the one hand, the return of classical assimilation theories—they are now labelled neo-assimilationist theories (Alba/ Nee 1997, Brubaker 2001)—and a new interest in assimilation politics in the public and political arenas on the other hand.

It might be interesting to know that, historically, assimilation efforts were always strongest in times of war, as the non-loyalty of immigrants towards their host state could be a serious danger to internal security in such situations—for instance, during the First World War great efforts were made to Americanise Germans living in the United States and even to force them to assimilate (Waldinger/ Fitzgerald 2004).

Nowadays the world is not at war in that way, but still these kinds of neo-assimilation efforts are growing and voices against diversity are gaining ground: One hypothesis which could be put forward is that the increasing assimilation efforts are closely linked to the <war against terrorism and mobility>. The London bombing, for instance, brought up the problem of the non-loyalty of even nationals and the detention of a terrorist with the name of Fritz in Germany showed this problem in all its acidity. Another hypothesis is that the formation of nation-states has entered a new phase demanding even more identification than ever. The idea of the adaptation of migrants to <Swiss>, <German> or <French> norms and values is in demand, while at the same time pluralism is becoming a central feature in these societies. Politicians have put this idea into practice, for example, in Germany with new naturalisation tests. Baden-Württemberg and Hessen have introduced questionnaires, where norms and cultural values are examined and the fidelity of the candidate towards democracy and his or her general loyalty towards the German state is tested. In France, migrants have to sign a contract of integration. The signature on this contract is intended to show both their willingness to engage positively in the integration process and their loyalty towards the fundamental principles of French society. In Switzerland, newly arrived migrants in various cantons will soon have to sign a contract where they confirm that they will adhere to Swiss norms and values.

In brief, we are witnessing, on the one hand, growing transnational (and border-crossing) practices with the involvement of migrants. On the other hand, the logic of the nation-state clearly puts them under pressure to accept a single identification and to engage in nationalised identity politics in the new country or the country of origin. The universal of the logic of nation-states and the universal of the transnational practices of migrants demonstrate here yet again the tensions and contradictions. This tension raises different questions: Is the social cohesion of societies possible only under conditions of unique and single-nation identities as classical sociology

claimed? How should we deal with these new forms of pluralism in a nation-state? Do we need to find—in our current pluralistic and diversified societies—new ways of binding societies together and of creating a ⟨we⟩?

4. Tension three: The globalisation of the idea of a reified culture—or the illusion of culture as destiny

The last point we would like to raise is closely related to the previous ones, but highlights another dimension, a dimension commonly called ⟨culture⟩. With regard to mobility, one can see that not only do humans circulate, but so do cultural meanings: transmitted by migrants or through the diversified channels of information technologies, cultural meanings travel around the globe. What is the outcome of this enhanced diffusion of cultural meanings around the world? While some predict that in future we shall have to deal with one single homogeneous culture dispersed all over the globe—with McDonaldisation as its symbol—others predict that we shall have to face cultural demarcation and reinforced cultural identities. Following this line of thought, some postulate that mobility will result in cultural conflicts, and that these will be ineluctable.

At the present time we find two ideal-typical, and fundamentally different, ideas about ⟨culture⟩; one idea is widespread in scientific publications, the other in the public and political spheres. The first type of idea we will call the «figure of creativity», the second the «figure of stability» (see also Dahinden 2005b).⁸

Let us start with the scientific idea of culture. Here, the global wandering of cultural meanings with migrants, or through information channels, is seen as having the effect of multiplying cultural systems. Culture is seen as creative—new cultural products like ⟨ethnomusic⟩ emerge when the local and global contents of cultural meanings encounter each other. In the last decades, new concepts have been developed to help define the new modi, the conditions of ⟨culture⟩ production and cultural transformations. We speak of *hybridisation*, of *cultural métissage* or of *creolisation* (Hylland Eriksen 2003, Werbner 1997, Hannerz 1992, 1996).⁹ When different cultural meanings meet, new cultural forms are created from these meanings and the cultural meanings are (locally) recontextualised. In this sense, human beings have to be understood as ⟨bricoleurs⟩. If a play by Shakespeare is performed in Burkina Faso by local actors, then it no longer belongs to England, but it is globalised in order to be ⟨localised⟩, or adapted locally. The old meanings have now, without doubt, been modified. The ideas which perceive of culture as a creative process performed by human beings in specific local contexts and involving specific power relations we shall

call the «figure of creativity». But this is only half of the story: Such dynamic ideas about culture and the ability of actors to make sense of their environment clash today with ideas about culture which insist on its stability and immutability. In the latter, ideal-type culture is linked to a given territory (the culture of the Swiss is in Switzerland, the culture of the Serbs is in Serbia, and so on). Culture is not only seen as being linked to a certain territory, but if one leaves the territory of one's culture, it is as if this culture necessarily accompanies you, as a piece of luggage one cannot abandon and which determines what one is able to do in other places.

For most Swiss citizens it may be obvious that «the Swiss» are far from being a homogeneous group with an overarching collective culture; in fact, they are plural and diverse on various levels. But immigrants and ethnic or national groups are seen as invariable and it is taken for granted that immigrant groups are constituted along ethnic and cultural lines; thus the habit of referring to such groups as the Turks, Yugos or Albanians, as if they were homogeneous and clearly circumscribed, and as if their members formed a unitary and collective group, with a common purpose and a common culture. In this kind of thinking, we find a phenomenon for which Brubaker (2004, p. 35) coined the word «groupism»: the tendency to take discrete, sharply differentiated, internally homogeneous, and externally bounded groups as the basic constituents of social life to which interests and agency can be attributed. It even seems, speaking in a slightly ironic way, that these ethnic or national groups are a kind of extended arm of their «natural» (territorially defined), ethnic or national origins. In this way, cultural groups or communities are transformed into *transnational* cultural groups (Dahinden 2008). Culture in this figure is something immutable and untouched by societal factors—like power, for instance.

Interestingly enough, this idea of a reified and naturalised culture sometimes has positive associations, sometimes negative ones. In multiculturalism and identity politics, as described before, they are positive—maintaining that diversity is positive, as well as important, for human beings and that one has the right to be culturally different.

On the other side, there are negative connotations and it is postulated that the future of the world depends on culture. The most prominent representative of this orientation is still Samuel Huntington (1993) with his apocalyptic vision of the clash of civilisations. In other words, conflicts between different cultures—as the most important dimension of identities are immutable—are the logical consequence of migration and globalisation.

The other idea, culture as the «figure of creativity», maintains that culture is the acquisition in the course of life of specific dispositions which allow agency and make sense of the world. Culture is an open process

which has to be analysed (Wicker 1997). In the second figure, culture is bound, directly related to the <nation-territory-people-culture> axes, and stoical; and culture becomes the source of explanations for behaviour, for instance. Culture does not have to be described and analysed but <to have a culture> is always to <be cultural> and never, as in the first figure, <to make culture>. In this sense, everybody knows, for instance, quite mystically, what Albanian culture is.

In the last 10 years, social scientists have produced a flood of articles and books to show that the second figure of culture makes no sense from a scientific point of view, and they have formulated a long list of serious critiques, which will not be repeated here. Let us simply reiterate that the <culture-as-stability> idea corresponds to the classical perception of the notion in question, as developed in American social anthropology, and is closely related to the philosophical (and nationalist) ideas of Johann Gottfried Herder (for critique see Wimmer 2005). But this classical notion has taken on a life of its own; politicians and journalists, as well as the migrants themselves and other actors, use this notion in order to describe feelings, belongings, behaviour and other people.

One of the main problems arising from this idea of culture is that it feeds the illusion of destiny (Sen 2006)—individuals in a specific cultural group have a specific way of thinking and behaving which is immutable. Amartya Sen criticises strongly what he labels a «solitarist approach» to human identity, which means seeing the human being as a member of precisely one group without the ability to choose in certain situations between the different aspects of his or her multiple identities. In our normal lives, as Sen insists, human beings see themselves as members of a variety of groups—and they belong to all of them. The same person can be, without any contradiction, «an American citizen, of Caribbean origin, with African ancestry, a Christian, a liberal, a woman, a vegetarian, a long-distance runner, an historian, a schoolteacher, a novelist, a feminist, a heterosexual, a believer in gay and lesbian rights, a theatre lover, an environmental activist, a tennis fan, a jazz musician, and someone who is deeply committed to the view that there are intelligent beings in outer space with whom it is extremely urgent to talk (preferably in English)» (Sen 2006, p. xiii).

Furthermore, culture as an idea of stability can very easily become a means of social exclusion, because it is only a short distance between insurmountable difference and the hierarchising of this difference: all of a sudden, certain cultures are superior to others, and cultural conflicts will never be solved because they are destiny.

In other words, it seems as if we have to deal with the mechanism of cultural demarcation and reinforced cultural identities in this globally interconnected world. Interestingly enough, on the other side, political de-

mands are also increasingly being formulated in ‹culturalised language›: The demand is for the recognition of cultural differences and no longer for socioeconomic redistribution (Fraser/ Honneth 2003).

In short, particularism, and not universality, is at stake when debating culture. However, this has not always been the case. In the French tradition, it was the universal character of culture which was emphasised: culture as the capacity of human beings to make sense of and give meaning to the world, to form a civilisation and make use of the potential for rational thinking (Cuche 2004 [2001, 1996]). How can we reconcile the idea of recognising particular identities with the universal ideas of the French? Or how can we arrive at a more universal understanding of culture in order to avoid simplistic ideas about destiny, and profit from the agency human beings have in creating culture?

5. Conclusion

The face of the world has changed during the last decades. Mobility has been one of the strongest forces in these transformation processes and has to be considered as a practice with universal character. However, this universal contradicts other universals, such as for instance the logic of nation-states. Mobility clashes with the efforts of nation-states to keep unwanted persons away; mobility results in transnational practices and identities which clash with the neo-assimilation efforts of nationalising states. And last but not least, mobility is related to the dissemination of a specific idea of culture. According to this idea, it would appear that culture is destiny and that cultural clashes are the normal outcome of mobility.

These three contradictions are all interwoven with processes of social exclusion; that is why we decided to call them ‹tensions›. A large proportion of the people involved in mobility are not wanted by Western nation-states and their policies aim at excluding them—having the wrong ‹culture› or ‹national background› results in exclusion with strong pressure to assimilate, or in stigmatisation and discrimination.

Clearly there are no simple solutions to these contradictions and these tensions will not be overcome easily. However, it is important that the debate about universality in theory and practice take into account the ideas and problems discussed here. Only globalised democratic universal values—which highlight and counteract unequal power relationships—can take us in the right direction.

Notes

- * I would like to thank the organisers and the participants of the SAHS Colloquium «Universality: From Theory to Practice» for their feedback on the paper I presented. Special thanks go to Etienne Piguet whose interesting comments without doubt contributed to improving this text. Finally, thanks to Rachel Matthey for editing the English manuscript.
- ¹ Emphasis G.S., translation J.D.
 - ² The idea that the world is naturally divided into nation-states and that these states are the appropriate units for analysis has the effect of blinding not only politicians but also researchers. The concept of «methodological nationalism» has been put forward in order to describe this weakness within social science: The critique refers to the unquestioned transfer of boundaries, categories and variables of the national view into the scientific perspective, and to the excessive weight of the nation-state as a category of reference, even among social scientists (Beck 2002, pp. 84–94). Methodological nationalism has in this line of argument been defined by Wimmer/ Schiller 2002, p. 302, as «the assumption that the nation/ state/ society is the natural social and political form of the modern world».
 - ³ It is evident that considerations other than nationality influence the Swiss migration policy as well, such as political considerations for instance, or more recently, the qualification of migrants.
 - ⁴ Irregular migration is a complex and diverse concept that requires careful clarification, which cannot be provided here. It is important to recognise that there are a variety of routes to irregularity: Irregular migration includes people who enter a country without the proper authority (for example through clandestine entry and entry with fraudulent documents); people who remain in a country in contravention of authority (for example by staying after the expiry of a visa or work permit, through sham marriages or fake adoptions, as bogus students or fraudulently self-employed); or people moved by migrant smugglers or human traffickers (Efiñay-Mäder/ Cattacin 2002, Koser 2005). There were «Sans Papiers» in Switzerland as early as the 1970s; however, with an increasingly restrictive policy, this phenomenon has grown considerably.
 - ⁵ In order to discuss this topic in detail, a separate article would be required.
 - ⁶ There is another form of transnationalism which was not developed by sedentarised migrants as discussed here in the text. The other form of transnationalism develops its theoretical ideas from concepts like circulatory migration and migrants' knowledge of «how to keep on the move». The central element is that mobility as such has become an integral part of the migrants' strategy. Instead of migrating with the aim of settling in another country, these migrants tend to stay mobile in order to maintain or improve their quality of life—and in order to avoid having to emigrate. Alain Tarrus (2002), for example, speaks of the new nomads who, by creating circular territories between Alger, Marseille and Brussels, can at one and the same time belong here and there, there and here. They contribute to a very thriving economic exchange in a transnational space involving a wide variety of goods, notably household electrical appliances and electronic equipment. They are not «diasporic» entrepreneurs in the sense of the first form of transnationalism, but nomadic entrepreneurs who develop a transnational orientation.
 - ⁷ The emergence of particularism was not only observed with regard to ethnicity and culture, but also in relation to most of the other categories which from then on served as a basis for identity politics.
 - ⁸ It is obvious that between these ideal-types lies a continuum and that they should in no way be understood as single types. For instance, cultural concepts developed on the basis of the habitus theory of Pierre Bourdieu relate the two types discussed here.
 - ⁹ It speaks for itself that processes of creolisation are not new, but that culture is always the result of something already existing, which has been transformed and creolized before. There is no such thing as a «real» or «authentic» culture.

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