



Migration, recession and an emerging transnational biopolitics across Europe

Adrian J. Bailey

Department of Geography, Hong Kong Baptist University, Room AAB 1325 13/F, Academic and Administration Building, Kowloon Tong, Hong Kong Special Administrative Region

ARTICLE INFO

Article history:

Received 8 February 2012

Received in revised form 25 August 2012

Available online 8 November 2012

Keywords:

Transnational

Family

Remittances

Scale

Governmentality

Return migration

ABSTRACT

Scholarship linking migration with recession has focused on the responses by migrants to deteriorating economic and cultural conditions. This paper argues for a broader reading of how migration affects structural transformation and social change. The research intervenes in critical population geography by re-conceptualising how the transnational context of recession affects mutual constitutions of biopower and socio-spatial relations. Drawing on Foucault's discussion of biopower in *Security, Territory, and Population*, the argument is organised around three conceptual propositions: that migration makes population through the linked circulation of biopower and production of socio-spatial relations; that the transnational context of recession disrupts socio-spatiality and biopower; that the reproduction of socio-spatial relations emerges through a transnational biopolitics. The case-study considers Europe. As recession deepened, the changed resonance of attributes of migration including motility, quality, order, and home disrupted economic, social, and cultural relations. Migrant practices of remitting and transnational familyhood intensify social-spatial relations such as simultaneity and instaneity, and disrupt how ideas about boundedness and proximity legitimise concepts including flexicurity, community, and multiculturalism. Lately, discourses concerning migration to and from Europe evidence securitisation and protection, and underpin policy that emphasises transnational circuits, portability of protections, and close co-operation with offshore partners. An emerging transnational biopolitics suggests this recession has accentuated the role of migration in structural transformation and social change.

© 2012 Elsevier Ltd. All rights reserved.

1. Introduction

Periodic crises in capitalist systems transform society. Since the late 2000s Europe has been profoundly affected by what is understood as a global and quadruple crisis (Dymski, 2010). For Europe's diverse migrants – numbering over 47 million and from within and without Europe – recession got personal. Unemployment among immigrants exceeded 40% in Spain; Law 94 made being undocumented a criminal offence in Italy; second generation immigrants in French *banlieues* were described as feral by then French President Sarkozy; the multicultural model of support and integration for immigrants was declared “utterly failed” by German Chancellor Merkel; foreign physicians were deemed unfit to practice in the UK. In his address to the European Parliament on 19 October 2010, UN Secretary-General Ban-ki Moon highlighted as “a dangerous trend” a new politics of polarisation associated with accusations that immigrants violated European values. No doubt alert to such widespread and virulent civil and institutional feeling, the European Commission recently confirmed that “migration is now firmly at the top of the European Union's political agenda” (2011a: 2).

Scholarship linking migration with recession takes an increasingly broad view of structural change. A number of accounts focus on the demographic, economic, and social responses by migrants to deteriorating conditions (Manning, 2002; Martin, 2009; Somerville and Sumption, 2009). For example, buffer theory predicts that migrant workers leave areas experiencing recession and help aggregate (often national) labour markets to function more effectively (Kühn, 1978). The hibernation concept identifies the conditions under which it is rational for migrant workers to remain in situ during recession (Mohapatra and Ratha, 2010). But, as Cohen (2005) notes from his work on remittances, apparent counter-cyclicity can be tied to the importance of social and cultural factors such as altruism. While social networks have always mediated the responses of migrants under recession, transnationalism has further increased the interdependencies between migrants, families, communities, and governments (Hannerz, 1996; Vertovec, 2004). Indeed, Clark and Jones (2008: 304) suggest the current European crisis may be a disjuncture between a persisting narrative of European integration and the daily transnational reality of migrants living and working in Europe. Yet, as Koser (2009) recently noted, research has not considered how a recession global in scope and transnational in character will affect migration.

To approach the transnational context, this paper joins scholarship that considers structural links between migration and recession.

E-mail address: bailey@hkbu.edu.hk

sion (for example, Sassen, 1991; Skeldon, 1997; Bauder, 2006; Ong, 2006). One line of geographic inquiry has examined how structural crisis encourages spatial and scalar fixes in capitalist relations of production and social reproduction, including through migration (Samers, 1999). Indeed, there is growing attention in critical population geography to the circulation of biopower, that is, how populations, including those of migrants, are constituted as part of the flow of power and regulation of society (Philo, 2001; Legg, 2005). To develop further the idea of biopower under transnational and recessionary conditions, this research intervenes in critical population geography by arguing for further attention to the mutual constitutions of biopower and socio-spatial relations.

The paper begins by reviewing the growing interest in reading scale alongside other socio-spatial relations including territory, place, and network. The first section also argues that transnationalism is usefully approached through attention to the practices and assemblages of socio-spatiality. The paper then situates its examination of socio-spatiality in Foucault's 1977–1978 lecture series published as *Security, Territory, Population* (Foucault, 2009). The general argument that the circulation of biopower and the production of socio-spatiality are recursive is summarised and expanded through three conceptual propositions. These propositions are applied to the case of Europe, geographically defined as the 27 European Union Member States (EU27) as at January 1 2010, and its diverse migrants, moving internally and across external borders.

2. Theoretical context

2.1. Scale, transnationalism, and assemblage

Michael Samers' (1999) account of the rise of a guest worker population in Europe represents an early reading of how migration is involved in structural transformation. He describes how, in response to the OPEC fuelled downturn of the 1970s, several industrialised economies deployed a scalar politics that extended the reach and stability of labour markets by conceptualising and recruiting a low cost and, in theory, temporary labour force of guest workers from new origins. Such re-scaling is now recognised as one from a broader set of socio-spatial relations of capitalism that are involved in structural change (Jessop, 2007; Jessop et al., 2008). In their review of how this scholarship has engaged with four spatial turns (territory, place, scale and network, that is TPSN), Jones and Jessop caution that (2010: 1124): "these debates tended to focus on fine-tuning concepts relevant to the theoretically privileged dimension of socio-spatiality and/or on (sic) over-enthusiastic deployment of one or other turn in empirical analysis." Indeed, Michael Peter Smith (2001) introduces a concept of transnational urbanism to attend to both place and network specificities of transnational migration. He also raises similar concerns about the privileged deployment of abstract network concepts in accounts of globalisation by such theorists as Saskia Sassen and Manuel Castells. Conradson and Latham's own articulation of transnationalism urbanism (2005) broadens the critique further, and argues against the abstract notions of temporality implicit in Bauman's account of liquid modernity (2007). Likewise, referring to the "radically de-territorialised notions of power and near abandonment of sovereign power" in Hardt and Negri's *Empire*, Schlosser (2008: 1626) advocates greater attunement to how territory, place, scale, and network are interdependent elements of socio-spatiality. To associate migration with structural transformation and social change is, then, to attend in a joined up way to scale, territory, place, and network.

Empirical research on migration takes this argument further. First, a number of authors argue that migration and re-scaling is

recursive: migrants and migrant groups are not only produced by re-scaling but, through practice, produce scale, including nation, household, and body (Silvey, 2004), border (Mountz, 2004), and everyday (Dunn, 2010). Second, analyses of the transnational context of much contemporary mobility draws attention to the simultaneous production of distinctive social morphologies and modalities of cultural reproduction, including place and locality (Vertovec, 1999: 449–56; Castles, 2004). Across Europe, social morphologies include cross-border daily living, the growth of opportunity for intra-European migrants, split families, and the diversification of epistemic and political networks (Bryceson and Vuorela, 2002; Struver, 2005; Ryan et al., 2009; Bermudez, 2010). Practices associated with these morphologies carry transnational socio-spatial relations which affect cultural modalities in at least two ways. First, because simultaneity and instaneity imply that here is there/there is here, and then/now/next is now, ideas about the boundedness of territory and progression of temporality are de-stabilised. Second, when (as is often the case) migrants are unable to meet the expectations of simultaneity and instaneity, pressure is heaped on those social relations which rely on normalisations of proximity. For example, in split families, children and parents may be separated by thousands of miles and, despite significant symbolic resources flowing backwards and forwards, have reported changed subject positions stemming from the false hope of affection-through-proxy and technology, and the loss of intimacy and physical contact (Parreñas, 2005). A transnational socio-spatiality may unsettle any association between proximity and contiguity (in space or time) and social coherence and generational succession. Similarly, superdiversity, and its superimposition of diverse networks, brings groups together with very different frames of reference (Vertovec, 2007). Even though they may share common and synchronised experiences in contiguous neighbourhoods, the power of the proximate and immediate setting to foster cohesion and connection is fragmented by the diverse frames being used to interpret such encounters (Braidotti, 2011). The transnational context of mobility matters, then, because it presents a moment when socio-spatial relations underlying, for example, boundedness and proximity, have ambiguous implications for cultural reproduction.

Scholars of transnationalism have turned to practice theory to conceptualise the recursivity of social life and socio-spatiality. Levitt and Glick Schiller (2004) call for the re-orientation of transnational scholarship away from the concern with community (as a bounded and territorial container of proximity) and toward a consideration of transnational social fields (as active networks) that contain and circulate ways of being and ways of becoming. Their approach, drawing significantly on Pierre Bourdieu, may be considered part of a broader thrust of scholarship which is loosely organised around the idea of assemblage and addresses a "more general reconstitution of the social that seeks to blur divisions of social-material, near-far, and structure-agency" (Anderson and McFarlane, 2011: 124). The notion of assemblage offers a recursive view of socio-spatiality through a commitment to see social change through interdependent inquiries into: processes of gathering/coherence/dispersion; how groups emerge not as organic wholes but from an uneven topography of trajectories that come together and fade; how emergence rather than formation characterises social change; and experiences of fragility, provisionality, and fracture (124–125).

2.2. Biopower and socio-spatial relations

Foucault's discussion of population provides a productive way of applying scholarship on assemblages to migration. Population, for Foucault, is intricately bound up in the circulation of different kinds of power and, through structural transformation, the constitution of society (Foucault, 1978, 2004, 2009; Elden, 2001). Two

Download English Version:

<https://daneshyari.com/en/article/5074428>

Download Persian Version:

<https://daneshyari.com/article/5074428>

[Daneshyari.com](https://daneshyari.com)