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“Fluctuating Transnationalism: Social Formation and Reproduction among Armenians in Germany”

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Short Contents

- 1 Introduction
 - 1.1 Transnationalism studies: state-of-the-art and the perspective of the book
 - 1.2 Studying Armenian transnational ties and components of belonging: the research questions
 - 1.3 Methodological framework and research methods
 - 1.4 Outline of the book
- 2 Transnationalism and Diaspora. Analytical Frameworks
 - 2.1 Transnational approach in studying migration
 - 2.2 Who are diasporas and why are they transnational?
- 3 Historical Background of Armenian Migration, and Formation of the Armenian Diaspora. Manifestations of the Strategic Nationalism
 - 3.1 Historical background and waves of Armenian migration
 - 3.2 Formation of the Armenian diaspora
 - 3.3 Strategic nationalism: the case of the Armenian diaspora
 - 3.4 Armenians in Germany
- 4 Peculiarities of Armenian Transnational Ties
 - 4.1 Configurations
 - 4.2 Encounters: everyday practices in diverse realities
 - 4.3 Social environment and connections: peculiarities of social ties
 - 4.4 Cross-border social ties: the role of contact recipients in determining sustainability of ties
- 5 Modes of Representation in Transnational Social Fields
 - 5.1 Presenting own ways of being: self-identification
 - 5.2 ‘Who are you?’: perceptions of the self
 - 5.3 Media as a mode of representation

- 6 Components of Belonging
 - 6.1 Mother tongue and religion as symbols of Armenian belonging
 - 6.2 Home, homeland, and belonging
 - 6.3 Manifestations of the sense of belonging
 - 6.4 Fluctuating transnationalism: continuity principle of transnational ties
 - 7 Conclusions
 - 7.1 Studying transnational and diasporic social environments
 - 7.2 Multiple realities and representations in various configurations
 - 7.3 Strategic nationalism and fluctuating transnationalism:
modes of attachments to the land of origin
 - 7.4 General considerations and avenues for future research
- Bibliography

Summary

The purpose of this thesis is to reveal the social formation and reproduction of transnational ties amongst Armenians in Germany (the first and the second generation). It puts forth the questions as to whether or not, and which kind of transactional activity/ties/practices survive over generations. Further yet, this research seeks to find out whether or not and how transnational engagements influence self-identification and the sense of belonging, and how this, in turn, influences perceptions of components of belonging. In other words, through the lens of transnationalism, this work touches upon broader issues of self-identification and sense of belonging, home and homeland. It also considers whether and how the social reproduction of ties influences and/or determines self-identification of younger generation.

By addressing the above-mentioned research questions, this work points out not only the significance of specific waves of migration and migrant generations, but also highlights the importance of distinct modes and conditions of migration. To put it another way, apart from touching upon specificities of transnational ties of two generations, this research focuses on patterns of transnationalism of onward migrants vs. “first migrants”, or in other words, once and multiple diasporized populations.

The results of this research have highlighted two-level understanding of transnationalism – at the level of real border-spanning practices and engagements, and at the level of

representations. This leads to the presumption that transnational ways of being, as such, are present in (or constitute part of) both encounters—namely social practices and engagements—and representations. On this basis, the research fleshes out the necessity of an interconnected analysis of the three important components and consequences of transnationalism – social practices and encounters, various modes of representations, and configurations. To bring this into being, as an analytical framework for the thesis is applied the conceptual schema of ‘configurations–representation–encounters’ elaborated by Steven Vertovec.

With respect to continuity of transnationalism, this work touches upon the question regarding not sustained but also not “extinct” ties, which has been left somehow open in the literature. The research results have shown that transnational ties do not necessarily need to be sustained or intensive in order to survive. Connections to the country of origin can, instead, undergo ups-and-downs, in other words *fluctuate*, depending on various factors, but still have the “right” to be called transnational.

This work has further pointed out that the diasporic consciousness can also be formed amongst the emerging diasporic groups, and, more precisely, among the second generation; it can have a dominant role in formation of a sense of belonging and self-identification, as well as in determining modes of attachment to the country of origin.

The research is carried out through the implementation of qualitative research methods, namely, in-depth interviews, participant observations, and thematic analysis of German–Armenian online social networks.