Einzelbesprechung
Transnationalismus

Emanuel Deutschmann, Mapping the Transnational World: How We Move and Communicate across Borders, and Why It Matters. Princeton/Woodstock: Princeton University Press 2021, 272 S., kt., 31,50 €

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How do humans move across borders in this world? *Deutschmann* addresses no less a question than the current state of patterns of human movement and forms of communication in his 2021 book *Mapping the Transnational World*. In his quantitative study, based on a dataset, he tracks five different groups of mobile people—tourists, asylum seekers, students, refugees, and migrants—and three different forms of transnational human communication: online friendships (as measured by Facebook), phone calls, and remittances across all national borders between 1960 and 2010. The book introduces the term "transnational human activity" as a framework for analyzing both human mobility across borders and transnational human communication.

Perhaps the most surprising finding of *Deutschmann's* book on transnationalism is that, although global mobility patterns continue to increase, the actual destinations remain regional. Thus, mobility and communication patterns are not as globalized as is often claimed but are instead more regionalized. This leads him to advocate for a Comparative Sociology of Regional Integration. Through this, he aims to establish "a more rigorous, systematic, comparative-universalist framework and analysis of the *social* dimension of integration beyond the nation-state" (p. 76).

For this, *Deutschmann* employs a comparative approach that examines various types of mobility and communication in multiple regions throughout time in absolute and relative measures, and even dares to compare different species and scales (p. 67).

The questions *Deutschmann* addresses are deeply intertwined with the foundational pillars of the social sciences: He draws on Marx's emphasis on the interrelations between individuals that constitute a society, Durkheim's concept of the social network, and Simmel's notion of society through interaction. From this foundation,

Deutschmann situates himself within the debate on the "world society" paradigm. He discusses three theoretical frameworks: Wallerstein's *World-System Theory*, Meyer's *World Polity*, and Luhmann's *World Society*. These three theoretical frameworks form *Deutschmann's* basis for viewing transnationalism as a deeply embedded concept for which he develops a conceptual approach with four characteristics: it is centered on the transnational activity of individuals, probabilistic, empirically testable, and allows "space for space" (p. 51). By doing so, *Deutschmann* positions himself against both the *meta* of world systems, world polity, and world society, as well as the *micro* perspectives of ethnographic analysis, instead examining the mobility structurings of how people move through regions. At times, readers may prefer more of *Deutschmann's* own interpretations and reflections on these foundational scholars, rather than the lengthy excerpts of direct quotations. To his credit, he anticipates this and offers an option for readers to "skip" this theoretical grounding if they are already familiar with the sociological framework. Yet, it is precisely this depth of theoretical engagement that underpins the conceptual rigor of the subsequent quantitative analysis.

A key strength of the data is its longitudinal dimension, covering a period of over five decades. *Deutschmann's* decision to focus on the years between 1960 and 2010 allows him to capture a crucial time frame for understanding the emergence of global connections.

The joy of macrosociology is captured by *Deutschmann's* established data platform which aims to capture the "multiplex nature of transnational human activity" (p. 7).

The book's strength lies in the vivid description of the data detection process. Through careful, incremental steps, *Deutschmann* analyzes the dataset using a range of approaches such as 3D chessboard plots, density-based analyses, and automated community detection. The detailed nature of this data description immerses the reader in the development of his methods and creates a revealing transparency.

The main contributions of the book lay in its exploration of regionalization and interspecies comparison of mobility. First, humanity has not necessarily become more "global" but rather more mobile in terms of the distances and ranges that individuals are able to traverse. His assertion that we are witnessing not "globalization" but rather a form of "global regionalization" (p. 157) is supported by his finding that distance proves to be a more influential determinant than cultural, economic, or political connections in shaping transnational relationships. *Deutschmann* systematically applies independent variables from cultural and historical factors (e.g., historical unions, colonial ties, conflict, shared language, and religious proximity) alongside economic and technological, political and legal factors, as well as geographic and control factors. These categories serve as the basis for the analysis of country-level divisions, ultimately reinforcing the argument for stronger regional ties.

This understanding of the transnational world mirrors Granovetter's seminal concept of the "strength of weak ties." Similar to the social world, the transnational world becomes interconnected through strong internal regional structures, linked by "relatively scarce inter-regional ties" (p. 103).

Although *Deutschmann's* approach is transnational and global, it is of particular interest to scholars focused on European integration and Europeanization (pp. 52–59). While *Deutschmann* himself critiques the fact that most research on regional integration centers on Europe, his book ultimately devotes significant attention to this region. *Deutschmann* argues at length (pp. 60–64) that Europeanization and Eurocentrism are embedded within the comparative sociology of regional integration and have, in many ways, given birth to it. As *Deutschmann* notes, "remarkably, there are little signs of European exceptionalism" (p. 85). While European integration remains a well-researched field, a more comprehensive understanding of regionalism would transcend Eurocentrism. A comparative sociology of regional integration, encompassing other continents and sociological perspectives from within those regions, would be a valuable next step. How would regionalism be theorized around the world? How do sociologists in all of the defined regions conceptualize regionalism? Here, sociology has an opportunity to push beyond Eurocentric frameworks and avoid the disciplinary tendency to defer the study of alleged "other" regions to anthropology but understand them from within. *Deutschmann's* contribution could serve as a starting point for this endeavor, as his approach on global transnationalism demonstrates that similar patterns of regionalism exist across different parts of the world.

Second, the book's insight lies in its enthusiasm and intellectual curiosity as it explores movement patterns in non-human species. Drawing from fields such as ecology and biology, *Deutschmann* incorporates methods typically used to track sharks and other animal species. The concept of the "animal turn," proposed by Ritvo (2007), encourages scholars to move beyond human-centered analyses to include animals as part of sociological inquiry. *Deutschmann* follows this trajectory and applies the Lévy-flight model, a mathematical approach for understanding the movement of living organisms. By borrowing methodologies from other disciplines to analyze human mobility, *Deutschmann* demonstrates the versatility of cross-disciplinary tools in sociological inquiry. Here, the focus on the "transhuman" is not confined to theoretical debates on the blurring of species boundaries, as discussed by Donna Haraway (2016), but serves to expand methodological approaches. With this, *Deutschmann* positions himself as a boundary-crosser, borrowing and innovating to develop new methods to trace mobilities on this planet.

This book has already established a standard reference for data analysis on human mobility, but it will become truly exciting if, in the coming years, it is compared with, expanded by, and revised in light of newer datasets. The period until

2010 was indeed relevant for mobility, but the past 15 years since then have ushered in new forms of hypermobility. This shift has affected the movement patterns of asylum seekers, refugees, tourists, migrants and students alike. How will *Deutschmann's* database serve as a reference point for comparing future mobility data? Moreover, advances in communication methods and the development of overlapping networks for business-related Zoom or Teams calls, alongside platforms like WhatsApp, Signal, Instagram, and TikTok, have created such a degree of simultaneity that the simplicity of basic phone calls and Facebook connections now feels like a relic of the past. There's almost a sense of nostalgia that might overcome the reader when thinking back to a time when online connections were still measurable on a single platform, as clearly organized as Facebook data appeared. The speed and multitude of today's apps — with constant overlaps and simultaneous creating, sharing, posting and messaging — would be fascinating to see further untangled and analyzed.

In addition, giving more credit to the asymmetries inherent in mobility would be insightful to trace not just *who* moves but *how* movement occurs – and how it is hindered when people become immobilized. Steffen Mau's (2021) concept of borders as "sorting machines," illustrates how technologies and bureaucratic procedures create hierarchies of mobilities.

Much has been written about an existing globalized and emerging multipolar world. In this context, a sober and nuanced analysis of the complex ties that link humans across borders is more important than ever. The book's self-proclaimed aim is to provide engaged, critical scholarship that forms the foundation for evidence-based policymaking on the contested topic of migration and mobility studies. Through his quantitative research, grounded in a regionally focused argument, *Deutschmann* establishes a rational framework by offering a detailed, empirical account of how transnational activities are structured. The book consistently emphasizes its ambition to contribute to policy-relevant research, aiming to challenge several entrenched myths about migrants, asylum seekers, and refugees in Europe, particularly in Germany. One such myth is the claim that 'not everyone can be admitted from everywhere in the world'. *Deutschmann*, adopting a global perspective, argues that this notion holds primarily at the regional level. It remains to be hoped that the book will be able to reach the policymakers it aims to engage. Its dense, theoretically rich, and historically reflective nature, combined with its meticulous exploration of the steps involved in quantitative data collection, can only be fruitful to policymakers.

The true value of this argument lies in its open and candid approach to forms of mobility. The view of individuals as mobile agents who move across borders for various reasons is no longer a given in today's politically polarized climate. Contemporary discourse tends to sharpen distinctions between the motives of asylum see-

kers, refugees, tourists, and migrants, often treating these categories as mutually exclusive.

Deutschmann guides his readers through the historical development of sociological ideas and key thinkers, as well as the step-by-step evolution of quantitative research methods. This approach is marked by curiosity about the methods of other disciplines and thus broadens the perspective of sociology while remaining deeply rooted in its core principles.

References

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