# Transnational

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# Transnational

Every other article in this volume begins with a short sentence defining its headword. This will not be the case here, not because the headword is a pair of words, but rather because the purpose of this entry is to capture the process of defining these words, and it consequently advises against a preliminary definition. From their first known uses, they have evolved in an uneven and non-linear way into buzz-words that are now ubiquitous in academic and public discussion. Though we are not familiar with the different words that have been and are used in the many languages of this planet, it seems that our American English pair is now in frequent use. On the wings of the success of its lexical root ('nation'), 'transnational' and 'transnationalism' have been embarked in a number of languages with only minor adaptations: '*transnasional*' in Bahasa Indonesia, '*transnazionale*' in Italian, '*transnacional*' in Spanish, '*transnational*' in French and German. Some Chinese scholars would use '*kua guo*' (跨国, 'straddling countries'), others rather have '*kua wenhua*' (跨文化, 'straddling cultures') – but many go for 'transnational' and use the English term as an element of a social science lingua franca. Japanese translations offer '*ekkyo*' (越境, 'crossing borders') and '*kokka o koeta*' (国(家)を超えた, 'going beyond, or transcending, states), but some scholars would use katakana (a phonetic alphabet for words borrowed from a foreign language) to approach the English structure; then it becomes '*toransunashonaru*' (トランスナショナル). Though, the idea and the word are far from ubiquitous: only if hard pressed, an English Hindi speaker would suggest '*paardeshi*' ('transcultural') as an equivalent, stressing it is scarcely used. It is then only one section of a developing lexicological trajectory in time, space, uses and meanings,  which are the object of this entry.

## Where to start from?

The search for firsts is a deceptive quest, especially when it is about words. Etymological dictionaries only rely on a limited corpus, and the growth of databases makes their findings obsolete. Until now, the terms were said to have been coined by the American Randolph Bourne (1880–1918) in 1916. Though this entry certainly does not offer an ultimate view, it is nevertheless necessary to mention earlier uses of the terms.

The German linguist Georg Curtius (1820–95) can be mentioned provisionally as the first user of the adjective 'transnational'. In his 1862 inaugural lecture at Leipzig University, where he insisted that all national languages were connected to families of languages that extended beyond contemporary national frameworks, Curtius wrote that '*Eine jede Sprache ist ihrer Grundlage nach etwas transnationales*' to point to this aspect of languages. The absence of inverted commas around *transnationales* suggests the term was not unfamiliar to German readers of his *Philologie und Sprachwissenschaft*. An anonymous author in the *Princeton Review* chose that very quote to support his views in 1868, and translated it as 'every language is fundamentally something transnational'. This is, provisionally, the first known appearance of the term in American English. Neither occurrence seems to have made much of an impression. But they firmly root the term in the 19th century, and within a mood that tried to question an 'obvious' national characteristic such as language.

Similarly, it is not mere anecdotal that 'transnational' was used regularly in the early 20th century to name the highways that made it possible for automobiles to connect distant parts of the United States. The term was then a synonym for 'transcontinental'. When US newspapers mentioned 'trans-national highways' from the 1910s, they point us to one of the possible meanings of the term, that is the idea of going through the national space from one side to the other. However grammatically incorrect, since the Latin term 'trans' means 'beyond' and not 'through', this provides evidence that the word has been empowered with a capacity to signify the act of crossing. Its first landmark use was to take a different direction. Randolph Bourne was a character on the New York City writing scene when his 'Trans-National America' appeared in the *Atlantic Monthly* in July 1916. The director of the journal was not very happy with Bourne's lack of allegiance to the 'Anglo-Saxon ideal', but did publish the piece. In reaction to the aspirations of and anxieties over the possible conduct of the diverse strands of 'hyphenated Americans' in the context of the European war, the article was an attack on the ideal of assimilation that Bourne presented as, by and large, the purpose of the American melting pot. Bourne's suggestion was that the United States had to accept its cosmopolitan nature and make the best of the communities of different national origins that had migrated to the Great Republic. To fulfil the chances offered by the fact of being 'a unique sociological fabric', 'a world federation in miniature' that it owed to the privilege of being a land of migrations, America had to become the first 'international nation' and to accept its 'cosmopolitanism', said Bourne. For all his insistence on the fact that this is an American problem, 'Project and destiny', the third section of Bourne's piece, focuses on explaining how such an American achievement would be the matrix for a cosmopolitan enterprise, that of building the citizen of the world. And this is also where he seems to thrive in terminological 'trans' invention. The first step towards a cosmopolitan horizon is to be made in the very context of the European war, Bourne suggested. Because it is 'trans-national', America can neither let European nationalisms hold sway over its destiny, nor take shelter in Americanization and the creation of a new nationalism that would oppress its 'trans-nationals'. It needs to create something completely different, for itself and for the world, 'a 'trans-nationalism of ours'. 'America is coming to be, not a nationality but a transnationality, a weaving back and forth, with the other lands, of many threads of all sizes and colors' (Bourne 1916, 96). In recent times, this has led to him being hailed or accused as a precursor of multiculturalism, though there is much more in Bourne than this: one can equally easily picture him as crusader with a belief that America has a mission to the world, that is to lead in the cosmopolitan enterprise. There are two things that are more interesting for us here. The first is that Bourne uses the preposition with its lexical meaning, which is 'beyond'. But Bourne's 'beyond' does not take place in a flat space: going beyond the national is not just stepping above it, dismissing it. Bourne's trans-national America is a transcendence of national characters and belongings, an osmosis, a further stage. Second, Bourne is putting all the current terminology on the table, its indeterminacy included. He uses 'trans-national' as an adjective to describe the nature of the American population as beyond simple national affiliation, 'trans-nationality/transnationality' to qualify the resulting situation, 'transnationalism' to coin the sense of belonging that would go beyond existing nationalisms and amount to world citizenship, and 'trans-nationals' to indicate the people with a dual sense of belonging. But, whereas others were very keen to distinguish between the meanings of, for example, 'internationalism' and 'cosmopolitism', or to invent new terms like '*mondialité*' or '*mondialisme*' (like the

Belgian Paul Otlet), Bourne did not really care, and he used the former and their derivatives as interchangeable or convergent with his 'trans' terminology. While it might have been expected that his coining of a new term would be partly a way to make for a collapsed internationalism, this was not the case. Bourne was not to elaborate further on these points because of an unexpected encounter with an unhyphenated migrant, Spanish influenza.

In the following years, the terms seem to have been used moderately and unsystematically until the early 1940s, as far as the existence of searchable databases allows us to see. But they definitely were applied to non-domestic situations. 'Transnational/trans-national' was mostly used to qualify elements that developed across national boundaries. Casual use of the terms can be encountered in major regional or national US newspapers during the 1930s: one could use the terms to speak of a 'transnational trip' to advertise a university study tour (1931), of 'trans-national affairs ' to locate the agenda of a session of the annual session of the Institute of International Relations (1931), of the 'trans-national' character of Christianity that German bishop Galen had used to reject Nazi principles (1934) or of 'transnational transports' to comment on war developments in the Balkans (1941). Such random use can also be identified within the academic world: one US political scientist could speak of a 'trans-national alignment' of fascist nations in 1937, pointing to the common views and shared plans of fascist states and groups, which crossed national limits and usually disjointed nationalisms.

However, there were some significant uses of the terms that bear witness to the fact that they began to be used to present the national variable as unsatisfactory or altogether irrelevant. Of major importance is their use by German law scholars who worked in the field of international law and arbitration. The Heidelberg law professor Max Gutzwiller seems to have been the first to have used them in the juridical vocabulary (1931). He used the terms to point to new norms and situations that 'international law' was not able to capture in a developing field, stamped by the importance of new arenas like mixed arbitration tribunals created by the Versailles Treaty. In *Fruits of victory* (1921), the English-American journalist and peace activist Norman Angell had also taken the terms into another sphere to serve his points about prewar trade, industrial and financial entanglements. He pointed to the 'transnational' economy that bound European countries together and with other areas through the world division of labour and the connections created by economic agents, a qualification he found 'more correct' than 'international', and used the term and its spinoffs ('trans-nationalism', 'trans-nationally') several times in his book. A similar connotation is found in *Living in a revolution* (1944) by Julian Huxley. Huxley, who would be the first director of UNESCO, has an occasional use of the terms in cases which underline the idea that national geographical and political units are, can or ought to be superseded in the new age into which the world is being ushered. The 'transnational' industrial region of North Western Europe he describes, and the 'transnational' control of European heavy industry he hopes for, announce the forthcoming incursion of the term into the language of the political and economic world orders.

**Searching for order in the postwar world**
Despite its German users, despite the fact that some English writers used the terms in books initially published in England, 'transnational' does not seem to have been taken into public use in Great Britain. The successful career of the terms in the 1950s and 1960s was still mostly bound to the US. There, generic uses that have

been sketched above were still operational. The phrase 'transnational highways' was used indiscriminately to name a highway that went from Austria to Greece, or the arteries planned by the federal highway programme within the US, while 'trans-national communications' or 'transnational transport' indicated that national spaces were crossed by flows that did not even stop therein. The notions of crossing and of transcendence were still both present. In addition to this, the terms gained momentum in three specific spheres.

On one hand, they were used to describe, follow and understand the economic integration of trade and of production. This does not seem to have come from the academic world. Economist Simon Kuznets' use of the term in a 1948 paper is anecdotal and does not seem to have been followed up. However, it was significant that Kuznets used the term 'trans-national economic relations' in his call to consider the study of the domestic US economy in a larger context that would include historical developments, non-material exchanges (population, policies, obligations) and the 'view of the world' of a given country: the idea was that it was part of an expanded toolkit for economic analysis. This appearance in academic economics was outpaced by a real success in the grassroots business world. One clue is the growing favour shown to the terms in firm naming during the 1950s. As witnessed by advertising blocks and business news in several US newspapers from the west to the east coast, the first to have caught the wave seem to have been transportation companies (Trans-National Airlines), together with trade firms (Trans-National Export Co.) or travel agencies (Trans National Air Coach Inc.). The 'trans' also enjoyed favour with firms in insurance or electronics businesses with an apparent domestic orientation. But they were also deemed fit to encapsulate overseas activities, as when the apparel and footwear company Genesco created a special outfit to handle its foreign operations, called Genesco Transnational Company (1964). This success forms the background for the use of the term 'transnational corporation' that developed both in the academy and the press. From the late 1950s, it was for some a mere synonym of the phrase 'multinational corporation', a way to name a corporation that was internationally owned and controlled, while for others the 'transnational' firm was a further stage of integration, where capital, research and other aspects were managed without any regard for the company's home country interests. This use to name a type of firm with important foreign activities helped the terms to travel, though it remained less popular than 'multinational'. Politically, it became a minor but common cry of leftist activists who attacked 'transnational capital' and 'the transnationals' in the 1970s; geographically, it acclimatized the term in the economic and political vocabulary abroad, as in Great Britain where it began to appear regularly in *The Times* from 1968, or later in France ('*l'intégration capitaliste transnationale*') and Germany ('*Transnationale Monopole*') where it began to be used to describe or attack such capitalist forms.

The second sphere where 'transnational' got a grip was among those who tried to analyse and explain the world political order. During the 1950s, those who commented on the current and future world order spoke of 'transnational monopoly' to describe a business whose property should be given to the community (Committee for a World Federation 1948), 'transnational cooperation' as promoted by the UN and its agencies (Walter Lippmann 1949), 'transnational groups' to give another name to the Soviet and American blocs (William McNeill 1954), or the establishment of 'trans-national communities' by scholars, scientists and others to achieve world peace (Robert Oppenheimer 1958). Law professor Myres S. McDougal used it to describe groups whose composition or activities stretched

across national frontiers, and so did political scientist Arnold Wolfers to indicate the role of corporations as 'transnational actors' in world politics (1959). As can be seen from this range, the meaning of the terms was still open-ended: they could be used as equivalent to 'supranational' or 'international', appended to the names of governmental, intergovernmental and civil society actors, used by those who proclaimed the end of the age of nations, or kept strictly descriptive.

The first prescriptive attempt to define what was 'transnational' in the new world order was made at the meeting point of these two spheres, economics and international relations. In February 1956, Philip Jessup, a professor of international law and diplomacy at Columbia University (USA) gave three lectures at Yale University Law School. A couple of months later, the University Press published them under the title *Transnational law*. Though he did not acknowledge the use of the term by German-speaking law scholars in the 1930s, Jessup was capitalizing on the same kind of dissatisfaction. After having played an important role in the technical and political design of several institutions of the new world order since 1943 and in the United Nations Relief and Rehabilitation Administration, Jessup had left government service in 1953. In the meantime, he had explored as a scholar different questions that could contribute to systematizing an increasing number of new situations that had emerged in different fields, from United Nations law to global commons and the legal protection of foreign investments. His generic proposal for a transnational law to include all law which regulates actions or events that transcend national frontiers came as a result of such specific explorations. Jessup's suggestion was to handle 'transnational situations' with reference to a corpus that did not abide by the categories of traditional law such as national/international, private/public. Prominent in his demonstrations of the need for such a reshuffling of legal norms to match the condition of a 'complex interrelated world community' were cases dealing with the work of UN agencies, with the development of the European institutions, with business and trade overseas, and with non-governmental organization activities. Jessup's message was clear: there were more than relations between nations and states in current world interactions, and there were problems that stretched across national borders and across the spatial and specialized categories of law. His move against the prevalence of international law was welcomed with a mixture of interest and resistance by law scholars, but the transformation of the *Bulletin of the Columbia Society of International Law* into the *Columbia Journal Of Transnational Law* in 1964 was one of the few immediate by-products of Jessup's suggestion. Yet he had opened a new era where the term 'transnational' would increasingly be the object of definitions within the academic community, as the basis for a new category, classification or concept to replace a former one, with a prescriptive view to establishing new tools for grappling with a perceived changing world and to achieving stability and peace through the means of multilateral organizations and peaceful settlement of disputes.

**The academic capture: the first 'transnational turn' in the social sciences**
These features were all present in the field of political science in the late 1960s, when a group of scholars endeavoured to define their approach in terms of 'transnational relations' as opposed to 'international relations'. As we have seen above, the term was running loose among those who tried to make sense of the world order, and it had been first used in the academy by law scholars dealing with arbitration. From the late 1950s, it began to surface with some regularity among the political scientists who were investigating world politics. Arnold Wolfers had it printed

in 1959 to identify the role of non-state corporate actors within world politics; the Frenchman Raymond Aron in 1962 spoke of a '*société transnationale*' to signify the relations that took place as it were aside from the international system of interstate relations, between individuals belonging to different political units and who migrated, traded, exchanged ideas and joined with each other for celebrating, competing or protesting; the German Karl Kaiser insisted that a '*transnationale Politik*' was emerging from the growing interactions between actors from different nation states. On the borderline of academy and activism, the Norwegian peace researcher Johan Galtung used the 'transnational' to name the kind of loyalty that would develop in organizations that transcend national borders without comprising any nations (1967). This trend was captured and turned into a pattern in 1970/71, when Robert Keohane and Joseph Nye, two US political scientists, hosted a conference on 'Transnational Relations' the proceedings of which were published in 1971 in the journal *International Organization*. The challenge was to the realist approach in the field of international relations, and its 'state-centric view'. Focusing deliberately on 'contacts, coalitions, and interactions across state boundaries that are not controlled by the central foreign policy organs of government' (Keohane and Nye 1971, xi), they urged international relations scholars to study transnational organizations and transnational interactions (movements of money, persons, objects and ideas where 'at least one actor is not an agent of a government or an intergovernmental organization', ibid., xii) as an element crucial to the understanding of contemporary world politics. Their interest in movements across state boundaries by non-governmental actors was clearly an attempt to dislodge a theory of international relations that focused on the interactions of politically significant units contained within these state boundaries. It was also an attempt to plead for a different approach to current world policies that would diverge from the unilateralism encouraged by the realist approach. In this sense, 'transnational relations' fell in line with functionalism, neofunctionalism or linkage politics as a weapon in the anti-realist arsenal.

From these analytic and prescriptive premises, the first 'transnationalism' was born. The contributors to the Keohane and Nye volume all used this word to describe a contemporary world order marked by an abundance of transnational ties, and to name their new approach to world politics that stressed non-intergovernmental relations. Only a few used it to describe a situation where national units were not relevant any more, as if 'transnationalism' were a further stage in the history of human societies, beyond the age of nationalism. This interest in 'transnational relations' and 'transnationalism' quickly faltered in the US, where the subfield of international relations is remarkable for its insistence on causal processes and its frequent enthusiasms for paradigm shifts. Samuel Huntington's meticulous discussion (in *World Politics*, April 1973) of Nye and Keohane, which argued for the term to be used only when the situation met very specific conditions and limited its 'genuineness' to the current era and to the impact of US expansion, may also have contributed to sterilizing the term. After a few years, the interest in transnational relations was taken up with more alacrity in other countries (e.g. at the French Centre d'Études des Relations Internationales) than in the United States proper. Nevertheless, this attempt to define what was transnational and what was not, with its focus on non-governmental actors, left an enduring mark on the vocabulary of other social sciences, and among some of these actors themselves. Transnationalism became 'in'.

During the 1970s, the term 'transnational corporations' featured more frequently in academic book and article titles, while the United Nations Organization created its

Centre on Transnational Corporations in 1975 to assess the role of these firms and draft an ethical code for their use. Scholars of European integration also used the term more frequently, while it spread to underline the extent of a host of non-governmental activities from terrorism to religious or political activities. Non-governmental organizations themselves found the term appealing, as they felt it stressed their difference from interstate actors much more than 'international' did. In the year 1976, the phrase 'transnational associations' made a spectacular appearance in *International Associations*, the journal published by the Union of International Associations. The journal even changed name in 1977, to become *Transnational Associations*. More generally, there were a number of activist groups, journals or think tanks, especially from the left, who began to carry the adjective 'transnational' in their names (*Agenor: Transnational Left Review* 1970, Transnational Institute 1974). This was also the moment when scholars of the European integration process regularly used the term to qualify its different dimensions, and when the spelling 'trans-national', that had lost ground during the 1960s, definitely disappeared. By and large, the 1970s made the adjective popular, and the momentary but spectacular attempt by international scholars to define it had been one reason for this popularity.

For all their criticism of state-centric approaches to international relations, Keohane and Nye were for the most part very careful to stress they did not support or advocate the view that nation states were withering away. This ambiguity was part and parcel of the different uses of the terms throughout the previous decades. What was defined as transnational was certainly presented as a challenge to national polities and societies, but there was no pronouncement on the result of the contest. Peace researcher John Galtung, despite his enthusiasm for such postimperialist perspectives, wrote in 1971 that the 'transnational', 'global' or 'world' phase, where international organizations would achieve their shift from their national touchstones, was still hypothetical . The irrelevance of nations was to be a characteristic of the first wave of globalization discourses, and the terms from the 'transnational' family would feature prominently in this context.

**The rise of transnationalism: the new condition of being in the global age**
It would be of limited interest to excavate the name of the first person to use the 'transnational' family of terms to assess, explain, support or reject what began to be called 'globalization' in the 1980s. The terms were familiar enough not to have to be invented, and were used over a wide range. But it was clearly on the wings of the 'global' craze that 'transnational' and 'transnationalism' found their second wind, which is directly at the origins of the current success of the term. In fact, a brand new range of 'trans' terms emerged at this moment: 'transmigrants', 'transurbanism' and many others. Anthropologist Arjun Appadurai may have been the most prolific inventor, with such terms as 'translocality', 'translocal' or 'transnations' that flirted along with 'transnational', 'transnationalism' or 'transnationals'.

Cultural studies and anthropology were, in fact, the major powerhouse from which emerged the renewed conceptualization and uses of 'transnational'. More exactly, one of the epicentres was the Center for Transcultural Studies in its dual embodiment at the University of Chicago and the University of Pennsylvania. The Center began to develop a programme for the internationalization of culture and communication in 1986, under the leadership of Appadurai and Carol Breckinridge. Building from the forays by British social scientists such as Stuart Hall or Paul Gilroy, among other bricks, the Center launched a Project for Transnational Cultural

Studies, and established the journal *Public Culture* in 1988. It would be the platform from where an interdisciplinary group of US scholars, many with Indian origins, would investigate the new cosmopolitan cultures ushered in by the dramatic change in cultural forms and flows whose emergence they identified in the 1970s. Appadurai's writings (gathered in *Modernity at Large* in 1996) and Paul Gilroy's *Black Atlantic* were the flagships of this prolific thread that carried the 'transnational' family of terms into a large section of the US social sciences, together with Prasenjit Duara (history) and Gayatri Spivak (humanities). Duara was, in fact, among the few from this group to use the term to study the past, while 'transnational' was clearly taken as a way to qualify, observe, assess or prophesy a new multipolar and multicultural world in the making in the 1990s. It was not by accident that the reconnection with Randolph Bourne was then explicitly made, as his 1916 plea for a transnational America had irresistible appeal for supporters of multiculturalism in the 1990s.

Another field where our terms were revamped, in parallel with the former though without apparent early connection, was the study of migration, with anthropologists and sociologists leading the march again. From the early 1980s anthropologists Nina Glick Schiller and Georges Fouron, among others, played with the idea that contemporary migrants in the US, especially Haitians and Caribbeans, were able to endorse multiple identities that did not fit with territorialized conceptions of identity. Here again, there was the feeling that the world was criss-crossed by unprecedented flows of people and cultural artifacts (songs, images), and that this called for a reconceptualization of migrants' identities. Their statements that the migrants' identities and political activities were bounded neither by the country of origin, nor by the country of settlement, gave way to their qualification as 'transnational'. From sporadic uses in the 1970s and 1980s, 'transnational' and 'transmigrants' became a rallying cry with the volume published in 1992 by Linda Basch, Nina Glick Schiller and Cristina Szanton-Blanc (*Towards a transnational perspective on migration : race, class, ethnicity, and nationalism*). Sociologists of migrations joined the bandwagon with a powerful voice, and Alejandro Portes' decided endorsement of the term in 1997 was a landmark in its success on the US academic scene and beyond, together with work on Dominican entrepreneurial transnationalism by Luis Guarnizo, who attempted to theorize 'transnational social fields'. This success story also led to some discussion on the 'right' definition of the term, e.g., with the anthropologists being chagrined by what they felt was a narrowing of the term's purchase in Portes' views.

While both previous groups shared a similar fascination with the 'unprecedented' flows of people, ideas, objects and images that ran across the territorial borders of nation states, the third core of the transnational revival was focused on capital flows. British sociologist Leslie Sklair, elaborating from his research on the maquila industry and the export-processing zones in Ireland, Egypt and China, picked up where popular economics had left off, that is from the transnational corporations. For him, as he explained in 1991 (*Sociology of the global system*), the current global capitalist system which was recomposing the labour and production process should be approached through 'transnational practices'. At the economic level, the transnational corporation was the key actor, while the 'transnational capitalist class' was the political touchstone of the system and the ideology of consumerism its cultural and ideological touchstone. There again, it was to capture the inner soul of globalization, here mostly economic, that 'transnational' resurfaced to qualify new developments.

There were indeed other places and fields where some kind of transnational outlook was proposed in the late 1980s and the early 1990s. Sometimes, as in history, they had no explicit or clear connections with the three cores that have been identified above. But these three have been snowballing very quickly, and carefully looked upon from other disciplines and fields, which made them very special. Although they did not always acknowledge one another, these three pulsing cores shared a similar creed: globalization of capital, and people or image flows, were making nation states irrelevant, and the social sciences had to account for this current major turn, a break in the history of the world. This role erred on the side of prescription and prophecy, as many of the above social scientists saw some social and political purchase in their use of the transnational family of terms. There is of course something of a paradox in the fact that, on one hand, 'transnational' was used to capture 'globalization from below', and rhymed with diasporas in pages that celebrated the potential retained by the new transnational identities and communities to oppose the hegemonic logic of both capital and nation states, while on the other hand it pointed to 'globalization from above' where capitalist corporations and elites were setting the pace. But this is likely what gave the terms their very wide appeal. From these premises began the epic of the transnational family, under all its declensions ('transnationals', 'transnationality', 'transnationalism'), with a sharp rise in success after 1998.

Weeklies and dailies in most countries quickly embraced the idea of the transnationalism of migrants who were 'neither here nor there'. The terms began to invade the titles of dissertations and theses, first in the US, then in the other English-speaking countries, and later in Germany and Continental Europe. They also expanded far beyond anthropology, cultural studies and sociology, with an increased presence in history, geography, gender studies, religious studies and political science (most notably through the study of the 'transnational civil society' and 'transnational movements'). New scholarly journals, mostly in English, endorsed the terminology (*Diaspora: A Journal of Transnational Studies* 1991, *Global Networks: A Journal of Transnational Affairs* 2001), which was also increasingly used to label research projects (e.g. the Transnational Communities Programme led by Steven Vertovec at Oxford University from 1997 or the Transnational Social Fields Network ran by Ludger Pries at the Ruhr Universität Bochum in the early 2000s), teaching programmes (e.g. the MA and PhD programmes in 'transnational studies' at the University of Southampton, England, from 2003).

Gustavo Cano has rightly observed that 'transnational' was the most commonly used term in the US academic world in the late 1980s and early 1990s, before 'transnationalism' took over after 1994. One of the most salient patterns of this recent moment is that 'transnationalism' was more and more used to signify a worldview that made it tantamount to an ideology, a political project, or a way of pointing to a loose network of people with a common belief, making 'transnationalism' a social movement of some sort. The rise of 'transnationalism' also reflected a search for normative definitions: battles soon began to define what 'real' transnationalism was, or what was transnational and what was not. A cottage industry of definitions quickly developed as the label became a must-wear. Consequently, it was also criticized for lack of theorization. As early as 1994, Katherine Verdery, an anthropologist specializing in Eastern Europe, noted that the term dissolved 'when inspected more closely' and pointed to its implicit confusion between state and nation, while in 2005 migration specialists Ewa Morawska and Roger Waldinger each came to grips with the presentism and approximations that

the use of the label usually included. This has not prevented projects of establishing 'transnational studies' as a new section of the social sciences. The introduction to the *Transnationalism Reader: Interdisciplinary Intersections and Innovations* that Peggy Levitt and Sanjeev Khagram have published with Routledge at the end of 2007 makes it clear that its editors believe in a paradigmatic turn to take place around the notion of 'transnationalism', whose destiny it would be to change the social sciences as we know them.

## Conclusion

These evolutions in the academic world had an impact on the lay use of the transnational family of terms. While the left-wing movements pioneered the spreading use of 'transnational' in the 1960s and 1970s to pinpoint lawless and homeless corporations and capitalist practices, it is now right-wing movements that use the term 'transnationals' or 'transnationalists' to point the finger at a group that includes academics, NGOs, activists, officers of philanthropic foundations, European Union and United Nations civil servants. They are said to be the 'transnational progressives', a global elite on the march to wash away national citizenship and democracy in favour of world government. This recent derogative use of the term has until now been mostly a US phenomenon. It is worth mentioning that scholars who have identified with the definition of 'transnationalism', like Alejandro Portes or Arjun Appadurai, are explicitly mentioned by these 'democracy watchers'. The latter see 'transnationalism' as the most recent version of the ideologies that have been fighting America and its values since independence. In a sense, this is a consequence of the use of 'transnationalism' that these scholars have suggested, offering it as the ideology of a world where nationalist, racial and other dominating impulses would be tamed by the multiplication of ties and links across borders. It might be a possibility that this backlash will soon expand and include other thinkers who have explicitly embraced such a prescriptive position, like the German Ulrich Beck and his 'cosmopolitan perspective'. This would just confirm that, by and large, the terms of the transnational family have been entangled in scholarly and political debates since their appearance..

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