Editorial

Transnationalism and Transgenerationalism in the Middle East and Its Diasporas

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Interactions across the Middle East and between the region and the rest of the world have arguably intensified in recent years, from shifts in economic and cultural relations to unprecedented levels and changing forms of migration. In response, anthropologists and others working in the social sciences and humanities have deepened their collective investigation of transnationalism, approaching this theme and the questions it raises in diverse ways (see Alsultany and Shohat 2013; Chatty 2015; Graw and Schielke 2012; Hage 2005; Kearney 1995; Naficy 2003, 1999; Silverstein 2015; Vertovec 2009). Many scholars have explored the limitations of thinking in 'national' categories, while at the same time observing the persistence of this way of thinking and its effects on the everyday lives of those who live transnationally or experience 'the diasporic condition'. Jumana Bayeh (2014: 19) suggests that: 'Defined by alterity, double consciousness and a fragmented identity, the diasporic condition, like the figure of the foreigner, accepts the dis-integrated subjectivity of the self and in turn exposes the nation-state's own internal heterogeneity'. The articles in this interdisciplinary special issue variously address these and other aspects of the diasporic condition in several different Middle Eastern and diasporic contexts.

A most significant aspect of transnational life is its effects on transgenerational relations and on the lives of second and third generations of migrant and refugee populations (see Abood 2002; Noble and Tabar 2002; Werbner 2002). The conditions and prospects faced by these generations have far-reaching impacts on both the region from which their parents or grandparents moved and, even more, the regions and communities to which they now belong, which they create, shape and represent. Conditions for these generations vary greatly in different contexts around the world. For some, the basic needs of formal education, fair employment and adequate housing are not available.

In other contexts, members of these generations enjoy great affluence and access to the 'best' education, employment and housing. Of course, most live between these two extremes and less 'material' conditions – such as forms of racism, popular stereotypes, social or familial dis/connection and the effects of transgenerational trauma or grief – may play equally significant roles in their experience of the diasporic condition (see El-Zein 2001). While relations with extended families are often disrupted by the process of migration, in some cases they are enhanced, as family members share their double – or multiple – consciousness. Transgenerational practices in contexts other than migration are also affected by shifts in transnational representations of culture, ideology and political relations. This special issue contributes some new perspectives on these questions, as well as accounts of transgenerational shifts in everyday life.

The first two articles, Mediya Rangi's 'Hope and Sorrow of Displacement: Diasporic Art and Finding Home in Exile' and Amy Malek's 'Claiming Space: Documenting Second-generation Iranian Americans in Los Angeles', address questions of representation in transnational and transgenerational contexts. Both examine the work of artists and others who 'claim space' as they represent personal and collective histories, experiences and communities that are popularly portrayed by mainstream media in limited and limiting ways. Rangi draws on her fieldwork with Kurdish Australian artists, focusing here on the life and art of Rushdi Anwar. Her reading of Anwar's work is informed by Deleuze and Guattari's notions of the smooth space and lines of flight, which leads her to reflect on the nature of home and homelessness on multiple levels. Although Rangi reads Anwar's work as directly emanating from his experiences as a Kurd, she argues that he counters the most widespread image of a 'politicised' Kurdish exilic artist with his preference for a universally 'human' approach. Also countering popular stereotypes, Malek's article presents the author's ethnographic work in second-generation Iranian American communities in Los Angeles, focusing on a collaborative documentary photography project she created in 2010. As Anwar self-represents and claims space in Australia, so too the photographers in this project, the Iranian American subjects they represent and the anthropologist Malek collaborate to direct their own collective representations and to claim space in the particularly crowded media and information context of Los Angeles, the centre of both American and Iranian transnational popular entertainment industries.

The third and fourth articles, Christian Ritter's 'Balancing the Here and There: Transnational Mobilities of Moroccan Middle-class Professionals in Istanbul' and Nasim Yazdani's 'Linking Ideology, Habitus and Landscape: Traditional and Contemporary Uses of Gardens and Parks in Iran', examine two very different forms of everyday practice in Middle Eastern contexts, as well as the ways these practices are linked to contemporary and historical transnational imaginaries. Ritter presents the findings of his fieldwork with a group of middle-class workers who have moved from Morocco to Istanbul,

Turkey. He traces the ways these migrants engage with imaginative, physical and virtual mobilities. Initially, they are attracted to the idea of Turkey through their viewing of Turkish television programmes. After physical settlement in Istanbul, these migrants intensify their virtual mobility, sharing a collaborative and constructive use of mobile practices to enhance transnational connections and relationships on many levels. While Ritter focuses on the transnational, Yazdani investigates the transgenerational use and imagination of urban green spaces in Iran, tracing shifts in attitudes towards nature, narratives around the Persian garden and the everyday use of parks. She also examines the influences of landscape design inherited from Persian garden ideology on recreational behaviour and activities in contemporary urban parks in Iran.

The final two articles, Nadia Eldemerdash's 'Being and Belonging in Kuwait: Expatriates, Stateless Peoples and the Politics of Citizenship' and Elisabeth Yarbakhsh's 'Iranian Hospitality and Afghan Refugees in the City of Shiraz', address the paradoxes and limitations of hospitality in nationally defined contexts, especially where people are not granted citizenship of the countries in which they live and therefore remain 'guests'. Hospitality in various forms is an implicit theme of each article in this issue and one central to questions of transnational and transgenerational relations. While this theme is often addressed in Western contexts, Eldemerdash and Yarbakhsh turn to the experiences of two generations of, respectively, migrant workers and refugees in two different Middle Eastern contexts. Eldemerdash analyses the situation of migrant workers and their descendants in the Persian Gulf, especially in Kuwait, and compares the failure to enfranchise these communities through citizenship with the disenfranchisement of descendants of indigenous nomadic groups in the region, who were not registered with authorities when Kuwait and other Gulf nations were formed, and therefore remain stateless. As she analyses the effects of nationalist narratives, Eldemerdash examines the ways the use of history may shape notions of belonging. As the movement of workers and refugees around the world increases, especially in the Middle East, and as Europe, in particular, considers its responses to its unprecedented numbers of arrivals, there is much to learn from the experiences of refugees and workers in the host countries that have accepted the largest numbers of refugees in recent decades. Most of these are in or around the Middle East, including Turkey, Pakistan, Lebanon, Iran, Ethiopia and Jordan. Yarbakhsh draws on her fieldwork with two generations of Afghan refugees in Shiraz, Iran, as she applies Derrida's notion of *hospitalité* to her analysis of the relationship between 'citizen-hosts' and 'refugee-guests' in that city. As observed in other contexts, Yarbakhsh's findings here support Derrida's argument that hospitality, with its demarcation of the roles of 'host' and 'guest', is never 'without finitude' (2000: 55).

As it engages with topics of increasing interest to anthropologists of the Middle East, this transdisciplinary special issue aims to provoke further debate and inspire more work in the field.

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