

ETHNIC AND RACIAL STUDIES

# Methodologies on the Move

The Transnational Turn in Empirical  
Migration Research

Edited by  
Anna Amelina, Thomas Faist and  
Devrimsel D. Nergiz



# Methodologies on the Move

This volume establishes a new agenda for approaches to migration research and the corresponding methodologies. A wide range of international contributors focus on the question of how to overcome the so-called 'methodological nationalism' within empirical studies on migration. They address two main challenges: how to contextualize the empirical research field; and how to deal with national and ethnic categorizations within the empirical studies.

*Methodologies on the Move* outlines, first of all, a new epistemological basis for migration research, which is pinpointing the relational concept of space. Second, building on the multi-sited ethnography, it provides detailed insights into novel qualitative and quantitative research designs. Third, it presents innovative data collection methods on geographic and virtual mobility, and on cross-border social practices. This volume transcends the early criticisms of 'methodological nationalism' in migration research and suggests both general methodological lines as well as helpful tools for empirical analysis.

This book was originally published as a special issue of *Ethnic and Racial Studies*.

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## **Ethnic and Racial Studies**

Series editors: Martin Bulmer, *University of Surrey, UK*, and John Solomos, *City University London, UK*

The journal *Ethnic and Racial Studies* was founded in 1978 by John Stone to provide an international forum for high quality research on race, ethnicity, nationalism and ethnic conflict. At the time the study of race and ethnicity was still a relatively marginal sub-field of sociology, anthropology and political science. In the intervening period the journal has provided a space for the discussion of core theoretical issues, key developments and trends, and for the dissemination of the latest empirical research.

It is now the leading journal in its field and has helped to shape the development of scholarly research agendas. *Ethnic and Racial Studies* attracts submissions from scholars in a diverse range of countries, fields of scholarship and crosses disciplinary boundaries. It has moved from being a quarterly to being published monthly and it is now available in both printed and electronic form.

The Ethnic and Racial Studies book series contains a wide range of the journal's special issues. These special issues are an important contribution to the work of the journal, where leading social science academics bring together articles on specific themes and issues that are linked to the broad intellectual concerns of *Ethnic and Racial Studies*. The series editors work closely with the guest editors of the special issues to ensure that they meet the highest quality standards possible. Through publishing these special issues as a series of books, we hope to allow a wider audience of both scholars and students from across the social science disciplines to engage with the work of *Ethnic and Racial Studies*.

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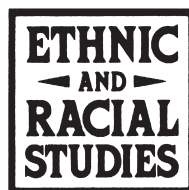
# **Methodologies on the Move**

## **The Transnational Turn in Empirical Migration Research**

*Edited by*

**Anna Amelina, Thomas Faist and  
Devrimsel D. Nergiz**

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Kenneth Horvath

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## Chapter 4

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*How to 'catch' floating populations? Research and the fixing of migration in space and time*

Bruno Meeus

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Mieke Schrooten

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**Chapter 7**

*Transnational dynamics in researching migrants: self-reflexivity and boundary-drawing in fieldwork*

Kyoko Shinozaki

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# De-naturalizing the national in research methodologies: key concepts of transnational studies in migration

Anna Amelina and Thomas Faist

## **Abstract**

Building on the transnational approach to migration, this introduction outlines some elements of the programme of an emergent methodological transnationalism. This effort aims to de-naturalize the concept of the national within migration studies. First, the analysis identifies methodological challenges of migration studies, such as contextualization, the ethnic lens and the essentializing view on ethnicity. Second, it indicates the relevant conceptual elements which deal with these methodological challenges, such as the critique of methodological nationalism, cosmopolitanism and the relational concept of space. Third, it addresses the relevant methods, such as multi-sited ethnography, the mobile methods approach, as well as researchers' positionality and strategies of de-ethnicization, all of which correspond to the new epistemology of migration studies. Finally, it highlights the common characteristics of the contributions to this special issue, which go beyond the normative view of cross-border migration.

This special issue of *Ethnic and Racial Studies* addresses the methodological challenges of empirical studies on cross-border migration. The set of concepts herein suggests paying more attention to the forms and mechanisms of unfinished and multi-directional migration flows. However, it does not define multi-directional geographic mobility as significant by itself, but as relevant in respect to the formation of cross-border social entities such as transnational professional networks, transnational kinship groups, transnational