Transnationalism’s Educational Challenges

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A short story of changes taking place in a village in India
This story is illustrative of some of the ways in which global mobility is:

- transforming, both directly and indirectly, our lives in more ways than we often realize
- becoming commonplace, affecting not only those who move but also those who do not
- reshaping our communities, transforming economic, political and cultural practices
- connecting distant places to each other, transnationalizing the spaces in which we live
- leading to shifts in our imaginaries of what is possible
- changing our senses of belonging and citizenship
We know that people are now more globally mobile than ever before. People move for a wide variety of reasons, including:

- Migration
- Refuge
- Employment
- Business
- Education
- Tourism

...leading to major demographic shifts, especially in cities but also in regional and rural areas.
It should be noted however that the global mobility of people affects and is affected by the mobilities of:

- Money and capital
- Media and images
- Commodities and cultures
- Ideas and ideologies
- Hopes and desires
These mobilities profoundly affect each other, but in ways that are often ‘disjunctural’ (Appadurai 1995).

Mobilities have unpredictable consequences, producing both positive and negative outcomes.

The ways in which they relate to each other often suggests a range of new global concerns.

Most of us are affected by these mobilities but in ways that are uneven.

Mobilities take place in spaces that embody various asymmetries of power.
On the one hand, global mobilities have

Diversified our communities, resulting in greater cultural exchange than ever before

Hybridized cultures and cultural practices, leading to cosmopolitan lifestyles (Pieterese 2006)

Created new patterns of global interconnectivity, resulting in new perceptions of time and space (Massey 2005)

Shifted notions of citizenship and belongingness, making possible ‘Place Polygamy’ (Beck 2000)
On the other hand, they have

Created new economic, political and economic pressures on communities, and on global cities in particular (Sassen 2003)

Given rise to new consumerist desires, and risks of cultural homogenization (Ritzer 2002)

Generated new conditions of cultural fears and reactions, leading to a new cultural politics of racism (Barber 2000)

Resulted in new patterns of inequalities, often centered on the possibilities of mobility (Bauman 2000)
These profound shifts involving various diverse and complex mobilities have increasingly ‘transnationalized’ the spaces in which we live, learn and work.
Transnationalism describes a condition in which

...despite great distances and notwithstanding the presence of borders (and all the laws, regulations and national narratives they represent), certain kind of relationships have become globally intensified, and now take place paradoxically in a planet-spanning yet common – however virtual – arena of activity.

Vertovec (2009)

...given rise to new ways of experiencing and thinking about our sense of belonging, within a complex web of relationships and networks.
The processes of transnationalism are dynamic, always emergent, constantly reconfigured through the various patterns of interconnectivity.

Something of a transnational public space has emerged, which has rendered any strictly bounded sense of community or locality obsolete.

Transnationalism of communities is sustained by a range of active modes of social organization, mobility and communication.

This has led to greater fluidity of social institutions, cultural styles and everyday practices.

A new transnational imaginary has de-centred attachments, of being simultaneously ‘here’ and ‘there’ -- ‘home away from home’.

The need to view cultural diversity as a norm rather than an exception.
This understanding of the emergent forms of transnationalism pose new challenges for thinking about education

for developing new approaches to curriculum and pedagogy;

for developing and analyzing educational policies;

for conducting educational research.

Discuss these challenges by referring briefly to my current projects.
Project 1: Cosmopolitan Learning

If our communities are becoming increasingly transnationally interconnected then a key educational question for our age is how to promote learning that encourages a better understanding of the global processes that are already re-shaping our identities, and to steer these towards morally and culturally productive directions.
Project 2: Elite Schools in Globalizing Circumstances : a global ethnography
(an ARC project with Jane Kenway, Cameron McCarthy, Debbie Epstein, Aaron Koh and Johannah Fahey)

• How are elite schools negotiating the challenges and opportunities associated with globalization?
• How are they repositioning themselves within the globally competitive terrain in which such schools now operate?
• How this require new ways of thinking about the processes of class formations in and through education?
The major challenge of global ethnography

“If all localities are becoming globalized, to a greater or lesser extent, through a range of global **forces** affecting them; through the various **connections** that each locality is able to forge across multiple and contested boundaries; and through the **imaginations** to which these forces and connections inevitably and reflexively give rise” (Burawoy et al. 2000) then

“how should we re-think existing social scientific methods of inquiry and units of analysis, especially when the embeddedness of social relations in particular communities and places has been destablised” (Gille & O’Riain 2002)
Project 3: Globalization and Indian Higher Education  
(a project funded by the Australia India Institute)  

How is the Indian system of higher education negotiating the challenges and opportunities offered by globalization and the knowledge economy.

How is it utilizing external policy ideas—emanating from international organizations, transnational corporations and the Indian diaspora— in defining its programs of reform, seeking to reconcile exogenous policy pressures with endogenous policy traditions?
Project 4: Worldviews and Networked Knowledge: How youth in diasporas learn and live through the web
(with Nikos Papastergiadis, Frank Vetere and Radhika Gurur)

To what extent, and in what ways, do migrant youth in Australia utilize new technologies and the social media to remain connected to their countries of origin?

How are these connectivities shaping cultural knowledges in the transnational spaces inhabited by migrant youth?

How do migrant youth use this cultural knowledge to make sense of and negotiate their engagement with the realities of Australian schools and society?
some concluding remarks