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FROM MIGRANT IDENTITY TO MIGRATION INDUSTRY:

The changing conditions of transnational migration

Abstract

In this article, I reflect on changes in the conditions of transnational mobility over the past 25 years. Drawing on continuous engagement with Dominican migrants in sending, transit, destination and return situations, I argue that increasingly strict migration control measures during this period have profoundly altered the existential option of living lives across borders. I specifically address changes in the right to move and settle, the absence of avenues for regular migration and the concomitant rise in high-risk irregular migration. Examples include the risk to life, safety and investments during journeys, the risk of exploitation in both transit and destination countries and the risks resulting from being subject to deportation and removal from family and community. I argue that the by now well-established tradition of transnational migration research, in particular the multi-local focus on the social relations that facilitate migration, can be fruitfully extended by paying equal attention to structural factors that restrict mobility.

Keywords

transnationalism • irregularity • border control • high–risk migration • deportation

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Introduction

Jacqueline left the Dominican Republic in 1988. She was 24 years old, still single and quite adventurous. Together with 18 other passengers, she embarked on a small *yola* with the aim of clandestinely reaching Puerto Rico by sea. When the smuggled passengers arrived on the Puerto Rican coast, a few were caught by the coastguard and immediately deported to Santo Domingo. The rest went off in different directions. Jaqueline hid for a couple of days in a fisherman's house before being picked up by a middleman who took her to an attorney in San Juan, who in less than a month produced forged papers for her. When we met in Washington Heights in 1991, Jacqueline was well on her way to becoming a performing artist. Asked about her migration experience, she explained in a matter-of-fact way: "I didn't arrive in New York as an illegal. I had papers, you know. If I was afraid? Not really. Well, I didn't give it many thoughts, because if I did, of course there were a lot of reasons to be scared. On the other hand, it was also an adventure, you know, it was exciting. The original plan was to travel together with my brother, but then my father decided that it was better if we travelled separately, like, if anything happened it would only happen to one of us. So yes, we took a risk, but I don't consider it any greater risk than life itself. And when I look at what I've achieved by coming here, I think the risk was worth it".[1]

Other clandestine migrants of the same period were less lucky. Two years prior to Jacqueline's journey, a 50-foot wooden fishing boat set out from the same coast carrying 150 passengers, mostly women, who all had paid as much as US$ 600 to cross the 250 nautical mile Mona Passage to Puerto Rico. Three to four miles off the Dominican coast, the boat's motor exploded. Many passengers could not swim and drowned immediately. Others were torn apart by sharks while trying to stay afloat by hanging on to empty gasoline tanks and the wooden wreckage of the boat. Eventually, military helicopters rescued 32 people from the sea.

I met Jacqueline in New York while conducting fieldwork for a research project on transnational ties between the Dominican Republic and the US in 1991 before news stories of fatal journeys and lives lost during migration became an everyday occurrence. Yet, her story and that of the 1987 shipwreck provide an occasion for what Pal Nyiri has called ethnographic "juxtaposition with hindsight" (Nyiri 2013: 369), a form of lateral vision enabled by long-term engagement with a field that allows comparison of situations across time. It shows that there is nothing new about migrants losing their lives, whether they are (ad)venturing out from small Caribbean countries to Puerto Rico or attempting to cross land and sea borders elsewhere in the world. What is new is the rising number of fatalities occurring as a direct consequence of the state's efforts to stem unwanted migration and the ever more difficult conditions imposed on establishing transnational lives from below, particularly for people with irregular migrant status. The story also shows the workings of a thriving migration industry involved in facilitating the passage of

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migrants, including smugglers charging fees to transport people to highly desired foreign shores, middlemen hiding and accompanying clandestine migrants along the route, and paper forgers whose work straddles the distinction between the regular and the irregular. Jacqueline made it, while others were intercepted by the coastguard. After deportation, in the 1980s and early 1990s, many succeeded in reaching their desired destinations at the second or third attempt. Once finally established abroad, many succeeded in regularizing their migrant status after three to five years of residence. Once regularised, home visits could be made, and new family members, as well as more distant acquaintances, could be brought over, the latter often in exchange for a money gift in show of gratitude.

By the early 1990s, many migrants had become quintessential transnational movers, their border-spanning activities defying state borders, control measures and legality issues. Their practices gave rise to a new theoretical perspective that became widely known as transnationalism. The transnational migration perspective emerged at a moment when global flows of goods, information and people not only became increasingly evident and were at times even celebrated (Glick Schiller & Salazar 2013) but also led to earlier, taken-for-granted correspondences between people, places and culture being questioned within the social sciences (Basch, Glick Schiller & Szanton Blanc 1994; Clifford 1997). On both sides of the Atlantic, scholars paid considerable attention to the study of migration from former colonies to the metropoles, as well as to transnationalism and diaspora formation, often promoting "mobility as normality" (Salazar & Smart 2011: ii).[2]

Simultaneously, however, enhanced border controls aimed at stemming irregular migration began to be enforced. In the case of Haitian boat refugees, US interdictions and returns reportedly began as early as 1972 (Stepick 1982). Since 1993, various US administrations have allocated more funds to border enforcement, including interdiction operations in the Mona Passage. Efforts to fortify the main gates of irregular entry such as the Operations "Hold-the-Line", "Gatekeeper", and "Safeguard" took shape in 1993–1994, resulting in both a rechanneling of migration from safer to more dangerous routes and an increase in the costs and risks involved in irregular migration (Cornelius 2001). The terrorist attacks on 11 September 2001 further securitised migration policy by increasing funding for immigration enforcement, doubling the number of deportations from 2001 to 2011, and extending border enforcement into the US interior by turning local police officers into immigration agents (the Secure Communities Program launched in 2008). High risks associated with border crossings, interception, detention and deportation severely affected migrants' ability to move between countries, upsetting not only the geographical direction of transnational migration (Boehm 2016) but also the option of establishing transnational lives.

In this article, I reflect on global changes in the conditions of transnational mobility over the past 25 years. I have juxtaposed various migration processes elsewhere (see, for example, Sørensen 2015), but I find that the engagement with different moments in a single and internally diversified migration experience allows broader global shifts to be highlighted more effectively. Drawing on a continuous engagement with Dominican migrants from 1990 to the present, I address the impact of the stricter immigration enforcement on migrants' ability to live transnational lives. I argue that transnationalism to some extent has become an elite project open to those with access to well-established transnational networks (e.g. family reunification policies). Transnationalism is less accessible to marginalised sectors of the Dominican society, both those detached from global networks by being involuntarily immobilised on the island and those prevented from moving on abroad socially due to their irregular migrant status.

I began conducting ethnographic research on transnational migration among Dominicans in New York in 1990 and have since engaged in research on Dominican migration to various destinations (Spain, Italy and the Netherlands) and the effects of these movements on sending communities, including the effects of return. For the past five years, I have focussed more explicitly on high-risk migration. This has redirected my former interest in transnational identity and place-making towards transnational governance and the growing economy and market-based governance structures that emerge from the enactment of state efforts to manage migration flows. This move echoes contemporary efforts within political anthropology to explore confinement and involuntary immobility, to underline the need to move beyond the "migrant" as an ethnographic object of study and to engage with a system in which migrant illegality and deportability is produced (Peutz & De Genova 2010). In engaging in these discussions, transnational scholars increasingly find that the number of people wishing to migrate without being able to do so is an indication that transnationalism must be analysed in the light of restrictive migration policy. One way of doing so is through a "regimes of mobility" framework that addresses the relationship between mobility and immobility and critically exposes the normalisation of the mobility of some travellers while criminalising and entrapping the ventures of others (Glick Schiller & Salazar 2013).

Transnational Mobility

The cover illustration adorning Michael Kearney's 1996 book, *Reconceptualizing the Peasantry: Anthropology in a Global Perspective*, depicts the classic Mexican icon, *La Calavera Catrina*, in a new guise. No longer denying her indigenous heritage under skin lightening make-up and a hat in the European fashion as had the original, this skeleton is riding a skateboard on the border between Mexico and the US, her skirt fluttering and her hair all loose. The original artwork by Chicana artist Juana Alicia portrayed the wall put up between Mexico and the US as a virtually powerless anachronism in a world of transnational hypermobility. The image related directly to several contemporary anthropologists' projects to situate the discipline in a global context by insisting that even fortified borders can be trespassed on. At the same time, the skeleton image – perhaps unintentionally and in any case not addressed in Kearney's book – suggested the need to develop a new form of critical transnationalism by anticipating the border deaths and the (un)intended consequences of stricter migration policies that were already in the making.

The early transnational approach suggested by Basch, Glick Schiller & Szanton Blanc (1994) grew out of ethnographic fieldwork carried out among post-colonial migrants who moved so frequently and felt at home in so many different places that it became difficult to tie their belonging down to any one particular place. The hypermobility thus revealed was based on two premises: first, that the everyday activities of transmigrants form a single field of social relations across nation states (the transnational social field) and second, that a new form of deterritorialised nation-state building was in the making, a project in which several post-colonial migrant-producing states were taking part and which consisted of incorporating migrants abroad into the national polity in order to ensure their continued economic and political engagement with the "home" society. The notion of transnational migration simultaneously revealed that migrants

confront structures of unequal power and discrimination when living their lives across state borders, a finding that was not fully understood, nor necessarily applied, by scholars inspired by the transnational perspective.

"Migration", Glick Schiller and her associates argued, "proves to be an important transnational process that reflects and contributes to the current configuration of the global economy" (Glick Schiller, Basch & Szanton Blanc 1995: 48). The ongoing ways in which migrants in the 1980s and early 1990s were able to construct and reconstitute their simultaneous embeddedness in more than one society were evidenced in transnational family relationships, transnational class positioning and class mobility, the construction of homes in several locations, transnational business activities, border-spanning organisational practices and political participation. In this understanding, transnational family relationships offset migrants' global vulnerability by enabling the care of children by kin at "home", continuing participation in important family decisions from abroad, regular family visits and purchases of property, homes and businesses in the countries of origin as a means to secure class position, even though this position might be denied in the country of settlement, whether temporary or permanent. As it takes considerable financial and social capital to migrate, interconnected relatives based in more than one household were recognised as fundamental to the workings of multiple connections of social networks.

Partly as a result of labour market marginalisation, migrants create business activities that build on and foster transnational social relationships: "Often the most successful migrant businesses arise in the very interstices created by transnationalism – for example shipping and air cargo companies, import-export firms, labor contractors, and money transfer houses" (ibid.: 54). Such businesses can still be easily located in New York City's Dominican neighbourhoods. By the early 1990s, up to one million Dominicans had established themselves in the city, contributing to the transnationalisation of Dominican economic, social, political and cultural relations. One group of professionals was engaged in occupations according to their skills, while others were slowly beginning to work their way up from precarious jobs in the garment industry. A significant sector of migrants made a living by establishing or working in the hundreds of small- and medium-sized Dominican-owned enterprises, including small corner grocery stores; restaurants serving Dominican dishes with *arroz y habichuela*; travel agencies offering cheap flights, paper work and the carriage of goods, cab and limousine operations taking *Dominican Yorks* to and from the airport and into neighbourhoods yellow cabs refused to serve; beauty parlours advertising hair and nails the Dominican way and other Dominican-owned enterprises (Pessar 1995; Sørensen 1998). This business community matured during the following decade and provided employment opportunities for not yet regularised newcomers, as well as money collection opportunities for political parties and charities.

During this period, Dominicans, like other Latin American and Caribbean migrants, travelled back and forth with relative ease between their different homes and activities, stretching between New York City and the island. Yet, the unexpected death of a close family member or a sudden disagreement over an investment made in the country of origin from hard-earned remittances provided an irregular migrant with severe difficulties. One's physical absence from a funeral could result in a loss of property, the interruption of family ties and, of course, considerable emotional problems. Nevertheless, Dominicans possessing legal travel documents (even if not always of their own) continued to make periodic trips to the island. During such visits, those working at the bottom of the US labour market could oversee the building of new houses and enjoy the status of having access to substantially more purchasing power than their local compatriots for a few weeks (Levitt 2001; Pessar 1995). Small-scale entrepreneurs could encourage new investments and expand their markets. Income earned through these activities sustained family members on the island or was invested in facilitating their migration. Newcomers often arrived on tourist visas that they subsequently overstayed. Over a three- to five-year period, many managed to legalise their irregular status, often by marrying a US citizen *por amor o por negocio* (for love or business).

Intrigued by the knowledge, skills and transnational tactics that Dominican migrants were mobilising in order to overcome the obstacles put in the way of their border-spanning existence and inspired by the New York academic community that was engaged in constructing the transnational paradigm, I began referring to *Dominican Yorks* as "natives" of transnational space (Sørensen 1998). Yet borders mattered, not least to the new group of returnees increasingly evident in their country of origin often consisting of young "misbehavers", who, often against their will, were sent back by their parents to be re-socialised into more traditional norms of appropriate conduct or simply removed from dangerous influences on the streets of New York. Contrary to the small number of marginalised young Dominican men who began to be deported on charges of drug dealing or Dominican women charged with selling sex in different destinations, these forced returns took place within family networks. However, they were not necessarily permanent and not yet circumscribed by new border enforcement legislation prohibiting re-entry.

Force, Uncertainty, and High-Risk Migration

Scholars in the field of refugee and forced migration studies have criticised transnational analyses for ignoring the experience of forced mobility (Al-Ali, Black & Koser 2001; Horevitz 2009). Indeed, although migration from the Dominican Republic to the US during the 1960s in many ways resemble flight, it was overwhelmingly analysed as economic labour migration, as the US generally did not recognise people fleeing political repression in non-communist states as refugees. Many Dominicans nevertheless embarked on migration in the wake of the economic and political turmoil that occurred after Dictator Rafael Trujillo's assassination in 1961 and the US military intervention. Some were exiled in New York, others in Cuba and Puerto Rico and many from lower social strata embarked on labour migration to Venezuela and the Netherlands Caribbean. However, once mobilised, Dominican migrants at that time did not necessarily react any differently than if they had been fleeing political or economic chaos (Sørensen & Stepputat 2001). They too made use of the available social networks to find housing and work and sometimes engaged in transnational activities, but of course, they differed in their ability to travel back and forth between origin and destinations.

At around the same time, Malkki (1995: 486) suggested that "involuntary or forced movements of people are always only one aspect of much larger constellations of sociopolitical and cultural processes and practices", so that "refugees do not constitute a natural self-delimiting domain of anthropological knowledge". Denaturalising the link between people and particular territorial spaces made it analytically possible to look beyond legal labels and migrant status categorisations and instead pay attention to the degree of force involved in mobility, displacement and emplacement (Jansen &

Löfving 2009). Efforts to apply such insights led Jørgen Carling to introduce the concept of involuntary immobility in his analysis of the gulf between the aspiration to move on the part of transnational family members and their ability to do so (Carling 2002). In forced migration studies, Stephen Lubkeman suggested that the forms and disruptions usually attributed to forced displacement are more often produced by involuntary immobility than by migration. Those who managed to flee using established avenues of labour migration have far better opportunities than those who remained immobilised due to conflict (Lubkemann 2008).

Van Hear (2014) attributes the lack of inclusion of forced migration experiences in early transnational theorising to the circumstance that most of the attention to transnational engagement focussed on migrants departing from relatively stable settings. This is not correct. The Haitian and Filipino experiences analysed in *Nations Unbound* were embedded in extremely volatile political situations. When diasporic and transnational formations were considered in situations of conflict, Van Hear further asserted that such formations often came to be understood as negative forces fomenting and sustaining violence and insurgency by both sending and receiving states. In the Dominican case, however, migration took off in the early 1960s as a direct consequence of Trujillo's murder and the following revolution. After the 1965 US military intervention and the subsequent establishment of a US-backed government, both the Dominican Republic and the US encouraged out-migration as a safety valve intended to rid the country of political dissidents and prevent sociopolitical upheaval arising from the economic crisis generated by the austere measures promoted by the International Monetary Fund (Hernández 1993). In the US, Dominicans fleeing these conditions were given migrant, not refugee status. Thus, while the politicised division between forced and voluntary migration departmentalised theorising into migration and forced migration studies, respectively, "attention to the role and dynamic tensions generated by global capitalist hegemony" (Basch, Glick Schiller & Szanton Blanc 1994: 15) formed part of the early transnational project from its very beginning. It potentially made it possible to analyse forced migration as a pivotal aspect of global social relations and to link population mobility to an emerging new political economy of political domination, economic globalisation and North–South inequality (Castles 2003).

In Europe, anthropologists supplemented the transnational perspective with a new interpretation of the classic concept of diaspora, focussing their attention on the dispersal of migrant communities to many diverse regions of the world (Cohen 1999; Van Hear 1998). Increasing recognition that a lot of human mobility is driven by a complex range of factors, these people may move in and out of legal migrant status over time and that migration policy in itself may account for differences in status categories (Boehm 2016) introduced an interest in mixed migrations. This term generally refers to groups of refugees, asylum seekers and economic and other migrants who travel in an irregular manner along similar routes and using similar means of travel, albeit for different reasons. The concept of mixed migrations suggests understanding migration as predisposed by a structural composite of economic need, democratic deficit and political force. It readily applies to many contemporary migrations, including the Dominican case, in which members of the same family often move, settle and/or return with different legal migrant statuses.

In the mid-1990s, a Dominican community also established itself in Europe, first in Spain, to a lesser extent in the Netherlands and Switzerland and was well on the way to making a considerable presence in Italy. This redirection of Dominican migration was spurred by a demand for female care workers in Europe and also by more open entryways. The arrival of Dominicans in Spain coincided with a period during which Latin Americans were exempt from visa requirements. Over time, my conversations with Dominicans in various European cities revealed that new destinations not only develop in response to labour demands but also arise in response to the inability to access more desired locations (stricter US immigration enforcement), a lack of access to (US-based) social networks and/or a complex interplay of force and will related to political structures in the country of origin.

The account of Juan is illustrative of these developments. We first met in Madrid in 1996. Back on the island, his high-school education and political contacts with the political party in power, the Partido Revolucionario Dominicano (PRD), provided him with an opportunity to obtain a job as a public employee. When the PRD lost the 1994 elections to the *Partido Reformista Social Cristiano* (PRSC), in an election marked by several irregularities, the repayment of political campaign debts meant that public employees taken on during the previous regime were laid off to make room for employees loyal to PRSC. Not directly persecuted, but barred from public employment on the grounds of his political affiliation, Juan felt forced to leave the country. His first choice was to become a *Dominican York*. However, with the regular routes to the US now being restricted by tighter border controls, the only route available was the risky *yola* trip to Puerto Rico that Jacqueline had made a few years earlier. Unlike Jacqueline, however, whose father had connections with a reliable and experienced captain, Juan had no such networks. He entered into a contract with an unknown human smuggler, who turned out to be of the "unscrupulous" kind so often referred to in anti-smuggling campaigns. Juan fell victim to the common scam of being taken off during the night and being put ashore on a remote and supposedly Puerto Rican beach in the morning, only to discover later that the boat had just circled the Dominican coast and offloaded its passengers in a local bay. During the second attempt, a few months later, he almost drowned. After more than 24 hours on the high seas, the boat began taking in water and eventually sank, luckily close to the Puerto Rican coast and in sight of a coastguard patrol that managed to save – and interdict – all but a few passengers who were assumed to have drowned. Juan was subsequently deported.

Back on the island, frustrated and also prevented from getting a job because of the criminal record he had now acquired as a deported person, he heard about the Spanish option. A political acquaintance told him, "All you need is to enter as a tourist, get a labour contract, become a Spanish citizen after two years, and then travel as a European to the United States". Having spent all his savings on two unsuccessful attempts, Juan took out a loan to pay for his ticket to Europe. Once in Madrid, he found it hard to get a work contract. The occasional odd jobs available hardly paid the bills, much less the debt he had incurred to pay for the journey. Juan slept badly and had recurrent nightmares of the hours spent bailing water out of the boat, the time floating in the sea and the degrading time he had spent in detention. He felt trapped, unable to return and unable to move on. Years later, and after several failed attempts to set up a business, he finally succeeded in finding a minor position in the Dominican political system abroad, a position he later lost when Dominican elections once again resulted in staff changes.

Juan's experience illustrates the degree of force that may be involved in mobility, the diasporic dispersal of Dominicans to new destinations (strongly occasioned by stricter border enforcement in the US), the workings of a deterritorialised nation state (which provides and withdraws jobs both at home and abroad) and the

personal psychosocial consequences of high-risk migration and precarious social networks. The rise in failed migration attempts and subsequent deportations should be read as a direct consequence of post-9/11 immigration enforcement in the US.

Transnationalism As Compensatory Means of Subsistence or Critique

Attention to power asymmetries and the fact that transnational incorporation may be the privilege of those who manage to exchange their irregular presence for citizenship, while others are able to transnationalise only their precarious labour power led Brotherton & Barrios (2011) to question whether transnational spaces are what they once were or whether, rather, they have lost terrain to global capitalist forces and increasingly unequal neoliberal globalisation. This is a relevant question and a question transnational scholars have struggled with over the past 25 years. During this time, researchers have contributed critical refinements to the research agenda (Mahler 1998) and introduced new ways of understanding citizenship (Ong 1999), transnational family relationships (Bryceson & Vuorela 2002) and various other geographies of power, including those pertaining to gender (Pessar & Mahler 2003). Meanwhile, the social theory and associated methodology that underpin transnational migration studies have been critically revisited (Glick Schiller & Fouron 2001; Glick Schiller & Salazar 2013; Levitt & Glick Schiller 2004). However, the social consequences of migrant status categorisation and the level of force involved, not least in return movements, did not attract sufficient critical attention until new research concerned with transnational governmentality began to emerge. Scholars involved in this line of theoretisation have highlighted the dramatic intensification and diversification of migration control strategies and the consequent disciplining of human mobility (Baker-Cristales 2008; Pécoud 2013). In redirecting the analytical optic away from migrant experiences to disciplinary structures, studies of the production of migrant illegality and deportability have sharpened the critical potential in transnational studies (De Genova 2002; Peutz & De Genova 2010) as have studies of the growing economy and market-based governance structures that have emerged in the enactment of the state's efforts to manage migration flows (Andersson 2014; Golash-Boza 2009; Sørensen and Gammeltoft-Hansen 2013). Contained in these efforts, a renewed interest in high-risk migration has also emerged (Alpes 2016; Lucht 2012; Sørensen 2012).

Frank Graciano's recent work on undocumented Dominican migration has made the important observation that structural pressures continue to mobilise poor Dominicans. Forced migration is not only a result of persecution, political violence or natural disasters, although all these continue to exist in the Dominican Republic, as they also emanate from socioeconomic conditions that jeopardise security and well-being. Chronic economic instability remains a high motivational factor for risking *yola* trips, despite the increasing costs, physical risks and the overriding probability of deportation. However, "even in the best of circumstances", Graciano (2013: 24) argues, "undocumented migration is a precarious means of advancement. The general presumption among migrants, potential migrants, and outside observers is that migration is profitable, but migration often perpetuates and aggravates the very poverty is endeavours to alleviate". Thus, even when successful, undocumented migration hardly offers more than a compensatory transnational means of subsistence.

What explains this precarious access afforded irregular migrants? Routinely, human smugglers are blamed for putting migrants' lives in danger, but destination countries are implicated in high-risk migration in diverse and conflicting ways too. Increased border enforcement significantly raise the risks associated with irregular migration by forcing migrants to use more dangerous means and routes, resulting in the Dominican case in the use of smaller and less secure boats. Embarking on less seaworthy boats is perceived as a safer way to avoid coastal patrols, and their use is becoming more frequent. In February 2016, at least 31 people drowned when a small *yola* was shipwrecked close to the coast of Samaná and a further 20 people were missing.[3] Later the same year, only 13 of more than 70 passengers survived a voyage in an overcrowded *yola* destined for Puerto Rico.[4]

Through search and rescue (SAR) operations, the US Coast Guard and the Dominican Navy save hundreds of people from drowning every year. However, these operations simultaneously contribute to the interception and rapid deportation of irregular migrants. The promotion of technocratic border control methods is transmitted from migrant-receiving to migrant-sending countries in training sessions and joint operations (Andrijasevic & Walters 2010). As a result, humanitarian and securitarian logics are far from being mutually incompatible but rather contribute to enforcing the US border regime and in subtle ways denying marginalised populations access to transnational space.

In 2006, the US Department of Homeland Security formalised the Caribbean Border Interagency Group cooperation. Most of the migrants who have been interdicted under this policy set out from Cuba, Haiti or the Dominican Republic.[5] According to Graziano (2013), the US Coast Guard currently interdicts about 50 percent of irregular *yola* crossings between the Dominican Republic and Puerto Rico, a percentage that rises to 70–80 percent when interdictions by other entities are added, such as the US Border Patrol and the Dominican Navy. Deportation rates are high, and enhanced enforcement affects prospective migrants. Quite a few Dominicans, with or without social family networks abroad, are finding that their aspirations to migrate have become severely limited. During a short re-visit to old field sites in the Dominican Republic in February 2016, I met several people who grew up believing that their future would be in New York, Madrid, Milan or elsewhere but found themselves involuntary immobilised by tightened immigration policies. Thus, mobility has become a factor producing social stratification parallel to old class structures throughout the country. A similar situation is discussed by Glick Schiller & Fouron (2001) who point to stratification between families on the basis of whether or not they have family members with legal status abroad.

The accounts of undocumented Dominican migrants and *yola* deportees analysed by Graciano resemble the unpredictability and socioeconomic precariousness of undocumented Mexican migrants studied by Boehm (2016). Contrary to the uncertainty inherent in undocumented migration, the trajectories of people touched by deportation is that of "ineluctability, certainty and unidirectionality" (ibid: 11). Unlike the involuntary returns within transnational family networks experienced by previous generations of Dominican migrants, I would add that Dominicans who are currently being deported from the mainland US and Europe increasingly find themselves separated from close family and kin located abroad, as well as experience criminalisation by both US border enforcement policy and national security perceptions.

The risks involved in irregular migration not only pertain to routes and means but also to becoming "illegal" and deported. As argued by Nicholas de Genova, it is "insufficient to examine the 'illegality' of undocumented migration only in terms of its consequences".

Rather, analysis should result in "historically informed accounts of the sociopolitical processes of 'illegalization' which can be characterized as the legal production of migrant 'illegality'" (de Genova 2002: 419). In this analytical framework, migrant illegality is closely connected to "deportability", the possibility of being removed from a given country of origin. It is, moreover, connected to maintaining irregular migrants' labour market vulnerability and to criminalising their conduct, even that of green card holders and naturalised citizens.

Together with Nathalie Peutz, de Genova has more recently called attention to the normative and administrative roles of deportation in global migration management. Deportability, the protracted possibility of being deported, has a profound impact on individual lives, above all by rendering greater numbers and more diverse categories of people subject to arrest, detention and deportation. In terms of practice, deportation entails the "sociological production of deportable populations [that] are not limited to bilateral transactions between 'host' and 'sending' states but rather must be comprehended as an increasingly unified, effective global response to a world that is being actively remade by transnational human mobility" (Peutz & de Genova 2010: 2). Nathalie Peutz further suggests that we understand the "deportee" by means of an anthropology of removal that throws the state and its exclusions directly into the transnational arena and further demonstrates how neoliberal globalisation generates immobility and opacity for some individuals when compared to the more transparent "flexibilities" forced on others. Deportation, Peutz suggests, has legal, economic, embodied and spatial consequences. Apart from the study of deported persons' experiences, explorations of deportation should also include scrutiny of the state agencies charged with apprehension and deportation, the private companies that benefit from these practices, the transnational organisations or local networks that assist arriving deportees and the activist groups whose political work opposes deportation (Peutz 2010).

Towards a Conclusion

Migration control, or rather the functions and effects of migration policy, is not just something that happens on state borders. Increasingly, border control has become deterritorialised through externalisation, its aim being to create effects outside the territories of the global North. One way of externalising border controls is to securitise migration policy discourses and practices. The criminalising of irregular migration – in particular, the human smugglers who facilitate migrant mobility and the migrants who make use of their services – effectively displaces migration control to territory external to the state. Graziano (2013: 177) argues with reference to the criminal prosecution of Dominican migrants who risk and lose their lives in attempts to flee poverty that there is something distorting about removing the analysis of migration from the wider global context in which it unfolds. However, there is more to it than that, I argue. It is severely limiting to foreground only migration facilitation actors in transnational analysis, especially when family networks become disrupted by deportation, when deported migrants become "homeless" in their countries of "origin" when no such networks exist and when a migration restriction industry is as much an accomplice to migrant deaths as are the human smugglers.

The developments in migration policy regimes discussed in this article are fundamental to the construction and redefinition of what it means to live transnational lives today as compared to the 1980s and 1990s. The conditions under which migrants move and settle have changed profoundly. Moreover, the absence of regular avenues of migration for large numbers of prospective migrants or migrant families divided by borders has led to a rise in high-risk migration. Through various campaigns, the Dominican government and its consulates abroad, often assisted by international organisations, currently discourage people from risking their lives in irregular boat migration. However, information campaigns focussed on the risks involved in *yola* migration are wasted on migrants who are aware of the dangers involved but, when weighing these dangers against the risk of never *pasar pa' adelante* (progressing) if they remain at home, hope to make it anyway. At the same time and despite declared intentions to avoid migrant deaths at sea and promote alternatives to irregular migration, less is done is this area. The unequal political attention given to information campaigns (stating the obvious with little effect) and the shared US and Dominican focus on combatting human smuggling and trafficking generally neglect the fact that resorting to irregular high-risk migration is linked to the absence of legal routes to migration, including access to transnational social networks.

Meanwhile, indiscriminate police round-ups in migrant neighbourhoods in the US, Spain and other destinations are resulting in the detention of Dominican migrants, many of whom have resided abroad for years. Women form a small but growing proportion of the forcibly returned Dominicans. National newspaper coverage of deportation tragedies results in headlines trumpeting the fact that a given number of "ex-convicts" have arrived after serving sentences for drug trafficking, robbery and assault, document fraud, sexual violations and "other criminal offences". That the forcibly returned have served their sentences and that up to one-third of the offences are related to irregular migrant status are never mentioned, nor is the fact that a growing number of deported Dominicans are the mothers of children who have foreign citizenship and that these children often remain abroad after their mothers' deportation.

Upon arrival, deported Dominicans are received with little attention from their own government apart from until recently being entered into the national criminal register, even when the 'crime' should not be an offence in the eyes of the Dominican state, such as overstaying a tourist visa or having stayed abroad without proper documentation in other ways. This registration complicates their reinsertion into the labour market, as most employers require *una prueba de buena conducta* (a clean criminal record) before hiring people.[6] A program to reinsert victims of human trafficking into the Dominican society and economy by granting them monetary aid of between USD 2000 and USD 5000 to start up micro-enterprises (sponsored first by the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) and then by the European Union) has failed in delivering much result, and many of the deported women who have participated in the program have subsequently embarked on new irregular migration projects.[7] A special unit under the Procurador General de la Republica (Attorney General) has been assigned the task of providing orientation to repatriated citizens, including legal aid and assistance in health, educational and labour-related issues. This far, little has come of this effort due to a lack of funding. A local NGO established by a former deportee in 2005, Fundación Bienvenda Seas, aimed at combating social stigmatisation and securing deportees' constitutional rights, has not succeeded in forming a social movement around deportation issues. Other local NGOs active in deportation issues have limited their efforts to advocacy and support to Haitians and Dominicans of Haitian descent, a much needed and totally legitimate activity that nevertheless does not help deported Dominicans.

During the Obama administration, the US State Department gently scolded the Dominican Republic's resumption of the deportation of

Haitians – a subject that for lack of space is not included here – but Dominican officials have been less than receptive to this criticism and instead defended the national immigration policy as an issue of sovereignty. The Dominican government has simultaneously pointed out that the US routinely deports Haitians and other Caribbean nationals, including Dominicans, although less fuss has been made about this particular national issue.[8]

Despite the fact that the volume of Dominican emigration is three times higher than the immigration of Haitians and other foreign nationals to the Dominican Republic (OBMICA 2015), the national interest in migration issues has concentrated on the "Haitian migration problem" and, to a lesser extent, on setting up an administrative framework to establish links to the "Dominican Diaspora abroad" (an euphemism for the Dominican business community in New York and Miami). A National Council for Dominican Communities Abroad (Consejo Nacional para las Comunidades en el Exterior, CONDEX) was belatedly launched in 2008, primarily directed at the Dominican elite and with an interest in improving the reputation of Dominicans abroad – "to show that we are more than those who come in *yola*", as a Dominican involved in these efforts told me in New York in May 2016. The government interest in involving this elite in developing public policies, programs and projects, aimed at enhancing economic, political, social, cultural and technological development, is pretty much in line with the international policy community involved in "stemming illegal migration through combatting its root causes". The initiative was later contested by a new Institute of Dominicans Abroad (Instituto de la Diaspora en el Exterior, INDEX) aimed at bettering the lives of more the marginalised elements among Dominican migrants, including people with irregular status. A lack of institutionalisation and the practice of each newly elected government replacing public officials wholesale have provided both initiatives with severe obstacles.

Unpredictability always marked migration experiences. The combination of high-risk migration and low-pace social mobility nevertheless introduces qualitatively greater levels of unpredictability and more diversified logics in transnational outcomes, as the juxtaposition of Dominican migration experiences over time has shown. The recently established National Institute of Migration (Instituto de Nacional de Migración, INM) is among the few state entities with an interest in tracing how changed migration policies and stricter border enforcement are altering migrant realities. In early 2016, the INM developed a training program for national migration police officials aimed at raising awareness of human right and migrant rights and initiated a research agenda with the aim of mapping the various interconnections between irregular migration and human trafficking. At the outset understaffed, and subject to the budgetary deficiencies resulting from the standby position that any government entity suffers around election time (held May 16, 2016), the results of the INM research remain to be seen.

Notes

1. Jacqueline and other names used in the text are pseudonyms.
2. Dominican migration attracted the interest of transnational scholars very early on (see Georges 1990; Grasmuck & Pessar 1991; Pessar 1995). It was already being described as diasporic by Glen Hendricks in 1974 and was later subject to discussions of the accessibility of transnational networks for Dominican migrants of different class, race and gender backgrounds (Duany 2011; Ricourt 2002; Torres Saillant 2000).
3. See http://www.diariode3.com/aumentan-a-31-los-muertos-por-naufragio-en-republica-dominicana/.
4. http://www.hispanosdelmundo.com/2016/11/zozobro-una-yola-repleta-de-dominicanos.html.
5. See https://www.gpo.gov/fdsys/pkg/CHRG-111hhrg48204/html/CHRG-111hhrg48204.htm.
6. See http://www.obmica.org/index.php/multimedia/70-dominicanos-deportados-de-eeuu-dame-la-oportunidad.
7. Personal communication with former employee during field visit, February 2016.
8. See http://www.huffingtonpost.com/entry/state-department-dominican-deportations_us_55d2225ae4b0ab468d9deef6.

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