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Belongings in a Globalising and Unequal World: rethinking translocations

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Introduction

Displacement has become the most powerful imagery for the modern world. Displacement already presupposes its opposite, which can be thought of as being 'in place'. Stuart Hall (2000) has argued (in his interview with Nira Yuval-Davis quoted in the introduction of this volume) that the multicultural question is the most important question facing the world today. This is defined as the problem of how people with very different cultural traditions, ways of life and understandings can live together. I believe that this is, of course, important. But we could usefully turn this question on its head and ask instead: under what conditions do people with different languages, cultures and ways of life fail to live in harmony? And I think turning the question on its head brings more clearly into focus the structural and political conditions involved and acts to contextualise the new 'multicultural question' historically and structurally (although such an analysis will take us in a different direction and this chapter is concerned with another set of issues).

Current debates around borders, security and social cohesion have reinforced the importance of engaging critically with the notion of belonging and its centrality to people's lives as well as political practice (Yuval-Davis *et al.*, 2005). They have also reinforced, however, the need to move beyond the politics of belonging and relate to the continuing importance of unequal social resources (which are increasingly, and I believe problematically, being discussed using the notion of social capital) and to think in what have been termed 'intersectional ways'. I want to contribute to this debate by trying to avoid the problems of a thoroughgoing deconstruction, where the only thing we are left with is the idea of a multiplicity of identities when discussing issues of belonging.

In this chapter, I will signpost a number of related issues – a kind of state of play – drawing out their implications in terms of finding a way forward. I will move towards developing an intersectionality approach that is tied to the idea of translocational positionality (see Anthias 2001; 2005).

Global Power: Refusing to Focus on 'Groups'

First, I would like to propose that the realities of global power requires rethinking processes of exclusion away from the focus on 'groups'. In the context of globalisation and the consolidation of hierarchical relations worldwide, new forms of migration, exclusion and racialisation, and new forms of violence and boundary making, it is no longer possible to clearly differentiate between ethnic and racist phenomena as phenomena relating to *groups* which are to be regarded as 'ethnic' or 'racial'. I believe that, alternatively, there is a need to highlight different forms of exclusion and violence. These are not so much enacted or experienced with reference to population categories with particular characteristics. Rather, we should look at the range of attributions that are constructed in the wake of different political strategies such as the war against terror, economic interest, fear for European or Western interests, values and culture and so on. In this sense we need to focus on processes and strategies involved in the political and economic projects of powerful social actors as well as the strategies and processes involved in dealing with these by people those on the receiving end. Such social actors may be either non-person actors such as financial or government institutions or person actors. Person actors cannot be conceptualised purely in terms of their affiliation to a specific group as such, given that group membership is always multiple and indeed cross-cutting.

We are confronted today with many different forms of ethnic and racist violence. Widespread ethnic conflict has been one of the most significant developments since the end of the 1980s, and it has had an impact both on ideas and practices of racism and on the flows of people fleeing violence and persecution in many parts of the world; in the process, the asylum seeker victimisation syndrome has re-emerged. This involves characterising asylum seekers only and persistently in terms of the act of flight from a 'home', and in terms of their orientation to 'return' even when they have settled in a new place and have made it a new 'home'.

We have also seen the growth of riots and racist groupings in many large European cities, the growth of anti-Muslim racism and racial attacks and the racialisation of refugees and asylum seekers. These phenomena have helped to correct the tendency in the past to differentiate between ethnic and race categories, showing that forms of violence based on different constructions of group boundaries (via culture, religion, ethnic heritage, supposed racial lineage etc.) share many characteristics. The enemy within, hatred towards particular categories of the population, and practices of dehumanisation and violence cannot be easily pigeonholed into issues of race on the one hand, stemming from race differentiations and 'otherness', and issues of ethnicity on the other (Anthias and Yuval-Davis 1992; 2002). The recent racialisation of 'Muslim' is a good example of the shifting nature of the boundaries used as props for pursuing particular political agendas.

Although ethnic and racist violence manifests itself at local levels and in specific sites, we cannot ignore the transnational and global dimensions involved in terms of policies, practices and identities. Transnationalism itself, by definition, involves the crossing and challenging of borders. However, it is often accompanied

by increased expressions of inequality, uncertainty, ethnic conflict and hostility (Bulmer and Solomos 1998). It is not, therefore, the case that the dismantling of national or ethnic borders of particular types leads to the dismantling of all borders. A good example is that of Europe and Islam. New borders achieve prominence in particular constellations of political and economic practice. New enemies emerge or may be resurrected in new ways. The ways the violence or hatred is expressed may also be reconfigured.

These processes of globalisation involve the growing imperialism of Western cultural forms that have become consumables on an ever-growing market avid for their commodities of plenty, often in nations where poverty and exploitation by the major Western countries continue to grow. In what the British and US governments refer to as the post 9/11 world, we live in a time when the war against terror is used as way ideologically to pursue often racist and exclusionary policies and practices.

Globalised networks now characterise modern societies at all social levels, including the cultural and the economic. Although this does not minimise the importance of ethnic and cultural ties, it does mean that these ties operate increasingly at a transnational rather than merely national level. Groups involved are also at the leading edge of the emergence of hybrid cultural forms, on the one hand, and communication flows around racist hatred and insularity, on the other.

One of the difficulties of thinking only about groups can be illustrated by pointing to the many ways in which concepts like 'global' or, as in the example below, 'transnational' function. Whilst transnationalism refers to processes that transcend or cross nation-state borders, it is possible to differentiate a number of objects of reference that it can be attached to:

- an *ethnic group* (e.g. diasporic groups);
- a *category* (e.g. sex workers);
- a *person* (e.g. a person who commutes across borders, or a person with homes in more than one country);
- an *orientation* (although not necessarily 'cosmopolitan');
- *processes* (e.g. trading rules, or juridical human rights).

Transethnic connections, on the other hand, can exist both within national borders and also transnationally. It could be argued that the two concepts militate against each other in the sense that transethnic bonds involve connections between people from different ethnic categories whereas many transnational connections are also essentially co-ethnic, certainly in terms of solidary formations or social networks.

Identity and Belonging in Relation to Exclusion and Inclusion

Belonging and identity are words overused and under-theorised in the context of population movements and translocation. A sense of collective identity and a feeling of belonging to the country you reside in are neither necessarily coterminous nor mutually exclusive. You may identify but not feel that you 'belong' in the sense of being accepted or being a full member. Alternatively, you may feel that

you are accepted and 'belong' but may not fully identify, or your allegiances may be split. Here it is useful to bring up the issue of multiple identities (in a later section I will refer to the idea of hybrid identities). Multiple identities may exist in a number of ways, such as in the sense of co-existence of different identities within one person (e.g. being both British and Asian, or a member of an ethnic group and a member of a particular social class or gender). In addition, the notion of a multiplicity of identities can refer to the situationally salient nature of identity (say, I am British in the classroom but Cypriot at home). However, identities cannot be thought of as cloaks to put on at will or to discard when they no longer fit or please. This is because they are more than agency-driven labels or subjectively constituted. They are empowered by their very relationality within intersubjective contexts (you need to be acknowledged (or otherwise) as having a particular identity). Moreover, the idea of multiple or multilayered identities, or their recognition, does not resolve the problem of the notion of identity. This is because the notion of identity, in its most conventionally accepted sense, has assumed that it is a stable marker of sameness or difference: with multiple identities, therefore, the question is where is the 'identity' to be located within the idea of multiplicity (see Brubaker and Cooper 2000, Anthias 2002b for different critiques of the concept of identity). A concern with multiple and fragmented identities still suggests that identity might be a possessive property of individuals rather than a process.

To problematise the epistemological and ontological status of the concept of identity, and critique the forms of politics based upon this, does not mean that identity cannot be treated as a *socially* meaningful concept. Such a position enables attention to be paid to spatial and contextual dimensions, treating the issues involved in terms of processes rather than possessive properties of individuals (as in 'who are you' being replaced by 'what and how have you'). Displacing the concern with identity, by focusing on location and positionality, enables a complete abandonment of the residual elements of essentialisation retained even within the idea of fragmented and multiple identities so favoured by critics of unitary notions of identity (e.g. Hall 1996).

It is increasingly important to think of a sense of belonging in terms of preconditions for quality of life, and not purely in terms of cultural initiation or cultural identity. This includes a focus on the range of experiences of enablement in society, as well as experiences of hurdles. In other words, there has been a tendency to focus too much on the cultural predispositions of newcomers or 'others', and this has turned attention away from societal mechanisms involved in the production of socially salient narratives and practices of 'identity' and belonging (Anthias 2002b).

The emphasis on integration and social cohesion in current debates can be seen as a new form of assimilationism (Rattansi 2004). However, unlike assimilationism, the edict for social cohesion involves a respect for group boundaries and the acknowledgement of 'difference'. This is accompanied by additional requirements from 'others' about learning and conforming to the central cultural and value systems of mainstream hegemonic Englishness (Yuval-Davis *et al.*, 2005). This includes currently, in the UK, learning the language and pledging allegiance

to the throne and state as a precondition of citizenship. However, the differences of economy and power are not attended to and managed equally, and hence the ideal of integration is in danger of being undeliverable.

From discussions of identity politics to discussions of the modern self, the issue of identity sticks out as one of the most important in modern-day life. And it is precisely when we feel destabilised, when we seek for answers to the quandaries of uncertainty, disconnection, alienation and invisibility that we become more obsessed with finding, even fixing, a social place that we feel at home in, or at least more at home with; where we seek for our imagined roots, for the secure haven of our group, our family, our nation writ large.

Asking 'where do I belong?' may be prompted by a feeling that there are a range of spaces, places, locales and identities that we feel we do not, and cannot, belong to. Belonging, therefore, involves an important affective dimension relating to social bonds and ties. However, the collective places constructed by imaginings of belonging gloss over the fissures, the losses, the absences and the borders within them. The notion of 'imagining' also refers to the ways in which constructions of belonging serve to naturalise socially produced, situational and contextual relations, converting them to taken-for-granted, absolute and fixed structures of social and personal life. Such constructions produce a 'natural' community of people and function as exclusionary borders of otherness.

Belonging has a number of dimensions. There is the dimension of how we feel about our location in the social world. This is generated partly through experiences of exclusion rather than being about inclusion per se; a sense of, or concern with, belonging becomes activated most strongly when there is a sense of exclusion. The relational nature of belonging is important here. Belonging in this sense is about both formal and informal *experiences* of belonging. Belonging is not only about membership, rights and duties (as in the case of citizenship), or merely just about forms of identification with groups, or with other people. It is also about the social places constructed by such identifications and memberships, and the ways in which social place has resonances with stability of the self, on with feelings of being part of a larger whole and with the emotional and social bonds that are related to such places.

Belonging and *social inclusion* (rather than *cohesion*), are closely connected, although this does not mean that belonging itself brings about social inclusion (or cohesion). It is, however, through *practices and experiences* of social inclusion that a sense of a stake and acceptance in a society is created and maintained. Belonging is in this sense centrally related to experiences of inclusion and exclusion and must be differentiated needs differentiating from the notion of 'identity'. Here, to belong is to be accepted as part of a community, to feel safe within it and to have a stake in the future of such a community of membership. To belong is to share values, networks and practices and it is not just a question of identification.

Belonging is about experiences of being part of the social fabric and should not be thought of in exclusively ethnic terms. You cannot belong to any collectivity if you do not conform to the gender norms of this collectivity. It is important to relate the notion of belonging, therefore, to the different locations and contexts from which belongings are imagined and narrated, in terms of a range of social

positions and social divisions/identities such as gender, class, stage in the life cycle and so on.

Belonging is also about rights and obligations related to citizenship, although being more than this (as suggested earlier). However, such rights and obligations are about meeting the criteria of inclusion and there is differential inclusion and exclusion of so-called citizens along the lines of gender, ethnicity, class, age and so on. Belonging is about boundaries but it is also about hierarchies which exist both within and but across boundaries (Anthias 1998a; 2001).

Moreover, there is much evidence that belonging is a gendered process and that gender itself is central to the boundary formation which characterises ethnic, national and state formation and transformation. As early as 1989, Nira Yuval-Davis and I presented a developed argument (Anthias and Yuval-Davis 1989) about women and gender processes in nation making. In this we argued that women carried the burden of the reproduction of national discourse, imagery and practice in particular ways, with men taking a different role. Women were important in the reproduction of the ideology and culture of the nation, and in producing nationalised subjects through the transmission of national ideologies and practices (as well as ethnic ones); they were symbolic of the nation (which was often represented as a woman, particularly when appealing for reinstatement of rights) and played specific roles in institutional and other arrangements of the nation-state such as labour markets and the military.

Boundaries of identity and exclusion are of many kinds and the difficulty is trying to think through the complex interweaving and contradictions involved. As we know, this poses challenges for feminists and antiracists, whose political projects often channel them into prioritising the boundaries and identities which are the focus of gendered, and feminist and anti-racist struggles.

Boundaries are shifting and changing; some are more a product of external constraints, such as political, legal and national rules relating to membership. Others are inscribed in the body through the stigmata of absence, and notions of incapacity/deformity via gender or disability. They may also be inscribed through body style (such as in class relations) or through colour physiognomy and the bodily and personal style/gait associated with ethnic difference (Anthias 2002a: 277). But boundaries are never fixed and they are forms of political practice. Constructions of boundaries of difference homogenise those within and pay no attention to differences, for example, of class, gender, age, political persuasion and religion. Such identities always cross-cut each other, and people simultaneously hold different ones and belong therefore to different categorisations depending on context, situation and meaning. Such a recognition problematises the very notion of identity.

Celebrating Cultural Diversity

Claiming difference and celebrating it has been one way of fighting racism, particularly in various forms of multiculturalism. Multiculturalism is currently under attack from both the left and the right. It is now being pitched as the opposite of social cohesion, as that which has prevented it, within the new integrationist

politics. The problem still remains, however, of a balance between valorising difference and the cherished traditions of people from different backgrounds or different values, and finding a common space of civic participation and agreement on core social aims. This is far from easy, particularly where there are divisions in terms of economic and other material resources and a different commitment to dominant structures.

There is also the debate on the twin aspects of the representational needs of people defining themselves in terms of different group boundaries (religious, ethnic or territorial, amongst others) and the pursuit of a politics of redistribution of resources. In this connection, these become pitched against each other only on the assumption that they are indeed alternatives and therefore not inextricably linked.

The pursuit of representation can, however, also be seen as the pursuit of a form of social capital in its broadest sense and therefore may also enter into the pursuit of redistribution of a range of cultural, symbolic and material resources (Fraser 2000, Anthias 2002a). When debates on resources are given prominence, it becomes clear that forms of representation, as indeed ethnicity is in its mobilised form, are a resource (e.g. see Barth 1969).

However, resource distribution and social capital could usefully be distinguished. One can possess resources that cannot be mobilised or do not translate easily into valuable social capital. Examples include resources such as minority languages that are not widely used or ethnic resources that are negatively perceived. Other examples include social networks that are attributed negative valuation, as is the case for the social networks of stigmatised or excluded groupings. Similarly, resources such as money which cannot be accessed or taken out of a bank or used to create more value may be thought of as lying outside the definition of capital, let alone social capital. From this point of view, non material forms of capital entail those resources – cultural, social, symbolic, representational or political – which can be mobilised or are being mobilised (cf. Bourdieu 1986, Portes 1998).

On the other hand, Bourdieu emphasises the importance of the translatability of non-economic forms of capital into economic resources. This is overly reliant on the retention of the idea of materiality in terms of the traditional Marxist conception of the economic as a feature of social life, and as superordinate in defining place and position in the social hierarchy.

Whilst culture is a social resource and may be mobilisable as a form of social capital, the validation of the cultural difference of migrant populations and their descendants, which has been pursued for many years by multiculturalist policies, has had the effect of producing modes of struggle that focus on culture and identity, repeating for themselves the static and ahistorical nature of racialised definitions. Recent critiques of multiculturalism (e.g. Trevor Phillips 2004) and those embodied perfectly in David Edgar's play at the National Theatre, *Playing with Fire*, have pinpointed the unintended consequences of segregating communities on the basis of cultural needs and cultural commonalities. This strategy of paying attention to cultural needs is not only about unambiguously respecting the wishes of communities, for it has resonances with segregationist politics, where it has led to separation of culturally or ethnically defined groups.

Multiculturalist policies have also tended to fail to acknowledge the gender-specific, and indeed at times sexist, elements of ethnic culture or the ways in which both ethnic and race boundaries are exclusionary. Critiques of identity politics, too, are very powerful in this regard (e.g. MacLaren and Torres 1999).

The project of maintaining culture potentially creates a notion of a static and totalising culture. Whilst public validation of different ways of life is important, who are to be the voices for defining this? There is much evidence that it is often the traditional male voices that are given the role of acting to represent the cultural needs of groups. Moreover, uncovering the hidden ethnicity of the dominant groups is as important as validating the ethnicity of minority groups and welcome attention is now being paid given to this (e.g. in Gabriel 1998).

A liberal multiculturalist framework means that the dominant group within the state is able to set the terms of the agenda for participation by minority ethnic groups and involves a bounded dialogue where the premises themselves may not be open to negotiation. This is one reason there has been increasing debate around critical multiculturalism (Parekh 2000b). Multiculturality or critical/reflexive multiculturalism, unlike liberal multiculturalism, is concerned with the removal of barriers to the legitimacy of different ways of being and is compatible with transnational and transethnic identities as well as those that have been discussed using the notion of hybridity. As such, the identification of the fault lines of multiculturalist policies should mean a reframing of the agenda and not ditching it in the name of a spurious notion of social cohesion (see Yuval-Davis *et al.*, 2005).

A starting point in debates on critical multiculturalism must be a move away from the idea of one dominant culture that sets lays out the frame of reference, and which sees the issue as a question of tolerance towards other cultures. In other words, tolerance must go hand in hand with dialogue and effective voice to different social groups. A view of citizenship must be maintained where the boundaries of citizenship are not coterminous with belonging to a community in the singular. The idea of a 'community of communities' is offered by the Parekh report on Multi-Ethnic Britain, published by the Runnymede Trust (2000a). Whilst this may be a recognition of what exists in the aftermath of multiculturalism and racism, it cannot be a way forward. Such communities themselves are not homogeneous in any case, nor do they have members who agree on the forms of participation best for them in society.

Diasporic Connections and Imaginations

The concepts used to understand population movements and identity formations such as diaspora, hybridity, transculturalism and cosmopolitanism provide different ways by which culture and ethnic identity are seen to be affected by translocation processes or population movements. Such concepts are not attentive on the whole to the intersectionalities of social position and positioning.

I would propose that it is difficult to encapsulate the processes relating to translocation through the terms available today (for a critique of diaspora see Anthias 1998b). Migrants and their descendants have complex relationships to

different locales. These include social networks involving social, symbolic and material ties between homelands and destinations and relations between destinations. Many nation-states wish to retain the ethnic identity of their diaspora populations and encourage their reproduction as well as their return to the homeland (unrecognisable for those who were born outside it; a home no longer 'a home' or a place where they may feel 'at home'). All these present us with a multiplex reality and a shifting landscape of belonging and identity.

Critiques of notions of ethnicity and identity that are fixed, stable, monolithic and exclusionary have led scholars and activists to embrace new ideas of hybridity and diaspora. Hybridity and diaspora (Anthias 1998b) are used to counter the essentialism found in many traditional approaches to ethnicity and racism (Bhabha 1994). To what extent do they potentially create a space to challenge the fixity of boundaries that characterise racist practice, culture and identities?

Hybridity and diaspora postulate shifting and potentially transnational and transethnic cultural formations and identities. These new identities are seen to be tied to a globalised and transnational social fabric rather than one bounded by the nation-state form. If one of the most virulent forms of racism is to be found in the very nature of modern exclusivist ethnicity with its culture of fixed boundaries, then we might envisage that progress can be made with forms of cultural identity that are more fluid and synthetic, such as those that have been characterised as hybrid and diasporic. One issue, however, is the need to be cautious in espousing concepts such as hybridity and diaspora as unproblematic.

Today, globalisation involves a growth in the amount of movement, which both intensifies strangeness and normalises it. The condition of 'overall strangeness' becomes the condition par excellence of global society. The importance of 'asymmetry', together with and hegemonic cultural discourses in this process, needs to be considered by the new approaches to interculturality found in the idea of cultural hybridities and diasporic imaginations.

Why is the problem of the concepts of diaspora and hybridity important and what are the limitations and usefulness of these concepts? Partly this relates to the importance such depictions give to our desire for a fixed place of origin where we are treated as social actors (when we are described as belonging to a particular diaspora by name, for example, Cypriot, Turkish, Asian, African, Eritrean) in terms of this origin. To think of diasporas in this way is to fail to problematise the processes at work and to create little boxes into which we fit.

Many writers emphasise the importance of transnational bonds between communities of origin and see these as positive and useful in undermining ethnic and national divisions. However, such bonds may weaken transethnic bonds with other groups which share a more local or national context of contestation and struggle. Trans-ethnic, as opposed to transnational, commonalities and processes are pushed to the background.

We must be careful not to treat hybridity outside the parameters of unequal power relations that exist between and within cultures. Diasporic groups have been thought of as particularly adaptable to a globalised economic system (Cohen 1997). It is important to consider such groupings neither as essentially constituted in this way nor as undifferentiated. It is also important to continue examining the

more violent, dislocating and 'othering' practices that they are subjected to. The existence of group boundaries and the ways we think about our belonging are crucial elements in these practices but the forms they take are products of positionalities and contexts that do not themselves originate from these identity formations. We must be careful that the focus on belongings in terms of diasporic attachments does not foreclose a concern with differences of gender, class and generation within diasporic groups.

Intersectionality and the Concept of Translocational Positionality

This discussion leads me to a reflection on intersectionality prompted by the recognition that we all occupy positions in a range of categories of difference and location such as ethnicity, racialisation and social class. Here I would like to discuss some of the problems and some of the potential to be found in bringing together the analysis of the different forms of oppression on the basis of gender, race, ethnicity and class.

The metaphors of intersectionality, crossroads and intermeshing have been used to denote the complex relationships of social identities and divisions (Hill-Collins 1993, Crenshaw 1994). However, it is important not to focus on the intersections in terms of constructing people as belonging to fixed and permanent groups which then all enter, in a pluralist fashion, into determining their lives. One view of intersectionality (e.g. around human rights; for a discussion see Anthias 2005, Yuval-Davis 2003, and forthcoming) is that categories of discrimination overlap and individuals suffer exclusions on the basis of race and gender or some other combination. One can see the usefulness of this approach, even though it merely scrapes the surface in terms of the issue of belonging we are concerned with here (for a discussion see Anthias 2005). The sexual trafficking of young Albanian women in Greece, for example, cannot be seen merely as either a gender problem or a race problem (e.g. concerning the position of Albanians in Greek society).

One aspect of this is the production of data which cross-reference the divisions within formulated groups. However, the very act of already presupposing the groups per se as useful classificatory instruments as opposed to groups who are positioned in a particular relation to the state (e.g. focusing on Albanians rather than working class or poor migrants who are located in Greek society in a particular way) risks placing too much emphasis on the origin of the migrant and not enough on a shared terrain of disadvantage across country-of-origin-based lines (or those of religion and so on).

If belonging is constructed in an intersectional way in relation to a range of boundaries such as those of class, gender and so on, the contradictory processes are as important as the symmetries experienced. Since we all belong to different constructions of boundaries and hierarchies involved in the different categories of difference and identity, it is important that belonging in relation to a person's position and positioning is seen as multiply experienced (bearing in mind the critique

made earlier about the idea of ‘multiple identities’). This means that it is difficult to construct persons in a uniform or unitary way in relation to different dimensions of social inclusion and belonging. We need to move away from the concept of intersectionality as an interplay in terms of people’s group identities in terms of class, gender, ethnicity, racialisation and so on, and towards seeing intersectionality as a process. Intersectionality is a social process related to practices and arrangements, giving rise to particular forms of positionality for social actors.

I have introduced the term ‘translocation’ to capture a number of aspects of our modern world, partly as a contrast to the idea of diasporic identity as hybridity which has so dominated the field and partly as an accompaniment to the notion of intersectionality. Social locations can be thought of as social spaces defined by boundaries on the one hand and hierarchies on the other hand. Therefore, when we think of our social locations we are forced to think of them in relation to each other, and also in terms of some of the contradictions we live in through our differential location within the boundaries in terms of hierarchies. The notion of ‘location’ recognises the importance of context, the situated nature of claims and attributions and their production in complex and shifting locales.

Positionality combines a reference to social position (as a set of effectivities, or as *outcome*) and social positioning (as a set of practices, actions and meanings: as *process*) (Anthias 2001: 634). That is, positionality is the space at the intersection of structure (social position/social effects) and agency (social positioning/meaning and practice) (Anthias 2001: 635). It also recognises variability, with some processes leading to more complex, contradictory and at times dialogical positionalities than others; this is what is meant by the term ‘translocational’. The latter refers to the ‘complex nature of positionality faced by those who are at the interplay of a range of locations and dislocations in relation to gender, ethnicity, national belonging, class and racialisation’ (Anthias 2001: 634).

Positionality is about more than identification; it is also about the lived practices in which identification is practised/performed as well as the intersubjective, organisational and representational conditions for their existence (Anthias 2001: 635). The major advantage of this conceptual framework is that it takes us beyond the theoretical and political impasse of post-structuralist and cultural feminist theorising, and beyond the fragmentation of identity politics. It does so in a number of ways:

First, difference and inequality are conceptualised as a set of processes, and not possessive characteristics of individuals. The concept of translocational positionality, and all the processes that are involved, allow us to develop radical conceptualisations of difference and inequality which are non-essentialist and therefore dynamic and changeable.

Second, the term signals a refusal to think of issues of population movement and settlement in terms of culture and identity; instead, they are thought of in terms of social inequality and transformation and in relation to the cross-cutting social divisions of gender, ethnicity and class difference and stratification.

Third, it signals a refusal to think of diaspora as merely a process of dislocation and relocation. For dislocation assumes a fixed and given location from which we become dislodged. Although this may appear in our imaginations to be the case, our

locations are multiple and span a number of terrains, such as those of gender and class as well as ethnicity and nation, political and value systems. To be dislocated at the level of nation is not necessarily a dislocation in other terms if we find we still exist within the boundaries of our social class and our gender. Nevertheless, it will transform our social place and the way we experience this. Hence the interconnections and intersections involved here are important. From this point of view, to think of translocations opens up thinking not only of relocations but also of the connections between the past, the present and the future.

Fourth, the term helps us to think of lives as located and therefore of our identities as always relational to our location both situationally and in terms of the intersections of gender, ethnicity and class and other important social boundaries and hierarchies. For example, we might be white working-class men or women or black middle-class men or women. We might occupy a disadvantaged or subordinate position within one boundary: for example, as a woman I occupy a generally subordinate role vis-a-vis men. I occupy a more advantaged position in class terms.

Moreover, it helps explain why the intersections of social relations can be both mutually reinforcing (e.g. minority working class women live in the worst social space, in many different political, economic and cultural contexts) and contradictory (e.g. a working class poor man is in a relation of subordination at work, but in a relation of domination in his relations with women). In the first case, social divisions articulate to produce a coherent set of practices of subordination, while in the second, social divisions lead to highly contradictory processes in terms of positionality and identity.

This opens up the possibility of more reflexive forms of political struggle and avenues to greater dialogue and collaboration between groups organising around particular kinds of struggles rather than particular kinds of identities.

Concluding Remarks

A society dedicated to social inclusion and cohesion (despite the problems involved in these conceptions politically), in the sense of acknowledging diversities and fostering multiculturalism whilst pursuing a more just and equal society with enhanced quality of life, must involve a concerted attack against those constructions of difference and identity that exclude and devalue. It also requires a concerted effort against all those social practices that construct identities and differences in naturalised, collectivised and binary ways and in terms of hierarchical otherness, unequal resource allocation and modes of inferiorisation (see Anthias 1998a). I believe that these strategies must be tied to a new imaginary of social transformation at the economic, political and cultural level and involve working on a number of fronts, but particularly in the redistributive sphere.

Our theoretical and political work must attempt in every possible way to denaturalise difference and identity by showing the ways they are located historically and as social constructs. Concretely, this means acting at all levels, for example, being aware and problematising our own positionality as well as refusing the idea that our positionality is determined by any singular social location

(e.g. as women, or as members of an ethnic group), for this fails to acknowledge our tranlocational positionalities (i.e. that positionalities are complexly tied to situation, meaning and the interplay of our social locations). At the intersubjective level in our roles as friends, political activists, citizens and workers, we can challenge each other to construct narratives of belonging that break with processes of differentiation and stratification. We need to question the underlying assumptions and mechanisms of accountability of legal and political systems, the unequal resource distribution (of various institutions) across various social categories and the violence inherent in our social system. I believe we also need to once again attend to a more radical conception of our social arrangements, of the ways we work and produce, of the ways we live in families, of our primary social bonds and of the ways we care for ourselves and others. This is not to provide a blueprint but to pursue more rigorously a dialogue about the kinds of societies and lives we want to have.

This involves thinking about ways which validate and respect differences of location and positionality (as well as the validity of the collective imaginings that inform people's valued and cherished beliefs, cultural practices and self-identities) without neglecting the important issue of equality for individuals and groups.

Attempts to bridge universes of meaning and develop alternative ways of thinking cannot be successful without the fight for equality. We need to attack the enabling conditions which allow all types of subordinating and oppressing social/cultural practices. This involves attacking not just those very practices but the structural and contextual relations which support and reproduce them. The role of agency and organisation on the basis of struggles rather than identities is crucial here. Identities exist only inasmuch as individuals are placed in different constructed identities in context, and in relation to particular facets of social participation (e.g. as women, as members of ethnic groups, as classes and so on). I have referred to this elsewhere in terms of the grid of social divisions as boundaries and hierarchies (Anthias 1998a). If this is the case, organisation on the basis of identities appears problematic, whilst organisation on the basis of struggles and solidarity formation appears more useful.

This includes engagement at a political level around the following:

Naturalisation: a denaturalisation of difference and identity by showing the ways in which they are located historically and as social constructs. This involves not only culture contact but a concern with addressing all those institutional ways in which such naturalisation is constructed, from the assumptions made in the legal and political systems to unequal resource distribution across various social categories.

Collective attributions: a recognition of differences within individuals in terms of the interaction between ways in which they are constructed and in which they construct themselves situationally and contextually; therefore an emphasis also on gender, class and other forms of categorisations. This is a refusal to construct people or selves in terms of singular identities. Whilst identity is the narrative where one is constructed as a person with agency, this needs to be mitigated by

a recognition of the importance of location and positionality in terms of opportunities and constraints for the effective articulation (even at the necessary fictive level) of its performance or accomplishment.

Hierarchical cultures: the development of legal and other state mechanisms which embody the principle of multiculturalism where it does not conflict with the fundamental basic ethical principle of personal autonomy as a basic human right, and where the collective claims of groups allow individuals to choose the legal and cultural framework within which they are embedded (e.g. education or legal pluralism) as long as this does not violate rules of human rights of individuals.

Racial and ethnic categories: to be disassociated from the space of political voice at the overall societal level but not in terms of the construction of internal communities with their own rights to culture and ways of life as long as they do not conflict with principles of human rights.

Rights and responsibilities: human rights also to be ways in which ethical principles are pursued whereby we acknowledge the other and our responsibilities for the other's human rights.

Mechanisms of accountability within institutional frameworks: scrutiny of procedures in terms of outcomes as well as intentions and rules, so that racialised sexist and class-unequal outcomes are made prominent even where no intentionalities are found, and are redressed through corrective and sustainable procedures such as positive action frameworks.

If we turn Stuart Hall's question on its head, we will find that it is precisely in societies where the enabling conditions for xenophobia, racism, unequal valorisation and distributive inequality are rampant that we find the most difficult question of our time: how can we change a world where the bloody stains of cultural difference are emblazoned as indelible markers on our lives?

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