

**MULTIPLE TRANSNATIONALISM:  
SPACE, THE STATE AND HUMAN RELATIONS**

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We are in fact always multiple and contradictory subjects, inhabitants of a diversity of communities (as many, really, as the social relations in which we participate and the subject-positions they define), constructed by a variety of discourses, and precariously and temporarily sutured at the intersection of those positions.  
Chantal Mouffe

Every year "Waling Waling" organizes a Valentine's Day dinner-dance at the Hilton hotel in London. The hundreds of guests are beautifully dressed in ball gowns and tuxedos. Some sell raffle tickets to complement the annual fundraising, awards are given, speeches made. Nothing ostensibly unusual in any of this, until you know that until very recently "Waling Waling" was an organization of undocumented migrants, working as carers and cleaners in private houses in London. It has some 4,000 members, 90% of them women. Although Filipinas are the most numerous, members come from over thirty different countries, from Tanzania to Peru, with significant numbers from Sri Lanka and India.

Waling Waling, now renamed the United Workers Association (UWA) has held regular monthly meetings for over 15 years. As well as organizational business, these meetings disseminate information and act as a venue where people can meet other domestic workers from the same country of origin, to share news and information about back home, tips on remittances, cheap telephone rates etc. However they also come together as a singular transnational community, a community of migrant domestic workers. I know the term "community" is extremely contentious at the best of times, let alone when you put "transnational" in front of it. The claim I am making is that this group shares common experiences, a particular relation to their employer and the British state, and crucially, takes political actions together to serve their

shared best interests. Most dramatically this has resulted, after over ten years of campaigning with their support organization, Kalayaan, in them winning a change in the immigration rules for domestic workers entering the UK and the regularisation of undocumented workers who entered under the old system. So I would argue that this is more than a “multinational gathering”, but it is indeed a “grounded” transnational community whose members are, as Guarnizo and Smith put it “bounded social actors”, working within and affecting local constraints and social moorings.

I would like to use this example to begin to unpack "multiple transnational membership". We are all multiple subjects according to Chantal Mouffe, so multiple transnational membership is scarcely a surprising concept, indeed one could argue that multiple membership is implicit in the term "transnational". The question is, how do these multiple memberships map onto and relate to one another? Ulf Hannerz has written that a single transnational relationship – for example a person going to work abroad, may turn out to

have served as a starting point for the build-up of a much more internally varied cluster of transnational links, a broader transnational orientation, a shift in cultural allegiances  
(Hannerz 1992: 48)

He expresses this “mapping” problem as a difficulty in network analysis of moving from micro to macro. I will argue that the concept of transnational social space can help with such an exercise, as space helps us conceptualise in terms of relations and dimensions, it can help us analyse the interwoven relations between individual and collective, socialisation and social reproduction, and place human beings in a dialectical relation with structure (Pred 1986).

## Space - how does it help?

A scene from the UWA/Kalayaan office in West London in 2001.

*P. is an undocumented worker from Lebanon. Her mother was dying. A Kalayaan staff member was on the telephone trying to contact P's lawyer urgently. P. was very upset. She had just telephoned her sister to say that her visa had not yet been granted and so she could not leave the UK to be with her family. Her sister had been furious, telling her that she had wasted her life cleaning houses in London, and she might as well be dead. She was comforted by a woman from Sri Lanka and a woman from Nigeria, who talked with her about their experiences with families back home and suggested she called another family member to act as a go-between.*

This office is a site where new configurations between space and the social are enacted. Pries, while accepting that "every view and concept of space is an outcome of human reflection" has advocated using the notion of transnational social space as a means of re-thinking the relation between geographic space (where "physical elements and their positional relations are the main focus") and social space ("defined as configurations of social practices, artifacts and systems of symbols that are characterized and defined by their density and importance in time and geographic space") (Pries 2000: 21). Given that, as Massey defines it "'the spatial' is constituted by the interlocking of 'stretched out' social relations" (Massey 1994: 24) the notion of transnational social space indicates that the relation between where our bodies are and our social space is changing. It is by now a truism that we are living in a world of greater mobility than ever, both in terms of physical movement, and communication - references to jumbo jets, computers, mobile phones, internet and cultural commodities are de rigeur. As Pries puts it:

Due to the push of new communication and transportation technologies and the pull of globalized movements of people, artifacts, and symbolic systems, the pluri-local expansion of social spaces and the stacking of different social spaces in the same geographic space are becoming mass phenomena. The

congruence of geographic and social spaces has begun to diminish greatly.  
(Pries, 2001:6)

Something has happened to the ordering of place and social relations.

One of the advantages of the "relational thinking" required by using concepts of space is that relations are imbricated with power. Transnational space - like any space - is inevitably a basis and means of engagement, since it is relational. The dynamics of power thereby rendered transparent have informed the idea of "transnationalism from below", for it is when power is challenged that it becomes evident to those who are not directly engaged in that relation. One can contrast the positions of the migrant domestic workers who are members of UWA with those of the wealthy employers (international elite, whether on business or on holiday) they accompany to the UK. Both employer and worker take part in the increase in human mobility, usually taking the same flight from the employer's country of origin to London, but we must be careful not to take this apparent roaming through space at face value, indeed this geographical roaming across immense distances is in some sense an illusion.

Travelling does not necessarily indicate freedom (Wolff, 1993, Larie and Swedenburg 1996). Witness the movement of people who are kidnapped and trafficked across borders, or indeed dispersed asylum seekers. Take D. for example. She is from Manipur, a trained nurse, who went to the Middle East when her husband died leaving her with no money to support their two children.

They want me because the daughter is going to deliver a baby. They send her to the UK to deliver there and they send me with her. I don't want to go, but I have to. She is very rude. She never give me food..... they have a lift, but they say that the lift is for them and I must walk. She burned me with cigarettes. Then she went to hospital to have a caesarian. I had to stay with her. I was sleeping on the floor. But there was no food in the hospital. The domestic

people gave me their coke and their sandwiches, because they saw that I have no food. Then she gave me £5 because I was so hungry. I didn't know about money in this country, and I didn't know where the food was. I ask the staff. When I was there I met someone and I cried. I told them everything, and they helped me. They said that they would help me to escape.  
(interview 9)

D's geographical mobility both signifies and exacerbates her lack of power. Having travelled through thousands of miles she, like many female migrants, found her movement very restricted<sup>1</sup>. The same is not of course true for the employers, whose movement across borders may signify and augment power, and whose movements in those parts of London inhabited by the wealthy are unrestricted (though issues of gender are very germane here, and of course "race" denies access to some spaces however wealthy one is). Moreover, the employer controls the social space of the home (see Pratt 1999), while domestic workers typically are "there but not there" - not allowed to mark their presence, to the extent of not having a bed (42%), only being allowed left-overs (61%), for the social space of the home is for the employer, not for them. To domestic workers living in such restricted circumstances transnational social space is the only space available to them other than the space configured by "master-servant" relations but access to transnational space can also be denied. Kalayaan staff members report that it is common practice for letters to be destroyed by employers, and many domestic workers do not have access to a telephone let alone a computer. Not only can they not contact relatives far away, they may not even be able to phone the police in the UK, and many escape abusive situations only thanks to a chance encounter with a caller to the house.

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<sup>1</sup> Thirty four per cent of those contacting Kalayaan are kept imprisoned in the house that is their place of work, and not allowed any contact with the outside world.

Even once they have left abusive employers, contact with family may be limited by a lack of economic resources and skills. Telephone and letter writing for those who are literate, are the main form of contact – in fact I have not come across anyone who uses email for regular personal communication. But many people are from rural areas with no access to a phone. N. is from a Muslim peasant family in Mindanao in the Philippines. She was recruited to work in the Middle East, but returned to Manila having had a very bad experience there:

When I go home I wanted to go to my family. I decided no more abroad, just settle down at home. But the only people I know in Manila is my recruiter and I have no money and I don't speak Tagalog. So I went to him hoping he would send me to Mindanao because I had no money. But he got very angry, he said, why you come back. I said send me to my family. But my recruiter said you can't go home, there's fighting, fighting in my village, and your family are scattered, maybe they're dead. It's so far, I couldn't contact them, because we have no phone. Only if you are in the town you can use a phone or pick a letter and that is three days from my village. The recruiter said, you must go abroad again.  
(interview 5)

Excitement about the possibilities of roaming in transnational space should be tempered by such experiences. The physical and social space of the weak is distorted by the institutions and the actions of the strong, the space of the powerful has dimensions unreachable by the powerless.

### **The power of the receiving state**

It is not simply the power of the employer that limits the space of workers. The power of the state plays an important role in this too. The wealthy, but not the poor, can move about freely - look at the fast-track borders which allow those who travel business class to pass quickly through immigration, and the long queues snaking around the “non EU passport holders” section at Heathrow. While much is made of

the alleged decline of the nation state, pressured from below by regionalism and separatism, and from above by transnational capital, the nation state from “the side” is stronger than ever. By from the side I mean from the point of view of migrants, non-citizens attempting to enter. A whole technology has developed in the North around keeping people out, vast sums of money are poured into policing borders, immigration controls are restrictive, asylum claims stringently vetted. Now of course this does not mean that states are controlling immigration – arguably the more it is illegalised the less control the receiving state has (Collinson, Anderson), but what the state does control is citizenship and legal presence. So while the power of the state over entry to its territorial space may be limited, its power over entry to the national social space continues to be strong.

In general, women who migrate to work must usually do so “illegally” for despite the demand for their labour, they cannot get working visas for the main forms of employment are prostitution and domestic work which are not considered “proper” work. The successful evasion of immigration controls is not just evidence of highly developed migratory networks, but also of the toleration of such migration. Romero (1992) describes how undocumented domestic workers go home to Mexico at the weekend from El Paso, and return on Sunday evening regularly with no problem from the border guards. The movement across international borders by domestic workers is here, as elsewhere treated as invisible, in part because it is a movement to the private (household). But such migrants must not stray into the public. I have already mentioned how domestic workers’ and prostitutes’ movements may be restricted because of control exercised by their employers/pimps, but, for example, during police crackdowns domestic workers routinely ask their employers if they can work

for free on their days off, so they will not have to leave their employers' households where the state is unlikely to intrude. Indeed the safety of the middle class private house from state intrusion is one very real advantage to domestic work for undocumented migrants – though it also constitutes a serious problem when employers are abusive.

These migrant women then are very much confined to the private sphere, both living and working in their employers' houses. They are not in the national public space.

The uncertainty arising from their immigration status means that they often feel they must work as much as possible, to maximize remittances as they might be stopped by deportation at any time. In the UK this was a real difficulty faced when beginning to organize this group, since time spent in meetings and campaigning meant time away from work, which might reduce income or jeopardize relations with employers.

Immigration status makes the “private” dimension of transnational social space (i.e. contact with households and relatives) the most accessible to undocumented migrant women, for involvement in “public” transnational social space of entrepreneurial business or political lobbying is difficult when one does not have a visa. Dina, for example, had a domestic worker visa in Hong Kong, and found her access to transnational social space severely hampered when she became undocumented in the UK:

I bought clothes and beauty goods in Hong Kong and forwarded them to Manila and Canada. I was working as a live-in, so I had no expenses, and my salary was my own, so every day off I went shopping. Then I put all the goods in a tea chest to the Philippines, or a package to Canada - because a tea chest to there is too expensive, and sent it to my friends.....Then they <*i.e. employers*> say they are coming to England. I want to stay in Hong Kong, because I have my business there, but they said, you'll have much more in England But then when I get here they give me no day off, just brings me to church and collects me from there and that's it...I have no money to send to

Philippines...Your life is unstable, you can't get on. In Hong Kong I can do what I want, but here I am isolated. You can't plan your life.  
(interview 1)

Involvement in “public” transnational social space can also be restricted by the institutions of other migrants from the same country of origin. Migrants’ political campaigning and lobbying is typically organized along lines of nationality, but settled communities who may have won certain rights at no small cost to themselves, often dissociate themselves very sharply from “illegal” immigrants. Glick Schiller et al. (1995) draw attention to the distinction of California’s Proposition 187 between different categories of belonging

The current debate on immigrants in UK will lead not to the effective policing of national borders but to the reinscription of boundaries. It serves to counter transnational identities and loyalties and creates a terrain in which immigrants are drawn into defending whatever they have achieved or obtained by defending it against the undocumented.

This was played out in UWA. After a change of management, the Filipino Centre, originally a founding member of UWA and Kalayaan, declared that undocumented workers were no longer its clients and that it was not prepared to work with them. Undocumented Filipinos were no longer to be given access to the social space controlled by a sector of the organized, settled community. This caused a great deal of resentment among the Filipino members of UWA, many of whom were middle class professionals and very active in UWA. They felt that they were just as “good” as the settled community, but were being written off as “illegal immigrants” and denied access to their class identity, even by their compatriots (Pratt 1999). These dynamics were played out in some other national groupings. As one worker from Ivory Coast put it:

The other groups from Ivory Coast are for refugees, they are not interested in me, they will look down, especially if you are undocumented. For what would I go to another place? I get everything I want from here. Even if I want to borrow money, I can ask for it here.

The movement between different dimensions of transnational social space that affects multiple transnational membership is not seamless then, as implied by Hannerz (“they get involved sequentially in more transnational linkages running in large part parallel to one another” (1992:47)), and the state plays a crucial role in access to transnational social space and in the negotiations around multiple transnational membership.

### **Transnationalism in action: “race” and mapping**

The construction of boundaries between documented and undocumented, encouraged UWA to form what was, for the UK, a new type of migrants’ organization. Guarnizo and Smith have quite rightly, warned against uncritical acceptance of the idea that transnational practices constitute ‘counter-narratives of the nation’, pointing out that migrants often take refuge in a strongly imagined and essentialised national identity:

These identities forged from below are often no less essentialized than the hegemonic projects of nation states. Identities forged “from below” are not inherently subversive or counter hegemonic.  
(Guarnizo and Smith 1998: 24)

While adopting such essentialised identities can give migrants access to a certain social space, this may be denied to undocumented migrants. It therefore in this instance encouraged people to forge a common identity in despite of national, religious and ethnic differences based first and foremost on legal status and type of employment - working as a migrant domestic worker. UWA does have members who are men (approx. 10%), but gender was and continues to be important in acknowledging commonalities and is often referred to as an equalizing factor. The

combination of employment and legal status creates a transnational social space in which this varied group, of over 30 different nationalities, of all social classes, rural, urban, indigenous, Christian, Muslim, Buddhist, younger and older, lesbian and heterosexual, (and all the in-between bits of such categories!) can relate and take action. It is a transnational social space moreover that is open in the sense that while workers identified as undocumented domestic workers this is not in any sense an identity that can be essentialised.

As Lefevbre (1991) identified, social space is both a field and a basis of action (REF). The UWA demonstrates not simply a coincidence of experiences, but a creation of collective stories and as people share experiences and support one another through the telling of such experiences, they also compile statistics on abuses and exploitation and use this to inform campaigning and political action – which notably has the British state identified as a key actor. Shared employment and immigration status have enabled women to take actions together to further their mutual interest, but this organizational coming together has also caused new transnational spaces to open up. So for example in January 2000, Kartini, an Indonesian migrant domestic worker in Dubai, was sentenced to death by stoning for adultery when she became pregnant. There was deep concern for her plight, since many of the women in London had worked in the Middle East. A Filipino woman who had worked in Abu Dhabi encouraged others to sign a petition calling for clemency as she described graphically the stoning process, where it takes place and the ritual around it etc. This petition, signed by some 250 domestic workers of many nationalities, was emailed to a human rights organization in Hong Kong, which forwarded it to Dubai. Her official legal status was not an issue for the petition signatories, and neither was her particular

nationality. A similar development has been the organizing of workers who passed through the UAE who are interested in supporting human rights initiatives with a focus on migrants in that state. There are many different ways of “mapping” multiple transnational membership for different purposes, and such organizing has a very rich potential.

What is unusual in the UK context is the forming of a migrants’ organization that embraces people from many countries of origin. At first this was managed by emphasising commonality, and in particular identifying the impact of legal status on migrants’ experiences, to enable domestic workers of many different nationalities to work together for a common aim. Loosened from their bounded communities, they could forge their own political community. So workers share experiences across boundaries (of nationality, country of reception, of the private) with a view to mapping, to identifying moments where they share the same or similar social space similarly deformed by the powerful.

However, “migrant domestic worker” is not some homogenized category. People use the organization as an opportunity to meet up with others from the same country of origin, it is not only a venue for meeting other migrant domestic workers or for political campaigning. On a Sunday, which is most people's day off, the office is packed with hundreds of people, and in the use of the space it is apparent that "transnational communities" are bound, not just to their homeland, but also to each other. Indians sit on the stairs, Filipinos in the centre of the room, Africans to the right of the door. People share particular foods, pass on jobs, speak particular languages,

and sometimes act collectively in support of their homeland - fund-raising to support groups confronted with national disasters for example.

Moreover, people have very different experiences and expectations, and these differences are partly structured by country of origin. This is particularly evident for domestic workers whose employment typically depends on the commodification of some stereotyped national or racialised identity (Anderson 2000). Employers of domestic workers will usually stipulate a particular nationality on the basis that “Filipinas are good with children”, or “Sri Lankans are hard workers”, or will state that they do not want a certain group (usually African or Muslim women). In London, African workers generally find it harder to get work than other nationalities, and Filipinos find work more readily than others: so different nationalities are competing with each other for jobs often purely on the basis of their nationality. In the UK, employees in the private household are explicitly exempted from coverage by the race and sex discrimination acts. Other differences (knowledge of English, or class) are also generalisable along lines of nationality (Filipinas are more likely to speak good English than Sri Lankans, for example), and these differences too have an affect on experiences in the UK. By overemphasizing what migrant domestic workers shared, the organizations risked alienating a significant proportion of the more marginalised women. Concerted efforts were therefore made to allow for differential access to employment and services and the different needs of different groups, and this was an attempt to prevent rather than create division. It also entailed a recognition of the relations and power between different national groups within the organization. In that ongoing disclosure and discussion gender is referred to time and time again as an equalizing factor. So N. from Zimbabwe for example, who when she first joined felt

the group was very Filipino dominated, and that African women were ignored or treated without respect, discerned a significant change in approach, and said she felt very relieved,

Because why do we always have to put each other down, to say one is better than the other? We are all women here aren't we? We are all equal.

In February 2001 I observed a conversation when N was complaining that she had not been greeted by a group of Indians when she entered the office, which she felt was because she was black. J from India argued that people often want simply to be among friends and to speak their own language, but she conceded that 'we are in a racist country' so must be sensitive to how such choices might be perceived. 'So give me your telephone number and I will phone you and you won't be lonely any more'.

Notably, although groups use the space separately, there is one space where they are all together, which is the queue for the solicitor (the free legal surgery sees between 150 and 200 domestic workers a session). All nationalities stand together in the queue and take the opportunity to chat to one another. For workers' illegal status has generally played an important role in levelling the playing field until now - whatever their nationality, they were all undocumented.

### **The impact of regularisation**

Exclusion by the state from its national social space is therefore a crucial factor in the mapping of multiple transnational memberships, so how is winning the campaign and obtaining regularization for members affecting this transnational organization and the relations between members?

The first point to make is that a visa is not sufficient to access the national public space in terms of having a full legal presence. Those who were in the UK for under 4 years before the regularization exercise, and those who enter the UK under the new immigration regime, are not given a working permit, but constitute a special category which has "permission to work as a domestic worker in a private household". This allows them to change employment to other private households, but they are not permitted to do the same work in the "public" sector (restaurants, hotels, hospitals etc). They are also, like other temporary migrants, not permitted to have recourse to public funds. However, many of the difficulties experienced by those with temporary and permanent visas are related to the nature of employment in the private household. In the UK, as in many other states, this is regarded as somewhat of an anomaly. It has been forcefully argued that, legislation tends either to ignore this phenomenon, or treat it as if it was a normal employment relation and either approach creates many problems for domestic workers. In this instance for example, all workers in the UK must have a National Insurance number. Employers in the private household are extremely reluctant to provide documentation confirming employment, partly because they do not want to pay tax and National Insurance contributions. Having obtained their papers, many UWA members have had to change employers because they have refused to confirm employment or pay their contributions, and one cannot be self-employed if one is, as most are, working live-in for a single employer. Some have even been sacked when their NI documentation has appeared in the mail.

Employment in the private household, whether of migrants or non-migrants, is usually paid "under the counter", and while recently regularized migrants may be keen to legalise their employment, employers are rather more reluctant. Those who have one

year renewable visas, and who are dependent on their employer to be legal under both employment and immigration regimes, are particularly penalized by this. The requirements of other institutions also make it difficult to move to the "public" - for example, banks require a bill in the applicant's name as proof of address in order to be able to open up an account. Live-in domestic workers do not have such bills and so find it very difficult to open up accounts. These difficulties in negotiating paths to full legal presence in a state in turn impact upon immigration status - one needs formal proof of employment, and that one is earning enough to support oneself in order to be able to renew a one year visa.

Breaking out of the private is a formidable challenge for migrant domestic workers even when they have immigration status. Some are continuing to work together for this, and indeed there is a clear overlap with British domestic workers and au pairs, leading to a re-vitalisation of the link with British trades unions. Regularisation means that UWA members are free to travel, and several have taken the opportunity to go to other European cities to meet up with migrant domestic workers and to develop European campaigning for an independent immigration status. So for example, in May 2001 a series of drama workshops was held in the office for 20 migrant workers from Zimbabwe, Ivory Coast, Nigeria, Philippines, India and Sri Lanka. The women devised scenes depicting their experiences of employment in private households, with a view to acting these out for other workers to both depict experiences and examine how outcomes can be changed depending on their responses. These shows are to be taken to different European cities, since many domestic workers are undocumented, and even if they do have papers, cannot afford to come to the UK, and they will be further developed.

One of the consequences of regularization then was that it forced applicants to the attention of the sending states. As workers entered the regularization process so, into the transnational space of the undocumented domestic worker entered the gravitational forces of sending states - bending and altering the space depending on one's country of origin. The majority of domestic workers applying for regularisation did not hold their passports. They were held by employers as an attempt to control their workers' movements. For example, of 195 workers who became Waling Waling members in 1996-97, 69 per cent had their passports taken by their employers. Those who had managed to hold on to their passport had not renewed it on expiry. One of the first steps for applicants therefore was to get a new passport from their embassy. But different national governments have different relations with 'their' migrant community, particularly those who are undocumented and this was to have important implications for those applying for legal status in the UK.

Some sending states and national institutions relate directly to their migrant community abroad (Basch et al. 1994). In the case of migrant domestic workers in London this is particularly true of the Philippines. The Integrated Bar of the Philippines has recently proposed to extend their free legal aid programme to Filipino nationals in the Middle East and some European countries, including to undocumented Filipinos in the UK. The Philippines Embassy in London meets regularly with migrant domestic workers, invites them, for example to the national independence celebration at the Millennium Dome, consults them on matters such as the UK government's recent proposal to extend the bond scheme to visitors from the Philippines. In line with this spirit of co-operation the Philippines Embassy, were

supportive of their citizens' applications for new passports. They required an affidavit of loss, a birth certificate and marriage certificate and four photographs. Filipino citizens who work abroad are required to pay tax on their earnings to the Philippines government and regularisation applicants were retrospectively liable, but, in a special concession this was reduced to £15 a year. This productive relationship with the Philippines Embassy was in part the result of attempts by the Philippines state to re-incorporate Filipino nationals into state projects both ideologically and financially - currently the government is considering giving its overseas citizens the right to vote. This was not a one way process, but the result of years of lobbying and campaigning by Filipino migrants across Europe, culminating in a meeting between the Commission for Filipino Migrant Workers with President Estrada in which embassies were described as 'centers of assistance to overseas' Filipinos. Estrada cautioned embassy personnel not to neglect their duties and requested migrants delegates to personally convey to him any complaint against government officials on the grounds that 'If I can hire I can also fire' (Kababayan Oct-Dec 1998).

The position of the Philippines Embassy contrasted with that of the Indian High Commission which professed itself uninterested in these 'girls who run away from Arabs'. While clearly it relates very closely to some sections of the Indian community in UK, domestic workers are not included. Women who had to go there to get new passports in order to be able to apply for regularisation said 'the Indian Embassy is not the place for us.' They had to produce 12 photographs, a statutory declaration authorised by a notary public (approx. cost £30), pay a fee of £125 and come up with a police report that the original passport was lost or stolen. Even then it was often required that the Home Office give the visa before they would issue the passport. The

first Indian workers to report their missing passports to the police, found themselves arrested and held overnight until their lawyer was able to argue them out. This scarcely encouraged people to go to the police station.

These specific difficulties should be set within the general context that it is not easy for domestic workers to approach embassies, particularly since many of them have worked (and been maltreated by) embassy staff. Of the cases known to Kalayaan, about ten per cent entered the UK accompanying diplomats. One worker who left his diplomat employer several years ago, was extremely anxious that he might bump into him at the embassy. In the event, not only did he bump into him, he found that his former employer was in charge of issuing his new passport. The employer went so far as to tell him that he would inform the police that the man had lied in claiming the passport was lost - 'You know where it is. I have kept it!' African workers in particular felt that their embassies were powerless as well as disinterested or antagonistic to them: 'Why do they have that big flag outside? They need to show off because really they can do nothing'. These differences in approaches taken by embassies had very real implications on regularisation procedures: when applicants finally registered for regularisation, 76 per cent of Filipinos had valid passports, as opposed to 40 per cent of Indians, 36 per cent of Sri Lankans, and 46 per cent of other nationalities.

While ready to embrace its citizens, this is not without its own difficulties. For example, for tax purposes a Filipino returning to the UK after a brief stay in the Philippines must have an overseas worker certificate. In order to obtain this certificate

a domestic worker must sign a standard contract with her employer. This contract is extremely onerous, requiring for example that:

The Worker is expected at all times to observe proper decorum and shall be courteous, polite and respectful to her Employer and members of his/her family. The Worker shall also observe the Code of Discipline for Filipino Workers and abide by the laws of the United Kingdom and respect its customs and traditions.

(SEC Philippine Embassy London, clause 5)

In fact the contract itself does not abide by the laws of the United Kingdom, and is in contravention of European legislation since, for example, the hours set out (ten hours per day, six days per week) are well in excess of those set out by the European Working Time Directive. As one Filipina remarked to me: 'for what have we had all this struggle against the British government and then when we get our papers this is what our own people does to us.'

So, the regularisation process meant that different nationalities came under different gravitation pulls from their embassies. In response individuals gravitated towards those experiencing the same forces - organizing meetings for example to discuss how to approach the Indian High Commission. Thus they created a new, "national" social space accessible from the transnational social space occupied by all nationalities, and having different mapping relations to transnational space and to the "national" spaces of other nationalities. The crucial point here is that the state plays an important role in transnational social space, which has in no way freed itself from state power. As far as UWA is concerned the difficulty this represents post-regularisation is that it threatens "multiple transnational membership". For there are conflicts between such memberships. Guarnizo and Smith have written about the essentialising of national identity both at a state level and also by migrants themselves, who recreate "imagined

communities” as a response to hostile and isolating situations (Guarnizo and Smith:1998). So the very fact of belonging to a transnational border-spanning community reinforces notions of national identity. When such essentialised identities are translated into a very real difference in experiences because of the behaviour of embassies towards their citizens, the regions of transnational space inhabited by women of different nationalities can start to drift apart. However, the creation of new social spaces, connected through mapping relations, by those excluded from the "public" dimension of transnational social space (whether they be undocumented or citizens denied the vote in their country of origin), offers new possibilities for collective action, both within different "national" spaces and between them. This opens up new ways of pressurizing states to grant access (political and resources wise) to that public dimension. A possible model of access to the public dimension through action across "national" social spaces is the example of the petition against stoning of a migrant worker for adultery already cited; if migrants can make common cause across geographical boundaries, why not also across social ones?

The most immediate impact of regularization on UWA members was that they could return “home”, sometimes after many years away. Almost all were remitting significant amounts of money back to families, and many were in regular contact with them. Lack of legal status however meant that those who had relations with people back home had conducted them purely in transnational social space for a long time. This changed when, from 1999 onwards, following their campaign for legalisation, people were given visas to remain in the UK, thereby enabling them to return to their countries of origin for a visit without risking deportation. The first thing that almost all of them did was return home, - hardly surprisingly, but suggesting that

transnational social space was not the best place to conduct relations (see Beaverstock for an interesting comparison). The return was typically a bitter sweet experience.

It was really good. But what I didn't know is that one year after I left Nigeria my sister died. They didn't tell me. So I had brought her a present with everyone else, I had thought what she would like. Then when I came to the airport I was surprised that she was not there. ....when we got home I said where is she gone and they tell me she has been dead. I felt very distressed. I was in shock. And I felt very excluded. It affected the whole trip. I had a happy face for my sister's wedding, but actually I was very upset. They had all dealt with it four years ago. They didn't tell me because they thought I couldn't handle it. They said, you are alone, they would rather say it when you're there with them so that they can help you with it. But I don't think that is good. I have friends here. You tell me, and I can deal with it. They didn't tell me either that my mother was sick to the point of death, until she was better. It makes you feel, who can you trust?

This experience was by no means unusual. Sometimes the deception was to protect the person, but often families were concerned to hide "misspent" money or infidelities. Where one's body is affects human relationships. Our visibility to others is not just a reality check but may affect or control our behaviour:

I've been sending money in this way, sending it for my brother to set up a business so he can help the young ones behind me. I sent money to my mother as well, so my brother did not have too much pressure on him, but could spend the money on the business. But I had to send this money to my brother to give them, because they are in the village. And he didn't give it to them. He had spent it on himself and his family....I was so disappointed. I said, what is the point of me struggling all this time. He hasn't got anything. His business is run down. My family haven't got anything. I see their house, and I think, it's just the same as when I left, why did I struggle?

This is of course as true for the migrant as it is for those they leave behind. Hannerz distinguishes different tendencies in personal networks – encapsulation, segregativity and integrativity, contrasting those who remain with networks informed by largely the same meanings and forms, and those people who are “in touch with various quite divergent cultural sets” some of whom keep these sets apart (“segregativity”) and

some of whom attempt to integrate them (“integrativity”). There are tensions inherent in multiple transnational memberships, and whether one wishes to segregate or integrate “cultural sets” is by no means a matter of personal choice. Their undocumented status meant that most people had been forced to keep these sets apart. Only one person I have met had been visited by her family while she was undocumented, and she was a teenager from a middle class Peruvian family. Receiving their visas meant a chance, not just to visit home, but to integrate “divergent cultural sets”. But these are not always so easily integrated; her conceptualization in terms of spaces and mappings can be helpful. For example: people felt they had varying degrees of success in explaining to their families what their situation in London had been. Many felt that there was a lack of understanding from the people in their countries of origin about their lives in the UK, and in particular about their experiences of being undocumented. People often used the concept of experience to explain these differences in understanding. So V. from Benin said of not having papers:

I’ve tried explaining to them, but you can never explain what it is unless you experience it, and it is so far from their experience.

These alien experiences can be thought of as points in transnational social space to which no corresponding experiential points can be found in the "home" social space from which the migrant set out - i.e. the two spaces do not map on to each other. But social spaces are created by human actions, and hence can be changed by them. This was vividly illustrated by M. from India, who saw her 9-year-old son for the first time for 5 years. He wanted to know what it was like to be in an airplane, and she found that she couldn’t describe it adequately in words. She paid for a round trip for both of them Delhi to Bombay, and had to leave India early because she had spent all her

money in consequence, but it was worth it for the sake of bringing into relationship the social spaces inhabited by herself and her son. In effect M. extended both his social and his geographical space so that a degree of mapping could take place from his space to hers. However when more complex and extended social relations are involved, this may not always be possible. Many of those who have their visas are concerned to visit home not only to maintain links with family but also for their own physical and mental health, with people wanting to return for medicines and cures. This seems to be particularly true for gynecological and fertility problems and for long-standing conditions such as diabetes and asthma, but it also had broader psycho-social implications. V. is a young woman from Benin, interested in business and computer courses. When she returned to Benin she became extremely ill, nearly to the point of death, and in desperation her family took her to a healer:

Like he asked me, what I dreamed about when I was in England. And my dreams are always bad dreams. People are giving me bad dreams. This is my aunt giving me bad dreams to block my life.... ..If she can't block my luck, in the end she'll try to kill me. That's why I was so ill. ...They said if I did not leave my brother's house they would not see me alive in the morning. Frightened is not the word.... I had to have candles around me and wear a white gown. And I had to be alone. No one was allowed in that room....Since then I haven't had any bad dreams. I think something is broken. But at home they still keep watching out for me over there.

V. was ready to return for more treatment if her dreams started to indicate any further problems.

But I know you won't understand this. It is outside your experience, just like visas and immigration is outside my family's experience. You can only really understand what you experience.

We may feel that in a sense V. is right, but if we take her literally, no one could ever understand anyone else, as no one can ever really duplicate someone else's

experience. The function of social space is to bridge this gulf. But we can still get at the truth in V's remark by thinking in terms of mapping. Understanding across different social spaces depends on the mappability of the spaces onto each other: V. was telling me her social space and mine just did not map - there were areas in hers to which no part of my space corresponded. Interpersonal understanding could only be achieved by transformation of one or both spaces to allow mapping - as in the case of M from India and her son. But the transformation required for understanding in V's case was on a scale that could not be accomplished by an individual alone.

The emergence of experience and understanding as key factors in interpersonal relations casts a new light on the kind of freedom associated with "transnationality". We have seen that, in experiential terms, while other geographical places may be included in the boundaries of the lived worlds of those who stay in the country of origin (Suzuki), this does not mean that these places are "known" or understood. The non-migrants' lack of experience contrasts with migrants' descriptions of themselves:

I am 42 years old, but double, triple experience I have. I have much experience. I have learned that everyone is different. If you have 100 people, you will have 100 differences. I have read many magazines and papers, Sri Lanka and English. I watch movies. I know how different people are. My life has changed so much.  
(interview 55)

This suggests that, if occupancy of transnational space regularly bestows any sort of freedom, it is mental freedom, not freedom of action: the experienced migrant can achieve understanding, enter and manipulate in thought geographical and social spaces to which she may be denied both physical and active social access. The Western tradition regards mental freedom and understanding as worth having in themselves. But it forgets that those who take this for granted generally have freedom

of action as well. Without it mental freedom can be unstable. Free thought has indeed been offered or embraced as a consolation for those deprived of physical freedom, e.g. by imprisonment (Boethius, the Consolations of philosophy; Bunyan, Pilgrim's Progress "stone walls do not a prison make, nor iron bars a cage" etc). But to those more subtly socially constrained it can in itself produce obstacles to freedom of action, leading to a sense of disjuncture with family. For example, within the Filipina membership of UWA lesbian relationships were socially very supported. Several of the organisation's officers have long term gay relationships. For many women, going back to the Philippines meant either continuing to hide this from disapproving families or risking distressing confrontation by "coming out". R and P had been living together as a couple for many years, and when I first spoke to them were looking forward to buying a house together having got their legal status. However, they were both going back to the Philippines, and nervously planned to tell their respective families about their relationship. When R. told her parents they threw her out of their home and cut off all contact with her. She went to P's family home, but P. did not see her. Her family had "cured" her and she was engaged to be married. P. did not return to the UK, and R. now lives alone. The mental freedom and freedom of action acquired in transnational space were not transferable back to home space.

Being undocumented forced migrant domestic workers into private transnational social space, and when a mapping of geographic and social spaces was enabled by regularization it highlighted the profound problems with maintaining human relations in transnational social space over long periods of time. One of the great topics of discussion among people who had returned from a visit home was the problem of having sexual relations with husbands whom one had not seen for many years. The

inadequacy of relations conducted in transnational social space became most clear in relation to young children. The mother-child relationship is very important in the sustaining of the transnational social space - whether the child is the one left behind or the person leaving. It was the need to support children or parents that most frequently motivated migration in the first place, and, as mentioned above, husbands were regarded as figures to be placated rather than trusted. Indeed, migration as a socially acceptable route to leave violent husbands, was a common theme in discussions (QUOTE workshop). While some of those who kept in regular touch with older children could find on their return that they were appreciated and valued as they wanted, those who had left young babies were deeply disturbed by the realisation that their continuing intense emotions were not reciprocated. S. from Sri Lanka had left her boy when he was four months old. When I first met her she missed him so much she couldn't speak his name without crying. When she returned he was seven, and on seeing her turned his face to the wall and declared "Mama? No! you are not my mama". There was a feeling that the family had been transformed from a zone where private affiliation mattered, to purely commercial relations. Indeed this was a common complaint more generally, that, not just family, but the neighbourhood in general, - and indeed the state itself<sup>2</sup> viewed them simply as an economic resource, and that relations were tarnished by envy and resentment (see also Ballard 2001).

Everyone is asking for things. Even your gift is not enough. They have no idea of your life here, no idea. All that is in their mind is that she's got a better life. (interview 54)

On their return home, most people found that transnational social space had not sustained their affective relations adequately. Indeed their social relations had

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<sup>2</sup> "We have kept the economy afloat. Is our right to vote too much to ask?" calls the campaign for

changed, sometimes beyond recognition: “home” had been changed by the act of their leaving, and they themselves were different from how they had been when they left. Several women remarked on how important it was to them to be the same as other people:

Even though I just took back my old clothes, I didn't go to show off. I tried to be like them, to drink what they drink, but it was hard. They are envious of you. And I get ripped off all the time. They can tell by my accent that I have been abroad, and they charge you too much money.  
Interview 53

The economic and social status associated with living abroad, is regarded by some as intensely problematic partly because of the consequent financial demands, and partly because of the feeling that it sets them apart from “home”.

I was very careful. I didn't want them to think that I was showing off. I didn't bring any new clothes. It was my Mum. She forced me to dress up. She told me that it's not good enough to dress like this. She said, I want people to see you. You've been away for so long, I want them to see you look good.  
Interview 56

Many people were deeply disturbed on their return, and destabilised by a mistrust of transnational social space as a medium for conducting personal relations. They were also imbued with a sense that where one's body is matters. Most had cut down on their remittances because they needed to save for their annual airfares. Many continued to state that their common experiences, at the hands of employers and the state, mean that they understand each other better than their own families.

### **Conclusion: the state, bodies, and transnationalism**

There are many different ways of "being" transnational, of engaging in transnational space. But these are not matters of personal choice, they are concerned with power which is in turn determined by matters of gender, race, and the intersection of these with class. The state plays a role in these contradictions, and most particularly in the access to the social space of citizenship. Private transnational social space and social relations is not immune from its influence. Original migration (REF Filipina concepts of home), legal status, organizational position (Goldring), the force of sending and receiving states is immense and ineluctable and is crucial en/dis-abling device in Hannerz's "transnational linkages".

Transnational space is not the same for everybody - the space of the powerful has dimensions unreachable in the space of the powerless, and points close together for the powerful may be impossibly far apart for the weak. Physical space – where one's body is – matters, however many multiple transnational memberships one enjoys. The physical space of the Kalayaan/UWA office, and how it is used by different nationalities, the space of employers' homes and its simultaneous inclusion and exclusion of domestic workers, the space inhabited by loved ones and their relations, these affect and are affected by the bodily presence and absence of migrants, as they affect and are affected by transnationalism. Entry into transnational social space does not in itself extend freedom of action, nor freedom from social or physical constraints rooted in the point of departure.