

## **Discourses and Images of Belonging: Migrants between “New Racism”, Liberal Nationalism and Globalization**

**Ulf Hedetoft**  
**Aalborg University**

### **1. Introduction: Parameters and Objectives**

Belonging and migration, like nationalism and globalization, might seem to be contradictory notions. This article wants, *inter alia*, to explore if (and how) this is indeed so. Whether “belonging” denotes “roots”, “stasis” and “traditionalism” in the context of bounded territoriality and national identity, whereas “migration” is linked to “mobility” and “postmodernity” in the context of porous borders and the insecurities attendant on globalization. Whether both belonging and migratory flows, in their global interaction, have acquired new meanings which call for new concepts, new ways of conceptualizing and explaining these phenomena. And how questions of belonging related to migration and migrants compare on the one hand with the global identity of contemporary travellers and cosmopolitans, and on the other different representatives of latter-day politics of identity--from above as well as from below.

In terms of the ways such issues are pervasively addressed--as “problems” or “solutions to problems”--in both public and academic debates, a notable change has undoubtedly set in compared with, say, 20 or 30 years ago. The most obvious change pertains to the ubiquitousness as well as legitimacy with which the notion of “belonging” is now universally applied in discussions about identity, ethnicity, nationality, citizenship, migration and multiculturalism--as a matter-of-course feature of an identity which is being constantly threatened; as a desirable objective; as an argument for minority groups making claims to autonomy or increased recognition; as part and parcel of political discourses either for or against multicultural societies; or as a notion dismissed by people--multicultural academics as well as global entrepreneurs-

-who perceive it as outdated and oppose ethnic-primordialist positions because humans have “feet” rather than “roots”.<sup>1</sup>

In other words, whereas belonging used to be a notion almost exclusively used by right-wing racists intent on drawing a rigid line between their own national-natural and therefore “organic” belonging “here”, and the Other who just as naturally belonged “elsewhere” and therefore *not* here (consequence: closed borders and repatriation), today it has developed into a broadly agenda- and debate-setting key concept. It has been colonized by all kinds of “ethnic communities” and political factions as a central referent of identity and an important factor of “identity negotiation” in a context of rapid global change. Today, “belonging” is part of both mainstream discourse and of competing, alternative discourses, undoubtedly not in spite but because of this rapidly transforming context. In the process, some of the formerly ridiculed rightist positions have insidiously been taken over by much larger groups, though their normative status have, for the same reason, undergone a climate change.

Analytically, “belonging” must be situated in relation to four key parameters which in varying configurations are responsible for its relations to and importance for the identity politics of different groups. They are, in systematic order, (1) sources of belonging, (2) feelings of belonging, (3) ascriptions and constructions of belonging, (4) fluidities of belonging. Broadly speaking the site of (1) is “locality” and immediate familiarity, of (2) socio-psychological needs, identification with “locality”, and memory, of (3) nationalism and racisms, new and old, and of (4) globality and the cosmopolitan dream. The four build on and presuppose each other in this sequence. For instance, (2) cognitively and affectively orders the wellspring and conditions of belonging as categorized under (1) and hence entails an element of “construction”, in that feelings of belonging are never totally unmediated or entirely “pure”, but always pass through mental processing, personal and collective experiences, and the temporal distantiator and psychological filter of “memory”--all of which shape each individual’s images and perceptions of belonging, giving them depth and value, and engendering the meaning they have for different persons. But, nevertheless, this element of constructedness is not socially, “ethnically” or politically “predetermined” and “pre-structured”, and there is no question of belongingness being the object of identity politics, being ascribed in fixed national categories from without, or being a contested issue of racist stereotypes or the politics of immigration and integration--like in (3). Likewise, the fluidities of global belonging are unimaginable except on the real-life background and normative assumptions of national constructions.

In addition to this and at this juncture, the following brief comments on each of the four sites must suffice.

*Sources of belonging: Locality and the Familiar.* My basic presupposition is that belonging is rooted in “place” (rather than space, which is a much more abstract notion), “familiarity”, “sensual experience”, “human interaction” and “local

---

<sup>1</sup> It is hard not to attach a passing comment to this faddish internationalist way of critiquing primordialism: “Trees have roots, humans have feet”. Well, cows have feet too. What they don’t have is mind, intelligence and consciousness to conceive of themselves with “roots”, nor do they have their very own politicians and opinion-leaders impressing their national rootedness on them, or--if they choose to use their “feet” to move elsewhere--a corresponding set of people telling them that they don’t belong and should get back to their “roots” as fast as possible.

knowledge". These elements constitute the sources of "homeness", its "conditioning context", but they are not equivalent to nor do they automatically produce feelings of belonging, let alone "identity". In other words, belonging is conditioned by social and psychological concreteness--persons, landscapes, sensory experiences and "mental mappings" of an immediate and familiar kind (often, but not invariably embedded in the "formative years" of childhood and adolescence). These are the materials, the building blocks of belonging. They are therefore the necessary conditions (but not the sufficient reasons) for feelings of belonging, homeness and related "identity producing" processes--as well as for feelings of uprootedness, non-belonging and "identity alienation" in cases where these conditioning elements have been spiced by a dearth of human interaction, continuous spatial mobility, negative sensual impressions, and the like.

*Feelings of belonging: Identification and memory.* Belonging as feeling is rooted in a positive identification with all or some of the above conditioning elements and the interiorization of them as determinants of homeness, self-identity and socio-psychological security. Feelings of belonging in this sense and on the level of immediacy do not have to be a conscious "factor of identification"; rather, belongingness plays itself out in terms of the satisfaction of needs, recognition by a specific community, participation in its cultural and social activities, and a shared "horizon" of ideas, knowledge, networks and topography. In this sense and at this point it is a category of practice rather than theory--it is unreflective, "embedded". This kind of "cultural belonging" does not presuppose the existence of an "Other", let alone a contradictory Other for its existence, viability and maintenance, and can co-exist with other factual forms of "local" belonging without problems or conflicts--because it is not/has not yet been politicized by nationalizing processes and interests. Hence it is this manifestation of belonging and identity that underlies Herder's theories of the non-exclusive nature of different cultural ("national") spheres (Herder, 1967/1774). On the other hand, in the course of individual histories, feelings of belonging will routinely begin to disengage themselves from this level of unreflected immediacy, as belonging becomes more conscious, as people move away from the sources of belonging, as belonging starts to become processed through and coloured by memory and by experiences, sensations and ideas encountered in other spheres and in different social contexts, and as varying forms of sentimentalism, mediated by distances of space and time, intervene between "being" and "belonging" (see next section). At this point belonging is losing its innocence--an affective "construction process" is underway, but belonging has not been transformed and instrumentalized by the nation-state context and does not emerge as a "discursive" category and a political identity more or less forcefully *ascribed* to whole collectivities of people to the exclusion of others.

*Ascriptions/constructions of belonging: Nationalism and racism.* In this "compartment" belonging is collectively transformed into the modern, nation-state dependent form of identity, which collapses individual, cultural and political interpretations of identity; institutionalizes belonging in the form of passport, citizenship, socialization agencies and official, ethno-national versions of historical memory; draws boundaries of sovereignty between "us" and "them" (in the process producing exclusivist alterity forms); transforms concrete "place" into abstract

(imagined) “territoriality”; and reinterprets “familiarity” as “nationality” and “strangers” as “aliens”--in other words, imposes homogeneity and ascribes belonging. Belonging in these forms is couched in organicist, frequently racist rhetoric, and produces arguments and discourses about who authentically belongs and who does not. On the other hand they would be impossible if they did not have “sources” and “feelings” of a *truly* authentic nature to build on (it is this fact that lends to “primordialist” notions of national identity an air of plausibility). These aspects of belonging will be developed in more detail below.

*Fluidities of belonging: Globalism and cosmopolitanism.* Belonging as interpreted in the nation-state context--“ethnic”, bounded, homogeneous, organic and unitary--has never been more than an ideal “model”, always practically contradicted by messy borders, migratory movements, ethnic minorities, dual citizenships and multicultural polities. Globalization has multiplied and strengthened such tendencies, both by weakening the sovereign, autonomous nation-state and by means of transnational processes that create or facilitate porous, “open” borders, multiple forms of identity and belonging, or even borderless, “virtual” forms of (non-)belonging. Territoriality is becoming “de-territorialized”.<sup>2</sup> Identities, conceived as homogeneous, essentialized categories, are being contested, *inter alia* through more massive and qualitatively different forms of global migratory patterns. In the process a new ideal of homogeneity is seeing the light of day: Belonging to the globe rather than the nation. Correspondingly, ideas of a world government, or at least world governance, are being floated and enjoy increased popularity, particularly among idealists of peace and justice. This is the contemporary cosmopolitan dream. Also these aspects of belonging will be addressed in more detail below, particularly the interaction between belonging, globalization and migratory processes.<sup>3</sup>

Section 2 will outline different contextual settings and configurations of belonging, drawing on all of the four categorial distinctions above. Section 3 will address issues related to nation-states as sites of homeness and belonging, philosophical questions of normativity, and different “models” of belonging in terms of national identity constructions. Section 4 will delve more deeply into forms of belonging in globalization--multiple homes, the belongingness of global elites, and the impact of globality on “national” belongingness. Section 5 examines different forms of “transnational movers” across borders with particular emphasis on transnational migration and related permutations of belonging and identity. Finally, section 6 contains concluding remarks on reasons and conditions for the added prominence and legitimacy of identity politics and questions of belonging in the contemporary debating climate surrounding issues of migration and globalization,

---

<sup>2</sup> In a sense also “national identity” has an important element of de-territorialization--for more on this aspect, see section 5 below.

<sup>3</sup> See e.g. Bell, 1999, Bromley, 2000, Hudson & Réno, 2000, Kymlicka, 2001, Rapport & Dawson, 1998, Skribis, 2000, as well as the volume I am editing with Mette Hjort (see note 4) for interesting analyses of new forms of belonging in the context of nationalism, multiculturalism, migration and diaspora.

## 2. Contexts and Configurations<sup>4</sup>

When we first start to think of it, "belonging" is a concrete, innocent, almost pristine notion, closely interwoven with and imbricated in the notion of "home". In fact, our home *is* where we belong, territorially and culturally, where "our own" community is, where our family, friends and acquaintances reside, where we have our roots, and where we long to return to when we are elsewhere in the world. In this sense, belonging, as already pointed out, is a notion replete with concreteness, sensuality, organicist meanings and romantic images. It is a foundational, existential, "thick" notion. In the ways that it circumscribes feelings of "homeness", it is also a significant determinant of individual "identity", that elusive but still real psychological state of feeling "in sync with" oneself under given external conditions. Most importantly, "home" and "belonging", thus conceived, carry affective rather than cognitive meaning; the indicative and simplistic statement above, "home *is* where we belong", really means "home is where we *feel* we belong".

But what, for instance, if where we feel we belong (our "cultural" or "ethnic" home) does not match objective ascriptions of membership (our "political" or "civic" home), because "belonging" separates into its two constituent parts: "being" in one place, and "longing" for another? This is where the web starts to get tangled, where ostensible simplicity is supplanted by complexity, permanence by mutability, clear-cut boundaries by fluid images of self and other.<sup>5</sup> In one sense, therefore, the above amounts to a false start, since at best it delineates the contours of an ideal state of affairs, a Herderian dream of many different "homes", and, congruously, as many configurations of "belonging", existing peacefully and permanently side by side. Let's try again, on a less pacific note.

"Identity and belonging plainly are potentially divisive", argues Anthony Giddens (1999: 129), because "nationalism can become belligerent". For though belonging does not, *eo ipso*, belong to nationalism, it is nationalism which in our world has appropriated and reconfigured most people's sense of belonging and identity in ways that deeply affect the harmonious portrayal given above. Think of it in the following way. People may feel that they belong to a piece of territory, to a community, or to a state. Normally they will also have a good idea who else rightfully belongs to this their own authentic context, their home, in other words how their primary "in-group", their "Gemeinschaft" (Tönnies, 1957) and their "organic solidarity" (Durkheim, 1965) are constituted. But, as routinely, they will know and feel who is not part of this in-group, and who for that reason does *not* belong--not really at least, though some of these *others* may well be tolerated, sometimes even as co-citizens of the same state.

People, in other words, may find themselves living and breathing in their own home, their privileged community space, with people of "their own kind", in more or less pronounced "ethnic purity". But they may also find themselves elsewhere, in voluntary or enforced exile, as part of a so-called minority, being treated miserably, decently or possibly even quite well by the ethno-national core (Brubaker, 1996)--in which case be-longing more often than not turns into a question of longing-to-be...at

---

<sup>4</sup> Sections 2, 3 and 4 constitute revised and expanded versions of my contribution to the Introduction to *The Postnational Self: Belonging and Identity* (forthcoming, University of Minnesota Press), co-edited with Mette Hjort.

<sup>5</sup> Such issues are further addressed in sections 4, 5 and 6 below.

home. This condition will typically produce images and memories, often quite out of touch with contemporary realities, of these their authentic roots (spatially or temporally)--and sometimes a matching politics of identity as well (e.g. the Rastafarian movement in Britain, Native Americans in North America, Turks in Germany, German settlements outside Germany's borders--*Volksdeutsche*--, German-speakers in Northern Italy, Hungarians in Roumania and hosts of other groups in Eastern Europe that have suffered displacement, deportation, redrawing of maps, and state attempts to blot out identities and memories of belonging). In some cases (though increasingly rarely) this mental condition will even engender plans for an eventual return to them.

Yet others may find that even though they *are* living in the place and the space where they prefer to be, their home is less than pure because "others" have taken up residence there. These others may, as indicated, be more or less reluctantly recognized, or they may be ostracized, marginalized, forcibly assimilated (a feature of Empires), locked up, killed off, or "repatriated"--either to where they do, culturally and ethnically, belong, at least in the eye of the majority wielding the big stick, or at least deported "out of territory", so that the home, soil and culture of the dominant ethnic can again become exclusively theirs (a feature of homogeneous Nationalisms).<sup>6</sup>

But if we turn the mirror on this scenario, the view we get is different still: Here people are also breathing their own air in their own (national) home, but this home has either been inundated by a mass of "others" who are now in majority as well as in power, or it is being ruled from a political center which is neither in nor of the relevant ethnic group, which will therefore be fighting to reclaim their territory for themselves through the creation of their own state.

Once this condition has been achieved, one way or another (and the roads to national homogeneity are many and diverse), people may start to feel so much at home that their primary belongingness never really becomes a fully conscious issue, because the convergence of ethno-nationality, state territory and "homogeneous" cultural practices is now normality and can be taken for granted, providing people with a commonsense, consensual context for their activities, dreams and aspirations (Billig, 1995). In fact, the national context and its identity-shaping power can become so "banal", so inconspicuous, that it may cause people to imagine that it has disappeared, that they are cosmopolitan and global *rather than* national, and that nationalism is only alive (but not well) in the Balkans and other foreign hotspots, but not in "our" part of the civilized world.

Finally, people may feel that they have several belongings, several places and cultures they belong to and which determine their identity as multiple, nested, situational or fluid, whereas others react to the uncertainties of belonging following

---

<sup>6</sup> It must be emphasized that the distinction employed here between empires and nation-states often is easier to deal with analytically than in the real world: Assimilating empires might want to assimilate precisely in order to reinvent themselves as nation-states, and ethnic nationalisms often operate in conditions that are de facto imperial, dynastic or at least multinational. Assimilation strategies in France have been successful, hence France is now recognized as a nation-state. They failed in the USSR, which is therefore thought of as an empire, whereas the many new states of the NIS area see themselves and are recognized as ethnic, in spite of the fact that almost all of them have retained sizeable contingents of other "ethnicities", notably Russians, who are often less than welcome. See Beissinger, 1995, and Motyl, 1999, for pertinent reflections on this *problematique*.

either from nomadic existences in the global village or from the impact of globalizing forces on handed-down sites of loyalty by developing new attachments, to belongings (in the sense of material possessions), familiar surroundings, close-knit localities, or the intimacy of personal relationships. Still others choose to abandon all collective solidarity in favour of pursuing individualism or elitism, in whatever guise.

Thus, the English word “belonging” is a fortuitous compound of “being” and “longing”, of existential and romantic-imaginary significations and associations, configured in multiple ways by the international system of nationalism as simultaneously a political and a cultural ordering principle. Hence belonging can constitute an important element of identity and not just can but does lead to manifold forms of identity politics across the political spectrum, not just on the right. As pointed out in section 1, this rightist confine of discourse and power has now been invaded by a motley gathering of on the one hand top-down discourses of national homogeneity and on the other “ethnic” groups who “from below” tirelessly seek recognition of their status of rightful belonging (either to an existing or a would-be state: blacks in the USA, Maoris in New Zealand, Palestinians in the Middle East, Catholics in Northern Ireland); organizations and political parties arguing their right to secede in order to reclaim their authentic, sovereign space of belonging and action (Taiwan, Quebec, Flanders, Kosovo, East Timor); and states finding or refinding each other in old-new configurations of common identity or civilizational collaboration (Germany and EU, respectively).

This is a somewhat different picture of belonging than the utopian one we started out with: more confused, more bristly, and much harsher. Indeed, as Giddens argues, nationalism *can* become belligerent, though it does not have to. It is *plainly* divisive, though only *potentially* so. Like forms of belonging, it is an ambiguous and contradictory construction, exclusive and international, hostile and friendly, ethnic and civic, conservative and liberal, backward-looking and progressive, all at the same time (Hedetoft, 1999). It structures belonging along all these parameters. But so does, to an increasing extent, globalization as an independent set of forces in their own right. Let us take a closer look at these interlocking, and partly competing determinants of belonging and identity--the national and the global.

### **3. Home as Nation, Nation as Home**

In a thoughtful article, Judith Lichtenberg discusses the “moral ambiguity of sources of identity based on belonging” (Lichtenberg, 1999: 171), because belonging (meaning national belonging in this context) is both egalitarian and ascribed (i.e. not based on individual choice or accomplishment), and therefore in a certain sense clashes with liberal notions of the individual freedom to choose: “there is also something illiberal’ in basing membership on something over which people have no control. This is, after all, part of the reason we condemn racism and other forms of prejudice and discrimination” (ibid.).

Toward the end of this section of her article, Lichtenberg resolves the ambiguity by abandoning all analytical and moral distinctions only to take note of the fact that “for most people cultural belonging is very important. It is hard to say a great deal about this in analytical (as opposed to poetic or literary) terms, perhaps because it is basically so very simple: for most of us, our native culture provides us with a sense of

being at home in the world. (...) we can recognize the superior virtues of other cultures, but still feel the attachment bred of familiarity our own culture affords. The features of a culture that produce this sense of familiarity and well-being are its language and folkways, its sounds and smells, the innumerable subtle and, in the scheme of things, trivial customs and practices and ways of life we grow up with” (ibid.: 173).

This account no doubt would meet with the approval of many, simply because it corresponds well both with commonsense perception and emotionally based orientation: we feel we belong to our culture, because it constitutes a home of natural embeddedness and unthinking attachment--”familiarity” *tout court*. Somehow it is beyond the grasp of analytical understanding, defies rationality, and has to be accepted for what it is. There is something alluringly attractive about this reference to the “banality” of belonging, and it does have its merits.

1. For one thing it takes us beyond the most barren forms of dedication to the idea of a constitutional, totally rational form of patriotism and belonging (see Keitner, 1999, and Yack, 1999, for critiques of this notion). This is an idea which often overlooks the fact that national attachment and identity, in whatever form, are inconceivable and inexplicable without recourse to a certain measure of irrationality, emotionality, sentiment and unselfish dedication. All the apparently rational principles of government, citizens’ rights and collective solidarity that are routinely invoked in discussions about civic nation(alism)s “tend to say much more about the way in which we should order lives within *given* national communities than about why the boundaries of these communities should take one shape rather than another” (Yack, 1999: 111, emphasis in original). National boundaries have never been drawn according to principles of rational argument or moral distinctions.

In one way, Lichtenberg’s “moral dilemma” points us beyond such categorial confusion, by referring us back to the unreflected, emotive sources of belonging. However, in a different way it also retains it--as a higher form of “guilty conscience”. For what kind of “belonging” is characterized by the normative paradox of a moral dilemma? Only that which on the one hand insists on all the concreteness and immediacy of familiar surroundings (see comments on “sources” and “feelings” in section 1) while transforming them into “national culture”, but on the other, in comparison with the supposed rationality of “civic identity”, is reminded of its “non-liberal”, ethnic and potentially “racist” nature.

The result is a dilemma of conscience where “feeling” and “reflection”, concretion and abstraction, personal predilection and civic responsibility cross swords. Lichtenberg interprets sources and feelings of belonging within the ambiguous (attractive yet scary) context of the National, on the background of (a) the shady history of “ethnic” nationalism and (b) the lures of “liberal” nationalism as well as cosmopolitan ideals; hence belonging becomes a moral question of far-reaching philosophical import. The suspicion that this might be a reflection not of a more general problem but of a particular political philosopher’s pangs of conscience is worth considering, but should be tempered by the likely possibility that Lichtenberg only articulates, in a specific idiom, that belonging (like national identity) is losing its “ethnic innocence” and is becoming pervasively invaded by normative concerns of a “liberal” and “heterogeneous” nature--because it has become subjected to widespread public scrutiny and been cast in doubt by the “relativization” of nationalism and the

participatory ideals of deliberative democracy characteristic of the latter part of the 20th century. As Seyla Benhabib has phrased the question: "While democracy is a form of life which rests upon active consent and participation, citizenship is distributed according to passive criteria of belonging, like birth upon a piece of land and socialization in that country or ethnic belonging to a people" (in Hedetoft & Hjort, forthcoming).<sup>7</sup>

2. In terms of popular identities, this distribution criterion (birthplace, ethnicity, the destiny of "blood") is pervasively accepted and adopted by national citizens across the globe. In this sense, Lichtenberg rightly identifies the unconscious and very powerful nature of (national) belonging and some of the immediate objects of reference and justification most of us use when asked to explain our sense of "home(sick)ness". In other words, in anthropological terms Lichtenberg's account faithfully reflects the "organicist", "pre-political" dimension of feelings of belonging to a national "*Gemeinschaft*". This dimension primarily springs from the fact the nation-state at the level of particularity bounds and organizes concrete places, local sites, urban architectures, regional landscapes and concretely rooted knowledges and memories of locales, as well as familiarities and engagements with these locales and the people inhabiting them (see Carter, Donald and Squires, 1993; Czaplicka & Ruble, forthcoming; and Czaplicka, this volume). "National space" and "territoriality", in other words, are constructions that rest on what Czaplicka & Ruble call the "archaeology of the local", including a sense of common history, common topographies, common genealogy. "Space" is the reinvention of "place" in the context of the National. All of this is "*instrumental* to identity constitution" (my emphasis). On the other hand, they do not in themselves, and certainly not in the context of latter-day nationalism, *constitute* identity and belonging at the level of immediacy. Rather, nation-states are political contexts that absorb and reorganize--through "mechanisms" of construction, ascription, generalization, socialization--these sources and feelings of belonging and homeness into the "imagined communities" of "national cultures".

Lichtenberg's account of the "moral dilemma" overlooks or at least seriously downplays this process. Rather it tends to reify "culture" by assuming a direct, uncomplicated link between this concept and "nation". The "national" element of culture is elided, the implicit argument being the following: cultures (as homogeneous units) produce nations which in turn engender strong feelings of attachment and belonging on account of the cultural homogeneity underpinning them. Culture equals nation equals home equals identity.<sup>8</sup> Thus cultures become "native" cultures, taken-for-granted and matter-of-course frames of reference and action. No matter how seductive the argument, then, it overlooks the fact that to the extent we can reasonably talk about cultural homogeneities in national terms (and often this is very difficult),

---

<sup>7</sup> This might be less of a contradiction that it appears to be. Citizens are expected to give active consent, but on the basis and in the framework of the political, cultural and territorial boundaries set to and by the national polity. In other words, democracy, though universal at the level of ideals, is bounded at the level of actual practice. Or in other words: there are limits to how active, in what spheres and in what ways citizens are encouraged and expected to be active. The dilemma, if there is one, consists in an increasing awareness, among citizens as well as academics, that "rights" can be interpreted in a transnational as well as a national sense.

<sup>8</sup> For a thorough critique of this proposition of homogeneity, see Hedetoft, 1995, Part I, Chapter V.

such homogeneity is the outcome rather than the cause of both historical processes and mental reconstructions; of oblivion as much as memory; of elite efforts to nationalize the masses in the transition from different kinds of Empire to an international order based on nation-states; of selective perception in the process (which all individuals must go through) of forming a homogeneous image of their national communities (in spite of the fact that most nations are culturally and ethnically “mongrel”, as Giddens (1999: 131) calls them) and creating mental boundaries that match the borders of the state in which they live--here the national education systems play an invaluable role.

In other words, this kind of explanation overlooks national belonging both in the form of Renan’s “daily plebiscite” (Renan, 1882) and of the symbolic and historical construction of roots (“native culture”) as identical with the limits of the national--in imperative, top-down, discursive terms *and* as popular transformations of such official discourse into second-order naturalness and axiomatic referentiality. In such terms, national belonging follows from neither nature nor culture in any simple forms--though this is how it is often experienced and more often articulated--but is the result of complex social and historical processes whereby the political, sovereign communities that we know as nation-states reinvent themselves as pre-political, simplistic and “ethnic”, partly in the mirror of selective histories of glory, heroism and destiny, partly by drawing on anthropological paradigms of kinship, blood and territorial rootedness.

In these communities, therefore, it requires more than just legal citizenship really to belong and therefore to be a true native with a genuine and universally recognized nationality.<sup>9</sup> Features and images of the political (civic) and the pre-political (ethnic) community must merge for a nation-state to be experienced and recognized as the authentic, cultural home of any individual living inside or outside its politically given borders. In other words, the state must appear as nation and the nation as ethno-culturally given and historically continuous. Identity and belonging must seem to derive organically from such pre-politically given homogeneity, though in the real world there is no such transparent, innocent and immediate relationship, and whatever cultural-national homogeneity there is, more often than not is the outcome of decades, sometimes centuries of cultural honing, ethnic mixing and social assimilation or exclusion.

One problem, of course, is that in spite of such long-standing efforts, frequently homogeneity amounts to little more than official discourse, a thin veneer of a common identity covering up the co-existence of a multiplicity of cultures and, sometimes, identities too (take, for instance, the cases of Belgium, the United Kingdom and Switzerland as different types of illustration of such scenarios). In this sense, most territorial states are not proper nation-states, but “multi-ethnic” in one way or another. Citizenship, culture and identity tend to part ways and to reassemble in new and multiple configurations of belonging. In the case of the United States, it has now even

---

<sup>9</sup> This distinction between citizenship and nationality is one that not least coloured “immigrants” in old colonial states like Britain and France have been confronted with, e.g. in the forms of Powellism and LePenism. It was Enoch Powell, for instance, who in the 60s talked about the “legal fiction of British citizenship” as regards these people and further claimed that “you do not become British by being born in Britain”. This is the credo that has since defined the ideologies of rightist nationalist movements in most European countries.

become the quasi-official credo to celebrate Americanness as multicultural and the USA as the prototype of an immigrant nation with ethnic roots all over the world and little common history to show for itself--a fact which for some bodes ill for the cohesion of the USA (e.g. Schlesinger, 1992), but for others signals the strength of this (post)modern identity formation, which has managed to create unity out of diversity or where homogeneity is simply configured in ways that are different from what we have become wont to expect based on the European model of cultural exclusivism and ethnic cleansing (Hall and Lindholm, 1999).

Whichever take one prefers, the USA for many embodies the liberal, civic nation-state in almost pure form and reintroduces the question of how identity and belonging are structured in plural states that seem to defy the logic of ethnic uniformity as the basis for societal cohesion and loyalty. Membership in a republican order with clear constitutional principles will not do (cf. the above discussion), since it does not explain the emotional attachment and overt manifestations of sacrifice and sentiment that clearly characterize the patriotism of US citizens--nor does it account for the multiplicity of ethnic groups who, whatever their distinctiveness, all conduct a politics of recognition *as Americans* (and not, say, as humans or cosmopolitans). In fact, as Hall & Lindholm rightly argue (1999: 3), no other state makes such a claim to "exceptionalism" and "manifest destiny" as the USA, and feelings of belonging to this country and its history and myths of independence and conquest are obviously no less forceful and deep-seated than in other national contexts. The "home of the brave" presents itself to the American imagination (though this comes in infinite sub-varieties) as basically one, not many, and this oneness is not primarily political or civic, though many of the ingredients thrown into the cauldron are undoubtedly of a deliberative, rational origin.

In spite of the fact, therefore, that on the face of it the USA seems to diverge radically from the ethnic, European blueprint of nation-states, the fact of the matter is rather that the US has reworked and modernized the model in order to assimilate patriotic identity (homogeneity) to individualism and cultural pluralism, allowing different groups to seek out their own avenue toward American identity, exceptionalism and pride, and thus to reconfigure forms of belonging as national, subnational and cosmopolitan at the same time.

Where in Europe political communities pose as pre-political and ethnic, in the USA the situation is reversed: feelings of common ethnicity and organic solidarity, shaped no less arduously than in the rest of the world and drawing on a wealth of myths (of the West, of nature, of frontiers, of the self-made man, of golden opportunities, of war and heroism...), consistently pose as political or civic, ethnicity *eo ipso* being universally recognized and officially celebrated only in its plural form and as "hyphenated" Americanness. But as Yack succinctly argues, "were Americans (...) to make citizenship contingent upon commitment to political principles instead of the mere accident of birth (to citizen parents or on American territory), they might become considerably more suspicious of their fellow citizens' declarations of political loyalty. Birthright citizenship can promote toleration precisely by removing the question of communal membership from the realm of choice and contention about political principles" (1999: 116). In other words, an American "nation-state" genuinely based on civic, political principles would not be particularly tolerant or all-inclusive, but

would draw borderlines between “us” and “them” based on formulated, “rational” distinctions and assimilate non-nationals in different ways than through oaths of allegiance to the flag.

The result, therefore, is much the same in the two kinds of nation-states: home as belonging to nation is a structured set of emotions and attitudes, shaped by an imagined oneness of political and pre-political, contemporary and historical, rational and cosmological orientations. And at least at the level of “ideal blueprint” (though far from always the actual state of affairs), this would seem to hold true for states in other regions of the world as well, in spite of the fact that the roads to the modernity of nationalism have been radically different (as have the results) in, say, Africa, Latin America, the Middle East and East Asia, where historical interactions of local history, impacts of colonization, independence, absorption/repulsion of western cultures and ideas, and global processes have resulted in a multitude of particularistic permutations of identity, nationalism and belonging. Conversely, what ties them all together, whether in a democratic format or not, is the idea(l) of the National as an imagined oneness of state and nation, of “civic” and “ethnic”, of past and present, of reason and affect. For instance, the PRC’s “one China policies” only make sense in this framework of national sovereignty, territorial integrity and historical legitimacy (which is also the universally acknowledged passport to recognition as a creditable entity by the international community). Liberal nationalism and inter-nationalism, however open-minded, do not basically alter these facts (see the next section for further reflections on this), and even western-based cosmopolitans--in spite of their assumption of belonging everywhere and nowhere in particular--arguably base their global outlook and interventionism on the confidence of embeddedness in particular national contexts and the possession of a national passport and national citizenship rights (Ignatieff, 1993 and 1999). However, what *has* tended to alter at least the conditions for national homogeneity--by imposing new parameters for “homeness” and belonging--are European and globalizing processes and the new types of identity formation, patterns of international migration, and ethnic politics that have followed in their wake.

#### **4. Belonging in/to Globalization: One Home or Many?**

“Globality”--for want of a better term--spells significant changes in the cultural landscapes of belonging, not because it supplants the nation-state and the forms of homeness outlined so far, but because it changes the contexts (politically, culturally and geographically) for them, situates national identity and belonging differently, and superimposes itself on “nationality” as a novel frame of reference, values and consciousness, primarily for the globalized elites, but increasingly for “ordinary citizens” as well. In this context, notions of liberal and civic nationalism assume new implications. Their real news value lies less in the theoretical assumptions as such--which have been known and debated since the 19th century--and more in the widespread interest they have recently attracted, inside as well as outside academic circles.

The pervasiveness of this interest reflects two points worth noting: first, that the organicism and essentialism of national identities are no longer just taken for granted, but are being universally challenged by forces (whether “rational” or not) claiming

forms of loyalty and allegiance that are not readily assimilable to the nation-state context; and secondly, that this state of affairs has given rise to attempts to rescue the nation-state--as "civic", "liberal", "cosmopolitan" or whatever--by rethinking its basic parameters and proposing a rational trajectory (e.g. in the form of Habermas' "constitutional patriotism" or sometimes even a political program, as in the case of the European Union) for its practical transformation, a "third way" between rampant globalization and conservative nationalism.

This double scenario reconfigures belonging by introducing wedges of uncertainty and impermanence into the imagined oneness of political and prepolitical orientations that underpins national identity. On the one hand, globality only constitutes "belonging" in the most flimsy and liminal of senses; on the other, nationality increasingly appears to be no longer a sufficient, though maybe still a necessary linchpin of belonging understood as "identity". This state of affairs, often compounded by new forms of individualism and migration, leads to cognitive and discursive reactions of different kinds: uprootedness, homesickness, affective alienation, attempts to retrace "local knowledges" and circles of immediate familiarity, or the construction of multiple homes and hybrid senses of belonging (in other words, new cosmopolitanisms or the advocacy of multicultural polity regimes)--though it might also imply reaffirmations of old-style nationalism in nostalgic, secessionist or "new racist" forms. In all events, it strengthens and reinvents the politics of identity as an increasingly transnational phenomenon, in the double sense of finding its way into all national contexts as a fairly uniform occurrence, and playing itself out as a substantively transnational politics of organization, platform, support and discourse: a "McDonaldization" of cultural and political differences, one might call it, exacerbated by declining trust in national politicians on a global scale.

Thus, the logical oxymoron of "civic nationalism"<sup>10</sup> and its pervasive popularity is a fairly precise reflection of a state of affairs where the nature and context of nationalism is being transformed by globalization. Where the age of nationalism and the nation-state demanded that the political and the pre-political community, citizenship and ethnicity/identity, be imagined as one, the "global era" threatens to disaggregate the two, either by propagating a wholly rational kind of nationalism as the ideal end-goal while relegating *ethnic* nationalism to the dustheap of a belligerent history (or to less civilized parts of the world!); by transposing the "political" dimension of identity and loyalty to a supranational level (e.g. the EU, or some ideal cosmopolitan set-up) while conceding that people's ethnicity (or cultural identity) may remain nationally bound; or by building "civic" allegiances to the country one happens to live in while remaining "ethnically" tied to one's country of origin (the case of many Turks--or their descendants--resident in Germany, for instance).

Although examples of such cleavages have been around for many years, the difference today is that where they used to be exceptions, they are now more like the rule: all-pervasive, institutionally organized, and the subject of public and private debates. It is becoming widely acknowledged that "hybrid identities", several homes

---

<sup>10</sup> The oxymoronic nature of the concept is nicely captured by Bernard Yack who argues that "the idea of the civic nation defends the Enlightenment's liberal legacy by employing the very concept--that of the political community by voluntary association--whose plausibility has been undermined by the success of nationalism" (1999: 115).

and multiple attachments are a ubiquitous fact of life in most nation-states. Where dual or multiple citizenship used to be seen as a remote and esoteric concern, relevant only to highly privileged elites, such issues are now widely debated (though not always condoned) in contexts pervasively described as multicultural. A cosmopolitan or a global citizen today is not to be recognized by the lack of passports (as was the case in the 19th century), but far more by the number of passports they can legitimately show for themselves--though in practice, the norm is still closer to 1 than one might expect.

From being conceived as a fact of nature, “belonging” has come to be treated as a property of the rational mind, as a particular kind of “politics”, situating subjects between individual freedom, collective rights and negotiated identities, and confronting states with difficult choices between transnationalized policies and communicative strategies aimed at convincing their national populations of their primary belonging in and loyalty to their particular nation-state. Increased mobility and virtual universes have added to this moveable feast of symbolically and deliberately constructing our roots as we go along. Take the following statement from a Pole living in the USA as an interesting case in point:

“Contrary to what you may have thought, we will stay put for the holidays because we will have to move out of our current apartment at the end of the month. We are experiencing the real thing’--American mobility; every four months at a different address! I got so mad that I arranged for a PO Box to get all my mail there. A simple PO Box will give me some roots in this soil and will keep me sane--or so I hope. Although I do recognize certain Americanisms in me, I *refuse* to be integrated into this culture. During my college years, I had zero American friends. My attitude hasn’t changed much since. I’ve just had to be stronger in alienating myself from Americans because there were so many of them around, and not enough foreigners. Have I succeeded? I don’t know, but I must leave the US in 2000 at the latest. By then, it will have been a decade for me, and that is definitely enough.”<sup>11</sup>

This brief excerpt from a much longer set of reflections on the tribulations of *feeling* Polish while *being* in the USA is a telling illustration of the changes modern individuals experience as far as their self-image, identity and sense of belonging are concerned, and the affective as well as cognitive processes these changes activate as regards re-configuring existential components such as roots, community and stability in a global age which this person clearly identifies as “American”. In this setting, “roots” shrinks into an unimaginable fixed point, a PO Box address, identity being sought in a rationally pursued and implemented outsider existence (hankering for many more “foreigners”), and security residing in images of future mobility, across state borders, back to (hopefully) authentic roots and a (wistfully imagined) genuine ethnic community--in order to escape the consequences of the mobility which life in America currently imposes.

For such reasons, the state of voluntary exilation from one’s imagined roots--and its attendant forms of consciousness--is one of the precise emblems of the reactive patterns that modern national cosmopolitans resort to in order to cope with (as well as rationalize) their existence in societies which apparently offer them ever diminishing possibilities for collectivity, adaptation, tradition and belonging of a more stable

---

<sup>11</sup> This statement derives from a letter to one of the authors from a Polish-American acquaintance.

"national" kind. Benedict Anderson's "imagined political communities" are facing significant difficulties when the world for substantial numbers of people appears as insecure, fragmented, and lacking in culturally demarcated borders and commonly accepted values. The reverse side of exile and marginalization--for the individual in the American "melting-pot" or the small-nation collectivity in the European integration process--then frequently reappears as a longing for authentic values and a journey back (or forward) to a country, a culture and a citizenship which is less hybrid, where politicians are trustworthy, and the language sounds right.

Other reactions are possible and pervasive too: the pursuit of constitutional patriotism, the development of civilizational identities, the forging of security communities, joining inter- and transnational organizations, and the cultivation of cosmopolitan stances (including the championing of a global human-rights regime) being just a few of them. However, as indicated, globality--or for that matter, Europeanness--is not an emotionally convincing substitute for nationality, no matter how intellectually and morally appealing such wider identifications might be (Weiler, 1997). "Belonging" requires, as far as identity goes (rather than vaguer and more non-committal attachments), territorial and historical fixity, cultural concreteness and ethnic exceptionalism, in addition to the existence (at least potentially) of a political superstructure with which one can identify and which is the provenance and safeguard of passport, citizenship and a sense of communal solidarity. "The globe" does not qualify in those respects, not even for the most liberal-minded elites--at least not yet. People can develop a sense of multiple homes (often functionally differentiated and spatially wide apart). The most affluent elites can even afford to set up house in different parts of the world and can use this as a substitute for genuine "global belonging". In their discourse and consciousness such conditions might well figure *as* such a truly postnational situation, materially and identity-wise.

Nevertheless, these cases highlight the significance of observing a basic distinction inherent in the concept of "belonging", i.e. that there is a world of difference between imagining that "the globe", like material possessions, memories and ideas, belongs to "us" (or rather, "me")--and that "we" belong to "the globe" and "globality". The images of home that we all carry around as regards national identity, and our linguistic way of speaking to them, are in the latter category. The question there is: What national entity do "we" belong "to"? In our perceptions and conceptions of this type of homeness, we routinely objectify ourselves, make ourselves into a part and a property of a given nation-state. We somehow adhere to it, are organically bound up with it, and spring from it, by virtue of birth, blood, race, history, culture or customs. In this sense, Lichtenberg's "empathetic" argument hits the nail on the head.

This is all very different in the case of images and discourses of "global belonging". Here the world appears as a terrain of opportunities, mobility, networking, money-making and so forth: it turns into a means for the achievement of particular goals, and does not appear as the end-goal of ideal belonging and identity-formation, as "roots". Potentially, the world is ours, it does not own us. It opens up possibilities but does not require sacrifices that we abide by because we belong to it. Or it allows us to cultivate myths and reveries of having our real roots elsewhere than where we happen to be, or of eventually finding real happiness somewhere else.

In such terms, “the globe” is a material and utopian tax haven, a site of (imagined) benefits, but very little belonging, in the sense this concept has been developed so far. Only in the cases of ardent universal religiosity, global environmentalism or the idealism of helping needy people on a global scale can we identify traces of an ideology of belonging to the globe, based in programmatic ideas of global responsibility; but even here the point of departure, more often than not, is a firm rootedness in a specific national identity, and the global position, including its cosmopolitan virtues, is ideologically rather than existentially defined.<sup>12</sup>

Thus, globalization--while certainly making inroads on the contexts and natural assumptions of national rootedness and homeness--does not offer a global substitute for them, despite much discourse to the contrary. The forms and perceptions of belonging that it engenders are, if not incompatible with those of the National, then at best their extension and complement. The new awareness of the difference between political and pre-political components of national identity that globalization and Europeanization have spawned has led to new configurations for the most globally minded, for whom nationality has come to represent their prepolitical, ethnic, “banal” site of belonging whereas globality or Europeanness have taken over as the main locus of their political orientations and identifications.<sup>13</sup> For the rest, belonging in globality is either a curse (globality as poverty, a threat to settled ways of life, rootlessness), a moderate blessing (globality as a means of getting help and support against repression) or an opportunity (globality as freedom and progress: the new land of opportunities); but in none of these cases is globality imagined as something people belong *to*. Though “our home”, understood as belonging to a specific nation-state, may be open to the globe (liberal, tolerant, sensitive, multicultural), the globe is not our home. The “semiotics of belonging” spells different assumptions and implications in the two settings and the ever more crucial permutations that the interaction between them engenders.

## **5. Migrants, Travellers and Cosmopolitans: Fixity or Flux?**

A consequence of these reflections is that we need to re-evaluate the kind of impact that globalization has on images and discourses of homeness and belonging in the context of transnational migration patterns. Where much sociological and anthropological reasoning, informed by postnational theorems, has recently tended to hypothesize that the fixity and homogeneity normally associated with national forms of belonging are being supplanted by flux, multiculturalism and indeterminate spatiality (identity becoming increasingly de-territorialized and “home” being found in movement per se) (e.g. Rapport & Dawson, 1988), the argumentative gist of this paper calls for caution based on discrete analytical distinctions.

---

<sup>12</sup> See Gubert, 1999, for noteworthy contributions to the discussion of territorial belonging in the context of culture and ecological concerns.

<sup>13</sup> For an interesting example of such interactions between matter-of-course national identity and self-proclaimed cosmopolitanism, see Michael Billig’s analysis of the American nature of Richard Rorty’s political philosophy, in Billig, 1995, chapter 7.

*First distinction:* between migrancy and global movement.<sup>14</sup> This may seem odd, since obviously migrancy always involves movement, and often of a global/transnational kind. But the logic of migration is rarely, if ever, the flux of movement, but the attainment of a new fixity, a new spatially bounded rootedness. As a rule, migrants do not have moving between points as their purpose, but solely as a means to an end. Migrants do not find their identity in motion, in other words. They are not committed to an identity of "fluid homes"--mostly quite the reverse, in fact. This is true whether or not particular migrancies are more or less voluntary or more or less enforced. Globalization, in some format, may be the underlying reason and certainly the contextual framework for increased mobility and displacement of ever more people of the "migrant" kind, but globalization should not be mistaken for an identity-defining, de-territorializing *rationale* of migrants, neither individually nor collectively. In fact, the more massive the migration, the more emphatically migrants tend to search for new stable homes elsewhere. This is not to deny that migration comes with a vengeance in terms of identity, belonging and homeness, since old identities and memories of the places they came from, or have been told about, or are constantly reminded of by people and institutions in their new homes, stick in their minds and keep (co)defining their sense of belonging (cf the exposé in section 2)--hence sentiments of exile, diaspora and multiple belongingness, and hence transnational forms of migrant organizations. But all of this must be conceptualized as consequences "after the fact", and not as a jubilant embrace of a postnational condition. In this sense, migrants are victims of global processes, not their architects.

*Second distinction:* between migrants and movers. Where migrants move in order to resettle, movers move either for the temporary pleasure of movement (travellers, tourists) or because they *are* the architects of global processes and invest their money, careers and lifestyles in and on the global arena (cosmopolitan nomads of varying hue). This, as argued above, does not nullify the national point of departure of these privileged elites and "symbolic analysts", although, unlike migrants, they do their utmost to delete any suspicion of national sentiments from their mental harddisk and behavioural currency. As a rule, they embrace and celebrate, if not transnationalism *tout court*, at least internationalism in the most liberal forms imaginable. Where the movement of migrants is finite, involving the abandonment of homes, networks and possessions, in favour of hoped-for replacements elsewhere in the world, the movement of cosmopolitan nomads is in principle infinite and continuous, incrementally adding homes, networks and possessions to the list, and for many constituting distinct lifestyles in their own right. Here, therefore, it makes sense to assume that movement is not just instrumental, a means to an end, but part of the overall teleology and identity of these movers--and shakers.

---

<sup>14</sup> The distinction used in the following between "migrants" and "cosmopolitans" is at this point analytically heuristic. Certain borderline cases do exist, particularly regarding certain types of entrepreneurial migrant workers who are adept at taking advantage of the opportunities presented by "fluid borders". This fact does not affect my main points, however, i.e. (1) that the binary distinction between architects and victims of globalization is cognitively necessary and normatively justified, and (2) that the majority of migrants, especially refugees and persons moving for purposes of "family unification", do not find their identity or purpose in the process of moving itself (in fact, for many of these people, questions of identity and postmodernity are a luxury that they are hardly concerned with).

It makes sense, of course, that the architects of global processes should invest part of their identity make-up in the time/space compression that globalization carries in its wake. But this should not be allowed to confuse the overall picture: the general “publics” in this world, and the ever increasing masses of economic or political migrants, more often than not are on the fringes of these processes, and either do not move except for touristic purposes, or move only reluctantly and against their better judgement/desires. And international migration apart (often between third-world and first-world countries), labour mobility as a rule takes place within national boundaries (see eg. the EU), where the national hub of belonging and homeness can be preserved intact. Ironically, the term “mobile homes”, as we know, refers neither to that type of movement nor to the extravaganzas of cosmopolitan nomads, but is an often condescendingly applied term used to describe the life of marginalized sections of society who do not possess the wherewithal to rent or buy a “proper” home and who are therefore compelled to a life of constant movement between trailer parks that all look much the same. Movement and diversity do not necessarily go together, and de-territorialization is far from always a bliss--let alone an ideal that people practically and voluntarily pursue. Except in one form, paradoxically, i.e. that of “national identity”, which contrary to ordinary discourse possesses some of the characteristics of a de-territorialized identity form--though one that is not predicated on physical movement. (This point will be developed further below--under “house and home”).

*Third distinction:* between “multicultural settings” and identity fixation. It is no doubt true that migration can result in the production or strengthening of multicultural communities, and also that processes of transvaluation in such communities can impact members’ cultural horizons and individual profiles in the direction of “hybridization”--though this is a possibility rather than a necessity. However, in a sense (see section 3 above) all communities, including national ones, are “multicultural”, and what migratory processes do is primarily to foreground multiculturalism as the official codeword (and sometimes ideal) for the political and sociological handling of problems attendant on immigration within specific national settings. In this sense, most talk of multiculturalism is not just politicized from the outset, but furthermore presupposes the nation-state and its national identity as the taken-for-granted framework and objective. In other words, forms of multiculturalism that are compatible with the nation-state, which further integration, and are useful as underpinnings of national loyalty, are acceptable and frequently advocated; forms that don’t spell problems and are discouraged/opposed.

But this is also to say (assuming such a presumption is correct and realistic) that multiculturalism/hybridity are not *per se* antagonistic to the construction of fixed (national) identities--that there is neither a logical nor practical opposition between the two. It follows from the fact that cultures are not causally, deterministically related to identities in a one-to-one correlation (see section 3). Further, “hybridity” is a very different thing from the outside and the inside perspective: for the observer it seems like a motley composite in constant motion, but from the subjective “owner” viewpoint more probably like a relatively stable and fixed make-up (though the result of a number of identity choices and intersubjective negotiations), appearing finally as “character” or “personality”. Here it is imperative to rigidly distinguish between the characteristics of a milieu in its totality and individual cultural and identity-related

formations. Whereas the former might have the characteristics of a heterogeneous and arbitrarily concatenated mass of disparate elements, the latter normally do not--and when they do nevertheless, are signs of socio-psychological conflicts.

Multiculturalism is only a real problem for national states when it has not been properly de-politicized on the level of public discourse and in the minds of citizens. In other words, cultural diversity must not by its constituent parts be interpreted as involving loyalty to other sovereigns (hence, demands for dual citizenship are rarely welcomed by national governments, though sometimes tolerated)--rather, the "multicultural" individual should symbolically attest to his/her allegiance and genuine wish to belong to the "host" country. This does not guarantee full recognition, but is its necessary prerequisite.

However, although in principle "hybridization" and a fully fixed, stable, "native" sense of identification with the host country is not an unattainable ideal, and sometimes materializes too, contemporary "migrant settlers" (whether first or second generation) tend to practice this model of convergence in ways that are slightly different from a "host-society" blueprint, but at the same time one that is far removed from the "identities-in-flux" hypotheses of globalists and also from the "divided loyalty", moral panic hysteria of receiving societies.

Modern migrants, as a rule (and of course there are exceptions), want to shape their own identities in such a way that they integrate sociologically and politically into the host societies and assume a "host-society" identity on their own cultural premisses. For instance, they fail to see how the wearing of veils and the practice of Islam in general contravenes their adoption of a Danish identity, why the maintenance of networks organizing their "ethnic claims" and cultural adherence to their "countries of origin" is not compatible with belonging to Denmark, and why dual citizenship is anything more than a practical measure to facilitate their movement (as travellers, not migrants) between their old and new homes. The point here is not to assess whether such assumptions and expectations are realistic or contradictory, but to record that from these contemporary migrants' perspective (who have mostly abandoned the myth of return that was so prevalent 20 or 30 years ago), their many-sided sense of belonging does not run counter to their desire for integration and recognition as nationals in their new countries. What this amounts to in actual practice is an argument that new configurations between x-(national) identity and its cultural underpinnings are possible and desirable, and need not become politicized. Host societies, on the other hand, have a tendency to interpret precisely such new configurations as a potential threat to long-established traditions, ways of life and political cultures, and routinely react by transforming even the most innocuous identity-reshaping exercises into political problems--although the concrete form that such transformations take depends on the precise characteristics of the nation-state in question.

*Fourth distinction:* between house and home. Questions of belonging--generally as well as in terms of migrancy--would be easy to settle if there existed an unproblematic relationship between "house" and "home"--if "home" for people's imaginative lives was always and unquestionably where one's house is located and where one for that reason has settled down or at least lives (permanently or temporarily). The two terms, admittedly, are often used interchangeably, but the connection between their meanings is at best metonymic. "House" is part of, sometimes the central part of images of

homeness and belonging (cf the English adage “my house is my castle”), but the cultural and political imaginary of “home” covers a lot more--spatially and temporally--than the physical location of residence.

I return here to my point above relating to the de-territorial aspect of national identity. National belonging interpreted as “home” is clearly distinct from “house” or even “locality”--it is abstract in Anderson’s sense of “imagined communities”, since a lot of the national territory, population and history exists only as imagined, as spatially extended and temporally reinterpreted perceptions which far transcend the bounds of individually familiar or practically useful homeness in the sense of “house” and its immediate surroundings. National identity is thus de-territorialized not in the sense that nation-states do not have clear-cut spatial boundaries, but that these are not individually and naturally meaningful identity criteria, but--like “collective national memory”--politically, culturally and historically orchestrated spaces, landscapes and locales, abstractions from the immediate life-world of individuals that are presented and often accepted as the limits of “homeness”, because they converge with the limits of political sovereignty. However natural and organic this organization of the nation-as-home may seem, in fact it is not just a historical construction, but one in which territory is chiefly meaningful as a symbolic rather than physical entity. Thus, “home” even for the traditional national citizen is a dual concept: on the one hand it exists physically, as “house” and “locality”, on the other as “nation”, in the de-territorialized sense set out above. The best example of this are the images of belonging of people who distinguish between their present physical but inauthentic “home” and their “real” national home, from which they are exiled, where they might never have been, whose language they speak badly or not at all, and which lives only in their fantasies, e.g. *Volksdeutsche* (Wolff, 2000), or second- and third-generation immigrants who symbolically (and sometimes materially too) reconstruct their originary home where their house is, thus creating their very own virtual convergence in a process of mimicking the nation-state blueprint (e.g. overseas Chinese communities in Europe).

This underlying national (European) ideal is that house, home, belonging and identity should be totally co-terminous. It has already been argued how globalization tends toward separating these elements and questioning the absoluteness of national boundaries. Migration patterns, in one sense, contribute to the same process. What contemporary migrants do when they attempt to reorganize identities and forms of belonging is little more than taking advantage of the opportunity presented by such globalizing forces, but, it should be emphasized, also by the constructedness, contingency and variability of national identity. The hyphenated model of American identity organizes and recognizes this model, based on the assumption that the core of identity is undivided loyalty to American constitutional values, but that this can be orchestrated, individually or collectively, in a variety of ways, and that attendant forms of cultural belonging and homeness can be multiple as well. In Europe, on the other hand, states prefer to monitor not just the resultant identity in terms of its practicality and consequences, but, in spite of historical contingencies, also the preferred national configurations between identity, belonging and cultural resources (for that reason, in immigration matters they have great difficulties respecting their own constitutional principles, such as separation of Church and State and the concomitant freedom/privacy of religious belief). Homogeneity, both in spite of its

abstractness/malleability and in spite of occasional rhetorical dedication to *European* diversity, is not up for grabs, citizenship comes with a price-tag, and identity in European states cannot be left to mostly unwelcome intruders to construct at their own convenience.

## **6. Concluding Observations**

The Introduction (section 1) discussed the issue of the ubiquitousness and legitimacy of "belonging" and the way in which the notion has increasingly come to occupy center stage in contemporary identity politics--a fact reflected *inter alia* in the rapidly growing academic literature on the subject. In terms of pure analytical description, it is apparent that the popularity of the notion is intimately tied up with the "postmodern" fluidities of borders and related phenomena of migration, globalization and interdependence; with the fact that the term has increasingly been adopted by ethnic/minority groups intent on confirming their (dual/multiple) feelings of belonging to a new polity and making "ethnic claims" on that background; and with the political discourses of "host societies" (having thus been legitimated "from below") now finding the confidence to ideologically and rhetorically "repossess" their very own cultural and territorial framework of belonging and consequently to specify to newcomers which conditions they must meet in order to be accepted as (also) belonging.

These sub-themes indicate that the issue of belonging in its present-day configurations is both an articulation of "globalization" and a reactive, "nationalizing" response to it. If we add to this diagnosis the fact that issues and legitimacies of politics of belonging have become prominent since 1990--the victory of the west euphemistically referred to as the end of the Cold War--a few additional comments are called for. Globalization is a set of processes, transnational by nature, driven by economic interests, and primarily fathered by the USA, which basically regards the existence of national borders and national sovereignty as an obstacle and strives toward minimizing their role(with the exception of specific types of population movement). As a uniform and agenda-setting set of forces and discourses, it was, in a manner of speaking, "set free" by the victory of the west in the Cold War, since the global polarity and its ideological outgrowths until 1990 had set certain limits to how far, how fast and how freely western market-forces, western media and western democratic values could impact the global stage. On the other hand, where the Cold War "froze" globalization, it simultaneously constrained manifestations of nationalism, and when it ended set free this ideological force as well.

In cultural terms, globalization is logically a "leveller" and homogenizer, though in the real-life world of transnational processes it comes up against a variety of counteracting influences and paradoxical consequences--partly because political and entrepreneurial "globalizers" are also, like ordinary citizens, "rooted" in nation-state contexts and represent more or less obvious national interests and "identities"; partly because globalization in its immediate economic and social effects poses threats to handed-down ways and standards of life, material and psychological security etc. (though the threat varies from one global region and nation-state to the next and obviously between different social classes too); and partly because the drive toward

the establishment of new nation-states and new nationalisms is part and parcel of the very same process (see above).

The combination of the threat that globalization undoubtedly constitutes to established lifestyles and the fact that these lifestyles routinely become associated with the traditional political context and its traditional form of power execution, i.e. the nation-state, accounts in general terms for the contemporary romantic return to the nation-as-home. However, it also provides a pointer to the universally negative/sceptical attitude among “ethno”-national citizenries toward the rise in immigration into their countries. For migration (including rising numbers of refugees, displaced persons, and other victims of ethno-national conflicts)--one of the many attendant phenomena of globalization--becomes symbolically singled out as the most prominent (humanly visible) threat factor and indeed as a cause rather than a consequence of all the (real or imagined) ills that globalization (and/or in some countries: Europeanization) implies for what is interpreted as citizens’ “national identity” and their rightful “scene of belonging”. Thus, immigrants, like often before in world history, in a process of “mass semiosis” are penalized and stigmatized, or just barely accepted, for processes they have not created. Advocating multiculturalism in their new national homes naturally only makes things worse in the eyes of self-styled homogeneous societies; and political backing, from right to center of the political spectrum, clinches it and triggers a reversal of tolerance and liberalism back to overt racism and policies of exclusion. “Belonging” has been vindicated, having negotiated the path from conceptual outcast to guest of honour.

The irony and paradox is that the “multicultural” discourses of immigrant, “ethnic” minorities and their supporters and champions around the world in the global era are doing little else, willy-nilly, than using as their role-model the discourses of ethnicity, minority positioning and related claims-making so prevalent on the domestic scene of the great globalizer, the “melting-pot” of the USA. It is paradoxical because this type of “multiculturalism” works extremely well in the States and is an integral part of the “identity kit” of most Americans. And it is ironic because once this “model” of identity/interest configuration is exported to other parts of the world (often by people critical of “US culture”), it immediately becomes politicized in a way which US citizens and the US polity would never have imagined in their wildest dreams. As argued in section 3, the secret of American multiculturalism is that it plays itself out under an umbrella of confident and very *homogeneous* allegiance to shared values, shared goals and shared historical legends--in other words, a collective perception of “manifest destiny” which does not contradict but forms the very underpinning of American individualism and its optimal pursuit of “happiness”. “Belonging” in the USA implies wholesale acceptance of this very particular version of democratic nationalism--and proof of belonging resides less in passive oaths of allegiance than in the practical *success* citizens or groups of citizens can demonstrate in their business-related or political *practice*. Multiculturalism, diversity and ethnic claims-making “make sense” within this context, both as a means of constructing and projecting particularistic, socially competing cultural profiles, and as a platform for the expression of grievances and the vindication of group interests. In the latter sense they are, of course, “political”, but with the important proviso that the American “model” does not perceive specific “ethnic” claims (with the exception of militant Black

organizations) or their reference to cultural diversity as a threat to the political identity of the USA. Hence they never, like for instance in Europe, give rise to high political rhetoric where the future and very soul of the country is apocalyptically orchestrated as threatened by for instance the influx of "illegal" Mexican agricultural labourers across the border.

This is not the place to enter into the many historical and cultural reasons for these differences and their links with the specifics of the US nation-state in comparison with European, Asian and South American societies and polities. The point is merely to take note of the remarkable variation in the shape, dynamics and "interpretation" of multiculturalism and belonging, when on the one hand what appears to be near-identical models and discourses become reconfigured in their encounter with different national contexts and when, on the other, both practical and theoretical advocates of multicultural belonging, who take their explicit cue from US multiculturalism, underestimate both the degree of homogeneity in the States *and* the will and dedication of their own elites and compatriots to doggedly oppose this particular cultural export article of American-led globalization and rather stick with the homegrown variant of culture and belonging.

## References

- Beissinger, Mark R., 1995. "The Persisting Ambiguity of Empire", *Post-Soviet Affairs*, 11,2, pp. 149-84.
- Bell, Vikki, ed., 1999, *Performativity and Belonging*. London: Sage.
- Benhabib, Seyla, forthcoming. "Citizens, Residents and Aliens in a Changing World: Political Membership in a Global Era", in Hedetoft, Ulf and Hjort, Mette, eds, *Reimagining Belonging: Self and Community in an Era of Nationalism and Postnationality*. Minnesota: University of Minnesota Press.
- Billig, Michael, 1995. *Banal Nationalism*. London: Sage.
- Bromley, Roger, 2000. *Narratives for a New Belonging*. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press.
- Brubaker, Rogers, 1996. *Nationalism Reframed*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Carter, Erica, Donald, James, and Squires, Judith, eds, 1993. *Space and Place: Theories of Identity and Location*. London: Lawrence Wishart.
- Czaplicka, John, and Ruble, Blair, eds, forthcoming. *Composing Urban History and the Constitution of Civic Identities*. Publisher as yet unknown.
- Durkheim, Emile, 1965. *The Elementary Forms of Religious Life*. New York: Free Press.
- Giddens, Anthony, 1999. *The Third Way. The Renewal of Social Democracy*. Cambridge: Polity Press.
- Gubert, Renzo, ed., 1999. *Territorial Belonging Between Ecology and Culture*. Trento: University of Trento (Sociology Series).
- Hall, John A. and Lindholm, Charles, 1999. *Is America Breaking Apart?* Princeton: Princeton University Press.
- Hedetoft, Ulf, 1995. *Signs of Nations*. Aldershot: Dartmouth.
- Hedetoft, Ulf, 1999. "The Nation-state Meets the World", *European Journal of Social Theory* 2 (1), pp. 71-94.
- Hedetoft, Ulf and Hjort, Mette, eds, forthcoming. *The Postnational Self: Belonging and Identity Belonging*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.
- Herder, Johann Gottfried von, 1967/1774. *Auch eine Philosophie der Geschichte zur Bildung der Menschheit*, in *Sämtliche Werke*, Band V. Hildesheim: Georg Olms Verlagsbuchhandlung.
- Hudson, Robert and Réno, Fred, eds, 2000. *Politics of Identity: Migrants and Minorities in Multicultural States*. Basingstoke: Macmillan.
- Ignatieff, Michael, 1993. *Blood & Belonging*. London: Chatto and Windus.
- Ignatieff, Michael, 1999. "The Grandeur and Misery of Cosmopolitanism", paper presented to conference on "Reimagining Belonging", Aalborg University, May 6-8, 1999.

- Keitner, Chimène I., 1999. "The False Promise' of Civic Nationalism", *Millennium*, vol. 28, no. 2, pp. 341-351.
- Kymlicka, Will, 2001. *Politics in the Vernacular: Nationalism, Multiculturalism and Citizenship*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Lichtenberg, Judith, 1999. "How Liberal Can Nationalism Be?", in Beiner, Ronald, ed., *Theorizing Nationalism*, New York: State University of New York Press.
- Motyl, Alexander J., 1999. *Revolutions, Nations, Empires: Conceptual Limits and Theoretical Possibilities*. New York: Columbia University Press.
- Rapport, Nigel & Dawson, Andrew, eds, 1998. *Migrants of Identity. Perceptions of "Home" in a World of Movement*. Oxford: Berg.
- Renan, Joseph Ernest, 1882. "Qu'est-ce qu'une nation?" [lecture at the Sorbonne], in *Discours et Conférences*, Paris: Calmann-Lévy, 1887.
- Schlesinger, Arthur, 1992. *The Disuniting of America*. Knoxville, Tenn.: Whittle Direct Books.
- Skribis, Zlatko, 2000. *Long-Distance Nationalism: Diasporas, Homelands and Identities*. Aldershot: Ashgate.
- Tönnies, Ferdinand, 1957 [1887]. *Community and Society [Gemeinschaft und Gesellschaft]*. East Lansing, Michigan: Michigan State University Press (translated by Charles P. Loomis).
- Weiler, Joseph, 1997. "Belonging in Europe--Eros and Civilization", paper presented to Nobel Symposium on *Nationalism and Internationalism in the Post-Cold War Order*, Stockholm, Sweden, 7-10 September.
- Wolff, Stefan, 2000. "German Expellees and Their Organisations between *Heimat* and *Zuhause*. A Case Study of the Politics of Belonging". Paper delivered at the conference "Diversity within Unity", Lady Margaret Hall, Oxford, 2-6 August 2000 (mimeo).
- Yack, Bernard, 1999. "The Myth of the Civic Nation", in Beiner, Ronald, ed., *Theorizing Nationalism*, New York: State University of New York Press.

*Discourses and Images of Belonging:  
Migrants between “New Racism”, Liberal Nationalism and Globalization*

© Ulf Hedetoft

ISSN 1601-5967

Published by:

AMID

Aalborg University

Fibigerstraede 2

DK-9220 Aalborg OE

Denmark

Phone + 45 96 35 91 33

Fax + 45 98 15 11 26

Web: <http://www.humsamf.auc.dk/amid>

**AMID** – Akademiet for Migrationsstudier i Danmark  
The Academy for Migration Studies in Denmark

Director: Professor dr. phil. Ulf Hedetoft

The Academy for Migration Studies in Denmark, AMID, is a consortium consisting of researchers at research centers representing three institutions of higher education and two research institutes. AMID is supported by the Danish Research Councils of the Humanities and the Social Sciences.

The Consortium consists of the following members:

**Aalborg University**--Department of Sociology, Social Studies and Organization, Department of Economics, Politics and Administration, as well as *SPIRIT* (School for Postgraduate Interdisciplinary Research on Interculturalism and Transnationality) and Institute for History, International and Social Studies. Aalborg University is the host institution.

**The Aarhus School of Business**--CIM (Centre for Research in Social Integration and Marginalization).

**Aarhus University**--Department of Political Science.

**The Danish National Institute of Social Research** (Socialforskningsinstituttet, SFI).

**The Institute of Local Government Studies** (Amternes og Kommunernes Forskningsinstitut, AKF).