(Re)producing Salvadoran Transnational Geographies

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As contemporary international migrants forge new webs of connection and social fields between distant places, transnational scholarship seeks to understand and theorize these emerging spaces. Our account of the Salvadoran transnational social field centered in northern New Jersey contributes to the development of transnational theory by considering how a particular legal provision—temporary protective status (TPS)—permeates daily life. We argue that material and nonmaterial aspects of daily life become associated with an experience of space-time relations to which we refer as permanent temporariness. Permanent temporariness limits the geographic, economic, social, and political ambitions of Salvadorans, but is increasingly resisted through acts of strategic visibility. Our article reflects on the implications of permanent temporariness for the production of scale in the particular transnational field we study, and on links to broader discussions about transnationalism, the international political economy of migration, and capitalist restructuring. To represent the experiences of Salvadorans, we use a transnational mixed-methods approach to pool quantitative and qualitative data that were collected serially at multiple sites. *Key Words: El Salvador, remittances, refugees, transnational, temporary protective status (TPS).*

Distinctive and contested geographies of international migration have accompanied the globalization of capital and culture in recent decades. Increases in the magnitude of outward and return international migration, new origin and destination regions, the increased classing, racing, and gendering of streams, and the politicization of migration all help characterize and differentiate this system (Castles and Miller 1998; Koser and Lutz 1998). Social scientists describe the experiences of contemporary international migrants as translocal (Appadurai 1996; Goldring 1998; Smith 1998), heterolocal (Zelinsky and Lee 1998), diasporic (Clifford 1994; Cohen 1997; Van Hear 1998), and, increasingly, transnational (see, e.g., Rouse 1991; Glick Schiller, Basch, and Blanc-Szanton 1992, 1995; Basch, Glick Schiller, and Szanton-Blanc 1994; Anthias 1998; Portes, Guarnizo, and Landolt 1999; Faist 2000). Indeed, for Tölölyan (1996), we live in the "transnational moment."

The rise of remittance economies, international migrant entrepreneurial classes, and dual citizenship provisions lends credence to a transnational perspective on international migration. For human geographers, however, two key limitations remain problematic. Although scholars have paid considerable attention to questions of structure and agency in accounts of international migration (e.g., Goss and Lindquist 1995), advocates of trans-

nationalism regard the theorization of agency as a continued blind spot (Glick Schiller 1997). Immigrants, refugees, and asylum seekers are becoming subject to an increasing array of state tactics that control their entry, define their conditions of residence, and fix their departure date. The optimism that punctuates many accounts of the hybridized spaces created by transnational migrants seems overwrought (e.g., Mitchell 1997a; Hirsch 1999; Portes, Guarnizo, and Landolt 1999).

A second, and connected, critique concerns the undertheorization of space-time relations. Such a situation is ironic given the supposed distinctiveness of new space-time relations in the liminal landscapes of transnational communities (e.g., Basch, Glick Schiller, and Szanton-Blanc 1994). Efforts to write geographies of this "age of migration" (Castle and Miller 1998) in terms of the restructuring of space-time relations, the role of migration in the international political economy, and the engagement of migrants within multiple webs of power have recently gathered momentum (e.g., Li et al. 1995; Ong 1995; Leitner 1997; van Ewijk and Grifhorst 1998; Samers 1999). Transnational scholarship broadly shares the objective of thinking through the operation of social processes under conditions of globalization (e.g., Kearney 1991, 1995). Research on transnational migration, however, remains largely divorced from such theories of

space-time, political economy, and power, and vice versa (see Kong 1999 for an exception).

To speak to these issues, and also to react to the more general criticism that the term transnational has been applied too broadly (Tölölyan 1996; Mintz 1998) and with epistemological confusion (e.g., Appadurai 1996, 185), we explore the Salvadoran transnational field that spans northern New Jersey and El Salvador. Our analysis looks to the material and nonmaterial aspects of daily life in a population comprised of a large number of individuals and families directly affected by a new round of state-legal responses to international migration in the 1990s. We are particularly interested in the experiences of space-time relations across the transnational field, how structural considerations play into daily life, and the nature of resistance from individuals, families, and social groups that are part of this emerging geography.

Our article contributes to social science scholarship in three ways. We describe in some detail the experiences of Salvadorans. This is a compelling case study to learn from for several reasons. In 1990, many Salvadorans formed the first group to be eligible for temporary protective status (TPS) in the U.S. Both numerically and in terms of time subject to TPS, Salvadorans represent the signal immigrant/refugee group to consider the widening scope of TPS provisions in countries of immigration. Furthermore, a recent review of international migration noted that social science research is devoted to migration between Mexico and the U.S., at the expense of other prominent sending countries, including El Salvador (Massey et al. 1994). Second, we deploy a mixed-methods, transnational research design that seeks not only to "recover" information from the field but also to shine light on the complex and situational relations between the research team and the researched (McKendrick 1999). The positionality of many of our informants as undocumented immigrants and unrecognized refugees obliged us to be aware not only that traditional methodologies undercount undocumented persons and underrepresent their experiences, but also that our own positionality would play a dynamic role in information exchange (Mountz et al. 2000). Third, we reach across the social sciences to feed insights on agency, structure, and the production and reproduction of space-time relations and scale into discussions of transnational theory. Most generally, the research extends an understanding of the role of mobility and immobility in effecting changes in the space-time relations of late capitalism. We suggest that an appropriately described transnational model of movement may provide a balanced consideration of the role of capital and labor in contemporary economic, political, and cultural transformations.

Transnationalism and Space-Time Relations

Whether it stems from a disenchantment with unimaginative binary teleologies (Mitchell 1997a), an effort to develop "counternarratives of the nation" (Bhabha 1990, 300) and nation-state (Glick Schiller, Basch, and Blanc-Szanton 1992), or efforts to rethink connections between radically different places (Rouse 1991), scholars are unearthing, reapplying, redefining, and inventing new terms to come to grips with contemporary patterns of international migration. Increasingly, the term "transnational" (Bourne 1916) is being used to connect these accounts (Rouse 1991; Glick Schiller, Basch, and Blanc-Szanton 1992; Anthias 1998; Portes, Guarnizo, and Landolt 1999). Accordingly, scholars describe portions of Latino and Caribbean populations in the U.S. and North African, Middle Eastern, and Eastern European populations in Western Europe as transnational (Pessar 1997; Glick Schiller and Fouron 1998; Koser and Lutz 1998; Levitt 1998; England 1999; Roberts, Frank, and Lozano-Ascencio 1999).

Researchers based in both the U.S. and Central America find utility in the transnational literature for framing the experiences of Salvadoran migrants and their families (Lungo 1997; Mahler 1998, 1999; Landolt, Autler, and Baires 1999). Drawing on this work, we argue that Salvadoran transnational fields emerge when Salvadorans construct simultaneous daily lives across and between places of core, semiperiphery, and periphery states. Our specific concern is the transnational field that spans El Salvador and a cluster of northern New Jersey communities, including West New York, Newark, and Elizabeth. This field is articulated by a diverse bundle of connections between the individuals, families, and social groupings in these places, including flows of migrants, gifts, gossip, political support, remittances, bribes, medicines, love, and cadavers. Such transnational fields are emblematic of broader transnational processes that have wider implications for the political economy of international migration. These include the emergence of new migrant entrepreneurial classes (Portes 1997; Landolt, Autler, and Baires 1999), new political and economic relations between nations (Friedman 1998), community-scale social reproduction (Mutersbaugh 2001), remittance economies (Conway and Cohen 1998), and the construction of discourses surrounding assimilation and citizenship (Bauböck 1994).

Indeed, scholars of transnationalism have been keen to situate transnational processes in their broader structural context. Kearney, writing as early as 1991 (57), noted: "[T]he basic thesis concerning transnationalism I wish to advance is that it corresponds to the political,

economic, and sociocultural reordering of late capitalism." However, concerns over theorizing agency, structure, and space-time relations have stymied this project (Glick Schiller 1997, 156). We use the balance of this section to contribute to the theoretical development of transnationalism by critiquing its conceptions of agency, the structural role of states through immigration policy, and space-time relations from the vantage point of recent research in international political economy.

The conceptualization of human agency—particularly the degree of individual or group autonomy from broader cultural, economic, and political structural constraints—vacillates between accounts that accent structural conditions and those that emphasize volition and choice. Portes (1996, 74) exemplifies the former in his belief that transmigrant communities are "a byproduct of improved communications, better transportation, and free trade laws" and "in a sense are labor's analog to the multinational corporation." Ong (1999a, 242) calls for an anthropology of transnationality that uses ethnographic/grounded theory to counter what she terms "'lite' anthropology" accounts. Glick Schiller (1997) argues for a focus upon transmigrant behavior. Certainly, repetitive migration is often characterized as a leitmotif of transnational fields, helping to stitch together cultural and economic worlds. In announcing a multimillion dollar research initiative on transnational communities, the United Kingdom's largest funder of social science (Economic and Social Research Council n.d., 1) research signaled that "[T]he programme will concentrate on an actor-directed view of globalization—'globalization from below.'" However, some scholars are keen to avoid an emphasis on agency at the expense of structure, and vice versa. In accenting the social constructions of gender in her analysis of Salvadoran transnationalism, Mahler (1999) shows how migrants are constrained by and constitutive of daily life. Lawson (2000) makes similar points in her account of the role of gender and ethnicity in the migrant discourses of rural to urban movers in Ecuador.

Such attention to the constitutive role of transmigration necessitates a close examination of the shifting relations between states and migration strategies. Recent accounts of international migration make much of the new tactics being used by states to influence the link between migration and globalization (Castles 1998). For example, immigrants and asylum seekers are subject to increasing levels of hostility and negative stereotyping (Koser and Lutz 1998; McBride 1999). Responding to these concerns, but mindful of the expansion of multinational networks of business, of trade agreements, and of the need to facilitate capital fluidity, states exercise control over their borders by using targeted admissions policies and discursive tactics (Richmond 1994; Croucher 1998). Meanwhile, geopolitical, technological, and cultural factors continue to shift the numbers and characteristics of arriving immigrants and asylum seekers.

A growing club of states has redefined the terms of entry, stay, and membership for outsiders. One increasingly common legal response is to grant "temporary protection" to certain newcomers: "temporary protective status" in the U.S. and "temporary protection" in Europe (Koser and Black 1999). The U.S. launched TPS in 1990 as a way for the government to accommodate—albeit temporarily—a rising tide of people fleeing situations of political and environmental dysfunction, and to project the message that overall admissions of foreign-born persons were not rising. TPS granted selected foreign-born groups temporary residence status and temporary access to employment. It carried no promises or guarantees of asylum, permanent residence, or citizenship. The discursive utility of making migrants *appear* to be temporary (in practice many stay, something not lost on the new right; see Krikorian 1999) is appealing, as the recent experience of Brazilian *nikkeijin* (Japanese descendants born and living abroad) in Japan amply demonstrates (Tsuda 1999).

However, the current transnational literature pays little if any attention to TPS specifically or to changing immigration provisions more generally (with the notable exception of the rise of dual citizenship). We argue that such an omission is damaging in several ways. TPS is increasingly prevalent in the U.S., and it describes the experiences of a larger and larger share of the foreign born population. Also, TPS-class persons are likely to have very different economic, social, and political experiences than immigrants, undocumented migrants, and refugees, due to their restricted access to government programs and the uncertain nature of their sojourn (Chavez 1998). Finally, TPS foregrounds an experience of temporariness that has the potential to disrupt the stability of space-time relations in immigrant communities. As such, TPS could represent a kind of "invisible" extension of the influence over migrants and their origin areas exerted by host nations like the U.S. Further elaboration of the broader meaning of this legal provision is thus bound up with the nature of space-time relations and scale in transnational fields, and it is this theme we address next.

Transnational studies weakly theorize space-time relations. Giddens (1984), Appadurai (1996), and others believe that the burgeoning of complex ties between the global and the local forms one of the most distinctive features of contemporary life in late capitalist society. However, accounts of transnational fields tend to celebrate the liberating effects of (global) technological fixes

(e.g., e-mail, faxes, telecommunications) without considering how these may be mediated in and by particular local contexts. Theories that speak to the restructuring of capitalism in a way that brings places closer together go some distance toward explaining the local-global interplay of people, remittances, products, ideas, and so on (Harvey 1989). For example, innovations in transportation and communication technology facilitate more efficient connections for both individuals and institutions and synchronize exchange. The growing number and scale of transnational institutions, such as multinational corporations and telecommunication companies that organize international production and interchange, augment these linkages (Rouse 1995). Giddens (1984) describes these changes as an intensification of time-space distantiation in social activity. Certainly, new circuits of capital and information provide innovative means by which the foreign-born in the U.S. maintain transnational interconnections and experience local and global constructions of space and time (Mountz and Wright 1996).

To build on these views of the nature of space under late capitalism, we consider two insights from international political economy. As Dodgshon (1999) recently noted, an understanding of transnational fields remains partial without attention to the production, reproduction, and experience of space *and* time and the relations between them. The joint construction of daily life in multiple locations implies the juxtaposition of two, often contrasting systems of spatiality and temporality. Furthermore, efforts by migrants to make sense of different locations and to plan individual and group transnational projects such as family reunification and remittance economies also involve the active consideration of the present in terms of the past, the future in terms of the present, and so on.

Post-structural efforts to write a more fluid account of space and its role in social and economic life imply that space is more than just a platform on which social processes unfold. Space is said to be produced as the result of the material and nonmaterial practices of everyday life and should be seen as both a thing (object) and a way of being (verb) (Lefebvre 1991; Shields 1999). A number of human geographers further argue that the production of scale is intimately involved in the production of space (Agnew 1997; Leitner 1997; Marston 2000). For Swyngedouw (1997, 140), "spatial scale is what needs to be understood as something that is produced . . . Scale becomes the arena, and moment, both discursively and materially, where sociospatial power relations are contested and compromises are negotiated and regulated." In fact, Brenner (1998), drawing on Lefebvre's *De l'Etat*, views

globalization as a rescaling fix for capitalism that involves the successive deterritorialization and reterritorialization of space. What, then, of the space-time relations and scale of transnational fields? How are they produced, resisted, and reproduced? What are the connections to broader aspects of capitalist restructuring?

Our description of one Salvadoran transnational field takes on board and extends the above insights. First, we expect material and nonmaterial, visible and invisible aspects of daily life to be central to the transnational field. Second, we jointly consider the constitutive roles of structure and agency in our account of space-time relations. Third, we remain open to the idea that space-time relations and scale are actively produced, experienced, resisted, and reproduced (but not necessarily in that order). This leads us, fourth, to look to the meanings Salvadorans attach to space-time and scale as a way of appreciating ongoing processes of deterritorialization and reterritorialization under capitalist restructuring. We thus put to work the idea that space-time is not a neutral platform upon which state power is embossed, but that a consideration of the production and resistances to space-time greatly enriches our understandings of transnationalism. Specifically, our theoretical conceptualization is that transnational social fields, space-time relations, and scale are mutually constituted through the visible and invisible actions and experiences of daily life. In the particular Salvadoran social field we explore, TPS directly affects the ability of many to move freely between the U.S. and El Salvador, so we continue with a summary of this legal provision.

Salvadorans and TPS

Salvadoran settlement in the U.S. is quite recent. Unlike much chain migration from Mexico, some of which can be traced to the 1942–1964 Bracero Accord and a longer history of movement stretching back into the nineteenth century, over 90 percent of the current first-generation Salvadoran population in the U.S. has arrived in the past twenty years. During the 1980s in El Salvador, as many as 70,000 war-related deaths occurred, and between 500,000 and 700,000 persons were displaced (Americas Watch 1991). More than a million Salvadorans eventually fled to other countries.

Salvadorans arrived in the U.S. at a time of intense economic, social, and political transition. Their geographic destinations broadened beyond Los Angeles and Washington, DC, as the low-intensity conflict undermined both political and, increasingly, economic viability (Jones 1989). Out-migration continued into the

1990s, as economic conditions deteriorated and Salvadorans used migration networks established in the previous decade. According to the 1990 U.S. Census (1993), 85 percent of the Salvadoran population in the U.S. is concentrated in five metropolitan areas: Los Angeles (with an estimated 275,000 Salvadorans), New York (62,000), Washington, DC (52,000), San Francisco (49,000), and Houston (40,000).

In the two destinations that became home to most Salvadoran exiles, Mexico and the U.S., the overwhelming majority of Salvadorans were not recognized as refugees, but were seen as "illegal" immigrants in search of work (Wollny 1991; McBride 1999). Although the proportion of undocumented Salvadorans may match other recently arriving groups in the U.S., the specific "legal" circumstances of residence for many Salvadorans who arrived in the 1980s and early 1990s differ. That is, many Salvadorans continue to be authorized to work and remain in the U.S. on a temporary basis because of two interrelated legal events with roots in the late 1980s. First, the 1990 Immigration Act contained a special provision to allow the Attorney General to "provide nationals from designated countries . . . with Temporary Protective status on account of ongoing conflict . . ." (Interpreter Releases 1990, 1284; cited in Coutin 1998, 910). Salvadorans were the first nationality group to be granted TPS, which has subsequently been extended to other groups, including those from Guatemala, Kuwait, Iraq, and Libya. Members of the TPS class became eligible to apply for deferred enforced departure (DED) status, which carried similar temporary residence and work privileges. The Bush and Clinton administrations extended DED until April 30, 1996. Second, the 1985 class action lawsuit filed by the American Baptist Church (ABC) against Attorney General Thornburgh, eventually settled out of court in 1990, also gave Salvadorans (and Guatemalans) leave to stay and work in the U.S. for a temporary period of time. As with the TPS class, this ABC class faced massive uncertainty over how to make more permanent their presence in the U.S. For example, rates of successful asylum adjudication for Salvadorans were below 7 percent in the late 1990s (USCR 1998). Delays in processing asylum claims meant that, in 1998, many of the 190,000 pending Salvadoran cases had been "waiting on Washington" for over a decade, as Repak's (1995) double entendre suggests.

With deportations proceeding at a record pace, the long-term prospects of Salvadorans in the U.S. seem always to be uncertain. TPS-DED and ABC Salvadorans were threatened by the expiration of both tracks of temporary protection in mid-1996 and the subsequent passage of the Illegal Immigrant Reform and Immigrant Responsibility Act (IIRIRA) in September 1996. One of the provisions of the IIRIRA linked "cancellation of removal" (i.e., DED repackaged) to ten years of continuous and demonstrated residence in the U.S., although the 1997 Nicaraguan Adjustment and Central American Relief Act (NACARA) later restored suspension eligibility for "ABC Salvadorans" and certain others. In December 2000, advocates of legislative change suffered yet another setback when efforts to obtain blanket amnesty for nonresident immigrants from El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, and Haiti foundered in a deal struck between President Clinton and Congress. In light of debilitating earthquakes in El Salvador, the George W. Bush administration granted TPS to a cohort of Salvadorans present in the U.S. prior to February 2001 (see Coutin 1998, 1999 for a comprehensive review of the legal situation of Salvadorans in the U.S. and Martin, Schoenholtz, and Meyers 1998 for a more general discussion of TPS).

We selected our U.S. study site, northern New Jersey, because it is an understudied locale for immigrants in the U.S. (see Espenshade 1997), and because it was geographically accessible to the four researchers involved in our article. Metropolitan New York contains the second largest concentration of Salvadoran-born persons in the U.S. after Los Angeles. According to one consular source we interviewed in early summer 1998, the northern New Jersey area is home to perhaps as many as 40,000 Salvadorans.

Transnational Mixed Methods

A desire to describe the range of experiences of the Salvadoran transnational field led us to the use of a distinctive methodology. Transnational scholarship shifts attention to multiple sites: "To my mind, the term transnational should communicate the fact that people's lives span borders, while acknowledging that borders, nation-states, and national identities still exist and are of consequence" (Mahler 1999, 692). As transnational fields involve simultaneous daily lives, we conducted parallel—or at least closely sequential—fieldwork in multiple sites (as advocated by Massey et al. 1994 and Mahler 1999).

Anchored in these sites, the intricacies of daily life comprise the basic unit of analysis. Guarnizo and Smith (1998, 11) suggest that "transnational practices, while connecting collectivities located in more than one national territory, are embodied in specific social relations established between specific people, situated in unequivocal localities, at historically determined times." Thus, we explicitly join others who call for a grounding of

transnationalism in the context of everyday life (Clifford 1992; Ortner 1994). As Rouse (1991, 9) suggests, "the raw materials for a new cartography ought to be . . . discoverable in the details of people's lives."

We started by planning a series of sixty-minute, semistructured interviews in New Jersey, to be conducted between September 1997 and June 1998. Although we had initially hoped to use a stratified sampling technique to identify Salvadorans across northern New Jersey, it was quickly apparent that our status as outsiders severely reduced the number of respondents who were willing to be interviewed. We turned to chain data collection (Erickson 1979) and began working through one community organization to obtain interviews and communicate the aims and objectives of our project. Interviews were conducted face to face in Spanish in a range of locations, including respondents' places of residence and work, a local community center, cafés and bars, and sports facilities. During this phase of research, we undertook, in parallel, participant observation, unstructured long interviews, and expert interviews. The third author spent considerable time volunteering with the local community organization and became involved in such activities as teaching English as a Second Language (ESL), helping individuals with particular bureaucratic problems, and acting as a translator/researcher for individuals with upcoming deportation hearings. We completed 56 semistructured interviews in New Jersey by the end of summer 1998.

We used "mixed-methods" approaches to recover and interpret the wide range of data that was needed to explore the transnational field. These approaches offered several advantages over traditional immigrant survey strategies (as used by, for example, Da Vanzo et al. 1994). First, we were able to examine the prevalence of key characteristics (e.g., remittance behavior). Second, we were able to work with and through the community to explore issues important to particular groups (e.g., access to health care). Third, we were able to interpret the meaning of social practices within the social field (e.g., activism). Fourth, we were able, over a period of months, to build relationships of trust that revealed something of the unequal power dynamics at work in interview situations, and modify our approach accordingly. Fifth, we were able to build a snowball sample that extended internationally and gave us valuable introductions for the El Salvador component of the research. Sixth, we were able to identify the emergence of nuanced geographic dimensions to the significance of place of work and place of residence. In general, mixed-methods approaches enabled us to draw strength from both quantitative and qualitative data and to appreciate in a meaningful way the expe-

riences of many quite reticent to speak with us (for example, the undocumented and those with painful memories of the civil war).

The El Salvador component of fieldwork lasted from the middle of May 1998 to the end of June 1998, during which time we were variously based in San Salvador and a number of outlying villages in La Union, Santa Ana, La Libertad, and Morazan. Several months prior to departure, we started making connections between Salvadorans in New Jersey and their family members and friends in El Salvador. We also prearranged interviews with government ministers, scholars, and nongovernmental organizations (NGOs), including Fundación Nacional para el Desarrollo (FUNDE). Across El Salvador we conducted twenty-five long interviews with Salvadorans who were part of the New Jersey transnational field. As it had been in New Jersey, information was traded in both directions. For example, we carried pictures of parents to children and aunts in El Salvador, and pictures of newly constructed homes to remitting family members in New Jersey. As the duration of the fieldwork extended, news spread of our whereabouts via the transnational field, and our own set of obligations to visit various kin and return to the U.S. with different goods increased. Overall, we carried significant responsibility across the transnational field to explain complex legal situations and the prolonged absences of family members.

The next stage of research involved assembling and disseminating the contents of the interviews and field notes. The semistructured interviews contained a series of closed-ended questions about family life, migration, employment, remitting, and transnational connections. We coded these into a secure spreadsheet. In addition, some of these forms, together with all other interviews and field notes, contained hand-written notes, which were typed up by four research assistants. We met individually and as a group with the New Jersey-based community organization to explore the meaning and significance of the themes present in these data. For example, the research team's feeling that uncertain legal status permeated every nook and cranny of daily life was confirmed by Salvadorans both prior to and during this meeting. This thematic insight helped us to construct from the qualitative and quantitative data a narrative of the direct and indirect ways that TPS impacted daily life. It also led us to close the field component of the project with an intercept survey, designed in conjunction with community leaders, to explore differences between Salvadorans who were part of TPS and those who were not (see Wright et al. 2000, 277 for details of this effort).

We told respondents that we would keep their identities hidden. Accordingly, we use pseudonyms throughout

this article and generalize descriptions of particular places or events as appropriate to mask individual identities. Salvadorans were offered a gift certificate for their participation in the research.

Salvadoran Transnational Geographies

This section presents our main empirical findings. After examining the political economy and cultural construction of migration in El Salvador, we construct a narrative of the acts and experiences of daily life. The discussion weaves together material, nonmaterial, visible, and invisible aspects of dailyness by focusing on the remittance economy, barriers to meeting social obligations, and invisibility and division. Our depiction closes with a consideration of the ways in which Salvadorans practice strategic visibility.

Transnational Warriors?

Like other countries with small, externally dependent economies located in the global periphery, El Salvador has been deeply marked by migration in the past twenty-five years. As in several other Central American states, notably Nicaragua, Guatemala, and Honduras, Cold War proxy struggles of the late 1970s initiated the current round of geographic dislocation. Without exception, the migration of one or—in most cases—several family members had affected all the Salvadorans in both countries with whom we spoke. Like many international movers, Salvadorans in both El Salvador and New Jersey see geographic mobility as a key strategy that helps them achieve social mobility. In common with, for example, those socialized in many Caribbean societies (Pessar 1997), Salvadorans received positive cultural sanctioning to work in the U.S.

Early accounts of the organization of the Salvadoran community in the U.S. described Salvadorans as undocumented immigrants and frustrated refugees (Montes Mozo and Garcia Vasquez 1988; Repak 1995). Raúl's experiences are emblematic of those among our respondents who arrived without documents. Raúl completed a ninth-grade education in Santa Ana and first left El Salvador in January 1981 after being recruited into the Salvadoran army. He spent a month in Guatemala trying to raise the necessary funds to reach the U.S., but, failing this, returned to El Salvador and the army in February 1981. His Salvadoran-born wife reached the U.S. in January 1989 and he sought to join her six months later. This time he was apprehended by Immigration and Naturalization Service (INS) agents near the border in Texas

and detained there for three months. Upon paying a fee he was released and traveled to New Jersey, where his wife was now sharing an apartment with her stepmother.

We also heard a number of testimonials that suggested Salvadorans were unrecognized refugees. One woman we spoke with fled El Salvador in the late 1970s at a time when, in her words, "dead people began appearing." At this time she was arrested by government security forces and was forced to flee the country, leaving her job behind. Like many from El Salvador whose mobility was sparked by state-sponsored individualized violence, her chances of being recognized as a refugee by the U.S. were extremely slim (USCR 1991). Thus, she eventually obtained a visa to come to the U.S. as an economic migrant.

During both the New Jersey and El Salvador portion of our work, we spoke with a number of Salvadorans who expressed economic and cultural reasons for return migration ambitions (see also Bailey and Hane 1995). A middle-aged woman in San Salvador highlighted familial issues in her response to our question "why does your nephew want to return?":

> I think it's because he wants to live [in] the place where his mother lived . . . I'd like to have him here so I could take care of him.

A Morazan woman in her sixties noted the importance of economic reasons for the return migration of those at the end of "useful" working lives:

> But if they [foreign government] don't pension them [workers], they have to return. Because over there [U.S.], an older person can't work.

A bus driver in a small community near Santa Ana, who had lived in the U.S., was among those to tell us of his desire to return north again because he could not earn a decent living now in El Salvador.

Despite the legal indeterminacy shared by a large proportion of the Salvadoran population in the U.S., some Salvadorans engage in practices found in other transnational fields unencumbered by border controls (e.g., Puerto Ricans). The significant flow of remittances from U.S.-based Salvadoran communities to El Salvador (U.S.\$1.4 billion in 2000) and the emergence of a Salvadoran transnational business elite resonate with the experience of other transnational communities in the U.S. (Funkhouser 1995, 1997; Conway and Cohen 1998; Menjivar et al. 1998; Menjivar 2000). Salvadoran politicians court financial support from, and conduct political campaigns among, Salvadorans on the U.S. mainland. In common with other transnational communities, a tradition of circulation migration between parts of El Salva-

dor, Central America, and the U.S. continues (Poitras 1982; Repak 1995).

At first glance, some Salvadorans seem to live in a web of hypermobility. For these individuals, as for some other transnational migrants, mobility comprises a key dimension of social life and thus social practice (cf. Appadurai 1996; Mahler 1998). Certainly, spatial mobility, in its various guises, comprises an important layer of Salvadoran identity, private and civic. Symbolically, visitors to the capital city of El Salvador, San Salvador, cannot ignore the presence of the monumental Hermano Lejano, a triumphant, St. Louis-style arch that faces north and welcomes home "distant brothers"—and, no doubt, their remittances.

However, as our fieldwork progressed, and as we focused on the experiences of daily life in both the U.S. and El Salvador, we became aware of the significant limitations on mobility that many Salvadorans faced. Despite frequent flights between New York and San Salvador, e-mail connections, cheaper telecommunications options (including video transfers), and other space-shrinking technologies, many Salvadorans spoke of the difficulty of staying in touch in a transnational context. In addition to the cost of the trip in direct terms (ticket) and indirect terms (lost earnings), a majority of the Salvadorans we encountered in New Jersey did not possess documentation that would enable them to cross the U.S.-Mexico border at will. For these people, the trip south was very risky. Likewise, those in El Salvador who lacked entry documents had no doubt about the difficulties of a successful journey.

Apart from traffic accidents, attacks on undocumented border crossers, and harassment, getting caught by *la migra* (the Immigration and Naturalization Service [INS]) may mean the loss of any chance of ever obtaining U.S. citizenship. Current INS protocol views any illegal activity extremely unfavorably and as grounds for deportation/denial of entry. Those claiming asylum must also be able to demonstrate an extended period of continuous residence in the U.S. For example, Humberto, now in his forties, was accepted into the ABC program in the early 1990s when he lived in Los Angeles. In 1993, he returned to El Salvador for two months to be with his ailing father, to see him "one last time," as he told us. When he came back to the U.S., the INS detained him in Arizona and subsequently deported him to El Salvador. Since that time, and because he re-entered the U.S. without permission, he remains undocumented.

Within the U.S., we found little evidence to suggest regular shuttling between the main poles of the U.S. Salvadoran community (compare McHugh, Miyares, and Skop 1997). Our New Jersey respondents had few con-

tacts with Salvadorans living in Long Island and were more informed of events in their home area in El Salvador than in the New York-New Jersey region. Angel is single, lives in the northern part of our study area, and has cousins in Hempstead, Long Island, fewer than twenty miles away. He has made four attempts to drive there, without success, because "crossing Manhattan kills me" and the whole trip is too difficult and makes him too nervous. So, despite evidence of significant cross-community financial (bank accounts in two places), familial (children in El Salvador), and emotional ties, immobility was a fact of life for many in New Jersey. As Mitchell (1997b) notes, this experience of immobility suggests a limited, not liminal, social field.

Our evidence suggests that while there are shuttlers and circulators leading hypermobile lives, the mythic transnational warrior is, in New Jersey, for the most part just that. International migration is sharply curtailed for those Salvadorans who are either part of TPS or undocumented. This segment of the social field amounts to most, though not all, of the population in northern New Jersey. Both our intercept survey and our semi-structured interviews suggested that about 75 percent of Salvadorans are not documented residents or citizens. This figure runs about 10 to 20 percent higher than recent national estimates of Salvadorans' status in the U.S. (Wright et al. 2000). One explanation for the higher proportion of TPS-class Salvadorans in this part of New Jersey centers on networked migration processes that may be behind a spike of arrivals there in the late 1980s and early 1990s.

Working to Remit

At first glance, the work practices of Salvadorans in northern New Jersey have much in common with those of other recently arrived immigrant groups in the U.S. Our intercept survey revealed that, among 184 Salvadorans, only 20 (11 percent) had not worked in the prior week; 84 percent had worked in one job, and a further 5 percent had worked two or more jobs. This benchmark of unemployment is in line with the national 10.6 percent unemployment level derived for Salvadoran-born persons who responded to the 1990 U.S. Census. Although Salvadoran men were more likely to have been working than Salvadoran women, the fact that over three-quarters of our women respondents indicated that they had worked in the prior week reflects the national rate of female labor force participation for Salvadoran women.

Our semistructured interviews in the U.S. revealed employment patterns for a total of 53 Salvadoran respondents. These individuals told us of 223 separate spells of

employment, suggesting that the typical Salvadoran has experienced between four and five job spells. Putting this in context, the median length of time between first entering the U.S. and the interview date for these individuals is 9.4 years, so our respondents are changing jobs (occupation, employer, or both) about every two years. Those working are employed in a variety of secondary and tertiary sector jobs. We counted 63 separate positions, which included those that made use of prior skills (e.g., carpentry), those in immigrant-dominated sectors (construction, restaurants, landscaping), and those directly associated with the life of the Salvadoran community in the U.S. (community organizer, lawyer, labor union activist). One woman worked in a factory making U.S. flags, which to her is an amusing irony as she imagines the day she will wave Old Glory when she is sworn in as a U.S. citizen.

Illustrative of this set of diverse and dynamic employment histories, Antonio arrived in New Jersey after three months in INS detention. After two months in New Jersey, he began working as a machine operator in a wallpaper factory and worked forty hours a week at $7/hour until October 1993. He left this job because he had no transportation from his new apartment (which, ironically, had been chosen three months prior to save him, his wife, and their two small children rent money). He then went without work for two months. In December 1993 he began work as a machine operator in an embroidery factory. Here he worked sixty hours a week and received $360 per week (a $1/hour reduction in the hourly equivalent). In April 1995, he was laid off for nine months. He worked again in the same job between February 1996 and September 1996 before being laid off again. His pay improved to $8/hour; his work week remained a sixty-hour one. After being rehired, this time at $7/hour, he finally left the embroidery factory in February 1997 after hearing about a better situation through a friend. At the freight company he earned $350 for a fifty-hour work week. His current situation, driving twenty-eight-foot trucks, began in July 1997 when he expanded his work hours to seventy per week for a $500/week paycheck (equivalent to an annual wage of $26,000 before taxes).

Overall, the Salvadorans we spoke with find themselves frequently stuck in secondary labor market positions characterized by instability, high turnover, discrimination, and few long-term prospects: "Salvadorans . . . work hard for modest returns" (Lopez, Popkin, and Telles 1996, 302). We found that the Salvadoran experience of work in the U.S. is one of insecurity. In some cases, an almost robotic performance results, as superbly illustrated by the words of Blanca, a factory worker:

And then they place them in the machine. The machine churns out the slices and the stamps that churn out small packages by the pound. It churns out the packages very fast. They move on the conveyer, from the conveyer you have to place them in the machine, and the machine goes very fast. You have to take the packages and fill them, but that is very fast. The whole day, every day, in a freezer, and you have to wear a heavy coat, many leggings, a hat, and you can barely move. You have to do it all well, cut, placing everything correctly, so the slices fit well, so they don't bend and the packages end up twisted. And do it all fast.

Themes of economic insecurity were also paramount in the volcano-side village of Amapalita, La Union, as this mother, whose son shuttles between El Salvador and New Jersey, explained:

But what is it that goes on here in El Salvador? The corporations say "a ship is coming in soon, so we'll only need laborers for four or five days." And then these laborers are left without work. Nothing is permanent. Now, the industries that are here—shrimping, and this one that is here—are the same. They only hire when there's merchandise. When there's no merchandise, that's when they leave.

However, there is one important difference between the experiences of economic insecurity in El Salvador and the United States. Stateside Salvadorans have been active participants in the strong performing U.S. economy of the 1990s. This has enabled Salvadorans to contribute to a rampant remittance economy. In common with Salvadorans in New York (Mahler 1995), Washington, DC (Repak 1995), San Francisco (Menjivar et al. 1998), and Los Angeles (Funkhouser 1995), Salvadorans in northern New Jersey remit large sums of money to family and kin in El Salvador. For example, Ricardo had sent a total of $5,520 to his extended family in El Salvador in the twelve months prior to our interview, a sum that represented around 20 percent of his total income. The fact that only seven of the fifty-six respondents to the semistructured interview said they had not remitted in the previous twelve months shows the pervasiveness of this connection across the transnational field.

These capital transfers make a tremendous difference to individuals and families. Indeed, faced with the uncertainties of economic restructuring, and still feeling the economic aftershocks of earthquakes, hurricanes, and the civil war, most of those we spoke to across El Salvador pointed to the economic significance/necessity of capital injections from overseas migrants. In a passage full of irony, Luisa in Amapalita told us:

Those people that do not have family living in the U.S. are selling firewood, are doing laundry, are ironing clothes, asking people "please, look, lend me such and such as I want to

. . . earn my meals." The children suffer too much, the children are deficient, with no vitamins, with nothing. In the case of [a recently deceased child in the village] there was no means . . . [a neighbor's] son sent so he could be buried in that, now he has his casket . . . his little casket, small, but before he had nothing.

No doubt the casket would have been carried up the main street of the village, symbolically paved with bricks paid for by *las remesas* (remittances), a path that has become the envy of neighboring communities in La Union.

Such is the size of the remittance economy in El Salvador (worth more than the leading export, coffee; Funkhouser 1995) that a series of related activities have grown up around it. We found evidence that, as in other transnational communities, a nascent trader class of Salvadoran "circulators" is emerging. Importantly, the traders to whom we spoke had all obtained the appropriate immigration documents to fly (and sometimes drive) back and forth (Landolt 1998). In conjunction with commercial companies such as "Gigante Express," members of the trader class provide opportunities to move goods and materials around the transnational social field.

Remittances have become the economic glue that binds northern New Jersey with El Salvador, but important implications accompany this material flow. For example, the cultural construction in El Salvador of an idealized migrant revolves around the need for this person to contribute to economic transnationalism, as these quotes, first from Tomás in San Salvador and then from María in Amapalita, both explain:

> They leave (behind) their parents, they leave everything, they forget. For a dream, for Salvadorans, for Latinos it's a dream, to be there, to go to work, to earn dollars, to send back dollars.

> But the Salvadoran that goes there [the U.S.] to work, right, they should be supported by the immigration service over there, the ones that go to work. But whoever just hangs out in the street, whoever does not want to work, well, they should be deported, because they don't want to work.

In New Jersey we encountered the corollary of this construction in the frequent use and implied meaning of the term *superar*. Literally translated as "working hard to succeed" and "to rise above,"[1] superar is regarded by Salvadorans as a touchstone to assess their time in the U.S., be they undocumented, permanent residents and citizens, or TPS-class migrants.

A pervasive sense of interdependence across the social field stems from this construction of migrant behavior, experience, and obligation. Salvadorans do not consider themselves part of a broader diaspora, or an exile community, waiting for conditions to improve in El Salvador in order to return and actualize an idealized vision of a new society there. Rather, immobility seems to intensify economic and social ties between family members in different countries and between the migrant and nonmigrant members of origin areas. We encountered a transnational field riddled with social obligations motivated by the guilt and responsibility felt by many in New Jersey who wanted to do more for those "left behind." Feelings of guilt and remorse were particularly strong when family members were located in different countries, with parents typically remitting to extended family members in El Salvador to help them meet the financial costs of surrogate parenthood during the extended absence of the biological parents (cf. Philpott 1973; Mutersbaugh 2001). Thus, a complex network of flows binds this social field together in a way that extends the direct effects of immobility across space-time.

Barriers

In order to meet their social obligations, Salvadorans must surmount considerable barriers to employment while keeping their living costs low. These obstacles have much in common with those encountered by other recently arrived immigrant groups. Many Salvadorans lack human capital. Half of our respondents had not finished the equivalent of a high school education, often because of the civil war. Those that did have higher education qualifications were unable to turn these investments into good labor market positions, often because employers did not recognize Salvadoran credentials in the U.S. context. Many of our New Jersey respondents spoke of discrimination in employment and housing markets. Knowledge of such discriminatory conditions is widespread in El Salvador, as this family member of a New Jersey Salvadoran noted:

> I believe it [U.S.] is a country of opportunity, but the bad thing is that it is not a country of opportunity for all. And there are many that marginalize people, what's it called, racism, right? People in the U.S. . . . they look upon Latinos as less than them.

As with Raúl's experience, geographic access to employment can restrict work opportunities. Within New Jersey, we interviewed families who had moved as many as ten times in four years. Poverty, substandard housing conditions, and uncertain legal status all prompted New Jersey Salvadorans to change residence frequently. The stated reasons for these moves focused on obtaining more space, paying less rent, escaping a violent and/or discriminatory domestic or neighborhood situation and, in a few cases, moving closer to work. However, lack of viable

housing choices meant that most Salvadorans continued to live some distance away from their employment sites. Industrial jobs, located away from the mass-transit corridors of West New York and Bergenline Avenue, are hard to reach without a car.

Other barriers to employment are more specific to Salvadorans. For example, we found evidence that those with TPS or who were undocumented thought they were being hired to work for less than those with resident status. An ABC-class Salvadoran spoke of being passed over for promotion because his boss told him he was unsure how long he would remain in the country (see Wright et al. 2000 for a detailed discussion). We also found that health and health care presented obstacles to Salvadorans meeting their remittance obligations. Some Salvadorans arrived in the U.S. sick, either ailing from a long and arduous overland journey or carrying the scars of the civil war. Local health-care workers told us that the incidence of posttraumatic stress syndrome was high. Francisco said that when he arrived in the U.S., after deserting the Salvadoran military, he was afraid of toll-booth attendants, who he thought were watching him. Working long hours in difficult conditions and living in overcrowded deteriorating housing stock has meant that many long-term residents have developed chronic health conditions, including asthma and arthritis. These often go untreated for at least two reasons. First, less than one-half of the community has health insurance. Second, Salvadorans believe health care is too expensive and may lead them into carrying debt, which would go against the desire to *superar*. Some also thought their chances of citizenship would be damaged if the INS found that they were public charges. The incidence of preventive care among Salvadorans was also very low, for the same reasons.

Poor health affects more than just ability to remit. Inevitably, health emergencies arise across the social field. Such emergencies mean not only a loss of income but also that some Salvadorans risk the dangerous journey back to El Salvador to seek health care. Others seek care at "doc-in-the-box" clinics in the commercial centers of Union City and West New York or at emergency rooms, and carry large debts for years (see Kerner et al. 2001 for further details). For at least one Salvadoran, ending up in hospital has come to represent one of the "scariest" aspects of living on the fringes of American society.

Salvadorans are obliged to remit across the transnational field. As a result, a number of macroeconomic, cultural, geographic, and health barriers define the parameters of geographies of work. Each is variously affected by geographic immobility and legal uncertainty in a way that potentially produces a downward spiral of in-

visibility, marginalization, and division. However, as we go on to discuss below, this is not the full story of daily life in the transnational field.

Invisibility, Division

The interplay between mobility and immobility, combined with the desire/need to remit, gives rise to patterns of invisibility and division. Invisibility is seen in the cultural landscape and marriage patterns, while elements of division and separation surface between local families and families with members across the transnational field and within communities in El Salvador.

Patterns of Salvadoran daily life initially suggest an isolated, invisible, and internally divided social field. Despite the proximity of a larger and visible cluster of Salvadorans in and around Hempstead, Long Island, few Salvadorans we spoke with had regular connections with individuals there. Indeed, Angel, for one, dreaded the journey across Manhattan. Invisibility suggests itself in the streetscapes of West New York's Bergenline Avenue, which barely represented the presence of Salvadorans in this part of New Jersey. Shops and kiosks stocked Salvadoran icons such as bumper stickers and key-chains portraying the Salvadoran flag and/or its colors, alongside similar objects for other ethnic groups living in the area, but the discounted calling rates advertised in storefront windows placed information on calling to El Salvador below that of rates to Colombia and Mexico. A small number of Salvadoran restaurants were scattered in isolated locations along the main streets or close to them. The offices of one community group occupied a second floor location above a shop and were accessible through an unmarked stairway off a side street. Other sites of daily life—notably Pentecostal churches and soccer fields—were shared by many groups and did not outwardly signify the presence of Salvadorans.

Patterns of family organization in New Jersey reflected this general invisibility. Approximately one-quarter of Salvadorans lived in coethnic households. Of fifty-two respondents who told us about their current living situation, twenty-three (44 percent) lived alone or with other Salvadorans, fifteen (29 percent) lived in a household with at least one U.S.-born person (often their own child or children), and twelve (23 percent) lived with at least one person not born in El Salvador or the U.S. Of the twenty-eight Salvadorans who said they were currently married, nine (32 percent) had non-Salvadoran-born partners. The origins of these partners, drawn widely from across Latin America and Europe, broadly reflected recent patterns of immigration to northern New Jersey, although there were no Cuban or Mexican partners.

Migration frequently figured in misunderstandings, tensions, and even divisions among Salvadorans in New Jersey, between Salvadorans in New Jersey and family and kin in El Salvador, and among Salvadorans in El Salvador. Some of the friction between Salvadorans in New Jersey results from the varied migration experiences and residential backgrounds of the respondents. We found that the layering of unrecognized refugees and more recent "economic" migrants contributed to a complicated and divided social structure in New Jersey. The first Salvadorans arrived in northern New Jersey in the early 1980s, fleeing the civil war, and often traveling alone. These Salvadorans settled independently from other Salvadorans, as business-owner María described:

> I came alone and had to live with families from other parts [of Latin America], not just El Salvador. So I've learned other customs, other ways of being, that is unlike theirs [fellow Salvadorans].

As this Newark woman goes on to describe, those from urban and rural backgrounds in El Salvador can find it difficult to relate to each other in the U.S.:

> I'm out of touch, as they say . . . because most of them are peasantry and I find it hard to deal with peasants. They have different manners. They come from the country, unlike me . . . And that's how they are, closed-minded, and I have a more open mind . . . We clash. I can't deal with them. They are nothing else [sic]. That's why I am not involved with things.

Tensions between family and kin separated by thousands of miles presented us with some of the most tragic narratives. Julia, for example, left her three children in El Salvador because her husband was beating her. She has not been back, and is distraught about having to leave her ten-, twelve-, and fifteen-year-olds with an abusive father. TPS member Reina has two children with her in New Jersey and two in El Salvador that she has not seen for ten years:

> Not having residency does affect us . . . Regarding [the children], there have been moments in which I despair and I want to return to El Salvador. But if I return, I have to bring the two children. And my husband, he tells me [the children] have opportunities . . . here they are not going to have in El Salvador . . . Oh, the problem is that I have two children there in El Salvador and my dream is to be close by them, with my whole family. And that is what is lacking for us, that we are separated . . . And that has affected me very much to be here far [from them] . . . My mother wants me to go back there . . . What am I going to do there? Die of hunger? To die of hunger myself and with these children and those children as well? No.

Reina goes on to describe how geographic separation leads to misunderstandings and tensions over her efforts to remit:

> And people in El Salvador think . . . that here we collect money in heaps. And already, when it is time for me to send money next month and I don't have any then . . . if they don't receive it, [they think] it's because I don't want to send it . . . Yes, I'm here earning dollars but I spend in dollars here . . . And how much do I spend just for food? A ton.

In El Salvador we also encountered considerable misunderstanding over the issue of visits and returns. Some Salvadoran family members, especially those who had not been to the U.S., seemed unaware of the very real legal ramifications of border-crossing for TPS-class and undocumented individuals. One aunt, responsible for the day-to-day upbringing of two teenage children, wondered aloud and in front of the children why the mother (her sister) had not been back to see them, when other Salvadorans in the area had returned. Although it appeared that our explanation might have been one of the first accounts of the mother's legal situation, it is also possible that the aunt had been telling the children an incomplete story that attached blame to the mother's lack of agency, rather than the structural conditions. In either case, the relationship between information and tensions/divisions emerges as an important characteristic of the transnational field.

We also detected tensions between those who were benefiting from remittances and those who were not. Although some remittance funds were being channeled into group projects (for example, the paving of the main street in Amapalita), most went to individuals and families directly. They were used to buy food and clothes and to assist with small entrepreneurial projects, such as a window-front shop, an egg distribution business using a truck that had been purchased in the U.S., and a *combi* (small bus) line.

Strategic Visibility

We came to appreciate "strategic visibility" in Salvadoran daily life, standing in contrast to the tendencies toward invisibility and division. Cognizant of the remittance responsibility, of interdependence, and of the underlying force of uncertain legal status, Salvadorans, through individual, family, and group acts, make themselves visible to others in carefully selected ways at particular moments. The prevalence of caller ID among our respondents is a metaphor for this practice. Relatively inexpensive call screening technology enables the subscriber to know who is calling and gives him or her the

choice of if/when to return the call. This increases their control over the process of information exchange. With the pervasiveness of uncertainty in the transnational field, control over information is highly valued. Before further discussing information circulation, we give examples of strategic visibility in the timing and circumstances of marriage, the nature of intergenerational aspirations, and the circumstances of political mobilization.

For many immigrants, marriage to a U.S. citizen can speed up the process of obtaining residence. For Salvadorans, this strategy also provides a means for circumventing the political asylum route to residency (only about 5 percent of Salvadoran asylum claims were accepted in the mid-1980s). Eva, who fled to the U.S. shortly after being arrested by the Salvadoran authorities in the mid-1980s, is one such Salvadoran who chose not to make herself visible to U.S. authorities via an asylum hearing:

> When I lost my job I went to live with a coworker and a friend in Jersey City . . . she was Puerto Rican. So then I lived with her and her brother, and then I married her brother. And through him I came to get my residency.

Several Salvadorans noted that they or friends they knew had "converted" long-standing cohabitational relationships into formal marriage agreements in the U.S. Jose interpreted this as a direct result of immigration legislation. Other Salvadorans suggested indirectly that the timing of childbirth is tied to the perceived need to appear as a stable family unit in the eyes of the INS.

Investments in children's education, a totemic act among the middle classes in the U.S., comprise a set of visible and public activities that were very important for some Salvadorans. Gloria, a Salvadoran mother in her thirties, reflects on the achievements of her young daughter:

> She went to school but she didn't understand anything. She would draw, she liked to draw, she draws. One day she drew a large doll for the teacher, a very large doll, and she put it on the wall. And the teacher said to her "Your doll is beautiful, but you do not make her any shoes, she's missing shoes." "No, I made them." "Oh yes?" says the teacher. "It's that they can't be seen because she's standing in the grass," she told her. "That's why." . . . And that story was known throughout the school and they laughed whenever the teacher told the story, that the girl at five years of age said that.

Gloria's recounting of this incident seems to link her own pride to the fact that her daughter's argument has been made visible to the public community of the school, and to the fact that her daughter is seen to critically engage with an important gatekeeper figure (a U.S. teacher). Symbolically, the incident itself celebrates the strategic visibility of the shoes (i.e., "you will only know the shoes are there when I choose to tell you"). Similarly, Eduardo, who was studying for his baccalaureate when he was recruited by the army and had to flee El Salvador in 1985, had just purchased a computer to assist his son in his studies when he was interviewed. Eduardo expressed his priority for his family in other ways too, mentioning that he tried to spend as much time (a scarce commodity) as possible with his son, and that he invests some of his savings for his son's education.

We encountered a complex landscape of political mobilization. As our initial point of contact with many in northern New Jersey was a community group originally tasked with assisting Salvadorans with residency, we had good opportunities to use participant observation to watch, and later join, activist efforts. During our fieldwork, political organizing continued around issues of residency. One organizer, Luis, said he did not understand why, when he sends out 500 invitations to a meeting sponsored by a well-known community organization, only 20 people attend. Although many Salvadorans share an experience of economic marginalization and encounter barriers to social and spatial mobility, political organizing was generally viewed with ambivalence. This reticence may be linked to the lack of resources (especially time), inherited suspicion of involvement in politics that stems from the past (El Salvador's civil war), and fear that political action will damage future claims of residency. Some in the social field had been working for Salvadoran rights for over twenty years and were deeply frustrated by a perceived lack of progress, and angered by the more favorable treatment dispensed by U.S. regimes to other groups, notably Nicaraguans. Another organizer, himself a Salvadoran-born permanent resident of the U.S., summarizes these tensions:

> At first, people were afraid [of coming to meetings]. When we started working with the community, doing community meetings, the people were very scared. But little by little we told the people not to be afraid. We had to be together to fight to achieve something. Because here, and in all the world, if you don't open your voice, you don't achieve anything. Now when we do campaigns, when we send things out, they respond and they call. But sometimes also people fade away. They lose their hope. They say we've fought so much and we have nothing. We've been fighting since the '80s and we never achieve it.

However, certain initiatives were extremely widely supported. These include a well-funded and popular Salvadoran soccer league, an annual picnic attended by a cross-section of around 200 Salvadorans and their friends, and, most importantly, English as a Second Language

(ESL) classes. Such visible group activities raise some interesting questions about, for example, the relative importance of the family as a focus of social organization in the transnational field, and the rise of sports-based affinities as an axis of group identity.

The role of the family in information circulation was paramount. Perhaps in response to the tensions, divisions, and estrangements across the transnational field, family members used strategic visibility to achieve more influence. During our fieldwork, TPS-linked mobility restrictions curtailed face-to-face interactions for many in the social field. However, our transnational research design—with sequential visits to New Jersey, El Salvador, and New Jersey—was appropriated by many of the families who offered us introductions to kin in El Salvador. This reciprocity arose again when El Salvador-based family members asked us to pass on information to relatives and friends in New Jersey. Salvadorans made themselves visible to us during those moments as part of their continuing efforts to exert agency over others in the transnational field. In these instances, our positionality as extracommunity members lent us some impartiality and authority in the eyes of the family members. We were thus expected to do more than just repeat information—to also contextualize news in a way that was favorable to certain individuals. Thus, we became part of the transnational field.

Strategic visibility illustrates the ways that Salvadoran agency responds to and, more importantly, seeks to influence the structural context of daily life, with all of its legal uncertainty, division, and interdependency. Many of the tactics of strategic visibility are mediated by and reflective of the space-time relations of the transnational field (e.g., having enough time, being able to move across space, exerting agency at a distance). As a way of drawing some connections between the different elements of this fragmented geography, we now consider how Salvadorans experience space-time relations, and the meanings they attach to systems of spatiality and temporality across the transnational field.

Permanent Temporariness

During the long interviews, and sometimes as part of the semistructured interviews, our respondents offered perspectives on their former lives, their future ambitions, and their attachments to particular places. These experiences of space-time relations are important in that they reflect how, consciously and subconsciously, Salvadorans assign meaning to daily life infused with legal uncertainty. That so many Salvadorans offered such vivid accounts is consistent with Lefebvre's (1991) argument that societies create meaning by producing space, and that this space is produced most intensely during moments of social upheaval and restlessness. Taken as a whole, these testimonials point to an unromanticized and noncelebratory experience of space-time, reflective of the tremendous disruption in the lives of Salvadorans over the past twenty-five years.

Salvadorans spoke of being "out of time" in several ways. Some simply did not have enough hours in the day to complete their projects. Others indicated that New Jersey time could not be understood with reference to time as it had been previously experienced in El Salvador. Still others spoke of a sense of time-space compression. Adriana, interviewed in Santa Ana, chose an example drawn from her perceptions of the world of work in the U.S.:

> Sixty-five years. According to the Bible, it said that. Nowadays it's rare that people can . . . get to live to be sixty-five. Pensioning at sixty-five in the U.S. is pensioning dead people—they won't reach sixty! They would be short five years. If they get to sixty-five, they'll have only two years left. Pensioning dead people.

In addition to expressing "difference" between systems of temporality in El Salvador and the U.S., experiences of space-time relations reflected distrust of and suspicion toward the notion that space-time relations are neutral and that they can be taken for granted. Ana remarks on her loss of hope of legal permanent residence, which stems from the repeated postponement of a previously imagined future:

> Every year it [residency] seems further away. Everyone is frustrated. I think they are trying to take us out of here by psychological frustration.

Others distrusted the past, often because the possibility of return to El Salvador was removed by the circumstances of flight. When we asked a New Jersey Salvadoran woman "do you feel that you have roots here?" she replied:

> Yes. I feel as though I'm more from here, because everything I remember about El Salvador I remember all as a nightmare. I don't want to remember more. I feel discriminated against here, but I say "I'm here while I can." The day they kick me out, I'll go to another place, but not to El Salvador . . .

This keen awareness of their own division from former friends and communities reduced the appeal of return migration for many:

> I feel that . . . surely it feels strange that the people you know are already dead or have left, only strangers, people

you don't know are there. They [those who did not leave] feel as if, as if one is going to treat them badly, going to humiliate them . . . the people that do not know me, well, don't like me and don't want me there, I am a, I am a complete stranger for them. And those that do know me, well, resent me, resent me for having abandoned my country.

We encountered the same sentiment in El Salvador: that migration, this time in the direction of the U.S., would not bring a viable future:

[Migration] has its advantages and disadvantages. But most leave [El Salvador] still young, and for them, their dream is to be over there. And then they find their own prison and can't get out of there.

For Gupta and Ferguson (1992, 9–11), experiences of space-time relations can be interpreted in the light of processes of deterritorialization and reterritorialization. Indeed, Salvadorans frequently described space-time relations in terms of deterritorialization. The first quote below was recorded in El Salvador, and the second in New Jersey:

My mother comes and goes. When she's over there, she wants to come here, when she's here she wants to go back. She's never in one place, she comes and goes. Today she wants to return, she wants to leave on the first (of the month). And when she gets there, she'll want to come right back.

And from Eva:

My head hurts, I am always very tired, drained, always busy running about, I worry too much about my family, I don't live for myself, and then the fear of the street. Too much stress. If I could leave as soon as possible I would, but I don't know where to.

But what of reterritorialization? Sentiments such as "I'm here while I can," practices of strategic visibility, and the extended duration of stay (immobility) point to the durability of the social field. What of the nature of change, especially given the structural obstacles we have described? Indeed, although structural constraints are hypothesized in literatures on, for example, imagined community (Anderson 1991; Appadurai 1996), such accounts tend to be agency-heavy. Yet, in the Salvadoran case, we have described in some detail how the material and nonmaterial aspects of a transnational field are shot through with the structural parameters of legal uncertainty. To connect together some of the themes explored above, we argue that "permanent temporariness" is a useful concept for appreciating how deterritorialization and reterritorialization operate in the transnational field. In addition, we suggest that post-structural perspectives on the production of scale provide a toolkit for connecting experiences of space-time to daily life and capitalist restructuring.

Signified by uncertainty and division, a sense of "permanent temporariness" describes both the static experience of being temporary (i.e., in suspended legal, geographic, and social animation, and so on) and the secretion of strategies of resistance (strategic visibility) in the acquired knowledge that such temporariness is permanent. The labeling turns a key structural parameter—TPS—on itself, in the same kind of way that Salvadorans responded to invisibility with tactics of visibility. We have shown how daily experiences of work, health, family relations, social networks, political organizing, and mobility options are singularly affected by TPS. However, although permanent temporariness springs from the fact that many immigrants now live and work under TPS, it is more than a static thing imposed upon individuals and groups by legal means. Indeed, as permanent temporariness is actively resisted, and as it creeps into all the nooks and crannies of Salvadoran daily life, we regard it as a way of being, a kind of space of action.

We thus interpret permanent temporariness as exerting a disciplining power over bodies, families, and social fields, which helps promote the interests of the state and capital. Our sympathy with Lefebvre's view of space implies that such disciplinary power will not limit itself to one scale (i.e., global or local), but will operate through multiple, shifting scales of operation (cf. Anzaldua 1987; Carter 1997; Delaney and Leitner 1997; Brenner 1998). For example, as a way of being, permanent temporariness fosters the adoption of *superar* and the shunning of all but emergency health care to promote the (short-term) productivity of Salvadoran workers. Economic accumulation is further enhanced by the pervasive remittance norm, the sense of guilt and social obligation engendered by the imprisoning and socially divisive effects of TPS. The production and reproduction of permanent temporariness disorients and divides groups with potentially common goals and needs (e.g., the nature of political organizing and the lack of any pan-Latino movement in the area). However, the fluid, chameleon-like nature of permanent temporariness also offers opportunities for resistance (Shields 1999, 183–84). That is, pursuing "permanence" through educational investments in the second generation, marriage, and even refusing to leave the U.S. by going underground marks, not a kind of false consciousness, but a hijacking and appropriation of the very elements of space-time that are assumed to imprison. Permanent-temporariness is neutral for neither capital nor labor, being constantly remade through the practices of daily life across the transnational field, and

exemplifies the deeply problematic nature of scalar fixes in things transnational.

Thus construed, permanent temporariness has implications beyond this immediate transnational field. For Shields (1999, 147), it is possible to link the joint production of space-time as thing and space-time as a way of being to the reproduction of capitalism: "Space is a medium—and the changing way in which we understand, practice, and live in terms of our space provides clues as to how our capitalist world of nation-states is giving way to an unanticipated geopolitics—a new sense of our relation to our bodies, world, and planets as a changing space of distance and difference." The relationships between migration policies and capitalist restructuring inside both the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) and the European Union (EU) provide good contemporary examples of this emerging geopolitics (Gledhill 1998; Brenner 1999; Pellerin 1999). Our own geopolitics as researchers also shifted during the project when, for example, we became part of the transnational field.

What of the implications for transnational theory? Kearney (1991, 55) called for research to go beyond descriptions of transnational communities as locations that exist between (literally, *trans*) nations and as locations defined with respect to the established geographies of nation-states to consider *post*national transnationalisms that are constituted in an abstract space of uncertain sources of power and unfixed meanings. This vision of the spaces of transnationalism as fluid and contested foreshadows more recent contributions in international political economy (Swyngedouw 1997; Brenner 1998; Anderson 2000). The distinctive "permanently temporary" scale of the Salvadoran transnational field arises from a complex interplay of structure (e.g., TPS) and agency (e.g., strategic visibility) in a way that remakes each of the elements of daily life, including work, family, affinity, aspiration, and ultimately space-time itself. This transnational field cannot be understood, then, with respect to the binary teleologies of U.S. versus Salvadoran society. It demands a broader vision of how space and scale is worked and reworked under late capitalism. Thus written, the production and experience of transnational space-time can provide a dynamic link between transnational processes and capitalist restructuring, and tie transnational theory to broader debates across the social sciences. In the same vein, Stepputat (1994, 8) argued that returning Guatemalan refugees were "far from reproducing the localocentric and closed corporate community of the past . . . [but were] creating a community that represents transnational (or maybe postnational?) space."

Conclusions

Although Salvadorans extend the neoclassical stereotype of the poorly educated, hard-working, impoverished but slowly assimilating immigrant, we found large sections of the social field characterized by immobility, a remittance-based economy, social divisions, and the use of tactics of strategic visibility. We interpreted these differences in the context of TPS, in particular how TPS comes to support an experience of space-time we termed "permanent temporariness." Drawing on Lefebvre (1991), we argued that permanent temporariness reflected both uncertainty, division, and *de*territorialization and, through acts of visibility, a *re*territorialization. So conceived, the Salvadoran transnational field is a place of oppression and of resistance that plays a dynamic role in reconstituting relations between the U.S. and El Salvador.

This Salvadoran case study has implications for international political economy, especially geopolitical relations between North and Central America. The post-1979 Salvadoran exodus enables us to speak to broader debates about the role of hegemonic powers in post–Cold War regional geopolitical transitions. For Salvadorans, their mobility is also an integral part of the redefinition of El Salvador's place in the world and an important part of the changing relationship between the U.S. and Central America. Although El Salvador's attempt to enter the union of the U.S. was summarily rebuffed, de jure, in the 1820s, in many ways an amalgamation of the two countries has perhaps occurred, de facto. The relatively recent out-migration of over one million Salvadorans results in a wholly new orientation of the trajectory of Salvadoran society. Indeed, Segundo Montes, the sociologist murdered by death squads in El Salvador and thus himself a poignant symbol of the brutality of the conflict, articulated the "profound changes" unleashed by the civil war (Montes Mozo and Garcia Vasquez 1988). For example, the presence of a large proportion of actively remitting Salvadorans in the U.S. flags the existence of multiple transnational fields, and perhaps a reterritorializing political entity (Basch, Glick Schiller, and Szanton-Blanc 1994).

This reorientation also takes the social science research agenda beyond the counting of refugees and migrants and estimates of the value of remittances returned to El Salvador, to an analysis of the very foundation of ideas of identity, the nation-state, and space. In this regard, our transnational mixed-methods approach made it possible to speak to issues of fluidity and disruption across the transnational field (e.g., how family members respond to separation in the context of simultaneous daily life). This research approach also raises issues of position-

ality, reflexivity, and politics, which we address elsewhere (Mountz et al. 2000).

Our account also extends transnational theory. We have conceptualized legal status as more than just the structural constraints that being in TPS embodies (Chouinard 1994; White 1998). Rather, in our effort to interpret and try to understand daily life in the Salvadoran transnational field, we argue that legal status both animates and, simultaneously, immobilizes daily life, yet itself becomes a force for action, reaction, and movement. The material conditions of social life of the Salvadorans we studied become the sites in which the law fixes itself, yet also becomes refixed and reconfigured (Blomley and Clark 1990; Blomley 1992; Coutin 1998; White 1998; Ong 1999b). The testimonials we recount portray an unromanticized and noncelebratory experience of space-time in a transnational population. Theorists should reconsider the idea that hybrid spaces are somehow "'beyond' space and time" (Mitchell 1997a, 534; see also Bhabha 1990) and removed from situated practices (e.g., laws) in particular places at particular times. Finally, we found merit in a post-structural view of space-time relations and scale that focused on daily life and gave us an opportunity to reflect on the (re)production of a transnational social field in the context of economic, political, and cultural restructuring.

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Note

1. We are grateful to a reviewer for pointing this out.

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