

## STAYING THE SAME? TECHNOLOGY AND THE NEGOTIATION OF MIGRANT IDENTITIES

A great deal of research and writing around migration has focussed on the ways in which migrants' identities develop and change over time. In contrast, this volume aims to showcase new research on the potential role played by electronic and digital technologies in enabling migrants to *retain* a continuous sense of 'identity'. Most obviously, technologies can assist ongoing social and emotional connections to a homeland. These connections can be empowering: facilitating migrants' adjustment to a new and unfamiliar environment. They may also, however, be seen as oppressive: technology may elicit feelings of compulsion with regards to maintaining ties to a previous sense of self. We are cognisant, therefore, that whilst technologies may be liberating and life-enhancing, they may also serve to inhibit behaviour (through surveillance) and the positive transformation of identity. In the light of this, the volume will include and invite contributions addressing the role modern technology plays in the retention and negotiation of migrants' (individual and group) identities and the consequences of this, including issues of differential access to technologies. Theoretical and empirical papers from all areas of the humanities and social sciences will cover the following fields of enquiry:

### 1. Role of the Internet (blogs, news, skype, facebook, and so on.):

The past decade has seen the rise and spread of diverse forms of electronic communication, which are readily accessible to most migrants. Here, we ask for contributions that critically address the role of modern communication technologies in enabling migrants to maintain social and emotional ties with their countries of origin. What is the nature (quality, function, etc.) of the relationships that technologies maintain/establish? To what extent are such technologies truly liberating and migrant-led? What is the role of governments/big business in these technological developments and does this impact upon how we understand their role in migrants' lives? There are important questions to be addressed, here, on the geographies and sociologies of technologies – questions that include issues around language and the culture of technologies. Contributions in this area will investigate the ways in which different types of cybercommunications affect the ability of migrant communities to retain a sense of their home identity after relocation.

### 2. Mobile Communications (text, mobile phones, and so on):

Increasingly, mobile communication technologies are part of the everyday fabric of migrants' lives. They allow instantaneous communication back and forth. Papers in this area will explore the role that mobile communications play in the quotidian practices and routines of different migrant groups and how these may or may not impact upon the negotiation of identities.

### 3. Modern Transportation Networks (speed, cost – routes)

Technological innovation has also transformed the physical mobility of migrants, often (but not always) resulting in the experience of time-space compression (Harvey, 1989). Whilst some migrants may be able to access the fastest and most efficient transportation networks, others may not. Commercial routes may be established, and then subsequently withdrawn, altering migrants' perceptions of time-space compression. For a small number of wealthy migrants, technologies of transportation enable individuals to maintain multiple homes, and to live in two or more countries 'at the same time'. Papers in this area will explore the role modern transportation networks are having in changing the migrant experience in relation to a range of aspects associated with the movement, and 'settlement' of groups in both time and space.

Proposals for contributions (750 words) are invited by 1 May 2010. Please e-mail your proposal to Dr Johanna Waters: [waters@liv.ac.uk](mailto:waters@liv.ac.uk).

*We also encourage proposals for monographs from scholars working on this theme.*