

Research Plan and Time Schedule

Global Nomads or Temporary Citizens Transnational Mobility of 'Middling'¹ Iranians

The aim of this PhD is to show that the concept of nomadism as a way of life is not dated or limited to traditional nomadic societies but can be used as a concept to explain aspects of modern societies today. Young, well-educated, middle-class Iranian transmigrants will be the main focus of this study. Most studies about transnational migration miss this group because they either focus on highly mobile transmigrants between rich countries (North-North migration) or less mobile migrants from poor countries to rich (South-North migration).

The areas of focus I have identified as a foundation for this study include transnational migration/citizenship (Sassen, Faist, Conradson and Latham), nomadism (Barfield, Deleuze and Guattari, Ibn Khaldun), transhistorical analytical concept (AlSayyad and Roy), network capital and mobility (Urry), dimorphic structure/societies (Rowton), strategic relational approach (Jessop). These will serve as the foundation upon which to build my thesis (please refer to abstract proposal for an explanation of this foundation).

The structural, top-down theoretical models mentioned above will act as a context in which I will posit my individual agents' points of views using a strategic relational approach. This will be done through interviews, search conferences, and web-discussions with my identified group. I will travel during the summer terms for focus-groups and search-conferences but emails and web-discussions will remain a large component of my field-research. As this research is to remain qualitative rather than quantitative in nature, I intend to focus on in-depth ethnographies of 3 interdependent networks of friends and family, probably not to exceed 40 respondents in total.

The results will be communicated through a multi-media presentation either in the form of a documentary or a website along with an approximately 30,000 word essay.

The breakdown of this 3-year research is as follows:

By the end of the first year (2009-2010) I will write my MPhil dissertation, which will focus on my theoretical and methodological frameworks and will include sample ethnographies to ascertain the applicability and feasibility of my approach. During this period I also hope to have established communications with my key respondents and their significant others (expanding upon my MSc dissertation). (Main tasks: Theoretical/methodological literature review; sample ethnographies; MPhil dissertation).

During the second year (2010-2011) I will revise my approach based on my MPhil findings and the feedback I receive from reviewers and participants. Accordingly I will refine my theoretical frameworks and start the main ethnographies. I will record these ethnographies to be used as audio/visual input in the final multimedia.

In the third year (2011-2012) I will work on the final analysis and work on writing the essay, editing the multimedia, and preparing a website to contain them.

¹ The term 'middling' is borrowed from Conradson and Latham's study on young transmigrants from New Zealand: 'They are often, but not always, well educated. They may come from wealthy families, but more often than not they appear to be simply middle class. In terms of the societies they come from and those they are traveling to, they are very much of the middle' (2005, 229).