Nicolas Parent

ANTI-SEDENTARISM AND THE ANTHROPOLOGY OF FORCED MIGRATION

ABSTRACT

Anthropologists of forced migration have advanced unique perspectives exploring identity and community as they relate to space. With its critique of naturalized conceptions of rootedness, boundedness, and territorialization, anti-sedentarism stands as an important conceptual development emanating from this work. And while expressions such as 'sedentary bias' and 'sedentarist thinking' are found throughout this body of literature, anti-sedentarism *per se* has not received a proper treatment of its disciplinary underpinnings and relevance to the anthropology of mobilities. This review article identifies some of the genealogical traces of anti-sedentarism, discussing it through anthropological contributions in both the cultural and mobility turns. Informed by the work of anthropologists of forced migration, the shape of anti-sedentarism takes form, followed by a critical discussion on key debates related to this concept. A selection and review of migrant and refugee ethnographies produced during the mobility turn (from the 1990s onward) is then used to explore the extent which anti-sedentarism has translated to the empirical work of anthropologists and ethnographers engaging with displacement, dispossession, and deterritorialization.

INTRODUCTION

Since the turn of the millennium, there has been a rapid uptick in studies exploring mobility (for a review, see Cresswell 2010; 2012; 2014). 'Mobility' is an all encapsulating term of research on movement, transit, transport, migration, displacement, and so on. In its ambivalence and diversity, this research area is interested in all that is in motion. This direction is supplemented by claims that we now live in a new age of 'hypermobility' or 'supermodernity'

(Augé 1995; Sivaramakrishnan and Vaccaro 2006)—qualified by rapid flows and processes of goods, people, and ideas—notions of 'time-space compression' (Harvey 1989), and the foundations and aspirations of earlier scholarship on globalization (Massey 1994). Central to the 'mobility turn' is its contestation of notions of sedentarism—in its relation to both time and space—where it is taken to represent boundedness, immobility, and 'being stuck' in a world that is otherwise moving. As an intellectual paradigm based on movement, the

mobility turn has naturally gravitated towards fluid, unsettled, and 'nomadic' conceptions about the world and its peoples.

The study of migration has been instrumental in defining the mobility turn. As Lems (2016) observes:

> Over the last two decades, there has been a radical shift from stable, rooted, and mappable identities to fluid, transitory, and migratory phenomena. Rather than being bounded by a timeless and unmovable place, people are now thought of as moving continuously through flexible, open-ended, and contested *space*. Refugees and migrants have come to be the symbolic figures of this shift. [emphasis in original] (Lems 2016: 317–318)

Migration scholars have effectively been well-positioned to contribute to the intellectual currents of the mobility turn. Amongst them, anthropologists have shown great aptitude, largely because of their discipline's imprint across the social sciences during the 'cultural turn'; many of its key ideas now formulate scholarship on mobility. An influential figure here is Liisa H. Malkki and her advances in 'Refugees and Exile: From "Refugee Studies" to the National Order of Things' (1995a). Based on her ethnography of camp-based and city-dwelling Hutu refugees in Tanzania, Malkki (1995b) warns against the sedentarist bias of scholarship and the naturalized representations of territoriality, nationality, and rootedness that underlie the category of 'refugee' and conceptualizations of 'people on the move'. Extending Malkki's work, anthropologists have challenged the notion that primordial attachments to particular places remain the primary determinants of identification and belonging among displaced populations,

emphasizing instead the importance of forward-looking practices of attachment to (and detachment from) place. These anti-sedentarist contributions focused on deterritorialization and transnationalism have been instrumental in deconstructing essentialized readings of refugees, their experience, and more broadly, global migration phenomena. Importantly, it has opened up new ways of thinking about refugees' role and agency in reterritorialization, place-making, and inscriptions of the cultural self in *new places*.

The aim of this article is to provide a comprehensive review of literature to draw out some of the genealogies of anti-sedentarism and how its critique of naturalized conceptions of rootedness, boundedness, and territorialization in situated within contemporary ethnographic work by anthropologists of forced migration. While many scholars have discussed the emergence, origins, and broad conceptual underpinnings of the 'mobility turn' (Cresswell 2010; Hannam et al. 2006; Sheller and Urry 2006), and others have explored how this relates to the study of forced migration (Schewel 2020; Glick Schiller and Salazar 2013), I am unaware of any work that specifically looks at these developments through the lens of anti-sedentarism. Bringing together an eclectic collection of anthropological literatures that connect different forms of human migration, (im)mobility, and movement to geographic space, this paper defies the often monolithic and isolationist norms of traditional review articles. Through this approach, anti-sedentarism *as a concept* takes shape, showcasing its relevance within assessments on the interconnection between people 'on the move' and places of meaning and identification. Importantly, while this article works towards recognizing and locating anti-sedentarism within anthropological work focused on forced

migration, it also hopes to speak to other anthropologies (and geographies) centering on human movement.

The next sections will move towards this, first by exploring anti-sedentarism' roots in the intellectual developments of both the 'cultural turn' (1970s–early 2000s) and the 'mobility turn' (1990s–present), supplemented by relevant work by anthropologists of forced migration. Drawing out key traits of the anti-sedentarist position, I will then attempt to draw out the shape of so-called anti-sedentarism. Critiques of anti-sedentarism will then be explored. Next, a selection of geographically-diverse ethnographies—largely by forced migration anthropologists—will be used to explore the extent in which the anti-sedentarist approach has been relayed to the field. The final section of this essay will explore how these ethnographies conducted and published throughout the mobility turn have at once grown from the engagement and critique of naturalized representations of territoriality, nationality, and rootedness, while also remaining faithful to the importance of 'groundedness'. This last section shows how the empirical work of forced migration anthropologists 'talks back' to the anti-/sedentarist binary, showcasing their important contributions to broader anthropological inquiries into transnational (im)mobility (Glick Schiller 2010; 2015; Levitt and Jaworsky 2007; Salazar 2013).

GENEALOGICAL TRACES OF ANTI–SEDENTARISM

Anthropology has long been interested in the relationship between place and people. In classical works, place (often synonymized with the term 'space') was merely an inert container where social and cultural life occurred. From a functionalist perspective, place and space facilitated and gave life. From a structuralist perspective, place and space constituted an affinal fixity—much like kinship—that provided the bedrock of community and society. As with many other concepts and theories of the social sciences, essentialist and taken-for-granted ideas of spatiality and culture were disrupted during the 'cultural turn' of the 1970s. This period, spanning from the 1970s until the early 2000s (Rosati 2017), was marked by a heightened interest in culture as a central node of sociality and personhood. Most importantly, it was a period where the old guard of structuralism and its deep commitment to understanding the organization of people and places through systems, hierarchies, and models was replaced with postcolonial (Bhabha 1994; Said 1978; Minh-Ha 1991), poststructural and postmodern (Derrida 1998 [1967]; Foucault 1990 [1976]; 1995 [1975]), and feminist (Butler 1990; Ortner and Whitehead 1981) approaches. Grappling with its foundational ties to the colonial project, anthropology paid great attention to how it had constructed and reified notions of 'the native', 'the savage', and 'the Other'.

In these confrontations, the intersection of place, culture, and identity underwent great scrutiny. James Clifford's (1988) work was instrumental in this new disciplinary reflexivity, making the erudite observation that 'the idea of culture carries with it an expectation of roots, of a stable, territorialized existence … common notions of culture persistently bias the answer toward rooting rather than travel' (Clifford 1988: 338). Confrontation to this long-standing 'expectation' was greatly influenced by the increasing popularity of critical scholarly work exploring nationalism and identity, and importantly, the historical observation that while mobility was characteristic of much of human history it had become increasingly restricted, as a result of post-Westphalian

nation-building and colonization (Dowty 1987; Wolf 1982). As Akhil Gupta notes in the introductory paragraph to his influential article 'The Song of the Nonaligned World':

> The nation is so deeply implicated in the texture of everyday life and so thoroughly presupposed in academic discourses on 'culture' and 'society' that it becomes difficult to remember that it is only one, relatively recent, historically contingent form of organizing space in the world. (Gupta 1992: 63)

Equally important was the increasing recognition that we were moving into an increasingly globalized future:

> 'Globalization' is currently one of the most frequently-used and most powerful terms in our geographical and social imaginations. At its extreme (and though 'extreme', this version is none the less highly popular) what it calls up is a vision of total unfettered mobility; of free unbounded space. (Massey 1999: 33)

In these reflections existed a deep sense of anti-sedentarism—both as a vision for an unbounded and 'free' future and in its confrontation of past (and present) anthropologies that uncritically naturalized the link between people and place.

Here, I echo Kokot's (2007) analysis that anthropology's new theoretical directions grew out of both a postmodernist perspective that critiqued foundational terminology—the 'field', 'place', 'culture', 'identity'—and the emerging global studies perspective that explored delocalization and deterritorialization. Important debates emanated from the postmodern perspective, where questions about representation led to observations on anthropology's implicit albeit perhaps unintentional forms of othering through the constructions of its 'subjects' as some-*how*—'primitive', 'native', 'savage', 'exotic'—and some-*where*—in place, bounded, immobile, and sedentary (Appadurai 1988a; 1988b; Gupta and Ferguson 1992). Representational issues of voice and time became discussed in close tandem with the issue of place. Fabian's (1983) concept of 'denial of coevalness' was relevant here, recognising that anthropological accounts of the 'Third World' were often anachronistic and central to primitivizing people and communities under study. Complimentary to this, Munn (1996: 464–465) showed the idiosyncrasy in assumptions about time and place, where the former was considered dynamic while space remained static, where 'boundaries are always fixed, relatively enduring forms marked off the ground'. Where spatiality in these foreign places experienced an assumed inertia, so, too, did its people, leading to representations of these cultures as somewhat frozen in time (Appadurai 1988a: 36). Rodman's (1992) contributions were also influential, where observations from her fieldwork in Melanesia and Vanuatu led her to articulate a conception of place as socially constructed, relative, and dynamic; one where ideas and people are temporary, overlapping, and contested. Like Rodman (1992), Appadurai (1988b) drew attention to the ethnographers' positionality at the intersection of place and vocality: 'The problem of voice ("speaking for" and "speaking to") intersects with the problem of place (speaking "from" and speaking "of")' (Appadurai 1988b: 17).

From the globalist perspective, the 'nation' and its constellations—nationality, nationhood, nationalism, nation-state—became the object of much deconstruction, largely as a result of new globalization-induced contestations to its integrity, its changing role in geopolitics,

and new theoretical directions from the postmodern critique. This deconstruction inevitably undermined the legitimacy of nations as homogenous and the 'natural' interlocutors between the global and local (Basch et al. 2000 [1994]). New observations about mobility and exchange also played an important role in shaking up these national markers of cultural and social difference:

> The view of an authentic culture as an autonomous internally coherent universe no longer seems tenable in a postcolonial world. Neither 'we' nor 'they' are as self-contained and homogenous as we/they once appeared. All of us inhabit an interdependent late 20th-century world, which is at once marked by borrowing and lending across porous cultural boundaries, and saturated with inequality, power, and domination. (Rosaldo 1988: 87)

In what was seen as an increasingly mobile and deterritorialized world, new ideas at the intersection of place, culture, and identity were flourishing; to name a few influential directions, scholars became interested in cultural exchange through hybridity (Bhabha 1989), assimilation of 'outside ideas' through indigenization and vernacularization (Appadurai 1996), and the exploration of culture through 'routes not roots' (Clifford 1997). Peoples and cultures were increasingly conceptualized as connected, heterogenized, and flowing through each other via intricate global networks (Massey 1993) and 'translocalities' (Appadurai 2003 [1996]). Where the 'clustering of cultural practices' became increasingly understood as deterritorialized (Gupta and Ferguson 1992), and national communities as constructed through 'imagina-tion as a social practice' (Appadurai 1996; see also Anderson 1983), there was a thorough

rattling of pseudo-puritanical ideals about the significance of emplaced and territorially bounded nations, and in particular how these relate to questions of identity.

Considering their scope, it is not surprising that anthropologists of forced migration found kin within these new horizons. Fieldwork 'at the margins' (Das and Poole 2004) exposed these scholars to the brutal reality of political violence and to the dark side of state technologies that cemented notions of identity, community, and nationhood—identity cards, passports, borders, refugee camps, and immigrant detention centres. And as these same notions became increasingly understood as artificial and socially constructed, so, too, did the assumed foundational building blocks formulating the refugee identity. Liisa H. Malkki was arguably a trailblazer in bridging the postmodern and globalist developments of the 'cultural turn', the then-emerging paradigm concerned with mobility (i.e. the 'mobility turn'), and anthropological work centered on displacement, dispossession, and deterritorialization. As observed by Chatty (2014), Malkki's contributions were revolutionary in shifting anthropologists from an interest in exploring refugees' past and continued attachment to their homeland to explorations on homemaking, belonging, and future aspirations.

To explore the emplacement-displacement binary, Malkki drew heavily on explorations of hybridity, postcoloniality, creolization, and transnational cultural forms, pointing out that 'these discussions do not assume the purity or naturalness, wholeness or wholesomeness of origins, identities, communities, cultural traditions, or nationalities (...) displacement and emplacement are seen as historical products, ever-unfinished projects' (Malkki 1995: 516). It is through this view that Malkki challenged the essentialized form of the 'refugee

identity'—a depoliticized and liminal identity that was 'naturally' out of place, estranged in its country of asylum, and undoubtfully yearning for an eventual return home (Malkki 1992; 1995a; 1995b). Malkki's research with Burundian refugees in Tanzania provided an anti-sedentarist countercurrent to much of the refugee research of the 1990s which, as Preston (1999) notes, was largely focused on the repatriation of refugees to their respective places of origin. This 'decade of repatriation', as it was designated by former UN High Commissioner for Refugees Sadako Ogata, was largely reliant on 'sedentarist thinking' (Kibreab 1999) that saw re-rooting displaced persons as the optimal and natural solution to the refugee problem, an approach that—alongside Malkki's contributions—became increasingly problematized as the 'decade of repatriation' was coming to a close (Black and Koser 1999).

THE SHAPE OF ANTI-SEDENTARISM

The above provides signposts of the anti-sedentarist position and its relation to mobility, migration, and displacement. It begins with a fundamental critique of a sedentarist mythico-history[1] that normatively considers the tight coupling of people and place as optimal and preferred. Following the discourses of human nature and evolution, sedentarism is seen as a historical imperative; conversely, nomadism is a backwards practice symbolic of an absence of civilization. While anti-sedentarism *should not* to be synonymized with nomadism, but rather be conceptualized as a critical approach to claims that 'naturalize' the link between people and specific geographic locales, it is no doubt influenced by a strong historical record showing exchange, movement, and interaction between people, and across large expanses of

geographic terrain (Barnard and Wendrich 2008), and relatedly, by the call to study human evolution and social change through historical explorations of changes in (im)mobility (Kelly 1992).

In its effort to debunk the 'sedentarist myth' that assembles people in isolated cultural units neatly associated to distinct places in geographic space, anti-sedentarism seeks to disrupt the 'sedentarist *doxa*'[2] that has led to the political, ideological, and religious construction of territorially-based identities. As expressed by Hammond (2004: 79), 'what is the issue (...) is the *assumption* that place plays a particular, generalizable, and predictable kind of role in community construction and identity formation across cultures' [emphasis in original]. Jansen and Löfving (2008: 9) provide a similar assessment: 'The problem of the sedentarist bias, we argue, is not only that people are presumed to be naturally rooted, and that movement is therefore somehow inherently violent, but also that they are seen as *forever* rooted' [emphasis in original]. And so, whilst the anti-sedentarist position sees both place and identity as the result of social construction, its analytical focus is most concerned with the internal and external construction of catchall, stereotypical, prescriptive, and essentialist *place-based identities*. Codified by markers of 'nationality', 'refugee status', etc.—as we have seen—these highly sedentarized identities risk emboldening geographic divisiveness and the 'Other', all the while locking peoples to places without choice, autonomy, or agency.

Located within critical assessments on global immobility (Maple et al. 2021; Turner 2007), anti-sedentarism therefore underpins the many confrontations to global power asymmetries and forms of violence that stifle, control, and prevent human movement. To anti-sedentarists, sedentarism as a script for social

organization is an imprisoning form of control, an extension of carceral logics if you will (Moran et al. 2018), and one based on territoriality, place of birth, heritage, history, and the like. Rather than look to the past for markers of identity—for instance, by exploring attachments to the homeland or nationalist discourse—anti-sedentarism and its engagement with movement, transnationalism, and deterritorialization is instead interested in forward-looking practices of identity formation and intersubjectivity. In its extreme deterritorialized form, the anti-sedentarist position has produced migration scholarship that goes beyond the material world, as is evident in work exploring the imaginary (Findlay et al. 2013; Ramji 2006; Salazar 2011), existential immobility (Hage 2005; Lems and Tošić 2019), and temporal dispossession (Ramsay 2019), to name a few. In its radical form, the anti-sedentarist position and its proclivity for individual and unbounded freedom leads to a direct confrontation with state, authoritarian, and hegemonic technologies of control, perhaps one grounded in anarchist theory and praxis.[3]

LOSING AND HAVING GROUND BENEATH OUR FEET

The critique of the anti-sedentarist dimension of the mobility turn—and it is, effectively, only one dimension of this paradigm—lies between a sense of *losing* and *having* ground beneath our feet, both materially and metaphorically. With sophistication, the postmodern critique has successfully penetrated and abstracted much of the social sciences, producing highly theoretical forms of scholarship that can seem distant from reality, or rather, difficult to translate to the empirical context. Hage (2005) exemplifies this feeling in his defense for field-based migration research, providing an interesting observation on the wide-use of Anderson's (1983) 'imagined communities':

When a person presenting a paper on a diasporic community is asked what evidence there is to show that the diasporic group they are studying is a community, they give you a superior look and inform you that 'it doesn't work this way' because the community they are studying is an 'imagined community'. Here 'imagined community' seems to have very little community in it and a lot of imagination instead, usually the imagination of the researcher. (Hage 2005: 468)

While this bold critique perhaps overlooks the value of Anderson's contributions, it is demonstrative of wider concerns on the absence of firm groundedness in postmodern theory and its wider project to 'de-naturalize' key concepts across disciplines (Easthope and McGowan 2004). Relevant to the study of migration, spatial terminology has undergone a similar upheaval, where Cresswell (2009: 9) identifies a bifurcation between those scholars 'who see mobility and process as antagonistic to place and those who think of place as created by both internal and external mobilities and processes'. While Malkki's contributions were certainly influential in confronting sedentarist notions of migration as pathological (Chatty 2014), other migration scholars have suggested that relying too much on this logic may instead lead to a pathologized conception of place-making, belonging, and connections to locality. Gaim Kibreab was arguably one of the first scholars to challenge Malkki's thesis, with Jansen and Löfving (2008: 4) providing a summary of his view on anti-sedentarism: 'ignoring existing patterns of territorialization, identification with place, and a desire to return to locality of origin, anti-sedentarists engage in politically dangerous forms of wishful thinking, mistakenly concluding that identities are nowadays more

and more detached from territory in a global move toward a-national, deterritorialized citizenship'. Relatedly, there is a concern that undermining important place-based questions related to exilic belonging and homemaking may embolden a problematic discourse that frames displaced persons as essentially liminal (Brun and Fábos 2015; Parent and Sarazin 2020; Ramsay 2019).

As a response to this, Lems (2016: 317) asks forced migration scholars to 'confront the absence of place in current readings of dis-placement (…) where dominant anthropological discourses tend to become tangled up in a fascination with the boundlessness refugees and migrants embody'. This is a preoccupation that has endured throughout the mobility turn, where Brun's (2001) early treatment of the 'imaginary' contends that 'the focus on imagination and the fear of becoming essentialist seem to have resulted in a neglect of the location where displaced people and migrants are present' (Brun 2001: 20). In its deepest form—fully uprooted, deterritorialized, and unbounded—one must wonder if the mobility turn somewhat fetishizes movement, not realising that this is perhaps an elitist worldview (Friedman 2002) that isn't thoughtfully engaging with neither the facts of widespread immobility, nor its violent form of forced displacement.

This last observation is no less important in the assessment of anti-sedentarism as an intellectual norm that—if not employed in close tandem with critical analysis—risks depoliticizing the migration process and overlooking important material manifestations of power that constitute the 'refugee reality'; important considerations of widespread immobility (Massey 1994; Kibreab 1999; Faist 2013; Bélanger and Silvey 2020), protracted encampment (Malkki 1996; Hailey 2009), short-sighted humanitarian interventions

(Hyndman and Giles 2016), the strengthening (Richardson 2013) and externalization (Rodier 2013) of borders, and so on. In its assault on terminology, there is a fear that some conceptual directions of the postmodern-friendly anti-sedentarist position have subtle—yet extremely important—political implications. As Stepputat (1999) puts it:

> When researchers use (…) de-naturalizing analytics on categories that are introduced in order to help or protect people, such as 'refugee', 'repatriate', or 'internally displaced people', they are entering a loaded political field where they have to be very much aware of the effects their arguments may have. (Stepputat 1999: 416; quoted in Turton 2005).

Allow me to draw a parallel to demonstrate this. In Blu's (1996) essay relating sense of place to her ethnography of the Lumbee Native Americans, she notes that 'Indians, for their part, need to make their claims convincing to federal or state legislators, lawyers, and policy implementers and are often forced to argue for their priority in time and stability in space in order to fit other Americans' ideas about Indianness, property, and rights' (Blu 1996: 224–225). These conditions point to a kind of sedentarism, one based on a 'stereotyped view of "an" Indian people with "its" own culture and social organization located in "a" designated territory' (Blu 1996: 224). In order to gain land rights, the Lumbee need to 'speak to' a state typology on indigeneity. This is evidently linked to the notion of 'legibility' and the demand to acquiesce with a rights-granting logic that has been put in place by what Scott (1998) would likely call 'authoritarian high modernism'. Refugees face a similar predicament, where their very protection (and the rights granted to them)

depends on the outcome of a highly opaque asylum determination process. They must 'prove' their persecution with finesse, using records, documentation, witnesses, and marks of bodily harm to build a case for themselves. Dubiously enough, the standard of proof and the protocols for status determination vary widely between nations. And as Malkki (1996: 516) rightly affirms 'the international refugee regime (…) is inseparable from this wider national order of things, this wider grammar'. There can be emancipatory brilliance, then, in an anti-sedentarist anthropology of forced migration that constitutes culture and identity as largely deterritorialized, interconnected, and hybridized; one where subjectivities take precedence over essentialized notions of belonging. However, in this resistance to essentializing refugees to a simplistic transactional model that associates identity and culture to bounded 'places' and national territorial entities, we also run the risk of undermining important identity markers that make them legible in a panoptic system of control (Foucault 1995). The disturbing plight of stateless persons and *sans-papiers* exemplifies the possible outcome of such risks.

This discussion, as it is intended, should leave us unsure about the beauty and the beast of anti-sedentarism as it relates to the mobility turn and the anthropology of forced migration. Stepping away from theoretical and disciplinary debates for a moment, the next section will 'look to the field' to explore how the above has translated to the practice and writing of ethnographies within migrant contexts.

WHAT A SELECTION OF ETHNOGRAPHIES TELLS US

The purpose of this section is to explore how anti-sedentarist thinking and approaches—and conversely, those from the sedentarist

position—have been employed in contemporary ethnographies throughout the 'mobility turn'. To do this, I will explore a small but eclectic mix of ethnographies (Agier 2018; Allan 2014; Chatty 2010; Clark-Kazak 2011; Hammond 2004; Hasselberg 2016; Hyndman 2000; Jackson 2016; Malkki 1995b). The selection of these ethnographies is based on three factors: (1) their influence to the field of refugee and migration studies, (2) their thematic and geographic difference, and (3) my personal interest and claim that these have something to say about the above discussion on anti-sedentarism. The analysis of this small collection of ethnographies was done by reading each carefully, first identifying key themes, methods, and conclusions on the link between people, place, and migration. This was followed by a process of literature grouping (Galvan and Galvan 2017), working deductively from categories related to key tensions between the sedentarist and anti-sedentarist positions. All ethnographies were conducted by anthropologists, at the exception of Clark-Kazak (2010) and Hyndman (2000) who, respectively, explore their cases through their expertise in international development and human geography. Diving into these ethnographies, readers should not consider this section as a complete review of these works; the selected ethnographies have much more to say than what I will draw out here. Rather, the intention is to situate sedentarism and anti-sedentarism within field-based studies.

One notable convergence is the persistence of territorial identities despite displacement, dispossession, and deterritorialization. In Hasselberg (2016), she follows the cases of eighteen migrants who have been given a deportation order as a result of criminal conviction. The bulk of those involved in her study are first- or second-generation immigrants, most of whom feel British and

disconnected from their place of origin. Her ethnography is focused on the period between their 'deportability' (i.e. when they are given the deportation order) and actual 'deportation', a period typically spent in a migrant detention centre. Here, liminality is experienced in different forms—between two national identities, and between freedom in one place and deportation to another. While Hasselberg (2016) clearly states that her work is not intended to be political, her ethnography draws attention to some of the idiosyncrasies of 'crimmigration' and its foundations in nationalist discourses of exclusion. Despite identifying more with the place and identity of the United Kingdom, this study shows how immigrants' nationality—as a legal category—predominates over these attachments, determining life courses and limiting individual choices.

While vastly different, Allan's (2014) study on the experiences of Palestinian exile in Shatila also explores the 'in between-ness' of identities, as they relate to territorialization and deterritorialization. Her work shows that for many Palestinian youth, there is a disillusionment with the 'Right to Return' movement and a strong desire to move beyond nationalist orthodoxies. As Allan (2014) shows, this is the result of several mutually-reinforcing and interdependent factors: to name a few, that most of these youth were born in Shatila and have no physical relationship to Palestine, that a generational divide somewhat bifurcates the elders who hold onto the past and the youth who wish to look beyond it, and that there is a sense of being abandoned by important organizations such as the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) and the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA). The difficult camp conditions, Allan (2014) contends, make it difficult for young Palestinians of Shatila

to address the tension between historical/ territorial and forward-looking/deterritorialized identities: 'the provisionality of daily life has produced a particular temporality in which the burdens of the present eclipse past and future' (Allan 2014: 162).

Clark-Kazak's (2011) study of Congolese refugees in Uganda also finds a temporal tension between identities. While explaining that research participants recognize the artificiality of borders and notions of ethnicity, her ethnography describes a camp experience that is heavily influenced by these markers of identity. Territorialized attachments to 'lineality', Clark-Kazak (2011) shows, are important in defining the refugee experience—both in how people associate with each other and in terms of legitimacy when making political claims at the family, house-hold, community, and policy level.

In her ethnographic work on Burundian Hutu refugees in Tanzania, Malkki's (1995b) findings suggest a rift between town-based and camp-based refugee identities. At Mishamo camp, Tanzanian authorities are 'Tutsinized', becoming the symbolic dominant Other who controls and makes life difficult for Hutu refugees. Town refugees living in Kigoma, who have more extensive and egalitarian contact with Tanzanians, are more inclined towards incorporation within Tanzanian society. Malkki's (1995b) work suggests that those living in the camp have a stronger attachment to Hutu mythico-history and national cosmology, explaining why this group is more resistant to the possibility of naturalization; the status of refugee is considered symbolic of Hutu identity, and if stripped away, would prevent them from laying claim to their homeland upon return.

Despite bodies being physically dissociated from place through deterritorialization and displacement, these works show the tenacity of territory and place in the construction

of identities, senses of self-perception, and community relations. Specific to Allan (2014), Clark-Kazak (2011), and Malkki (1995b), these historical and territorial ties are related to the locus of agency and futurity, demonstrating an effective exchange between both sedentarist and anti-sedentarist approaches to analysing fieldwork data. Their engagement, on the one hand, resists 'naturalizing' the link between people and place, and on the other, doesn't take an ontological route that forcibly de-historicizes research participants from their spatial roots.

In their exploration of refugee geographies—the physical places where refugees inhabit and experience the world—these ethnographies leverage both sedentarist and anti-sedentarist analytical perspectives. In camp-based ethnographies, some scholars show both an acceptance of and resistance to the deeply sedentarizing feature of refugee encampment. On the one hand, these scholars (Agier 2018; Allan 2014; Clark-Kazak 2011; Hyndman 2000) recognize that the extreme lack of resources in refugee camps, limited opportunities for employment, non-existent privacy, and dearth of meaningful places to congregate make up a substratum for dire living conditions. To that end, readers of these ethnographies can get a sense that in order for refugees to live dignified and fulfilling futures, these 'warehouse conditions' (Smith 2004) will need to be dismantled. Yet, these ethnographies do not make such normative—perhaps anti-sedentarist—claims that directly contest the fabric of refugee camps. Instead, they explore what goes on inside the camps to subvert the logics that formulate the 'refugee identity', control refugeehood, and justify their segregation from citizen spaces. By showing how complex, creative, and innovative refugees are in their effort to build informal economies (Allan 2014) and embody and enact politics

(Clark-Kazak 2011; Malkki 1995b), these scholars deracinate essentialized notions about refugees; those that qualify them as liminal, apolitical, unproductive, and effectively out-of-place until returned to their 'homeland'.

While Hammond's (2004) ethnography is not within a refugee camp, but rather explores the building of the isolated returnee settlement of Aba Bai, her ethnography unsettles common ideas about refugees by showing their impressive ability to form community attachment and a sense of home all the while coping with and adapting to extreme living conditions. In this context, Hammond (2004) shows the paramount importance of place. Taking a stronger stance within the sedentarist and anti-sedentarist debate, Agier (2018) is firmly anchored in the former while Hyndman (2000) the latter. From a markedly spatial approach, Hyndman (2000) provides a critical study that places the refugee camp as a site of power. Travelling between ground-level qualitative data with refugees and a macrolevel analysis of humanitarian aid and development actors, she demonstrates how powerful actors qualify and govern refugee camps along the Kenya-Somalia border as 'communities' despite their lack of autonomy, agency, and social functionality. Agier (2018), on the other hand, provides a near-romantic account of the informal camp at Calais, characterising the 'Jungle' as a vibrant social and urban laboratory ripe for experimentation. Whereas Hyndman (2000) firmly holds that power asymmetry is characteristic of the relationship between camp residents and humanitarian actors, Agier (2018) defines this relationship as essentially productive and egalitarian. Until its destruction by French authorities, the Jungle was a deeply meaningful place that encouraged self-organization and autonomy and embodied a solidarity of cosmopolitanism. Similar to Agier

(2018), Chatty's (2010) ethnography points to the central importance of place in building local cosmopolitanism across the Middle East. Looking to important communities having suffered a great deal of dispossession and displacement, notably Armenians, Christians, Kurds, and Palestinians, she argues that these minorities have maintained their cultural identity while enjoying a strong attachment to their host community. Defying the anti-sedentarist position, Chatty (2010) argues that this is the result of a Middle East metaculture that does not prefer assimilation, but rather encourages cosmopolitan ideals where minorities are encouraged to remain attached to their cultural identification and heritage.

Across these ethnographies, an important observation can be made on the 'de-sedentarizing' of methodologies. As with other important concepts that were re-examined during the cultural turn as described in the previous section, the 'field' underwent a similar treatment. As described by Kokot (2007: 12), '"the field" is no longer a spatially defined site anthropologists naïvely enter, leave or return to, as the notion of spatially bounded 'cultures' rooted in a distinct territory has been thoroughly deconstructed', adding that 'in a vague metaphorical way, "de-territorialization" refers to the dissolution of borders, boundaries, and the anthropological "field"' (ibid.: 15). As such, scholars have recognized a notable push for multi-sited ethnography, also in migration-related research (Boccagni 2014; Falzon 2015; Hage 2005; Paul and Yeoh 2020; Salazar, Elliot and Norum 2017).

The ethnographies of Chatty (2010), Clark-Kazak (2011), Hyndman (2000), and Jackson (2016) embrace this methodological approach, where findings are less attached to specific locations and places. This allows the authors to engage with metanarratives

that go beyond specific places and speak to broader, systemic, or general themes such as humanitarianism (Hyndman 2000), ethics (Jackson 2016), youth (Clark-Kazak 2011), and cosmopolitanism (Chatty 2010). This approach can also make way for comparative research that explores differences between sites, as is the case with Clark-Kazak's (2010) and Malkki's (1995b) work. From a conceptual and epistemological standpoint, ethnographies engaging with the imaginary (Allan, 2014) and existentialism (Hasselberg 2016; Jackson 2016) also show a commitment to deterritorialized and anti-sedentarist pathways to study migrant and refugee identities, memory and futurity, and attachment and belonging.

CONCLUSION: TALKING BACK

The ethnographies discussed in the previous section were all written during the mobility turn, and importantly, following the publication of Liisa H. Malkki's seminal ethnography in 1995. While only a snapshot has been provided, these scholars have certainly engaged with and 'talked back' to issues brought forth by the debate between sedentarism and anti-sedentarism and how these relate to anthropological research. While some have been more critical—or rather, explicit—than others, I would argue that the bulk of these ethnographies have re-examined taken for granted markers of identity—'nation', 'refugee', 'foreignness'. In a sense, this is representative of the postmodernist foundations of the anti-sedentarist position, characterized by a deep desire to uproot and 'deterritorialize concepts'. Interestingly, nuance has emerged from this exercise. On the one hand, these ethnographies have shown the deep persistence of territorially-based identities in the everyday lives and remembered histories of forced migrants. On the other, the

innovation and creativity of refugees, and their impressive efforts to build homes and a sense of community, have challenged the notion that primordial attachments to particular places remain the primary determinants of identification and belonging among displaced populations. These observations attest to the complexity of displacement and the lives that exist within these situations, and neither the sedentarist nor the anti-sedentarist positions in their strictest and singular form seem to be able to disentangle all that happens therein. As these ethnographies reveal, life, identity, place, and culture are—unsurprisingly—too complex to explore exclusively through a mutually-exclusive binary.

Perhaps the most thoughtful, inspiring, and humanizing of these ethnographies are those that analyze their cases through a somewhat Bhabhian 'third space' where identities are conceptualized as hybridized, negotiated, translocal, and ever-changing. While memory, history, and things of the past are important in identity-formation, so are present day lived experience and aspirations for the future. While a person is physically in one place, they can still attribute meaning or attachment to 'other places', whether they be in other geographic locations, in the past or future, or even the imagination. And lastly, while testimonials sometimes suggest life is at a standstill and betwixt and between, it certainly is not inert. These nuances are particularly salient in ethnographies that make generous use of direct quotations from research participants (Allan 2014; Hammond 2004; Jackson 2016).

The ethnographies presented above have also showcased the important ways forced migration anthropologists have engaged with and advanced broader anthropological inquiries into transnational (im)mobility. Born out of the mobility turn, this 'anthropology of mobilities'

(Lelièvre and Marshall 2015) has produced a vast 'conceptual repertoire' (Levitt and de la Dehesa 2017) around a recognition that 'many people maintain ties to their countries of origin at the same time as they become integrated into the countries that receive them [where] immigrant incorporation and enduring transnational practices are not antithetical but simultaneous processes that mutually inform each other' (Levitt 2009: 1225). In the 1990s, Basch, Glick Schiller, and Szanton Blanc's *Nations Unbound* (2000) described, amongst others, the concept of 'transnationalism', 'the processes by which immigrants forge and sustain multi-stranded social relations that link together their societies of origin and settlement, [building] social fields that cross geographic, cultural, and political borders' (Basch et al. 2000: 7). This has produced other related concepts such as 'simultaneity', the idea that people who move can be simultaneously embedded in more than one locale (Levitt 2009; Levitt and Glick Schiller 2004), and more recently 'multiscalar social fields', where migrants 'form multiple new social relations and maintain others as they settle in specific places and the networks in which they live contribute to the remaking of the institutional nexus of city-level, regional, national, supranational, and globe-spanning actors' (Çağlar and Glick Schiller 2018: 9). A critique of 'methodological nationalism' has also been called into play (Glick Schiller 2010; Wimmer and Glick Schiller 2003), asking that scholarship go beyond the nation-state as the 'natural' or 'essential' container of people, societies, and cultures. From the ethnographies of forced migration presented above, their alignment to these developments in the anthropology of mobilities is clear.

Yet in 'talking back', some from the anthropology of mobilities may critique the continued use of the language and analytic of

(anti-)sedentarism within academic literature, claiming that this binarily-oriented debate has been supplanted by the above (and more recent) concepts of transnationalism, multiscalar social fields, and simultaneity. And while I can appreciate certain anthropologists' desire to 'move on', the forces of sedentarist logic have not ceased to exist. The phenomena of mass displacement and mass incarceration continue to be deeply intertwined, sustaining and producing new carceral geographies across the globe. Repatriation, as opposed to resettlement and local integration, continues to be the most likely 'durable solution' to protracted forced migration (Bradley 2013; Hammond 2014; Gerver 2018). Securitization and criminalization of migration is still gaining ground, orienting territorial containment strategies at the American, Australasian, and European periphery. And as for implications related to scholars' own research work, the so-called resurgence of nationalism, and particularly in its populist, ethnic, and digital forms (Elias et al. 2021; López-Alves and Johnson 2018; Mihelj and Jiménez-Martínez 2020), has in some ways emboldened the pervasiveness of methodological nationalism, where the nation-state increasingly exerts a centrifugal/pulling effect on social science research. To summarize, the link between people and place continues to be 'naturalized' along a spectrum of discourse, at one end, and violence, at the other. While many idealists will appreciate Levitt and Glick Schiller's (2004) call for transnational migration studies to reformulate the concept of society, those whose studies are centered on the latter pole of this spectrum know too well that theoretical reformulations won't change material circumstances.

As such, despite sedentarist bias and its dull and outdated essentialist-collectivist

readings on the links between people and place, it is perhaps too soon to abandon the (anti-)sedentarism analytic. As the literature review herein has shown—and further situated within landmark ethnographies—both sedentarist and anti-sedentarist positions continue to pull at each other in meaningful and stimulating ways. In its unique ability to articulate and critically assess the different discursive registers around the link between people and geographic space, this article has shown the importance of (anti-)sedentarism language within the anthropology of forced migration, and more broadly, within interdisciplinary transnational migration studies.

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NOTES

1. Here I borrow from Liisa H. Malkki's lexicon in *Purity and Exile* (1995b). Mythico-history is understood here as ordered, scripted, and formulaic stories that make up a world that can neither be called history nor myth.

2. This is a reference to Bourdieu's (1990 [1980]: 68) conceptualization of doxa as 'undisputed, pre-reflexive, naïve, and native compliance with the fundamental presuppositions of the field'. By 'sedentarist doxa', I am referring to the unquestioned and taken-for-granted logics and 'facts' that naturalize the link between human civilization and permanent settlement.

3. Through its long-standing philosophical contributions, anarchist thought has emphasized freedom, liberty, and autonomy. Relevant to anti-sedentarism, Emma Goldman's (1969 [1917]) essays 'Prisons: A social crime and failure' and 'Patriotism: A menace to liberty' share a common discussion on the spatiality of control. Both Élisée Reclus (2013 [1905]) and Peter Kropotkin (1989 [1902]) are also relevant to this discussion, where they question notions of progress across geographies and refute the naturalization of humans as inherently competitive. Anti-sedentarism can also be found in anthropologist David Graeber's (2004) discussion on non-state political entities and the need to dissolve borders, a point that has been raised by the author in his own discussion on environmental displacement (Parent 2021).

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NICOLAS PARENT
SOCIAL AND CULTURAL GEOGRAPHY LAB
DEPARTMENT OF GEOGRAPHY
McGILL UNIVERSITY
nicolas.parent@mail.mcgill.ca