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Brokerage and Transnationalism: Present and Past Intermediaries, Social Mobility, and Mixed Loyalties

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Abstract: This article brings two distinct sets of literatures in dialogue with one another: ethnohistorical studies on cultural brokerage and mediation in colonial/settler societies and studies of contemporary transnational activities. The article argues that this is productive because it throws into sharper relief three significant areas of contention that are a common thread of many empirical transnational studies, but are rarely of central concern. For each of these three identified aspects, respectively, the desire for mediation, social mobility, and mixed loyalties, it traces the historical resonance with cultural brokerage and shows how ethnohistorical research can complicate current transnational studies. It thereby challenges transnational scholarship's focus on the newness of transnational exchange and demonstrates how ethnohistorical findings on brokers and mediators can aid the development of the research agenda of transnational studies.

Keywords: brokerage, go-between, mediator, colonialism, settler society, ethnohistory

The establishment of the concept of transnationalism has been characterised by a proliferating and fuzzy use of the term as well as by efforts to carefully define its meaning in order to demarcate transnational studies as a field (Glick Schiller, Basch, and Blanc-Szanton 1992; Portes, Guarnizo, and Landolt 1999; Vertovec 1999). While in the earlier phase the merit of the concept of transnationality was established by *isolation* from already existing concepts, recent scholarship has put more emphasis on *dialogue* with other concepts and fields, such as identity, integration and social inequalities (Vertovec 2001; Erdal 2013; Faist 2014). In this spirit, this article proposes to establish a conversation between transnationalism and brokerage, departing from Nina Glick Schiller's definition of transnationalism as encompassing "the ongoing interconnection or flow of people, ideas, objects, and capital across the borders of nation-states, in contexts in which the state shapes but does not contain such linkages and movements" (2007, 449). In particular, I suggest that the findings from ethnohistorical studies on cultural brokerage in colonial and settler societies, in which cultural brokers are described as "operators […] 'between two worlds', exemplars of

'transculturalisation'" (Hosmer, 1997, 493), can contribute to further developing the research agenda of transnational studies.

In a review article on brokerage in the Annual Review of Sociology, Katherine Stovel and Lynette Shaw (2012) trace the foundations of theories of brokerage back to Georg Simmel and Eric Wolf. According to Georg Simmel's theory of triadic relations, the entry of a third party fundamentally changes the nature of relationships, introducing the figure of the non-partisan mediator, as well as the possibility for the third actor to profit from conflict or separation of the two other parties, according to the logic of 'divide and rule' or the 'laughing third' (1950). Eric Wolf (1956) employed the term broker to describe culturally mobile individuals who mediated relations between the (emerging) nation and local communities in Mexico, and suggested that the study of brokerage was a fruitful research avenue for modern anthropology. Stovel and Shaw recognise that brokerage has been studied in different subfields of sociology, but is "hardly considered a central concept in the discipline's theoretical or analytical arsenal" (2012, 139). In a similar vein, Thomas Faist recently argued that brokerage is "an essential yet understudied function in social life" (2014, 38). Drawing on Georg Simmel's work and on network theory, he considers brokerage in cross-border mobility in relation to the (re)production of social inequalities. While Faist (2014) focusses on cross-border mobility in particular, he alludes to the fact that brokerage plays an important role in transnational social spaces *beyond* the act of migration; an argument he also develops in a joint publication with Başak Bilecen (2014) on international doctoral students as knowledge brokers.

This article responds to calls for a more focussed research agenda around brokerage by drawing on ethnohistory[i], a field that has so far remained marginal to discussions of contemporary brokerage. It is not my intention to equate brokerage with transnational practices, since not all brokerage is transnational and there is more to transnational space than brokerage. Instead I propose that reading transnational studies alongside historical cultural brokerage helps to identify and complicate three key aspects of transnationality: the demand for mediation, social mobility and loyalty. While these three themes are chosen to make the parallel concerns between the two fields of scholarship most obvious, their selection is not merely based on convenience. Instead, I argue that thinking transnationality against the backdrop of ethnohistorical studies of brokerage will help researchers of transnational interactions recognise the significance and complexity of these three aspects, which cut across

many empirical studies on transnationality, but rarely are made explicit focal points for analysis.

In the following section, I will give a short introduction to cultural brokerage in settler and colonial societies as described by (ethno)historians. Subsequently, I will present a set of arguments in favour of considering ethnohistorical accounts of cultural brokerage in relation to research on contemporary transnational practices. I will then set out to draw connections between ethnohistorical scholarship on brokerage and transnational studies by focussing first on the demand for mediation, then on social mobility and, finally, on the suspicion related to cross-border mixed loyalties.

Brokerage in Settler and Colonial Societies

Research on cultural brokerage has uncovered the way in which the formation and sustenance of colonial and settler societies depended on 'go-betweens' between different social groups (Metcalf 2005). Language interpreting was often a key ingredient, but the broker role exceeded linguistic translation and extended to negotiation of community's interests and cultural intermediation (Hagedorn 1988). Through archival research, scholars have attempted to recover the fascinating life stories of these actors and the role they played in wider structures. While some of these studies employ a static definition of 'culture', research on cultural brokerage has also challenged ethnohistorians and anthropologists to critically interrogate interpretations of 'culture' as rigid and self-enclosed. It has further encouraged a rewriting of colonial and settler histories in triadic rather than dyadic terms and fostered critical self-reflection on historians' fascination with the often gendered and sexualised cultural broker (Hinderaker 2004; Metcalf 2005, Scully 2005; Havik 2013).[ii]

Brokers emerged from the ranks of colonisers and settlers as well as from indigenous communities (Szasz 1994; Karttunen 1994). Some actively pursued a brokerage role, while others got recruited into it, or were the object of broader political and economic governance. For instance, employers of European fur traders in the Canadian Hudson Bay actively encouraged relationships with indigenous "Indian" women to foster trading contacts (van Kirk 1980). This was not restricted to the fur trade. As Kidwell argues, "there is an important Indian woman in virtually every major encounter between European and Indians [sic] in the New World. As mistresses or wives, they counselled, translated, and guided white men who were entering new territory" (1992, 97); similar observations have been made in African and

Asian colonies (Stoler 2002; Zastoupil 2002). The careers of three mythologised cultural brokers, Pocahontas (North America), la Malinche (Mexico) and Krotoa (South Africa), each females from indigenous communities, are conventionally narrated as deriving from their relationships with European men (Scully 2005).

In colonial New York white settler children were placed among indigenous populations to be trained as cultural brokers (Hagedorn, 1994). In 1608, the thirteen-year-old English boy Thomas Savage, who later became one of the first English interpreters in Virginia, was offered as a gift to the Powhatans by Captain Newport, not only as a sign of 'good intentions', but also to allow him to acquire language skills for future negotiations (Fausz 1987). Others were kidnapped, instead of exchanged in a context of mutual agreement. In 1789, the first governor of South Wales, Australia, for instance, ordered the capture of Woollawarre Bennelong (Smith 2009).

Later intermediaries were oftentimes individuals who embodied the exchange between communities; those considered 'mixed-blood' or *metis*. They, as well as converts to the Christian religion brought by settlers and colonisers, and indigenous people schooled in the colonial education system, were seen as the product of transculturalisation and predisposed to a mediating role (Richter 1988; Fullagar 2009). In late colonialism, once colonial administrations became firmly established, African colonial clerks and Indian social reformers became brokers (Osborn 2003; Lawrance et al. 2006; Goodwin 2013). Thomas Bierschenk, Jean-Pierre Chauveau, and Olivier de Sardan (2002) have traced the continuities between late colonial brokers and contemporary local development brokers in Africa. Clifford Geertz also linked brokerage in the colonial with the postcolonial era by arguing in his famous study that social change in post-revolutionary modern Indonesian state created a demand for the Javanese *kijaji* (local Muslim teachers) to shift their role from religious mediators to political mediators between rural communities and urban elites (1960).

Despite the variety of regions and conditions from which cultural brokers emerged and the importance to consider contextual specificities, a range of common characteristics and patterns can be identified (Szasz 1994). "What links the structures of intermediaries, transcending geographical location and historical period, are the characteristics of ambiguity, mobility and agency" (Goodwin 2013, 3). In the remainder of this article, when juxtaposing

cultural brokerage with transnationalism, it is these commonalities, which will constitute the main focus.

The upsurge in research on cultural brokers in the 1990s, has been attributed to the growing interest in those who negotiated between different communities in the context of the increased pluralisation of the United States ((Weibel-Orlando 1995; Massmann 2000). It is therefore perhaps not surprising that the timing also coincided with the development of transnationalism as a field of studies (Glick Schiller 2007).

Brokerage and Transnationalism

What warrants a juxtaposition and dialogue between cultural brokerage and transnationalism? On a very basic level, cultural brokerage and transnational practices share the engagement with different spaces, often by means of bridging and connecting two or more realms. This is illustrated by the ease by which this quote about cultural brokers could be transposed to transmigrants: "For intermediaries or cultural brokers […] borders have become pathways that link peoples rather than separate them" (Szasz 1994, 3).

However, one cannot equate the nature of these spaces and the act of bridging in colonial cultural brokerage with contemporary transnational practices. This becomes clear, for instance, when Thomas Faist defines the transnational according to two criteria. According to him, transnational means,

> (a) trans-local, that is, connecting localities across borders of states and, by implication, also (b) trans-state, that is, across the borders of nominally sovereign states. Thus transnational does not mean *trans-national*, that is, across nations as ethnic collectives, since trans-national in this sense would theoretically also apply to relations between nations within one state (Faist 2014, 7 italics added).

The cultural brokerage described in ethnohistory predominantly takes place along the lines of the "trans-national", which Faist here excludes from the "transnational". Moreover, the interaction between indigenous peoples and early settler and colonial societies preceded the modern sovereign nation-state, with cultural brokers such as Malinche seen as the (violated) mother of the modern nation-state (Alarcón 1989), and therefore cannot be framed in the contemporary language of the transnational. This might be one reason why Faist refers only to

nineteenth century migration when referring to the "(historical) literature on brokerage in international migration" (2014, 40). Such perspective excludes encounters during earlier settlement and conquest, which are central to ethnohistorical literature. While the scholarly separation between immigrant history and American Indian history is longstanding, it is "detrimental to an understanding of the processes of migration, ethnicity and colonialism" (Fur 2014, 55).

Much early transnational scholarship defined the need for the concept on the basis of the *newness* of a development that was intrinsically linked to the conditions of global capitalism as well as novel modes of transportation and communication (Glick Schiller, Basch, and Blanc-Szanton 1992; Portes, Guarnizo and Landolt 1999; Vertovec 1999). If earlier connections between communities across borders are referenced at all, most scholars quickly move to distinguish these from contemporary forms. Nina Glick Schiller has argued that research on transnationality "requires a concept of historical change that moves away from this ahistorical portrayal of the past, as well as from the binary contrast between the past and the present" (1997, 161), while Steven Vertovec has lamented that "an historical perspective is often largely lost" in transnational studies (2001, 576). The importance of historical sensitivity is reinforced by studies that have demonstrated how the colonial past continues to shape contemporary transnational practices (Flynn 1997; Binaisa 2013).

The few references to early precursors of transnational agents are limited to 'mobile people', such as traders, excluding those who negotiated different worlds as a response to the arrival of other nations on their own soil. This is perhaps unsurprising given the strong association between transnationalism and migrants as subjects. Regular travel between different communities was, however, also a key component of the lives of many colonial cultural brokers. Exceptionally, this even included the travel of indigenous people to the colonial metropole. Either to receive language training, such as the approximately twenty Native Americans that Sir Walter Raleigh brought to his London home in the sixteenth century (Townsend 2004) or to be paraded around once they were established brokers, such as Pocahontas and Bennelong in England (Robertson 1996; Fullagar 2009). Physical mobility across nation-states and cultural brokerage are, however, not the same thing. Metcalf usefully distinguishes between "physical go-betweens" referring to people who travelled and "transactional go-betweens", with the latter describing the "translators, negotiators and, cultural brokers", which are the focus of this article (2005, 10).

Notwithstanding these differences, multiple aspects facilitate the exploration of the resonances between the roles and practices of cultural brokers and transnational actors. First, both brokerage and transnationalism are interdisciplinary concepts, stretching from the Humanities to Social Sciences. Second, both literatures have taken a strong actor-centred approach. Ethnohistorical studies are, however, limited to reconstructing life stories from the (colonial) archive, while contemporary research on transmigrants can rely on interview data. Third, brokerage as well as transnational activities take place in a range of realms. The typology of Portes, Guarnizo, and Landolt (1999), which includes three types of transnational engagement, namely economic, political and socio-cultural, neatly maps onto brokers' roles in each of these realms (Szasz 1994). Lastly, and most importantly, studies on transnationalism and cultural brokerage share the ambition to challenge conventional narrations of culture, community and nation.

After briefly having discussed these similarities and differences, the following sections will establish a dialogue between cultural brokerage and transnationalism by first discussing the demand for mediation, then social mobility, and, finally, contested loyalties, with the aim to highlight and complicate these three constellations, which are referenced in transnational studies, but rarely given primary attention.

Mediation in Demand

Ethnohistorians have shown that intermediaries between indigenous and settler or coloniser communities were much-desired actors. This is demonstrated in the cases of people taken captive or exchanged as gifts for the purpose of mediation. These were organised tactics: "to facilitate first contacts [in the Portuguese conquest of Brazil], sea captains continued to use strategies that had worked well in Africa, such as seizing indigenous boys and men to train as interpreters, and leaving behind expendable European men, such as degredados" (Metcalf 2005, 58). In 16th and 17th century Spanish colonies the capturing of indigenous people to be trained as interpreters of language and "all facets of life of the indigenous peoples" "became such a routine part of expeditionary life that the policy was codified into law in 1573" (Giambruno 2008, 31).

While the kidnapping of early phases of conquest and settlement got replaced by other forms of recruitment and the conscious pursuit of careers in brokerage, what remained stable was

the general demand for intermediaries. A boy who was taken by the Spanish in North America in 1561, then taken to Spain and Mexico, where he lived among the Aztecs but educated by the Dominicans, was later brought back to North America because Spanish conqueror Pedro Menéndez de Avilés "asked the Spanish king if the *valuable* boy could be given into his care" (Townsend 2004, 8 italics added). Almost two centuries later, the fact that *métis* Andrew Montour was proficient in the languages Delaware, Miami, Shawnee and several other Iroquois languages "*put him in demand and enhanced his value* with the Pennsylvania, New York, and Virginia colonial governments" (Hagedorn 1994, 47 italics added). The very success of New France, which compared to the British settlements was small and in close proximity to Amerindian communities, depended on educating and working with brokers: "Not only was intermediaries' work central to New France's security, prosperity, stability and day-to-day social life, it was nothing less than the key which made the extension and maintenance of French influence in North America possible" (Cohen 2013, 236).

While a substantial part of transnational studies addresses the negative evaluation of transnational practices (especially in respect to being regarded as an obstacle to integration, as will be discussed in more detail later), many studies have shown that transnational actors are increasingly in demand, both by 'receiving' and by 'sending' countries as key players in international business and development (Lampert 2009; Berg and Rodriguez 2013; Marabello 2013). This has led states to attempt to "*capture the benefits of transnational spaces* by devising new institutions, such as ministries for the diasporas and a host of ways to *court* citizens abroad" (Faist 2008, 37 italics added). According to Faist (2008) this development opens up new research questions, for example concerning the way people act as intermediaries and the role of networks.

Hence exploring the parallels with cultural brokerage in colonial and settler communities is instructive, in particular in light of Faist's suggestion (2010) that contacts, trust, and knowledge of language, culture and community needs, put mediators in a privileged position. The relevance of drawing lessons from ethnohistory not only pertains to the level of actors and networks, but also to states. With regards to the latter, the earlier discussed argument about the particularities of New France, which compared to New England created a stronger dependency on brokerage, could feed into observations about contemporary state's investment in diasporic communities. For instance, this is especially strong in the case of

"relatively weak, new or reconstituted states, in conflict with other states or groups" (Faist 2008, 35). The fostering of certain transnational activities and agents remains highly selective and policed by border and citizenship regimes (Faist 2008). This was also the case in colonial and settler communities were selective mobility went hand in hand with a strict policing of 'racial' and cultural boundaries. Hence, the demand for mediation depends on and coexists with the maintenance of separations between groups (Salovesh 1987).

Ethnohistorical accounts of cultural brokerage further demonstrate that particular subjects were deemed more suitable for brokerage roles and therefore more in demand. I have argued elsewhere that cultural brokers are '"exemplary figures," which are on the one hand presented as sharing their identity with 'their' community and on the other hand as distinct by virtue of their exceptional character (de Jong 2016). For instance, Behramji Malabari, broker and interpreter in 19th century British India, was on the one hand "the right sort of native, whose knowledge of India was authentic and therefore useable and useful' (Goodwin 2013, 18), but on the other hand schooled by Irish Presbyterian missionaries, leading to close identification with and "admiration of and familiarity with British culture" (Ibid., 4). Hence, it is productive to explore the parallels and differences between the construction of the *ideal* cultural broker in ethnohistory and the *model* transnational diasporic development broker. For instance, the successful strategy of Dominican entrepreneurs to solicit development donor funding depended on their ability to speak excellent English and to show "in the presence of foreign visitors, [a] life-style (and that of their wives), which is very American in many respects: clothing, manner of speech, practice of certain sports, house parties" (Gonzalez quoted in Bierschenk, Chauveau, and de Sardan 2002, 17). Also, the production of the 'ideal labour migrant', a key subject at the migration/development nexus, shows continuities between contemporary migrant and historical colonial subjectivities (Rodriguez and Schwenken 2013). These parallels extend beyond the field of transnational studies to contemporary migrant subjects in national integration projects (Hernández Aguilar 2016).

In the next section, I shift the focus to the brokers as actors themselves to demonstrate that a dialogue with ethnohistorical studies on brokerage can usefully highlight aspects of social mobility for transnational studies.

Social Mobility

Negotiations of social status are a recurrent theme in studies on transnational migration (Glick Schiller 2007). Transnational life worlds are characterised by uneven and unstable social positions. Migrants' ability to send remittances to the country of origin could place them in a high-class position, while their labour to generate the income relegates them in the country of residence to a lower status. Boris Nieswand has neatly captured this dynamic of simultaneous gain and loss of social status with the term "the status paradox of migration" (2011, 3). For instance, the transnational mobility of Nepalese students in Denmark was both dependent on their initial class status - with only the Nepalese middle-class being able to afford study abroad - and inspired by the hope of increasing social status in Nepal upon return. At the same time, the financial costs of mobility forced many to work in jobs they would regard as 'below' their status in Nepal (Valentin 2015).

The dynamic nature of social status as mediated through the transnational is prominent in many of the vignettes about the experiences of transmigrants that Glick Schiller, Basch, and Blanc-Szanton (1992) present in their seminal article 'Transnationalism: A New Analytic Framework for Understanding Migration'. They write about a group of Grenadians in New York who are addressed by the Grenadian Ministry of Agriculture and Development that "by having their views elicited by a government minister from home, the Grenadians were exercising a status as Grenadian leaders, *a social status generally unavailable* to them in the racially stratified environment of New York" (1992, 3 italics added). At another point, they suggest that when Haitians in the US send a barbecue grill to Haiti "the grill is a statement about *social success* in the United States and *an effort to build and advance social position* in Haiti" (1992, 11 italics added). A heterogeneous group of diasporic Haitian professionals who meet in New York to discuss the building of a sports complex in Haiti, are portrayed as eager to "make a mark back home in a way that *maintains or asserts social status* both in Haiti and among […] personal networks in New York" (Ibid., 2 italics added).

Each of these examples show how transnational activities, beyond the act of migration itself, become key to developing and negotiating social status. At this juncture I argue that the ethnohistorical literature on cultural brokerage can help to foreground the dynamic nature of social status as a central component of transnational activities. Brokerage roles generally provided avenues for social mobility. Bierschenk, Chauveau and de Sardan characterise brokerage as "a passageway or stage in a social trajectory, usually marked by upward

mobilization" and state that "becoming a broker can be, in itself, a form of social promotion" (2002, 24).

For instance, reminiscent of descriptions of contemporary transnational entrepreneurs (Drori, Honig and Wright 2009), indigenous women in North America who were married to settler fur traders "relied on the interface between two worlds to position themselves as mediators between cultural groups, to assume leadership roles in religious training, to influence commodity production, and eventually, at least in a few cases, to establish themselves as independent traders" (Sleeper-Smith 2000, 425-426). In eighteenth century British India 'native' women who were in relationships with European men "were able to maximise various opportunities" (Ghosh 2006, 15). While the conclusion should not be drawn that the women profited from colonialism, it was nevertheless the case that "the activities of the East-India Company opened up limited social, material, and legal opportunities for native women, allowing them some mobility within positions of relative powerlessness" (Ibid.). The considerations and manoeuvres of colonial cultural brokers and the structural constraints in which they operated to obtain or maintain certain social status, echo in the observation that "[contemporary] transmigrants use their social relationships and their varying and multiple identities generated from their simultaneous positioning in several social locations both to accommodate to and resist the difficult circumstances and the dominant ideologies they encounter in their transnational fields" (Glick Schiller, Basch and Blanc-Szanton 1992, 4-5). Many ethnohistorical studies on brokerage also demonstrate that the social mobility afforded by brokerage is often of a temporary and precarious nature. Once social conditions change, the demand for brokerage might decrease or brokers have to re-invent their roles. Geertz described how the kijaji in post-revolutionary Indonesia had difficulty deciding "whether it is more dangerous for him to stand stock still or to move" (1960, 242).

An interesting question raised in ethnohistorical studies, which can provide fruit for thought in transnational studies, is whether brokers are more likely to emerge from community elites or from marginal positions. The ambition to leave a marginal social status could provide the impetus for seeking intermediary roles. In 15th and 16th century Africa, "degredados and translators carved out roles for themselves that *compensated for their marginal social status* in the Portuguese world, and they found ways to create for themselves considerable independence and autonomy in the African world" (Metcalf 2005, 58 italics added).

Marginality in a community can provide brokers with particular skills and competences (Hinderaker 2004; Fur 2006).

Reading transnational studies alongside ethnohistorical studies on brokerage facilitates centring social mobility as a key area of concern for transnational research. Such analysis of social mobility through transnational practices can be developed in constructive dialogue with the work of Thomas Faist (2014) on transnationality and the (re)production of social inequalities. For instance, he discusses migrant traffickers as brokering intermediaries, and their role in diminishing or reinforcing social inequalities. The figure of the criminalised migrant trafficker as broker is strongly connoted with profit. Simmel's (1950) theory of the triad, which introduces the 'laughing third' as one figure, is therefore effectively used by Faist to develop a typology of brokerage in relation to the (re)production of inequality.

While migrant smugglers and Indian women in liaisons with European men in the British Empire of the18th century seem to have little in common, and Faist's network theoretical approach to brokerage is distinct from the ethnohistorical perspective on cultural brokerage, what connects these research findings is the underlying anxiety about positionality. This anxiety pertains to how the broker is positioned in power structures as well as in relation to the connected communities. For instance, Durba Ghosh defends the activities of Indian women in relationships with European men which "consolidated the regime rather than challenged or resisted it", by stating that this does not make them "complicit in colonialism'" (2006, 22). Faist (2014) considers the concept of brokerage useful to disrupt the "unhelpful dichotomies" of altruism on the one hand and profit on the other (with the migrant smuggler conventionally associated with the latter). The next section will elaborate on this anxiety, highlighting a third area of convergence between transnational studies and ethnohistorical accounts of brokerage.

Mixed Loyalties

That intermediaries are in demand does not mean that they are uncontested (cf. Severs and de Jong forthcoming). Brokers' "grasp of different perspectives left all sides to value them, although not all may have trusted them" (Szasz 1994, 6). Wolf describes brokers as "exposed", because "Janus-like, they face in two directions at once. They must serve some of the interests of groups operating on both the community and the national level, and they must cope with the conflicts raised by the collision of these interests" (1956, 1076). In French West

Africa, African employees of the colonial administration were referred to as "white-blacks" to describe their complicity with the colonial state (Lawrance, Osborn and Roberts 2006, 3). Broker of imperial relations, the Mexican indigenous woman Malintzin Tenepal, translator, negotiator and mistress of Spanish conqueror Cortéz (Moraga 1983, 99) carries the derogative label "la Vendida, sell-out to the white race", while Krotoa, child servant and mediator of Cape Colony governor van Riebeeck is seen as an "irredeemable sell-out" (Wells 1998, 426). Many of these brokers, including Pocahontas were cast in a double way: both as "traitor to his or her race" and as "national hero" (Hinderaker 2004, 360).

This dynamic is uncannily echoed in the reception of contemporary transnational migrants, moving from "'turncoats' to 'heroes'" (Faist 2013, 11). That Caribbean and Latin American migrants to the United States, are now incorporated as migrants in development and embraced "as 'hero' is a shift […] from prior representations of migrants as threats to or traitors of the national project of the liberal state" (Berg and Rodriguez 2013, 652). Romanian media reports on migrants, display an anxiety about the possibility that migrants might chose not to return or to invest their newly acquired capital elsewhere (Mădroane 2016). Moreover, returning Romanian migrants who displayed changes in behaviour taking up 'foreign' lifestyles, are both admired and distrusted (ibid.). Both in past and present times women's border crossing and treachery is read in sexual terms as literal and figurative prostitution (Wells 1998; Scully 2005). The crossborder trade of contemporary women traders in the border region between Bénin and Nigeria "came to be conceived as a form of prostitution" with all women "trading traitors" automatically regarded as suspect (Flynn 1997, 261).

The parallels between colonial and contemporary anxieties around border crossing underline the centrality of issues of loyalty. As the effectiveness of mediation is seen to be dependent on social ties to guarantee trust and allegiance, mixed loyalties constitute a threat. At the same time, arguably, mixed loyalties are also the enabling factor for successful mediation. Questions of loyalty do not only emerge in the case of diaspora development brokers, other case studies on transnational activities also wrestle with the issue. This is clearly visible in the debate in transnational studies about whether transnational activities are incompatible with integration. Since integration is associated with loyalty, "questions arise as to whether or not migrants who are engaged in transnational activities and sustain transnational identifications can become 'one of us'" (Erdal 2013, 988).

Ethnohistorical case studies on cultural brokers show that anxieties about loyalty are linked to problematic rigid understandings of 'cultures', which are sometimes echoed by scholars themselves. For instance, indigenous broker Bennelong in Australia is described as "one of the first to face the dilemma of knowing two cultures. In the end he chose his own" (Smith 2009, 7). However, in general studies on cultural brokerage effectively demonstrate that the permeability of boundaries between cultural communities and the fluidity of 'cultures'. In both ethnohistorical and transnational studies in which anxieties about loyalties cast their shadow, there is a concern with agents' manipulation of manners. This keeps intact a notion of 'real' or 'authentic' cultural behaviour. The Dominican local development brokers who, as described above, could flaunt their American life style, "willingly expressed third world, anti-imperialist and anti-American opinions", when that served them well in other contexts (Bierschenk, Chauveau, and de Sardan 2002, 17).

To challenge this, studies of transnational engagement can much benefit from conceptualisations of cultural brokerage in colonial and settler societies. Eric Hinderaker's reflection, for instance, can speak effectively to analysis of transnational activities:

> If cultures cannot be conceptualized as self-contained, self-perpetuating systems, and translation and brokerage cannot be treated as transparent acts, the tasks of explaining those acts becomes much more complicated. The old metaphors –crossing a cultural divide, living in two worlds- no longer ring true. But these challenges are liberating as well as threatening. While they complicate any attempt to theorize cultural brokerage, they also make translation and brokerage look different, both less aberrant and more complex than they have often been represented to be (2004, 368)

This fits neatly with critical studies on diaspora engagement in development which criticise an *a priori* meaning of diaspora, instead emphasising that "migrant groups translate, act and perform these discourses, legitimising their role within development, creating new opportunities for political participation, or strategically playing down their political role in the name of diasporic charity'" (Marabello 2013, 207). Or as Ipek Demir (2015) observed for the political efforts of the Kurdish Turkish diaspora in Britain, their mobilisation of British support for the Kurdish political struggle, depends on a complex act of translation, including displaying British style communication and body language.

Crucially, recognising the parallels between cultural brokerage in colonial and settler societies and contemporary transnational activities, draws attention to power dynamics and inequalities between so-called host countries and countries of origin, which further underpin anxieties around loyalties. In the same way that "any effective definition of brokerage must address the issue of power" (Hinderaker 2004, 359), studies on transnational actors need to be explicit about the ways in which transnational activities take place in a global arena where different countries are hierarchically placed in relation to one another.

Concluding Remarks

This article has intervened in the field of transnationalism, which in its early stages has largely defined its relevance by reference to the newness of the phenomenon. In light of the current maturity of transnational scholarship, I have argued here – without contesting the novelty of a certain type of transnational space – that it is constructive to reconnect transnational agents with their historical precursors. In particular, I have set up a dialogue between ethnohistorical studies on cultural brokerage with research on contemporary transnational activities. By juxtaposing these two sets of literatures, I have identified three converging areas of concern, namely the demand for mediation, social mobility and loyalty. While these can be recognised across different studies on transnational actors, they have so far not formed the focal point of research. The parallels between ethnohistorical findings and current transnational phenomena, for example the fact that the desire for mediators coexists alongside a policing of boundaries, can serve to sharpen the analytical lenses of both fields. This can take the form of establishing continuities and changes as well as bringing new topics into focus. Moreover, the fields can draw on each other to advance their agenda of recognising the significance of borders as well as their permeability and of deconstructing reified boundaries between communities.

While this article invited scholars of transnationality to draw lessons from the past, this does not mean that they have nothing to teach historians. Transnational studies have, for instance, more successfully managed to overcome the regionalism of area studies that still characterises ethnohistorical accounts of brokerage. Ethnohistorical studies on brokerage could also benefit from the careful conceptual debates characteristic of the early phase of transnational studies. More speculative, but perhaps also more exciting, would be to carefully untie the knot between the concept of the transnational, advanced capitalism and (post)modern communication or travel, in order to explore whether transnational perspectives could be

productive for historians to understand transcultural encounters in earlier periods and to invite historical scholars to refine a concept that has become so seminal in the social sciences[iii].

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[i] Ethnohistory, "the illegitimate product" of anthropology (regarded as the study of the timeless 'Other' without a meaningful historical past) and history (as the study of the past of 'civilised peoples'), is itself a contentious field (Harkin 2010, 113). The field's origin can be traced back to the US Indian Claims Commission Act in which academics became expert witnesses for land claims, advocating both on the side of indigenous peoples as well as the US state (Strong 2015). While ethnohistorians have done important and progressive work, for instance in

revaluing oral sources, tracing indigenous experiences of colonisation and resistance, and introducing reflexive practices, the name and legacy of ethnohistory cannot completely avoid reinforcing the colonialist practice in which History is distinguished from ethnohistory (Strong 2015).

[ii] While outside the scope of this article, it is important to note that Chicana, black and postcolonial feminist scholars have made key contributions to further problematising the role of so-called mixed race women as mediators and traitors, as well as recovering the agency and resistance of the women involved (Rushin 1981; Anzaldúa 1987; Alarcón 1989).

[iii] I would like to thank one of the anonymous reviewers for suggesting to further explore the implications of the inverse of the argument that transnational scholarship would benefit from learning from ethnohistorical work on brokerage and regret that the limited space here does not allow me to consider this in more detail.

Brokerage and Transnationalism: Present and Past Intermediaries, Social Mobility, and Mixed Loyalties

Abstract: This article brings two distinct sets of literatures in dialogue with one another: ethnohistorical studies on cultural brokerage and mediation in colonial/settler societies and studies of contemporary transnational activities. The article argues that this is productive because it throws into sharper relief three significant areas of contention that are a common thread of many empirical transnational studies, but are rarely of central concern. For each of these three identified aspects, respectively, the desire for mediation, social mobility, and mixed loyalties, it traces the historical resonance with cultural brokerage and shows how ethnohistorical research can complicate current transnational studies. It thereby challenges transnational scholarship's focus on the newness of transnational exchange and demonstrates how ethnohistorical findings on brokers and mediators can aid the development of the research agenda of transnational studies.

Keywords: brokerage, go-between, mediator, colonialism, settler society, ethnohistory

The establishment of the concept of transnationalism has been characterised by a proliferating and fuzzy use of the term as well as by efforts to carefully define its meaning in order to demarcate transnational studies as a field (Glick Schiller, Basch, and Blanc-Szanton 1992; Portes, Guarnizo, and Landolt 1999; Vertovec 1999). While in the earlier phase the merit of the concept of transnationality was established by *isolation* from already existing concepts, recent scholarship has put more emphasis on *dialogue* with other concepts and fields, such as identity, integration and social inequalities (Vertovec 2001; Erdal 2013; Faist 2014). In this spirit, this article proposes to establish a conversation between transnationalism and brokerage, departing from Nina Glick Schiller's definition of transnationalism as encompassing "the ongoing interconnection or flow of people, ideas, objects, and capital across the borders of nation-states, in contexts in which the state shapes but does not contain such linkages and movements" (2007, 449). In particular, I suggest that the findings from ethnohistorical studies on cultural brokerage in colonial and settler societies, in which cultural brokers are described as "operators […] 'between two worlds', exemplars of 'transculturalisation'" (Hosmer, 1997, 493), can contribute to further developing the research agenda of transnational studies.

In a review article on brokerage in the Annual Review of Sociology, Katherine Stovel and Lynette Shaw (2012) trace the foundations of theories of brokerage back to Georg Simmel and Eric Wolf. According to Georg Simmel's theory of triadic relations, the entry of a third party fundamentally changes the nature of relationships, introducing the figure of the non-

partisan mediator, as well as the possibility for the third actor to profit from conflict or separation of the two other parties, according to the logic of 'divide and rule' or the 'laughing third' (1950). Eric Wolf (1956) employed the term broker to describe culturally mobile individuals who mediated relations between the (emerging) nation and local communities in Mexico, and suggested that the study of brokerage was a fruitful research avenue for modern anthropology. Stovel and Shaw recognise that brokerage has been studied in different subfields of sociology, but is "hardly considered a central concept in the discipline's theoretical or analytical arsenal" (2012, 139). In a similar vein, Thomas Faist recently argued that brokerage is "an essential yet understudied function in social life" (2014, 38). Drawing on Georg Simmel's work and on network theory, he considers brokerage in cross-border mobility in relation to the (re)production of social inequalities. While Faist (2014) focusses on cross-border mobility in particular, he alludes to the fact that brokerage plays an important role in transnational social spaces *beyond* the act of migration; an argument he also develops in a joint publication with Başak Bilecen (2014) on international doctoral students as knowledge brokers.

This article responds to calls for a more focussed research agenda around brokerage by drawing on ethnohistory[i], a field that has so far remained marginal to discussions of contemporary brokerage. It is not my intention to equate brokerage with transnational practices, since not all brokerage is transnational and there is more to transnational space than brokerage. Instead I propose that reading transnational studies alongside historical cultural brokerage helps to identify and complicate three key aspects of transnationality: the demand for mediation, social mobility and loyalty. While these three themes are chosen to make the parallel concerns between the two fields of scholarship most obvious, their selection is not merely based on convenience. Instead, I argue that thinking transnationality against the backdrop of ethnohistorical studies of brokerage will help researchers of transnational interactions recognise the significance and complexity of these three aspects, which cut across many empirical studies on transnationality, but rarely are made explicit focal points for analysis.

In the following section, I will give a short introduction to cultural brokerage in settler and colonial societies as described by (ethno)historians. Subsequently, I will present a set of arguments in favour of considering ethnohistorical accounts of cultural brokerage in relation to research on contemporary transnational practices. I will then set out to draw connections

between ethnohistorical scholarship on brokerage and transnational studies by focussing first on the demand for mediation, then on social mobility and, finally, on the suspicion related to cross-border mixed loyalties.

Brokerage in Settler and Colonial Societies

Research on cultural brokerage has uncovered the way in which the formation and sustenance of colonial and settler societies depended on 'go-betweens' between different social groups (Metcalf 2005). Language interpreting was often a key ingredient, but the broker role exceeded linguistic translation and extended to negotiation of community's interests and cultural intermediation (Hagedorn 1988). Through archival research, scholars have attempted to recover the fascinating life stories of these actors and the role they played in wider structures. While some of these studies employ a static definition of 'culture', research on cultural brokerage has also challenged ethnohistorians and anthropologists to critically interrogate interpretations of 'culture' as rigid and self-enclosed. It has further encouraged a rewriting of colonial and settler histories in triadic rather than dyadic terms and fostered critical self-reflection on historians' fascination with the often gendered and sexualised cultural broker (Hinderaker 2004; Metcalf 2005, Scully 2005; Havik 2013).[ii]

Brokers emerged from the ranks of colonisers and settlers as well as from indigenous communities (Szasz 1994; Karttunen 1994). Some actively pursued a brokerage role, while others got recruited into it, or were the object of broader political and economic governance. For instance, employers of European fur traders in the Canadian Hudson Bay actively encouraged relationships with indigenous "Indian" women to foster trading contacts (van Kirk 1980). This was not restricted to the fur trade. As Kidwell argues, "there is an important Indian woman in virtually every major encounter between European and Indians [sic] in the New World. As mistresses or wives, they counselled, translated, and guided white men who were entering new territory" (1992, 97); similar observations have been made in African and Asian colonies (Stoler 2002; Zastoupil 2002). The careers of three mythologised cultural brokers, Pocahontas (North America), la Malinche (Mexico) and Krotoa (South Africa), each females from indigenous communities, are conventionally narrated as deriving from their relationships with European men (Scully 2005).

In colonial New York white settler children were placed among indigenous populations to be trained as cultural brokers (Hagedorn, 1994). In 1608, the thirteen-year-old English boy

Thomas Savage, who later became one of the first English interpreters in Virginia, was offered as a gift to the Powhatans by Captain Newport, not only as a sign of 'good intentions', but also to allow him to acquire language skills for future negotiations (Fausz 1987). Others were kidnapped, instead of exchanged in a context of mutual agreement. In 1789, the first governor of South Wales, Australia, for instance, ordered the capture of Woollawarre Bennelong (Smith 2009).

Later intermediaries were oftentimes individuals who embodied the exchange between communities; those considered 'mixed-blood' or *metis*. They, as well as converts to the Christian religion brought by settlers and colonisers, and indigenous people schooled in the colonial education system, were seen as the product of transculturalisation and predisposed to a mediating role (Richter 1988; Fullagar 2009). In late colonialism, once colonial administrations became firmly established, African colonial clerks and Indian social reformers became brokers (Osborn 2003; Lawrance et al. 2006; Goodwin 2013). Thomas Bierschenk, Jean-Pierre Chauveau, and Olivier de Sardan (2002) have traced the continuities between late colonial brokers and contemporary local development brokers in Africa. Clifford Geertz also linked brokerage in the colonial with the postcolonial era by arguing in his famous study that social change in post-revolutionary modern Indonesian state created a demand for the Javanese *kijaji* (local Muslim teachers) to shift their role from religious mediators to political mediators between rural communities and urban elites (1960).

Despite the variety of regions and conditions from which cultural brokers emerged and the importance to consider contextual specificities, a range of common characteristics and patterns can be identified (Szasz 1994). "What links the structures of intermediaries, transcending geographical location and historical period, are the characteristics of ambiguity, mobility and agency" (Goodwin 2013, 3). In the remainder of this article, when juxtaposing cultural brokerage with transnationalism, it is these commonalities, which will constitute the main focus.

The upsurge in research on cultural brokers in the 1990s, has been attributed to the growing interest in those who negotiated between different communities in the context of the increased pluralisation of the United States ((Weibel-Orlando 1995; Massmann 2000). It is therefore perhaps not surprising that the timing also coincided with the development of transnationalism as a field of studies (Glick Schiller 2007).

Brokerage and Transnationalism

What warrants a juxtaposition and dialogue between cultural brokerage and transnationalism? On a very basic level, cultural brokerage and transnational practices share the engagement with different spaces, often by means of bridging and connecting two or more realms. This is illustrated by the ease by which this quote about cultural brokers could be transposed to transmigrants: "For intermediaries or cultural brokers […] borders have become pathways that link peoples rather than separate them" (Szasz 1994, 3).

However, one cannot equate the nature of these spaces and the act of bridging in colonial cultural brokerage with contemporary transnational practices. This becomes clear, for instance, when Thomas Faist defines the transnational according to two criteria. According to him, transnational means,

> (a) trans-local, that is, connecting localities across borders of states and, by implication, also (b) trans-state, that is, across the borders of nominally sovereign states. Thus transnational does not mean *trans-national*, that is, across nations as ethnic collectives, since trans-national in this sense would theoretically also apply to relations between nations within one state (Faist 2014, 7 italics added).

The cultural brokerage described in ethnohistory predominantly takes place along the lines of the "trans-national", which Faist here excludes from the "transnational". Moreover, the interaction between indigenous peoples and early settler and colonial societies preceded the modern sovereign nation-state, with cultural brokers such as Malinche seen as the (violated) mother of the modern nation-state (Alarcón 1989), and therefore cannot be framed in the contemporary language of the transnational. This might be one reason why Faist refers only to nineteenth century migration when referring to the "(historical) literature on brokerage in international migration" (2014, 40). Such perspective excludes encounters during earlier settlement and conquest, which are central to ethnohistorical literature. While the scholarly separation between immigrant history and American Indian history is longstanding, it is "detrimental to an understanding of the processes of migration, ethnicity and colonialism" (Fur 2014, 55).

Much early transnational scholarship defined the need for the concept on the basis of the *newness* of a development that was intrinsically linked to the conditions of global capitalism as well as novel modes of transportation and communication (Glick Schiller, Basch, and Blanc-Szanton 1992; Portes, Guarnizo and Landolt 1999; Vertovec 1999). If earlier connections between communities across borders are referenced at all, most scholars quickly move to distinguish these from contemporary forms. Nina Glick Schiller has argued that research on transnationality "requires a concept of historical change that moves away from this ahistorical portrayal of the past, as well as from the binary contrast between the past and the present" (1997, 161), while Steven Vertovec has lamented that "an historical perspective is often largely lost" in transnational studies (2001, 576). The importance of historical sensitivity is reinforced by studies that have demonstrated how the colonial past continues to shape contemporary transnational practices (Flynn 1997; Binaisa 2013).

The few references to early precursors of transnational agents are limited to 'mobile people', such as traders, excluding those who negotiated different worlds as a response to the arrival of other nations on their own soil. This is perhaps unsurprising given the strong association between transnationalism and migrants as subjects. Regular travel between different communities was, however, also a key component of the lives of many colonial cultural brokers. Exceptionally, this even included the travel of indigenous people to the colonial metropole. Either to receive language training, such as the approximately twenty Native Americans that Sir Walter Raleigh brought to his London home in the sixteenth century (Townsend 2004) or to be paraded around once they were established brokers, such as Pocahontas and Bennelong in England (Robertson 1996; Fullagar 2009). Physical mobility across nation-states and cultural brokerage are, however, not the same thing. Metcalf usefully distinguishes between "physical go-betweens" referring to people who travelled and "transactional go-betweens", with the latter describing the "translators, negotiators and, cultural brokers", which are the focus of this article (2005, 10).

Notwithstanding these differences, multiple aspects facilitate the exploration of the resonances between the roles and practices of cultural brokers and transnational actors. First, both brokerage and transnationalism are interdisciplinary concepts, stretching from the Humanities to Social Sciences. Second, both literatures have taken a strong actor-centred approach. Ethnohistorical studies are, however, limited to reconstructing life stories from the (colonial) archive, while contemporary research on transmigrants can rely on interview data.

Third, brokerage as well as transnational activities take place in a range of realms. The typology of Portes, Guarnizo, and Landolt (1999), which includes three types of transnational engagement, namely economic, political and socio-cultural, neatly maps onto brokers' roles in each of these realms (Szasz 1994). Lastly, and most importantly, studies on transnationalism and cultural brokerage share the ambition to challenge conventional narrations of culture, community and nation.

After briefly having discussed these similarities and differences, the following sections will establish a dialogue between cultural brokerage and transnationalism by first discussing the demand for mediation, then social mobility, and, finally, contested loyalties, with the aim to highlight and complicate these three constellations, which are referenced in transnational studies, but rarely given primary attention.

Mediation in Demand

Ethnohistorians have shown that intermediaries between indigenous and settler or coloniser communities were much-desired actors. This is demonstrated in the cases of people taken captive or exchanged as gifts for the purpose of mediation. These were organised tactics: "to facilitate first contacts [in the Portuguese conquest of Brazil], sea captains continued to use strategies that had worked well in Africa, such as seizing indigenous boys and men to train as interpreters, and leaving behind expendable European men, such as degredados" (Metcalf 2005, 58). In 16th and 17th century Spanish colonies the capturing of indigenous people to be trained as interpreters of language and "all facets of life of the indigenous peoples" "became such a routine part of expeditionary life that the policy was codified into law in 1573" (Giambruno 2008, 31).

While the kidnapping of early phases of conquest and settlement got replaced by other forms of recruitment and the conscious pursuit of careers in brokerage, what remained stable was the general demand for intermediaries. A boy who was taken by the Spanish in North America in 1561, then taken to Spain and Mexico, where he lived among the Aztecs but educated by the Dominicans, was later brought back to North America because Spanish conqueror Pedro Menéndez de Avilés "asked the Spanish king if the *valuable* boy could be given into his care" (Townsend 2004, 8 italics added). Almost two centuries later, the fact that *métis* Andrew Montour was proficient in the languages Delaware, Miami, Shawnee and several other Iroquois languages "*put him in demand and enhanced his value* with the

Pennsylvania, New York, and Virginia colonial governments" (Hagedorn 1994, 47 italics added). The very success of New France, which compared to the British settlements was small and in close proximity to Amerindian communities, depended on educating and working with brokers: "Not only was intermediaries' work central to New France's security, prosperity, stability and day-to-day social life, it was nothing less than the key which made the extension and maintenance of French influence in North America possible" (Cohen 2013, 236).

While a substantial part of transnational studies addresses the negative evaluation of transnational practices (especially in respect to being regarded as an obstacle to integration, as will be discussed in more detail later), many studies have shown that transnational actors are increasingly in demand, both by 'receiving' and by 'sending' countries as key players in international business and development (Lampert 2009; Berg and Rodriguez 2013; Marabello 2013). This has led states to attempt to "*capture the benefits of transnational spaces* by devising new institutions, such as ministries for the diasporas and a host of ways to *court* citizens abroad" (Faist 2008, 37 italics added). According to Faist (2008) this development opens up new research questions, for example concerning the way people act as intermediaries and the role of networks.

Hence exploring the parallels with cultural brokerage in colonial and settler communities is instructive, in particular in light of Faist's suggestion (2010) that contacts, trust, and knowledge of language, culture and community needs, put mediators in a privileged position. The relevance of drawing lessons from ethnohistory not only pertains to the level of actors and networks, but also to states. With regards to the latter, the earlier discussed argument about the particularities of New France, which compared to New England created a stronger dependency on brokerage, could feed into observations about contemporary state's investment in diasporic communities. For instance, this is especially strong in the case of "relatively weak, new or reconstituted states, in conflict with other states or groups" (Faist 2008, 35). The fostering of certain transnational activities and agents remains highly selective and policed by border and citizenship regimes (Faist 2008). This was also the case in colonial and settler communities were selective mobility went hand in hand with a strict policing of 'racial' and cultural boundaries. Hence, the demand for mediation depends on and coexists with the maintenance of separations between groups (Salovesh 1987).

Ethnohistorical accounts of cultural brokerage further demonstrate that particular subjects were deemed more suitable for brokerage roles and therefore more in demand. I have argued elsewhere that cultural brokers are '"exemplary figures," which are on the one hand presented as sharing their identity with 'their' community and on the other hand as distinct by virtue of their exceptional character (Author A). For instance, Behramji Malabari, broker and interpreter in 19th century British India, was on the one hand "the right sort of native, whose knowledge of India was authentic and therefore useable and useful' (Goodwin 2013, 18), but on the other hand schooled by Irish Presbyterian missionaries, leading to close identification with and "admiration of and familiarity with British culture" (Ibid., 4). Hence, it is productive to explore the parallels and differences between the construction of the *ideal* cultural broker in ethnohistory and the *model* transnational diasporic development broker. For instance, the successful strategy of Dominican entrepreneurs to solicit development donor funding depended on their ability to speak excellent English and to show "in the presence of foreign visitors, [a] life-style (and that of their wives), which is very American in many respects: clothing, manner of speech, practice of certain sports, house parties" (Gonzalez quoted in Bierschenk, Chauveau, and de Sardan 2002, 17). Also, the production of the 'ideal labour migrant', a key subject at the migration/development nexus, shows continuities between contemporary migrant and historical colonial subjectivities (Rodriguez and Schwenken 2013). These parallels extend beyond the field of transnational studies to contemporary migrant subjects in national integration projects (Hernández Aguilar 2016).

In the next section, I shift the focus to the brokers as actors themselves to demonstrate that a dialogue with ethnohistorical studies on brokerage can usefully highlight aspects of social mobility for transnational studies.

Social Mobility

Negotiations of social status are a recurrent theme in studies on transnational migration (Glick Schiller 2007). Transnational life worlds are characterised by uneven and unstable social positions. Migrants' ability to send remittances to the country of origin could place them in a high-class position, while their labour to generate the income relegates them in the country of residence to a lower status. Boris Nieswand has neatly captured this dynamic of simultaneous gain and loss of social status with the term "the status paradox of migration" (2011, 3). For instance, the transnational mobility of Nepalese students in Denmark was both dependent on their initial class status - with only the Nepalese middle-class being able to afford study

abroad - and inspired by the hope of increasing social status in Nepal upon return. At the same time, the financial costs of mobility forced many to work in jobs they would regard as 'below' their status in Nepal (Valentin 2015).

The dynamic nature of social status as mediated through the transnational is prominent in many of the vignettes about the experiences of transmigrants that Glick Schiller, Basch, and Blanc-Szanton (1992) present in their seminal article 'Transnationalism: A New Analytic Framework for Understanding Migration'. They write about a group of Grenadians in New York who are addressed by the Grenadian Ministry of Agriculture and Development that "by having their views elicited by a government minister from home, the Grenadians were exercising a status as Grenadian leaders, *a social status generally unavailable* to them in the racially stratified environment of New York" (1992, 3 italics added). At another point, they suggest that when Haitians in the US send a barbecue grill to Haiti "the grill is a statement about *social success* in the United States and *an effort to build and advance social position* in Haiti" (1992, 11 italics added). A heterogeneous group of diasporic Haitian professionals who meet in New York to discuss the building of a sports complex in Haiti, are portrayed as eager to "make a mark back home in a way that *maintains or asserts social status* both in Haiti and among […] personal networks in New York" (Ibid., 2 italics added).

Each of these examples show how transnational activities, beyond the act of migration itself, become key to developing and negotiating social status. At this juncture I argue that the ethnohistorical literature on cultural brokerage can help to foreground the dynamic nature of social status as a central component of transnational activities. Brokerage roles generally provided avenues for social mobility. Bierschenk, Chauveau and de Sardan characterise brokerage as "a passageway or stage in a social trajectory, usually marked by upward mobilization" and state that "becoming a broker can be, in itself, a form of social promotion" (2002, 24).

For instance, reminiscent of descriptions of contemporary transnational entrepreneurs (Drori, Honig and Wright 2009), indigenous women in North America who were married to settler fur traders "relied on the interface between two worlds to position themselves as mediators between cultural groups, to assume leadership roles in religious training, to influence commodity production, and eventually, at least in a few cases, to establish themselves as independent traders" (Sleeper-Smith 2000, 425-426). In eighteenth century British India

'native' women who were in relationships with European men "were able to maximise various opportunities" (Ghosh 2006, 15). While the conclusion should not be drawn that the women profited from colonialism, it was nevertheless the case that "the activities of the East-India Company opened up limited social, material, and legal opportunities for native women, allowing them some mobility within positions of relative powerlessness" (Ibid.). The considerations and manoeuvres of colonial cultural brokers and the structural constraints in which they operated to obtain or maintain certain social status, echo in the observation that "[contemporary] transmigrants use their social relationships and their varying and multiple identities generated from their simultaneous positioning in several social locations both to accommodate to and resist the difficult circumstances and the dominant ideologies they encounter in their transnational fields" (Glick Schiller, Basch and Blanc-Szanton 1992, 4-5). Many ethnohistorical studies on brokerage also demonstrate that the social mobility afforded by brokerage is often of a temporary and precarious nature. Once social conditions change, the demand for brokerage might decrease or brokers have to re-invent their roles. Geertz described how the kijaji in post-revolutionary Indonesia had difficulty deciding "whether it is more dangerous for him to stand stock still or to move" (1960, 242).

An interesting question raised in ethnohistorical studies, which can provide fruit for thought in transnational studies, is whether brokers are more likely to emerge from community elites or from marginal positions. The ambition to leave a marginal social status could provide the impetus for seeking intermediary roles. In 15th and 16th century Africa, "degredados and translators carved out roles for themselves that *compensated for their marginal social statu*s in the Portuguese world, and they found ways to create for themselves considerable independence and autonomy in the African world" (Metcalf 2005, 58 italics added). Marginality in a community can provide brokers with particular skills and competences (Hinderaker 2004; Fur 2006).

Reading transnational studies alongside ethnohistorical studies on brokerage facilitates centring social mobility as a key area of concern for transnational research. Such analysis of social mobility through transnational practices can be developed in constructive dialogue with the work of Thomas Faist (2014) on transnationality and the (re)production of social inequalities. For instance, he discusses migrant traffickers as brokering intermediaries, and their role in diminishing or reinforcing social inequalities. The figure of the criminalised migrant trafficker as broker is strongly connoted with profit. Simmel's (1950) theory of the

triad, which introduces the 'laughing third' as one figure, is therefore effectively used by Faist to develop a typology of brokerage in relation to the (re)production of inequality.

While migrant smugglers and Indian women in liaisons with European men in the British Empire of the18th century seem to have little in common, and Faist's network theoretical approach to brokerage is distinct from the ethnohistorical perspective on cultural brokerage, what connects these research findings is the underlying anxiety about positionality. This anxiety pertains to how the broker is positioned in power structures as well as in relation to the connected communities. For instance, Durba Ghosh defends the activities of Indian women in relationships with European men which "consolidated the regime rather than challenged or resisted it", by stating that this does not make them "complicit in colonialism'" (2006, 22). Faist (2014) considers the concept of brokerage useful to disrupt the "unhelpful dichotomies" of altruism on the one hand and profit on the other (with the migrant smuggler conventionally associated with the latter). The next section will elaborate on this anxiety, highlighting a third area of convergence between transnational studies and ethnohistorical accounts of brokerage.

Mixed Loyalties

That intermediaries are in demand does not mean that they are uncontested (Author A and B). Brokers' "grasp of different perspectives left all sides to value them, although not all may have trusted them" (Szasz 1994, 6). Wolf describes brokers as "exposed", because "Janus-like, they face in two directions at once. They must serve some of the interests of groups operating on both the community and the national level, and they must cope with the conflicts raised by the collision of these interests" (1956, 1076). In French West Africa, African employees of the colonial administration were referred to as "white-blacks" to describe their complicity with the colonial state (Lawrance, Osborn and Roberts 2006, 3). Broker of imperial relations, the Mexican indigenous woman Malintzin Tenepal, translator, negotiator and mistress of Spanish conqueror Cortéz (Moraga 1983, 99) carries the derogative label "la Vendida, sell-out to the white race", while Krotoa, child servant and mediator of Cape Colony governor van Riebeeck is seen as an "irredeemable sell-out" (Wells 1998, 426). Many of these brokers, including Pocahontas were cast in a double way: both as "traitor to his or her race" and as "national hero" (Hinderaker 2004, 360).

This dynamic is uncannily echoed in the reception of contemporary transnational migrants, moving from "'turncoats' to 'heroes'" (Faist 2013, 11). That Caribbean and Latin American migrants to the United States, are now incorporated as migrants in development and embraced "as 'hero' is a shift […] from prior representations of migrants as threats to or traitors of the national project of the liberal state" (Berg and Rodriguez 2013, 652). Romanian media reports on migrants, display an anxiety about the possibility that migrants might chose not to return or to invest their newly acquired capital elsewhere (Mădroane 2016). Moreover, returning Romanian migrants who displayed changes in behaviour taking up 'foreign' lifestyles, are both admired and distrusted (ibid.). Both in past and present times women's border crossing and treachery is read in sexual terms as literal and figurative prostitution (Wells 1998; Scully 2005). The crossborder trade of contemporary women traders in the border region between Bénin and Nigeria "came to be conceived as a form of prostitution" with all women "trading traitors" automatically regarded as suspect (Flynn 1997, 261).

The parallels between colonial and contemporary anxieties around border crossing underline the centrality of issues of loyalty. As the effectiveness of mediation is seen to be dependent on social ties to guarantee trust and allegiance, mixed loyalties constitute a threat. At the same time, arguably, mixed loyalties are also the enabling factor for successful mediation. Questions of loyalty do not only emerge in the case of diaspora development brokers, other case studies on transnational activities also wrestle with the issue. This is clearly visible in the debate in transnational studies about whether transnational activities are incompatible with integration. Since integration is associated with loyalty, "questions arise as to whether or not migrants who are engaged in transnational activities and sustain transnational identifications can become 'one of us'" (Erdal 2013, 988).

Ethnohistorical case studies on cultural brokers show that anxieties about loyalty are linked to problematic rigid understandings of 'cultures', which are sometimes echoed by scholars themselves. For instance, indigenous broker Bennelong in Australia is described as "one of the first to face the dilemma of knowing two cultures. In the end he chose his own" (Smith 2009, 7). However, in general studies on cultural brokerage effectively demonstrate that the permeability of boundaries between cultural communities and the fluidity of 'cultures'. In both ethnohistorical and transnational studies in which anxieties about loyalties cast their shadow, there is a concern with agents' manipulation of manners. This keeps intact a notion of 'real' or 'authentic' cultural behaviour. The Dominican local development brokers who, as

described above, could flaunt their American life style, "willingly expressed third world, anti-imperialist and anti-American opinions", when that served them well in other contexts (Bierschenk, Chauveau, and de Sardan 2002, 17).

To challenge this, studies of transnational engagement can much benefit from conceptualisations of cultural brokerage in colonial and settler societies. Eric Hinderaker's reflection, for instance, can speak effectively to analysis of transnational activities:

> If cultures cannot be conceptualized as self-contained, self-perpetuating systems, and translation and brokerage cannot be treated as transparent acts, the tasks of explaining those acts becomes much more complicated. The old metaphors –crossing a cultural divide, living in two worlds- no longer ring true. But these challenges are liberating as well as threatening. While they complicate any attempt to theorize cultural brokerage, they also make translation and brokerage look different, both less aberrant and more complex than they have often been represented to be (2004, 368)

This fits neatly with critical studies on diaspora engagement in development which criticise an *a priori* meaning of diaspora, instead emphasising that "migrant groups translate, act and perform these discourses, legitimising their role within development, creating new opportunities for political participation, or strategically playing down their political role in the name of diasporic charity'" (Marabello 2013, 207). Or as Ipek Demir (2015) observed for the political efforts of the Kurdish Turkish diaspora in Britain, their mobilisation of British support for the Kurdish political struggle, depends on a complex act of translation, including displaying British style communication and body language.

Crucially, recognising the parallels between cultural brokerage in colonial and settler societies and contemporary transnational activities, draws attention to power dynamics and inequalities between so-called host countries and countries of origin, which further underpin anxieties around loyalties. In the same way that "any effective definition of brokerage must address the issue of power" (Hinderaker 2004, 359), studies on transnational actors need to be explicit about the ways in which transnational activities take place in a global arena where different countries are hierarchically placed in relation to one another.

Concluding Remarks

This article has intervened in the field of transnationalism, which in its early stages has largely defined its relevance by reference to the newness of the phenomenon. In light of the current maturity of transnational scholarship, I have argued here – without contesting the novelty of a certain type of transnational space – that it is constructive to reconnect transnational agents with their historical precursors. In particular, I have set up a dialogue between ethnohistorical studies on cultural brokerage with research on contemporary transnational activities. By juxtaposing these two sets of literatures, I have identified three converging areas of concern, namely the demand for mediation, social mobility and loyalty. While these can be recognised across different studies on transnational actors, they have so far not formed the focal point of research. The parallels between ethnohistorical findings and current transnational phenomena, for example the fact that the desire for mediators coexists alongside a policing of boundaries, can serve to sharpen the analytical lenses of both fields. This can take the form of establishing continuities and changes as well as bringing new topics into focus. Moreover, the fields can draw on each other to advance their agenda of recognising the significance of borders as well as their permeability and of deconstructing reified boundaries between communities.

While this article invited scholars of transnationality to draw lessons from the past, this does not mean that they have nothing to teach historians. Transnational studies have, for instance, more successfully managed to overcome the regionalism of area studies that still characterises ethnohistorical accounts of brokerage. Ethnohistorical studies on brokerage could also benefit from the careful conceptual debates characteristic of the early phase of transnational studies. More speculative, but perhaps also more exciting, would be to carefully untie the knot between the concept of the transnational, advanced capitalism and (post)modern communication or travel, in order to explore whether transnational perspectives could be productive for historians to understand transcultural encounters in earlier periods and to invite historical scholars to refine a concept that has become so seminal in the social sciences[iii].

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[i] Ethnohistory, “the illegitimate product” of anthropology (regarded as the study of the timeless ‘Other’ without a meaningful historical past) and history (as the study of the past of ‘civilised peoples’), is itself a contentious field (Harkin 2010, 113). The field’s origin can be traced back to the US Indian Claims Commission Act in which academics became expert witnesses for land claims, advocating both on the side of indigenous peoples as well as the US state (Strong 2015). While ethnohistorians have done important and progressive work, for instance in revaluing oral sources, tracing indigenous experiences of colonisation and resistance, and introducing reflexive practices, the name and legacy of ethnohistory cannot completely avoid reinforcing the colonialist practice in which History is distinguished from ethnohistory (Strong 2015).

[ii] While outside the scope of this article, it is important to note that Chicana, black and postcolonial feminist scholars have made key contributions to further problematising the role of so-called mixed race women as mediators and traitors, as well as recovering the agency and resistance of the women involved (Rushin 1981; Anzaldúa 1987; Alarcón 1989).

[iii] I would like to thank one of the anonymous reviewers for suggesting to further explore the implications of the inverse of the argument that transnational scholarship would benefit from learning from ethnohistorical work on brokerage and regret that the limited space here does not allow me to consider this in more detail.