Displacement: Framing the Global Relationally

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Historically, it was colonialism and slavery that introduced the large-scale displacement of labor forces around the globe. While white colonial settlers relocated to explore and exploit new territories, slaves were captured, uprooted, and forced to work for free for European masters. In the contemporary global order of free-market capitalism, complex movements of people across territories, some through voluntary relocation, others through systematic displacement, have continued. However distinct in their incentives and trajectories, these population movements are commonly referred to as (im)migration--a term that often conflates the varied stories behind people's movements within and across political, social, and cultural borders. In this chapter, I will seek to retell a narrative that is often told as one of immigration by uncovering the systematic dispossessions that make it a story of a displaced labor force.

America's heartland in the last four decades has seen a significant transformation. Once capital moved overseas, or south and west, many rust belt towns struggled with depopulation. In the last two decades, however, rural counties of the rust belt that did not have much, if any, foreign-born population have seen the end or even the reversal of their population shrinkage, thanks to the arrival of a new and growing foreign-born labor force (Massey and Capoferro 2008; Durand, Massey, and Capoferro 2005). Since the 1990s in particular, the percentage of foreign-born populations have been decreasing in gateway metropolitan areas while increasing in non-gateway areas.[1] Apart from the lower cost of living, immigrants arrive in these towns for employment. Often, these are jobs in manufacturing sectors that need to stay closer to their raw

material--namely agriculture and animals--but to maintain profitability in the face of global competition they offer depressed wages unattractive to the local labor force. These rust belt townsare saved by the arrival of an immigrant labor force and their families (Grey and Woodrick 2005). Immigrants in many cases "solve" the problem of urban shrinkage--a common reality for many dying towns of the heartland. They revitalize the towns by fixing up houses, registering their children in the local schools, and spending their wages at local shops and other facilities.

One example is a town I have studied in the rural rust belt since 2005: a small packing town in Illinois that lost many of its local manufacturing jobs in the 1970s and 80s. A meatpacking plant which remained in the area saw a transition in ownership during the mid-1980s, lowering wages by $2 per hour. As many local residents sought opportunities elsewhere, an immigrant labor force was recruited by the town's meatpacking plant, transforming the town and its diminishing population. Adjacent small towns struggled to keep their schools open and their downtowns became filled with boarded-up businesses and houses, while in this packing town a new elementary school and library were built, and there was a steady market for home ownership and rentals and a functioning downtown business area.

In this case, which some describe as a success story for immigration, I grapple with two questions: What is the global cost of the revitalization of the rust belt towns like this? What kind of globally constituted relationships and practices make meatpacking jobs more viable for immigrant workers and less so for their native-born counterparts?   To answer these questions, I conducted ethnographic fieldwork in this Illinois meatpacking town and also visited the home communities of immigrant workers in Mexico and Togo. I spoke with their children, parents, relatives, friends, and neighbors back home to understand the set of social, political, and economic processes in communities of origin that not only motivated their move to the United

States, but contributed to their willingness to accept and stay in meatpacking jobs in the Midwest. Conducting ethnographic research in multiple global sites that are intimately, albeit not so obviously, connected allowed me to see the series of systematic dispossessions that produce the workforce that shows up at my study site in Illinois. It clarified the need to speak about immigration in close conjunction with displacement.

To frame the story of this meatpacking Illinois town as one of immigration, without exposing the dispossessions and displacements that have produced such population movements, suggests that it is a natural and inevitable occurrence and assumes a certain innocence in the process of globalization. To leave displacement out of the picture assumes and suggests that international migration is similar to the laws of physics or nature: water flows to the lower plain; people move to places with higher likelihood of jobs. To avoid such simplification, in my study of the revitalized midwestern town I also study the transformation processes in immigrants' communities of origin. This helps us to better understand the processes that send populations to relocate in faraway places and why they take on backbreaking jobs from which many native-born workers walk away.

Framing Relationally

How we tell the story of globalization matters. Our framings of the global determine what we reveal and what we obscure; what we place at the center and what remains at the margin; what defines the structure or becomes a marginal element in the construction of the story. The story of revitalizing packing towns framed merely through the processes of immigration to the heartland reveals some and obscures other aspects of the global processes. It reveals how the international migration of the labor force transforms local communities which, despite their

geographic isolation, are intimately involved in the production of global capital and its processes of accumulation. But it renders invisible the stories of dispossession and displacement that produce a migrant labor force in the first place. Dispossession and displacement are important conditions that produce migration by laborers. Telling the story of migration without its interwoven stories of displacement offers a picture that is not only incomplete but inaccurate. As the saying goes, "Half the truth is a lie."

I stress the importance of telling the story of immigration, an important inroad into the story of globalization, *relationally.* I use a multi-scalar analysis developed through a multi-sited methodology to see not only the node but the web, not only the processes that capture and consume immigration and the labor force of migrants, but also those that produce them. Multi-scalar analyses and multi-sited ethnographic approaches reveal the indivisible processes of dispossession and displacement that create the contemporary processes of migration and globalization.

What drives me in my global research is to see communities relationally--that is, to detect points of junction and disjunction, and to expose the inequalities required to make up the "global village" that is celebrated today. This urge arises from an acute awareness of the points of disconnection, disjunction, and friction (Tsing 2000) as well as the stoppages and decelerations (Sassen 2000) through which globalization takes place. My approach to framing such global processes strives for a multi-scalar and multi-directional analysis that scholars before me have explored (see Gille 2001; Burawoy et al. 2000; Guarnizo and Smith 1998). While anchored in specific locations, my analysis of the global spans local, national, and global boundaries, and recognizes the multiple directions through which globalization is constituted. Such a framework allows me to see the complex and multiple spatialities and temporalities of globalization

(Miraftab 2011). It accounts for the non-linear zigzags that shape global policies and human migration, and recognizes the structures that selectively include and exclude nations in the imagination of a global community.

Following Gillian Hart (2006), I argue we must eschew an "impact model of globalization," whereby localities are mere sites in the global restructuring of capital. Our scholarly optics must allow us to recognize the interconnections and multi-directionality of these relationships. The methodology Michael Burawoy and colleagues (2000, 2001) label "global ethnography" is very helpful in this regard. It allows us to see how "[w]hat we understand to be 'global' is itself constituted within the local; it emanates from very specific agencies, institutions and organizations whose processes can be observed first-hand" (Burawoy 2001, 150). Hart contributes to this approach a Lefebvrian concept of place that stresses the relational constitution of a specific place in the production of global processes. According to Hart, this constitutes a critical ethnography capable of unearthing the local production of globalization that is not "a bounded enclosure," but rather highlights "nodal point[s] of connection in wider networks of socially-produced space. Places are always formed through relations with wider arenas and other places; boundaries are always socially constructed and contested; and the specificity of a place-- however defined--arises from the particularity of interrelations with what lies beyond it, that come into conjuncture in specific ways." Critical ethnography, Hart argues, builds "directly on this conception of the production of space and place" (2006, 994-95).

To see the interconnected relationships that shape the story of globalization and international migration, we need a shift in modes of seeing. Such a shift requires that we examine the phenomenon at several scales—local, regional, and global—and examine the inter-scalar relationships. It also requires that we utilize a multi-sited mode of inquiry that not only follows

objects and people across locations but, more than that, is able to reveal how each of these seemingly independent processes and locations is intimately connected with the others through hierarchically structured relationships.

To this end, I adopted a multi-sited ethnographic inquiry (Marcus 1995). I expanded the physical sites of my ethnographic study beyond the town in Illinois to other locations across the globe intimately connected with this town. But unlike Marcus's methodological intervention, I did not follow and stay with the movements of a particular group of initial subjects. I started with the relatives of Illinois immigrants in their communities of origin but moved beyond the specific practices connecting these transnational families and networks of support to include those who have not emigrated or have returned after migration, and beyond them to the broader processes and relationships that shape power structures connecting these three sites.

In the spirit of multi-sited global ethnography I studied historical, political, economic, and cultural forces, as well as immigrants' everyday practices and imaginations that connect these communities to each other to construct the global. I combined several years of fieldwork in Illinois (beginning in 2005) with visits to Michoacán, Mexico, in 2008 (followed up by my research assistant in 2010); and to Lomé, the capital city of Togo, in 2010. In the Midwest, I focused on one specific town in Illinois. I interviewed residents, including the native-born and new immigrants, authorities, and members of non-profit groups and civic associations and conducted focus groups among recent immigrants through their English as a Second Language (ESL) community college classes. In Mexico and Togo I interviewed the relatives of Illinois immigrants, returned immigrants, future immigrants, and other key informants.

Using a multi-sited ethnographic approach unveils the interrelated global realities that shape new immigration to the rust belt. These transnational processes are not merely a global

restructuring of production. They are also restructurings that occur in the sphere of social reproduction and through simultaneous place-based and translocal strategies. The countervailing processes rely on local communities, neighbors, and households and yet draw on translocal and transnational networks of families, friends, and remittances through what I call a "global restructuring of social reproduction." Thus, the processes of local development in this packing town need to be understood in conjunction with processes of dispossession and displacement taking place in other global locations.

Multi-sited ethnography, in particular, proved helpful for working on contentious issues and in communities that are politically constrained. In this modern-day company town, everyone and every institution is tied to the company. If you do not work at the plant, you probably have a wife or a husband, a son or a daughter, a niece or a nephew who does. One way or the other, "all roads end at the plant," as one of the local residents said. As a small town with a single employer, the situation introduces a different set of concerns for field-based research. As one respondent explained: "If you get an altercation with the police or you get drunk and get into a fight in the local bar this Saturday night, you are called to the management office at the plant on Monday and risk being dismissed depending on what the issue has been." There is not much one can do in town without the plant management knowing, or for that matter without the whole town knowing. "Think about it: even your traffic violation is listed in the local weekly newspaper," observed a new arrival from Detroit. The implication of this for research into potentially contentious issues can be grave. The difficulty of researching and breaking into the closed circle of a company town is a matter not only of gaining trust, but also of the risk your questions may impose on your respondent.

In such a context there were many questions I did not readily pose to my interviewees.

For example, much of my information regarding labor practices of the company when it comes to the injuries of undocumented workers had to come from my fieldwork outside of the packing town and among returned immigrant workers. Conducting research in the communities of the workers' origin or among workers who had returned home was liberating in that these respondents were not subject to the same pressure as their counterparts back in Illinois. They openly shared their stories and their observations. I also felt free to participate in conversations about the company's labor practices, injuries, and bonuses, since I knew they posed little or no risk to my respondents. The advantages of multi-sited ethnography are therefore important when working with vulnerable populations and highly contentious contexts: namely, you can avoid an omnipresent power structure by conducting the interview in another context.

Accumulation by Displacement and Global Restructuring of Social Reproduction-

A vast body of literature on the global restructuring of the meat industry has long established the logic of capital in this process (Broadway 1995; Warren 2007). In relocating to rural areas, industry moves away from urban centers where unions have a stronghold and closer to raw materials (in this case hog farms). It also is better able to integrate vertically (production of animals and their feed, slaughtering of animals, processing and packing of meat) and take advantage of economically distressed rural municipalities offering tax abatements along with lax labor and environmental regulation. In the last two decades, the recruitment of immigrants and minorities to plants in small towns has further enhanced a rural industrialization strategy by creating a segmented labor market, pitting one group of workers against the other. Such processes and dynamics are extensively documented and discussed in a broad body of labor literature (Bonacich 1972; Farley 2005; Edwards 1973).

While an analytical focus on the global restructuring of production helps explain some

aspects of the rapid social and demographic transformation taking place in rural towns, parts of this complex process remain murky. The restructuring of production analysis offers insights into the logic of capital in relocating production sites and wooing an immigrant labor force. But this approach falls short in explaining the logic of laborers and what kind of practices motivate them to keep these jobs.

My research brings to light two key conditions for understanding the story of rural revitalization: (1) processes of accumulation by displacement; and (2) the global restructuring of social reproduction.

The developments that take place in heartland Illinois, in Michoacán, Mexico, and in Lomé, Togo, form intricate parts of the conditions Marxian analysts articulate as accumulation by dispossession (Harvey 2006). Using a relational comparison approach (Hart 2006) one uncovers how the diminishing agricultural livelihoods in Mexico and rising unemployment and political instability in Togo contribute to the vitality of this midwestern packing town, its sustained population growth, healthy housing market, and flourishing school system. A relational analysis helps us see how the meat industry's crisis of accumulation in the 1970s and 80s benefited from a series of dispossessions around the world resulting from political and economic adjustment policies.

In Mexico, for example, the advance of free trade policies, particularly the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA), undermined agricultural production by Mexican farmers and contributed to their being dispossessed of viable rural livelihoods--processes that ultimately catalyzed the supply of cheap labor to the plant in Illinois. The privatization of *ejido*s (or communal lands)[2] and the subsequent passage of NAFTA and other neoliberal policies facilitated the dispossession of Mexican farmers of their limited resources. The story of Mr.

Fernández, the father of two Illinois immigrant workers, whom I interviewed in Michoacán, is a case in point. Mr. Fernández had formerly been involved in domestic milk production. He explained his decision to sell his *ejido* share and send his sons to the United States as migrant workers when he could no longer compete with the price of imported milk brought in under NAFTA. "We have no other way to support ourselves," he told me. His experience testifies to the logic that has dispossessed and displaced his sons, who are now workers at the Illinois meatpacking plant.

Similarly, the end of the Cold War and the implementation of structural adjustment policies in Togo created the economic conditions leading to a brain drain and the uprooting of educated youth and civil servants. The fall of the Berlin Wall shifted the geopolitics of West Africa. No longer would Togo receive international aid, as it was not an asset as a pro-capitalist ally against other Soviet-leaning governments of the region (see Piot 2010). This shift removed both political and economic support going to the corrupt Togolese government from Europe, the United States, and international development agencies. The post-Cold War geopolitical shifts reducing the position of Togo within the hierarchy of priorities of global institutions, combined with globally implemented structural adjustment policies, shrank the Togolese public sector and its social service activities, creating massive unemployment. Educated youth found a "way out" of this unemployment through gaining a lottery visa that facilitated the displacement of educated Togolese to the Global North and their transformation into inexpensive labor.

In more recent recruitment strategies, the company has turned to yet another group of migrant workers, which I refer to as an "internally displaced" labor force. This group of workers includes African Americans recruited from Detroit. What attracts the employer to this labor force is their legal citizenship, but in the imagination of local white residents they are as foreign as the

immigrants. While the Togolese and Mexicans cross national borders, African Americans displaced from their urban neighborhoods, lifestyle, and culture in Detroit are equally "out of place" in towns that before this recent wave of immigrant labor force recruitment did not have any nonwhite residents. I will not go into the violent racism African Americans experience when imported as workers. Nor will I discuss the dynamics among the diverse groups of workers and how identities are constructed inside and outside the plant.[3] I mention the African American workers recruited from Detroit to highlight the parallels that exist between their experiences and those of the international immigrant workers. Both groups represent a displaced labor force, one constituted internationally and the other internally displaced. In the last two decades de-industrialized cities of the rust belt such as Detroit have been subject to free market policies similar to those that have produced dispossessed and displaced populations in Mexico and Togo.

While dispossession and displacement are forces that motivate the labor force to relocate and accept high-risk, low-paying jobs, they do not explain why and how these jobs are not filled adequately by the native-born workforce. What are the practices and processes that make meatpacking wages "viable" for a foreign-born workforce, but less so for their native-born counterparts?

Transnational reorganizations of familial and community care, what I call *the global restructuring of social reproduction,* are critical to answering this question. I use the term "social reproduction" in a broad sense, one that extends beyond biological reproduction or childcare to include the reproduction of place, cultural identities, traditions, and sense of pride. Important to the ability of the foreign-born workforce to accept the high-risk, low-paid jobs of the meat industry are the possibilities for "outsourcing" reproduction and care work for segments of the workers' life cycle to their home communities. Many immigrants leave their children behind in

the care of relatives and spouses; others return home to their relatives and families when they are old or injured. Hence, responsibility for such care work rests elsewhere. This includes childhood, old age, and periods when they are unable to work due to health considerations. Social reproduction during these periods of "down time" is carried out in communities of origin. To realize the social reproduction of immigrant workers in Illinois, an army of people, with women at the center, are at work elsewhere in their support.

A range of factors move immigrants to and keep them in places of destination. From remittances that they can send home to pay for daily bread, road pavement infrastructure development, and health and education insurance; to the hope that motivates immigrants to embark on risky journeys and perform hazardous jobs out of a sense of obligation; to honor and pride that drives immigrants to tolerate the disillusionment and meet cultural expectations. All of these factors keep immigrant workers in jobs that otherwise would not be viable. The imagination of an "elsewhere" where one could retire or retreat to is yet another important consideration in determining what wages workers are willing to work for. A real or imagined "elsewhere," where a person would "be set for life," has a material power and exchange value. In some cases this is real. Moderate savings in the United States offer a source of capital which can be combined with the labor of family members at home to create a comfortable retirement or to finance a business which would constitute another sort of promise. But this is not always a possibility. Immigrants develop "roots" in towns they move to; they do not want to move away from their children and grandchildren in communities of destination; their connections to home weaken; or their U.S. savings are lost in a bad business deal. Multiple factors might make this promise of "elsewhere" only an imagined one. Nevertheless, this imagination has the material power to make a wage untenable for one worker but acceptable for another. Imagined or real,

home community as an alternative place that workers create or dream of creating becomes an asset that distinguishes the viability of wages across groups of workers.

The African American workers recruited from Detroit are also displaced migrant workers who are dispossessed through previous cycles of capital accumulation in the rust belt. While this population moved to Illinois attracted by the promise of a full-time job at the packing plant, they are not able to outsource segments of their social reproduction to communities of origin or to networks of support elsewhere with a lower living cost. Nor can they enjoy the imagination of the elsewhere as a resource the way international displaced migrant workers can. The former Detroit residents do not rely on the kind of social reproduction strategies that Togolese or Mexican workers employ. As one of them said, "I cannot leave my child to be raised by my mother in Detroit, it will cost her as much as it will cost me here." The ability to take part in global restructuring of social reproduction for oneself and one's family makes a difference in workers' ability to make the wages of the company worthwhile. Workers who do not take part in transnational practices for social reproduction cannot restructure their care work in ways that their internationally displaced counterparts do. So while displaced migrant workers from Detroit and Togo and Mexico are similar in that they are all displaced and they are considered as foreign in the imagination of the white locals, they are distinct in how they can strategize the challenge of social reproduction.

A multi-scalar and multi-sited ethnographic approach to the complex transformation of this rust-belt town makes visible the series of connected dispossessions that have created the crisis of social reproduction and hence displaced workers from their communities of origin to join the army of cheap labor in communities of destination. It also makes visible how an internationally displaced labor force deals with the crisis of social reproduction through their

transnational families and practices. If white native-born workers earn the "wages of whiteness" (Roediger 1991); and the internationally displaced migrant workers earn wages subsidized by their families and home institutions in their communities of origin, African American workers stack at the bottom. Displaced from their home communities and often experiencing a history of discrimination, these black workers do not take part in transnational practices for their social reproduction.

Framing for Global Justice

When framing global processes, what we place inside or outside the frame, at the center or margin, is key to the silences we create or the voices we amplify. Telling the story of revitalized Midwest towns as a story of immigration creates many silences. Immigration studies, by framing the phenomenon within one singular location, either captures the story of towns receiving immigrants and hence the challenges and perks that come with them, or focuses on locations that have sent immigrants. Those focused on immigrants' communities of origin often focus on remittances or the kinds of policies that displace rural or native populations. Seldom, however, has immigration studies connected these nodes to see them relationally and understand the relationships between displacement on the one hand and revitalization and economic prosperity on the other.

Looking through a multi-scalar analytic lens and a multi-sited ethnographic approach, one discovers local developments and transformations of the rust-belt town in relation to processes taking place in other communities--some far away, as in Togo and Mexico, and others closer by, as in rust-belt cities like Detroit. A multi-scalar analysis indicates that two sets of interconnected relationships are crucial to understanding contemporary global processes: the interconnected processes of dispossession and displacement and the global restructuring taking

place within the realm of production and reproduction.

Framing the global relationally is critical in bringing to light the injustices that shape it. As my research makes visible, the hard work of the dispossessed peasants in Michoacán and the pain of parents who left their child behind in Lomé are integral to the economic revitalization and repopulation of the Illinois packing town. Scholarship with a deep commitment to social justice frames global processes such that connections between faraway yet intimately related contexts are exposed, explained, and integrated into the knowledge we develop.

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[1] Traditional gateway metropolitan areas are Los Angeles, Miami, Chicago, New York, and Houston (Gozdziak and Martin 2005; Frey 2006; Portes and Rumbaut 2006). The percentage of the total foreign-born population in the United States living in these traditional gateway metro areas shrank from 43 percent in 1990 to 33 percent in 2010, while the percentage of foreign-born residents living in non-gateway destinations grew from 56 to 66 percent (calculated from IPUMS data [Ruggles et al. 2010]).

[2] *Ejido* is an Aztec system of communal landownership reintroduced and institutionalized as a component of the Mexican land reform programs of the revolutionary governments 1911-1934. *Ejidos* were by and large dismantled by the neoliberal privatization policies of President Salinas in the 1990s, which amended Article 27 of the constitution to allow privatization of communally owned *ejidos.*

[3] For that see my forthcoming book with Indiana University Press *Making a Home in the Heartland: Immigration and Global Labor Mobility.*

Hilary E. Kahn is Director of the Center for the Study of Global Change at Indiana University. She is author of Seeing and Being Seen: The Q'eqchi' Maya of Livingston, Guatemala, and Beyond. the global frame, we must transform the member frame (frame n) to the. global frame (frame o), using. (b). ao = con, r". In the formulation presented in the previous articles, we worked with the actualjoint displacements and external joint forces referred to the global frame. The governing equations are given by (17-30), which we list below for. convenience