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## Replacing Old Spatial Empires of the Mind

### Rethinking Space and Place Through Network Spatiality

*In this article we argue for the spatialization of research on educational transfer in the field of comparative education within a theoretical framework that focuses on networks, connections, and flows. We present what we call a “spatial empire of the mind,” which is comprised of a set of taken-for-granted “truths” about space and place that have legitimized much research in the social sciences. We critique this spatial empire of the mind and present some of the core ideas associated with the spatial turn. The next part of the article reviews three possible ways that new spatial theorizing has been taken up in educational research. Here we make reference to existing educational studies that engage with new ways of rethinking space and place. The argument that we put forward is that the most promising approach, for research on educational transfer within the field of comparative education, is network spatiality. We argue that there is great value in rethinking space*

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*and place not simply as objects of study, but within a theoretical framework that focuses on networks, interconnections, and movements within and between them, as well as their productive capacity to produce and shape knowledge, identities, and human subjectivities.*

Conceptualizations of space and place have been, and still are, of great importance in the social sciences in general and in the field of education in particular. One area of educational research that deals more directly with concepts of space and place is work on policy borrowing and educational transfer. We understand transfer as the movement of educational knowledge across space. Most of the research on this theme (and more broadly within the social sciences) has been based in what we call a “spatial empire of the mind,” which posits a separation between place and space, as well as fixed metaphorical meanings of place and space. These conceptions of space and place limit the capacity of researchers to capture the complexity of connections and relations between different (sometimes new) actors that participate in the global educational field. In this article, we challenge the assumptions underpinning this spatial empire of the mind and propose alternative spatial metaphors to guide educational research.

We begin this article with a definition of “empires of the mind” and then review a set of taken-for-granted assumptions that comprise the spatial empire of the mind. We critique this spatial metanarrative and follow this with a review of what we consider to be some relevant ideas associated with new spatial thinking based on relational character and productive functions of space and place. These ideas associated with the spatial turn have been taken up in the social sciences in a variety of ways. We review three different approaches to engaging with the spatial turn, making reference to existing educational research that reflect these approaches. The different ways that spatial theorizing can and has been used includes focusing on the regulatory nature of space and place; scalar research; and finally spatial networking. It is the final body of research that we find the most promising for transfer research within comparative education. We turn to two methodological approaches: social network analysis and transnational history to show their potential to provide comparative education researchers with new spatial methodological tools that can contribute to a more thorough understanding of networks that constitute contemporary geographies of power/knowledge in education. We suggest that by focusing on spatial networking, comparative education can construct a new cartography of connections between educational places and spaces, and can better understand how knowledge about education circulates and is transformed in the global educational field.

## **Spatial empire of the mind: A limited narrative of modernity and globalization**

Much current writing in the social sciences presents a common meta-narrative (or empire of the mind) about the changing relations between space, place and time from the premodern through to an era of globalization. We are using the phrase “empire of the mind” to reflect the idea of a dominant metanarrative that shapes the ways in which we see the world. Jean-François Lyotard coined the term “metanarrative” with his claim that the postmodern era was characterized by a mistrust of and skepticism about metanarratives such as progress, emancipation, and freedom associated with Enlightenment thinking. Lyotard (1979) wrote about the totalizing nature of metanarratives and their reliance on some forms of “transcendent and universal truth” (pp. xxiv–xxv). Although our own conceptualization of the term “empire of the mind” is similar to the concept of metanarratives, especially with respect to its legitimizing function, we opt for the term “empire” given its roots in the Latin word *imperium*, meaning power and authority. Furthermore, empires are typically formed from separate components that come together, and as such they have been known for transgressing political boundaries, and are not necessarily defined by contiguous boundaries. Their reach was far and wide, and hegemonic power was exerted through various flows and connections of people, goods, and ideas across frontiers, concepts we explore later in this article (Howe, 2002; Mazumdar, 2009).

We can take this concept of “empires of the mind” and apply it to a set of undergirding assumptions about space, place, and time that have dominated contemporary work in the social sciences, including educational research. How space, place, and time are represented (or not represented) in theory matters because this affects our interpretations of and actions within the social world. As Harvey (1989) puts it: “The history of social change is in part captured by the history of the conceptions of space and time, and the ideological uses to which those conceptions might be put. Furthermore, any project to transform society must grasp the complex nettle of the transformation of spatial and temporal conceptions and practices” (p. 218). We refer to a set of commonly held understandings about the relationships between space, place, and time as a spatial empire of the mind, which has operated to legitimize a particular narrative about modernity and globalization. We assert that this spatial empire of the mind has produced a limited and oversimplified view of the processes associated with globalization, and argue later in the article for a broader understanding of space and place that moves us beyond binary distinctions between these concepts.

According to this spatial empire of the mind, in premodern times social

relations were mostly circumscribed to those located within the same territory. Thus in premodern societies, space generally coincided with place. With the advent of modernity, space was dislocated from place and from time (Giddens, 1990; Harvey, 1989). We summarize this narrative keeping in mind that the processes associated with modernization occurred unevenly across time and space and therefore had very different effects across different sites, physical, social, and intellectual. The “discovery” of “new” regions of the world by the Western European empire and the charting of the globe set the basis for the notion of space as independent of any particular place. Social relations were expanded, and the certainty of a given place was replaced by the insecurity of a relative and changing space in which events occurring in one location affected other distant places. Contact between different social groups increased and traditional social practices started to be questioned as they were contrasted with “the other.” This influenced the speed and scope of social change, leading to universal frames of spatial reference.

The shift from feudalism to modern capitalism also involved the separation of space from time that was made possible by the invention of the hour in the thirteenth century, the development of the minute and second as common measures of time in the seventeenth century, the eighteenth-century invention of the mechanical clock and its diffusion to the population, and later standardization of calendars and time across most regions. The clock expressed a linear and uniform dimension of time that was seen as having qualities analogous to those that attached time to space. Yet time was still connected to space until the uniformity of time measurement was matched by uniformity in the social organization of time (Giddens, 1990; Harvey, 1989).

These early modern changes and the latter (nineteenth-century) rise of historicism, and related developments of industrial capitalism, Western Marxism, and the social sciences, pointed to the subordination of space to time. As Foucault (1986) maintains: “The great obsession of the nineteenth century was, as we know, history: with its themes of development and of suspension, of crisis, and cycle, themes of the ever-accumulating past, with its great preponderance of dead men and the menacing glaciation of the world” (p. 1). Toward the end of the nineteenth century, the spatial was viewed as being closed, fixed, immobile, and even associated with the dead, while time was conceived as richness, fecundity, life, and the dialectical (Foucault, 1980). The spatial was also viewed as a way of containing the temporal. Once the world could be held still, it was possible to study and understand it. Massey (2005) explains: “Space conquers times by being set up as the *representation of history/life/the real world*. On this reading space is an order imposed upon the inherent life of the real” (p. 30). Thus, according to this argument, space became subordinate to time in social science thought.

Continuing with our metanarrative about the changing relations between space, place, and time, contemporary theorists contend that the processes of globalization have further contributed to new space-place and space-time relations. Giddens (1990) refers to the idea of “time-space compression” to explain how place and space are so mutually constituted today that any conceptualization of place as “here” and space as “out there” is no longer justifiable. Similarly, Harvey (1989) used the phrase “time-space compression” to describe processes that seem to accelerate the experience of time and reduce the significance of distance during our current times.

The ways in which the term “globalization” has been used are in many cases predicated on a set of assumptions about space and place that are oversimplified and block our sociological imagination and capacity to understand the world. As Massey (2005) argues, they evoke powerful images of an “immense unstructured, free unbounded space and of a glorious, complex mixity” (p. 81). Oversimplified views of globalization produce power effects, a topic we return to later in this article. As Massey (2005) suggests, the concept of globalization has become a grand narrative that has effects similar to the notion of “progress” for the Enlightenment and modernity. If progress was the grand narrative that legitimized military, political, economic, and cultural (including educational) colonization, globalization now defines a certain inexorable route through which some political decisions become inevitable in order to “adapt” to global changes that are reified and rendered as inescapable and out of control.

### **Limitations of the spatial empire of the mind**

The ideas associated with the spatial empire of the mind have been challenged in many ways by other researchers. For instance, the notion that space and place were conjoined in premodern times has been questioned by historical research that has shown that far from being isolated, most “traditional” societies were connected with other indigenous local peoples (Smith & Ward, 2000). The interpretation of an isolated premodern world is based on a Eurocentric perspective in which it is assumed that the only relevant connection was with the “civilized” European world. This calls into question the assumption that social relations were circumscribed to a community inside given territorial boundaries and, consequently, that in premodern societies, space generally coincided with place.

Furthermore, there is plenty of evidence of connections between regions not geographically bound to one another in early empires in Africa, the Americas, and Asia. For instance, Skaff (2012) in his transnational history examines the relations between the Sui-Tang empires and neighboring Turko-Mongol

pastoral peoples from 580 to 800. He shows how the routes of the Silk Road were pathways for transmitting political culture via diplomatic exchanges across wide swathes of Eurasia.

The dominant assumption that premodern societies (places) were untouched by outside influences is linked to the ways in which the concepts of place and space have been (explicitly or implicitly) construed in the social sciences. Place has been defined as the physical setting of social activity that is situated geographically (Castells, 2000; Giddens, 1990). Places are characterized by their fixity: they have names, appear on the surface of maps, and have boundaries. In many ways, place is used as an equivalent to “the local,” where we feel safe and secure, the locus of our everyday experience. From this perspective, places are not only constituted by territory and buildings, but also by the ways in which humans relate and attach meaning to these locations and the ways they feel about them (Tuan, 1974, 1977). Thus, place is constituted by physical settings and by symbolic attachment and belonging. It is associated to the notion of home, of community, where we feel safe and secure. Place is seen as real, authentic, and as the source and location, tradition, and stability (Dirlik, 2001).

However, this understanding about place is problematic on a number of different levels. Places such as the home, as many feminist researchers have proven, are not havens of safety and security for many women and children. Rather they are prisons characterized by terror and abuse (Koss, Goodman, Browne, Fitzgerald, Keita & Russo, 1994; Oakley, 1974) and as Pain (1991) argues, sexual violence occurs primarily in private places that we assume are safe for women.

Meanwhile, space has been defined as the material support for time-sharing social practices that are not necessarily confined by territorial contiguity. The concept of space is linked to the ubiquitous, the abstract, the amorphous and porous. It has no borders or confinement. Space is also associated with movement, flows, and activity. It is forward looking, the catalyst of change (Tuan, 1974). We refer to spatial practices, but not practices of place. In this way, space is privileged and viewed as “more of a verb than a noun” (Gulson & Symes, 2007, p. 2). Consequently, we have a plethora of research on new spatial thinking, spatiality, and spatialization, and lack of similar attention to place, the “placial,” and “placiality” (terms that have yet to be used in research about places). Taylor (1999) explains that the focus of space over place stems from two underlying assumptions, the first being the idea that space, as we noted above, is viewed as being more abstract and therefore more “amenable to discursive interrogation ... [and] the suspicion implicit in much writing that the politics of place is inherently reactionary” (p. 13).

These assumptions about place and space (and privileging of space over

place) pose methodological problems for how social scientists carry out their research. The binary logic in which place is construed as ontologically different and historically separated from space is directly linked to dominant theories of globalization that assume a binary between “the global” and “the local.” The global/space is seen as abstract, futuristic, and beyond rooted experience, while the local/place is interpreted as the real and the stable that is always under the threat of globalization. As Escobar (2001) suggests, “the global is associated with space, capital, history and agency while the local, conversely, is linked to place, labor, and tradition—as well as with women, minorities, the poor and, one might add, local cultures” (pp. 155–56). In this way, the dominant discourse of globalization becomes a spatial empire of the mind that emphasizes the impact of globalization on local/places, and presumes that local places had previously been untouched and pure prior to contact with the outside.

Places, in this narrative, are victims of globalization (Massey, 2005) or, at best, capable of some kind of heroic resistance. This view is also based on the assumption of a unidirectional relation, as if though “the local” does not influence “the global.” Hence, in much of current writing, globalization is viewed as a kind of “grand narrative” of domination and resistance (e.g., Harvey, 2005). In this type of view the North, the First World (or whichever other label is used) is rendered as dominating, and the South or Third World (or local places) as resisting. Actors in the South are thus given “one of two roles, namely that of victim or that of heroic resistor” (Bayly, Beckert, Connelly, Hofmeyr, Kozol, & Seed, 2006, pp. 1450–51).

The construction of globalization as a grand narrative of domination and local resistance reinforces a reified view of globalization in which global forces are a kind of abstract external power that is uncontrollable. These perspectives implicitly promote policies and identities of resignation: the idea that since future changes cannot be controlled the only thing that can be done is to adapt to these changes (Beech, 2011). These conceptualizations of globalization are not only an abstract academic problem; they are performative and have concrete political effects, producing reforms in which the global is interpreted as a threat and/or an opportunity that defines the problems in an educational site and, at the same time, the possible solutions to those problems. In this way, certain educational reforms (with their particular educational visions attached) are rendered as inevitable and local places, the unwilling “recipients” of global educational reforms.

Finally, the spatial empire of the mind runs the risk of falling into the same weaknesses found in dependency, neo-Marxist, and World Systems theories in which binary differentiations between First and Third Worlds tended to flatten the political complexities of each. This alerts us to the ways in which

empires of the mind transgress boundaries, both political and sociological. There are alternative ways to view relations between the global and the local (or space and place) and it is to these that we now turn.

### **Rethinking the spatial empire of the mind**

A number of social theorists have put forward ideas about space and place challenging the spatial empire of the mind. These new spatial theories emphasize the relational and productive capacity of new spatial thinking. These are based on the idea that space and place can be seen as a set of relations among people, groups, and institutions (Foucault, 1986; Lefebvre, 1976; Massey, 2005; Soja, 1989). From this perspective, space and place are understood as open and related systems that are always in construction, never finished, and permanently changing as they relate to other places.

This leads to the notion that places have a performative aspect. Spaces and places are shaped by social practices, since the ways humans inhabit a place, the ways in which they experience it, and the meaning they attach to that place partly defines what that place is. But at the same time social practices are structured and produced by their spatial context. For example, the physical disposition of a classroom promotes certain pedagogic styles while restricting others, and the same can be said of the features of an online learning environment.

Relational notions of space and place help us to rethink the binary between the global and the local. For example, the metaphor of the network society (Castells, 2000) is based on an interpretation of space as a set of relations that can be mapped into overlapping networks, a topic we return to later in this article. The social sciences have tended to assume a simplistic view of the shrinking of the world, in which all locations tend toward ubiquitous and increased interconnection. Yet the spatial turn involves attending to the complexity of the processes of time-space compression and the power-geometry that underlies them. In other words, the ways in which individuals and groups are placed within the compression of time-space is complicated and varied (Massey, 2005).

Another issue that can be better understood through a relational notion of space and place are global-local relations, overcoming the assumption of a unidirectional relationship in which the global influences the local. The global is produced in local settings; it has a material basis, and local origins. Some local places might have a stronger impact on global practices than others, but as Massey (2005, 2009) suggests there are hardly any places that in some way are not part of the making of the global. Some pedagogic discourses, for example, have acquired a global status (e.g., the ideas of Freire or Piaget),



but they were originally developed in a specific context (Popkewitz, 2000). These discourses might be resignified in global networks and in places in which they are localized, but it is important to keep in mind that they emerge from particular local experiences.

Global forces should not be seen as transcending nations and other places such as the city, but rather as creating and being created by these sites in complex and sometimes incoherent relations (Sassen, 2007a). Popkewitz (2000) proposes the use of the concept of hybridity, which “enables us to consider the relation of knowledge and power as not hierarchical, moving uncontested from the center nations of the world system to the peripheral and less powerful countries. Rather, the global and the local are intricately joined through complex patterns that are multiple and multidirectional” (p. 6).

The same argument can be made with respect to how local places “respond” to globalizing forces. Rather than think of local places (whether they are in the Global North or the Global South) as victims of a dominant force called “neo-liberal globalization,” it is helpful to think about the ways in which “geographies of resistance” (Pile & Keith, 1997) are both global and local. Sassen’s (1999) work is particularly important here in illustrating a nonterritorial way of viewing place politics in our era of globalization. Places, according to Sassen, are sites where we see a juxtaposition of local, national, and global politics. She uses the examples of ethnic minorities protesting against local racism supported by national antiracist groups and international diasporic organizations; office employees protesting local closures who are connected to union activists elsewhere through Internet discussions about the dismantling of world trade barriers. This way of thinking about resistance challenges binary notions of space as the global and place as the local. Relations of domination and resistance are deployed in contexts that are simultaneously local and global.

### **Spatial turns: How space has been deployed in educational research**

Above we presented some of the key ideas associated with what has been called the “spatial turn” (Warf & Arias, 2009). What we actually have is a number of different spatial turns. Here in this section, we review three different spatializing approaches and argue that the approach focusing on networks and connections is most appropriate for comparative research on educational transfer. First, we begin with research on the regulatory nature of space. This body of research turns to Foucault’s work on governmentality to show how space has been linked to power and knowledge. Foucault demonstrates in much of his work how architecture and urban spaces are fundamental for the

“exercise of power” (Foucault, 1984, p. 241). These ideas have been taken up among educational scholars who have explored how school and teacher training classrooms and buildings, for example, are places of surveillance and regulation (e.g., Larsen, 2011; Lawn & Grosvenor, 2005).

Another way that the spatial turn has been deployed in educational research involves rethinking the notion of scale. Since the 1990s, there has been increasing interest in rescaling the focus of research. Traditionally, attention has been paid primarily to comparison across large geographical units such as the nation-state. This has contributed to a reification and naturalization of the national scale across the social sciences (Sassen, 2007b). This emphasis on the national scale has been apparent in much comparative education research. As Dale and Robertson (2009) explain, studies focusing on the nation-state have assumed that countries are homogeneous, equivalent units of analysis, and that the nation-state is the container of society. As a result of these limitations, a number of scholars, including those within comparative education, have pointed out the limitations of focusing on the nation-state, especially in our age of globalization, and proposed new or modified spatial units of analysis beyond the country or nation-state. Bray and Thomas (1995), for instance, have created a cube to classify comparative education studies by level and type. The geographic/location dimension of the cube includes world regions/continents, countries, states/provinces, districts, schools, classrooms, and individuals. They propose through their model that we engage in comparative studies beyond the nation-state and take into consideration other spatial scales.

There are limitations, however, with this particular approach to the spatial turn. Focusing on different scales/units of analysis (e.g., towns, regions) does not necessarily take into consideration that traditional demarcations between spatial and territorial forms of organization might be changing and blurring with globalization. Rather than thinking of a nesting of places/territories with the local embedded within the national, which is embedded within the international, why not think of places as related but not nested within one another (Amin, 2002)? On the other hand, research on the productive capacity of places such as classrooms to regulate and discipline individuals may be useful to understanding certain power effects, but it does not imply a central shift in the ways in which transfer is interpreted. So while we agree that it is important both to focus on the regulatory nature of space and to rethink our spatial units of analysis to include scales previously downplayed in our research, these approaches do not necessarily change the spatial logic of comparative research on educational transfer.

There is a long history of educational transfer research in comparative education and in policy analysis (Beech, 2006). Overall, this work has been

based on the kind of spatial empires of the mind that have been discussed in this article. Most research in this area has used the nation-state as the main unit of analysis. So, for example, the English infant schools were borrowed by the United States (Ravitch, 1983), universities in the United States and in Japan were created using the German model (Tanaka, 2005), in the early 1800s teacher training institutions were established in Brazil following the logic of the French normal schools (Figueiredo & Cowen, 2004), and so on. Analyses of later periods include new nonterritorial actors, such as UNESCO, the World Bank, the European Union, and other supranational organizations. However, in terms of spatial theorizing, the inclusion of these organizations did not imply significant shifts. These new actors were domesticated within existing spatial frameworks as a new scale or unit of analysis (Beech, 2011; Jones, 1998; Mundy, 1999).

With the rise of the concept of globalization in the social sciences, this concept became popular in comparative education. Much globalization research in education has focused on how hegemonic globalizing processes have affected national educational policies; or how the national has mediated the global (Arnove, Torres, & Franz, 2012; Astiz, Wiseman, & Baker, 2002; Steiner-Khamsi & Stolpe, 2006). These are typical examples of the type of binary spatial thinking we have critiqued in previous sections, in which the global/space is defined as being “out there,” influencing local places that receive, modify, or resist these influences. These views of the global as an abstract force out of human control constructs globalization as a metanarrative that legitimizes educational reforms that are then seen as inevitable.

We argue here that these spatial approaches to educational transfer have significant limitations to capture the complexity inherent to new geographies of power/knowledge in education. One of these problems is that they fail to capture the participation of new actors, such as consultants, corporations, and NGOs, that have an active participation in the circulation of knowledge about education. These institutions are connected in complex and dynamic networks of collaboration and competition that cannot be grasped through territorial notions of space. Another problem with these types of approaches is that they are based on static views of transfer, as if ideas are produced in one site and then received in another context. On the contrary, we here suggest that we need to grasp the relational dimension of processes of knowledge construction (Zimmermann, 2009), understanding that it is in the communicative process that ideas about education are constructed and that the ways and channels through which these ideas are conveyed contribute to shaping educational knowledge. In the next section we will develop our argument about the potential of network spatiality to overcome some of these pitfalls.

### **Network spatiality: A way forward for transfer research**

A number of scholars have engaged in the spatial turn by focusing their research on networks, flows, and mobilities as they interrogate the processes associated with globalization (e.g., Appadurai, 1996; Castells, 2000, 2011). The idea of a net as a metaphor of space (Castells, 2000) helps to reconsider what distance means in a hyperconnected globalized world. Attention is paid to the complexities inherent in globalizing processes associated with time-space compression. Links established through networks actually draw some locations and people together while at the same time pushing others further apart (Murdoch quoted in Warf, 2009).

Networks are important to focus on because they shift the focus of analysis from fixed surfaces to “tracing points of connection and lines of flow” and “inhere in a host of sociotechnical practices—such as property, sovereignty, and identity—that are always in the making, not in some a priori order of things” (Whatmore, 1999, p. 31). Hence, research on networks and flows has been taken up across a wide range of studies on social movements, interurban relations, financial flows such as commodity chains, cultural exchanges, and governance systems. We refer to this generally as “network spatiality.”

Focusing on networks necessitates rethinking some of the underlying ontological assumptions about place and space outlined above. First, this involves reconceptualizing space in nonterritorial terms as nodes in relational settings, sites of situated practices (both presence and absence). This means shifting our thinking away from places as essentialized and preordained viewing places as dynamic and being formed through movements and flows (Amin, 2002). This necessitates focusing on practices within places such as the ways that people in particular locations walk, talk, and act, and the memories they hold about these places through the traces left behind. As Amin (2002) explains, “places now can be seen as the embodiment of virtual or immanent forces, and as the temporary spatiotemporalisation of associational networks of different lengths and duration” (p. 391). This aligns with Massey’s (2005) call for a “global sense of place” and operates in such a way to break down the binaries between place and space. We turn now to two specific methodological approaches that focus directly on network spatiality as examples of the kind of studies that can inform comparativists engaging in transfer research.

### **Transnational history and social network analysis**

There are two related developments in the social sciences, transnational history (TNH) and social network analysis (SNA), which provide us with some tools for rethinking space and place in comparative education transfer

research. We argue that these approaches in focusing on networks, flows, and interconnections among humans, ideas, and institutions provide a means by which to crack the static space-place binary prevalent in much contemporary educational research on globalization. We review each approach and note the relevance of these approaches for comparative and international education research on transfer.

The term transnational history is relatively new, dating back to the early 1990s and initially closely associated with research in American history. In 1989, Iriye argued for an examination not just of nationalism but of internationalism, and proposed the study of an explicitly “transnational cultural history” to complement purely national developments in historical research (Iriye & Saunier, 2009; Tyrrell, 2007). TNH has gone by many different names, including international history, connected histories, entangled history, *histoire croisée*, and new global history (Iriye & Saunier, 2009). Of particular interest to comparative education researchers is the idea that TNH has also been characterized as comparative history and “a world of comparative possibility” (Bayly et al., 2006, p. 1441). And although most transnational historians now distinguish their work from comparative history (in that comparative history has generally taken national borders as a given), both approaches actually complement one another. Indeed, Marc Bloch’s 1928 argument for comparative history hints strongly at ideas associated with contemporary TNH: “a parallel study of societies that are at once neighbouring and contemporary, exercising a constant mutual influence, exposed through their development to the action of the same broad causes just because they are close and contemporaneous, and owing their existence in part at least to a common origin” (Bloch quoted in Tyrrell, 2007).

TNH is an approach to historical inquiry that “focuses on a whole range of connections that transcend politically bounded territories and connect various parts of the world to one another. Networks, institutions, ideas, and processes constitute these connections, and though rulers, empires, and states are important in structuring them, they transcend politically bounded territories” (Bayly et al., 2006, p. 1446). Thus, like social network analysis, which we discuss next, TNH focuses on circulations, interconnections, and complex links of humans, objects, ideas, institutions, technologies, and processes across national boundaries. Transnational historians are interested in how these flows and movements produce historical process, as well as how identities are produced, how people come to imagine themselves as global citizens or part of a global community, and “allow themselves to be addressed as transnational subjects” (p. 1442). Here we see many potential areas for research in the role of education in the formation of global identities for comparative education researchers.

Furthermore, another strength of TNH as a methodological approach is that it avoids falling into grand narratives (or what we have termed, “empires of the mind”), which are often organized around binary oppositions such as North–South, metropole–colony, elite–subaltern, and dominance–resistance. Transnational historians attempt to show the complexity of these binaries in more detail, and in so doing, produce narratives that lead us to reconsider major, taken-for-granted conceptual categories such as development and modernity (Bayly et al., 2006, p. 1459). This points to the value of TNH for comparative education researchers trying to understand processes associated with educational transfer, especially involving Global South countries.

Transnational historians have engaged in numerous studies about the global spread of nationalism, imperialism, global capitalism, diasporic movements, and the spread of communications technologies. Of particular interest to readers of this special issue are the TNH studies about empires. For example, in *Empire and Information: Intelligence Gathering and Social Communication in India, 1780–1870*, Bayly (2000) shows how networks of Indian spies, runners, and political secretaries were recruited by the British to secure information about their subjects. Liu’s *The Clash of Empires: The Invention of China in Modern World Making* provides a unique examination into the nineteenth-century clash of the British Empire and the Qing Dynasty (1644–1911), revealing the connections between international law, modern warfare, and comparative grammar (Liu, 2006). And in the final example, *A Hundred Horizons: The Indian Ocean in the Age of Global Flows*, Bose (2006) paints a vivid picture of the history and culture around the Indian Ocean between 1850 and 1950, a period when the region was filled with the interdependence of peoples and ideas from the Middle East to East Africa to Southeast Asia. Bose challenges traditional ways of looking at history and reveals instead the crucial importance of an intermediate historical space, where interregional geographic entities like the Indian Ocean rim fostered nationalist identities and goals yet simultaneously facilitated interaction among communities.

Social Network Analysis (SNA) is another related methodological development in the social sciences that focuses on network spatiality. SNA views social relationships in terms of network theory, comprised of nodes (which represent individual actors within the network) and ties, representing relationships between the individuals, such as friendship, kinship, and organizational position (Pinheiro, 2011). Such networks are often depicted as a social network diagram, where nodes are represented as points and ties are represented as lines. Attending to the processes of flows and circulation of ideas, individuals, objects, and capital across regions, allows researchers to shed light on the communication processes that constitute knowledge transmission, and the mechanisms through which these processes are shaped or construct what is being conveyed (Roldán & Schupp, 2005). Roldán & Schupp

(2005, 2006) have used SNA in combination with other approaches to analyze educational transfer in their research on the dissemination of the monitorial system in early-nineteenth-century Hispanic America. In their analysis of the connectivity and position of individuals and associations, they emphasize the role that James Thompson had as the most connected node of the network through which the monitorial system was introduced in different American countries. We see their research is an outstanding example of how SNA can allow us to reinterpret previous educational transfer research.

Mapping and understanding connections and networks in global educational space is important for the study of educational transfer because it is increasingly through these networks that influential ideas about what it means to be educated and how education practices should be organized and governed are being defined and disseminated. These ideas are not constructed in one site and then transferred to place-based institutions. Rather, ideas are permanently being shaped and reshaped in the process of circulation. But it is not only knowledge that is permanently on the move. Networks and institutions that constitute global educational space are dynamic and changing through mergers and acquisitions; and the borders between state and private and philanthropy and for-profit are under permanent negotiation (Ball, 2012). Furthermore, network spatiality can help to amplify the gaze of research on educational transfer and its related concept, policy borrowing. The problem with the concept of policy borrowing is that it tends to focus exclusively on state policies. However, if we center our attention only on “policies,” defined as state policies, and usually only those expressed in policy texts, we are only capturing part of global influences in education and we are missing some of the new geographies of power/knowledge in education. Of course some global influences are directly linked to state policies, but others are loosely linked, and others bypass state policies. In these ways, it is this particular spatial turn—with its focus on networks, connections, circulations and flows—that has the potential to strengthen comparative research on educational transfer.

Finally, this is not to say that comparative researchers have not yet taken up these ideas. Ball (2012) has explored the spread of education policy in his recent study about the policy activities of edu-business, transnational advocacy networks, and policy entrepreneurs. Ball focuses on the mobility of policies rather than the simple transfer of educational policies, and suggests that they move through, and are adapted by, networks of social relations involving diverse participants. Although he draws on SNA, Ball (2012, p. 5) considers the method he deploys as “network ethnography” involving “a mapping of the form and content of policy relations in a particular field.” Ball’s argument is that policy networks constitute new forms of governance and bring into play new sources of authority into local and global policy processes. In addition, comparativists such as Steiner-Khamsi & Quist (2000) and Resnisk (2008)

have analysed how the actors involved in the specific cases of educational transfer that they researched relate to each other. Indeed, Steiner-Khamsi (2004) has called for comparative researchers to engage with SNA and empirical network analysis.

## Conclusion

In writing about cosmopolitan sociology, Beck (2006) notes that “cosmopolitanism is a non-linear, dialectical process in which the global and the local are to be conceived, not as cultural polarities, but as interconnected and reciprocally interpenetrating principles” (pp. 72–73). Beck continues by asking what theoretical and methodological problems arise from societal changes such as the globalization in the twenty-first century, and how researchers can address these problems in their research. The dominant metanarrative about space and place—what we have termed a “spatial empire of the mind”—is inadequate for the task of making sense of contemporary educational phenomena. The spatial turn, which has been taken up in diverse ways across a range of the social sciences, involves thinking explicitly about how we view space and place in our research. We argue in this article for an ontological shift to viewing space and place not simply as objects of study, but within a conceptual framework that focuses on networks, interconnections, and movements within and between them, as well as their productive capacity to produce and shape knowledge, identities, and human subjectivities. Specifically, our argument focused on the value of network spatiality in contributing to more sophisticated understandings of the processes of educational transfer, overcoming binary thinking, and capturing the complexities associated with the movements and flows of educational knowledge.

In this article we began by presenting and critically analyzing the spatial empire of the mind, which is comprised of undergirding assumptions about space and place. Empires shape the way we see, understand, and research the world. The spatial empire of the mind is no exception in constructing a set of binaries about space and place that have shaped much social science research, including research on educational transfer and borrowing. However, there are signs that this empire, like all empires, is crumbling.

After critiquing the spatial empire of the mind, we reviewed current ideas associated with the spatial turn, drawing on research in critical geography and other disciplines outside of education. We focused on three specific manifestations of the spatial turn in educational research: the regulatory nature of educational spaces; scalar analyses of educational phenomenon, and research that focuses on network spatiality. Each must be viewed as mutually constitutive and relationally interconnected sociospatial relations. However, we argue



that network spatiality is the most promising for comparative research on educational transfer, given the focus on movements of and relations between policies and associated practices. We pointed readers to two specific related methodological developments in the social sciences, transnational history and social network analysis, as providing specific ways of how we might engage in comparative education research on how educational policies, processes, and practices move and get taken up across disparate locations, without falling back into binary thinking about place and space.

Problematizing space and place provide us with new and exciting possibilities in how we go about conducting research on educational transfer in comparative education. We need to understand space within the realm of possibility. Opening up/liberating space from its old meanings can lead to something more productive and more political. Massey (2005) writes: “Conceptualising space as open, multiple and relational, unfinished and always becoming, is a prerequisite for history to be open and thus a prerequisite, too, for the possibility of politics” (p. 59).

Power relations in education are complex and contradictory, and cannot be understood through binary categories such as centre/periphery, First World/Third World, coloniser/victim, place/space or local/global that are used as “commonsense” categories both analytically and politically. Relational approaches to spatial thinking in comparative education can help us overcome the simplicity of those kinds of static and binary analyses and contribute to the collective project of trying to grasp in more sophisticated ways the complexity inherent to new geographies of power/knowledge in education. We need to look more carefully at the connections and circulations, at the in-betweenness through which the global and the local are constructed and relate to each other, and the productive capacity of such thinking. These approaches, we argue, will assist us in the mapping of the global field of education through the construction of new cartographies of connections. In so doing, we begin to work toward the construction of new analytic spaces in our field through network spatiality.

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