

Transnational digital space: an undocumented dimension of digital divide and the school leadership as conversion factor

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1 Introduction

Transnational space has gained prominence in contemporary scholarship, reflecting the increasing interconnectedness of people, societies, economies and cultures across national borders. This concept, originally used to describe how migrants and their communities maintain connections and transactions that span multiple countries, is now used more broadly to describe the emergence of social formations that consist of sustained and continuous interactions that cross the borders of at least two nation-states and enable transnational interactions, cooperation and identities. Transnational spaces are therefore spaces of reterritorialisation that challenge traditional notions of citizenship and belonging offering a range of benefits, such as extended social networks, cultural exchange and economic opportunities, possibilities for political engagement, innovation and knowledge transfer, solidarity and support, without being bound and limited by the spatial and temporal constraints of a physical location.

The phenomenon of transnational space has expanded enormously in the digital age due to the limitless possibilities of transnational communication, cooperation and interaction offered by digitalisation. This often gives the impression that the mere availability of digital tools is sufficient to ensure the transition to a transnational digital social space, overlooking the fact that transnational spaces as territorial spaces are not neutral. Sack (1983), De Certeau (1984), Fortier (2000) and Casti (2015) were among the first to associate territory with power, mobility, access and control over a specific geographical area in which people can develop dwelling practices. Agnew (2008) argued that transnational territories must be perceived not as national spaces but as ‘dwelling spaces’. Sassen (2013) emphasised the relationship between territory, power and agency, noting that territory is a capability with embedded logics of power and entitlement. Cresswell (2015) and Preece (2020) have linked territory to a sense of belonging. But even belonging is not neutral, as unequal resources influence people’s experiences of belonging and identity. Belonging involves a combination of social and symbolic ties, positions in networks and organisations, and the movement of people, ideas and resources that take place across these borders (Anthias, 2006; Faist & Bilecen, 2017).

This essay argues that while the digital age and digital space offer unlimited possibilities for the creation of a transnational digital space, the latter should not be taken for granted