

THE POWER OF “LIMITED LIABILITY” – TRANSNATIONAL COMMUNITIES AND CROSSBORDER GOVERNANCE

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ABSTRACT

While going through a revival in sociology and business studies, the concept of communities, as used in those disciplines, appears to confront, in an unresolved tension, the development of differentiated and transnationally interconnected modern societies. We argue that there is a need not only to “rediscover” but in fact also to “renew” the notion of community. Building on insights from classical sociology, we propose a definition of transnational communities as social groups emerging from mutual interaction across national boundaries, oriented around a common project or “imagined” identity. Transnational communities are not static structures but fluid and dynamic processes. They are constructed through symbolic or “imagined” proximity rather than through physical propinquity. More often than not, they are “communities of limited liability” rather than the expression of permanent ascriptive markers. Finally, transnational communities go well beyond the provision of local protection and solidarities as they engage in different kinds of transnational activism. This chapter compares bottom-up and top-down patterns of transnational community development, exploring

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