CONCEPT OF DIASPORA

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Introduction

In the last decade, the term diaspora have begun to emerge first in migration studies, then in development studies. Once conceptualized as exile or forced dislocation from a "homeland", in the recent migration-development literature, diaspora has increasingly been used to describe the mass migrations and displacements of the second half of the 20th century as well as to analyse the developmental "impact" of these migrants' cross-border activities.

On the one hand, to analyse the extent to which widely accepted definitions and conceptualizations of diasporas ignore three empirical problems, namely the role of border redefinition in creating diasporas, the relevance or irrelevance of dispersion to diasporic identification, and the imprecision of what constitutes diasporic linkages. It is argued that we cannot assume that the notion of dispersion is sufficient, and in some cases even necessary, for the articulation of a diaspora. Moreover, the linkages that constitute or inform diasporic development must be tangible and influential, not merely symbolic. On the other hand, we need to pay firm attention to the material and political circumstances which are encouraging or inhibiting the growth of contemporary diasporas.

Diasporas

The association between diasporas and dispersion is unambiguous in perhaps the case of Jews or Greeks. Once, however, the notion of "diaspora" is applied to other religious or ethnic groups, "it becomes immediately apparent how difficult it is to find a definition that makes a clear distinction between a migration and a diaspora, or between a minority and a diaspora" (Chalian and Rageau, 1995). Shain (1995), for example, uses the term to refer to a people with common national origin who reside outside a claimed or an independent home territory. Esman (1986) has defined a diaspora as a minority ethnic group of migrant origin which maintains sentimental or material

links with its land of origin. These, and other, definitions of diaspora share in common notions of a relationship between groups of people that are based on some form of national ancestry, and sometimes of dispersion. These interpretations or descriptions of diaspora seem problematic.

First, assuming the traditional notion of diaspora as related to dispersion leaves out all those groups which, by virtue of the formation of a nation state, were separated but not dispersed by territorial boundaries. Mexicans and the descendants of those living in northern Mexico before its annexation by the United States are one example. Numerous African groups in the post-colonial period provide other examples of separation without dispersion. Second, these definitions assume that any group by virtue of their common national origin and scatteredness constitute a diaspora. However, this categorization may include groups who do not identify with what is regarded as the homeland. In other words, not all ethnicities who have a common national origin can be regarded, or regard themselves, as diasporas. Third, the assumption about diasporas as groups that retain some meaningful link with perceived homelands is important but imprecise. The assumption depends on some abstract notion of a link or connection which is difficult to pin down.

In contemporary transnational migrant communities, diasporic involvement can range from the exclusive maintenance of family ties in the homeland to establishing political connections that may lead to acquiring positions of power. In this regard at least four kinds of involvement can be observed at the family, community, social and political level. In most cases, migrants maintain family ties and some community and social connections with the homeland. Political exiles who struggle to return to their home land and (re-)gain power are more eager to pursue political links with local constituencies. In these cases, however, the establishment of ties as an indicator of diasporic connection requires further specification. Thus, meaningful contact needs to be tied to another triggering or motivational variable. As a preliminary definition, and in this context, Sheffer offers a more concrete definition of diasporas as a "socio-political formation, created as a result of either voluntary or forced migration, whose members regard themselves as of the same ethno-national origin and who permanently reside as minorities in one or several host countries. Members of such entities maintain regular or occasional contacts with what they regard as their homeland and with

individuals and groups of the same background residing in other host countries" (Sheffer, 2003).

By virtue of this reality, diasporas implicate themselves internationally through relationships with the homeland, other international entities, and host country governments and societies, thereby influencing various dynamics, including development.

According to de la Garza and Orozco, 2000, diasporas do not emerge solely as a consequence of dispersion, common national ancestry, or simply any kind of connection. There is a process by which groups are motivated or influenced to become diasporas. Orozco and de la Garza's case study research on Latinos and their links to their homelands indicate that four critical factors enable the formation of a group into a diaspora. These are:

1. The level of community – and particularly elite and activist – consciousness about the need or desire for a link with the homeland,

2. The homeland's perceptions of emigrants,

3. The outreach policies by governments in the homeland, and

4. The existence of relationships between source and destination countries.

Review

In exploring the dispersion, diasporization and transnationalization of populations across geographic regions and continents, migration studies have re-emerged as a vibrant area of research a more optimistic assessment of the role of migration in development processes, current research suggests that global migration, only in some cases and under certain circumstances, sets in motion processes that engage people in global, diasporic or transnational networks. The actual link between migration and development thus remains an empirical question to be studied in concrete situations. Migration in itself rarely seems to be able to induce the broader social, economic and political changes needed to advance progress in most developing countries, we still need to ask what can be learned from migrants' attempts to overcome structural barriers to development.

Despite important empirical and theoretical contributions from a growing number of studies applying a transnational lens, we still know too little about the

determinants of transnational engagement. What, for example, makes people develop diasporic identifications and engage in transnational activities? To what extent are such identifications and engagements influenced by the form and conditions of movement, the context of reception and incorporation in destination countries, the status and standing of diasporas within them, and the attitude of source country governments towards their populations abroad? Another set of questions in need of further exploration revolves around the degree to which choice or compulsion in movement shape the subsequent influence of diasporas. Who has the power to initiate and sustain global flows, who are denied spatial mobility and, by implication, social mobility in transnational social space?

While particular transnational migration experiences have been extensively examined on a case basis, there is still a dire need for comparative research into the factors that determine whether migrant and refuge diasporas integrate into their countries of destination, return to the source countries, or engage in transnational practices that embrace both source and destination countries and/or the wider diaspora. The nature of destination societies and the place of diaspora groups within them are likely to shape profoundly the capacity of individuals and diaspora organizations to influence the homeland. But does marginalization encourage or discourage transnational engagement? Are the dynamics the same no matter what social, political, economic, cultural or religious forms such engagements take? And how do differences of wealth, power, class, ethnicity, gender and generation within diasporas shape the form and scope of transnational activities and their influence? (Sorensen, 2007).

As international migration has become subject to greater control and increasing numbers of migrants concomitantly have been forced to travel and live in undocumented ways, research has also focused on the ability of migrants to negotiate the legal, social and economic barriers they encounter because of their precarious legal status (Sørensen and Olwig, 2002). Both research foci have been most thoroughly investigated in studies of migration between Mexico and the United States, which, due to several historic and geographical circumstances, is probably too specific to serve as ground for broader theorizations. On a similar note, Carter (2004) has argued, that recent work dealing with issues of diaspora has failed to pay sufficient attention to the geographic specificities of particular diasporas. Although spatial metaphors abound in analyses, the significance of geography is denied and often left un-interrogated.

As a result, the "reterritorializing elements of diasporic practices" are discounted (Carter, 2004: 55). In order to respond to this challenge, studies included in this volume not only reflect on the specificities of particular migrant and refugee diasporas but also on the specificities of particular places, spatial practices and the production of social space that follows from crossborder movement and transnational engagement.

The growing complexity of international migration has been both prompted and facilitated by globalization. Apart from the growing disparity in the levels of livelihood possibilities and human security, other factors contribute to the current magnitude, density, velocity, and diversity of human population movements. These include improved transportation, communication and information technology; the expansion of transnational social networks and diaspora formations; and, at times, the emergence of a commercial and often criminal industry devoted to facilitating human movement across international borders. However, while the cornerstone of globalization has been an increase in the international flow of trade, capital, information and services, the right to freedom of movement

Within the social sciences, work on the relation between the global and the local has focused attention of the restructuring and extension of networks of flows and their articulation with spaces of different scales (Castells, 1996, Smith, 2001), leading, among other things, to the concept of transnational social space (Pries, 2001). Another body of research has focused attention on diaspora (Clifford, 1994; Cohen, 1997; Van Hear, 1998; Safran, 1999; Vertovec, 2000; Axel, 2001), and on what distinguishes diasporas and the sometimes tricky issue of accountability and transparency of diaspora political networks (Ostergaard-Nielsen, 2006). Work on transnationalism (Glick Schiller et al, 1992; Smith and Guarnizo, 1998) has generally been linked to transmigration (Basch et al, 1994; Rouse, 1991; Kearney, 1995; Portes et al, 1999; Mahler. 1998). Gains from these approaches include an abandoning of "methodological nationalism", the assumption that the nation-state is the logical, natural container within which social life takes place (Wimmer and Glick Schiller, 2003). Another gain stems from a redirection of the analytical focus from place to mobility and from the bipolar view of "place of origin" and "place of destination" to the movements involved in sustaining mobile or cross-border livelihoods (Sorensen and Olwig, 2002).

Work on globalization, diaspora and transnationalism nevertheless differs in the key assumptions made about the role of the state in the production of meaning,

identity and social outcomes. Whereas the perspective of globalization is largely decentred from specific national territories (Kearney, 1995), work on diaspora and transnationalism depicts economic, political and socio-cultural processes and relations as anchored in, while also transcending, more than one nation state, and thereby understands the nation state and transnational practices as mutually constitutive social formations (Smith, 2001).

The concepts and theoretical assumptions guiding globalization, diaspora and transnational studies moreover have different genealogies. Work on the nature of globalization has tended to privilege economic over cultural, social and political processes. Diaspora studies have primarily been concerned with identity and history, and transnational studies have tended to focus on the social ties and networks that link contemporary migrants or refugees to the communities or nation states of their birth. As a consequence, migrants' transnational practices have been understood to dissolve fixed assumptions about identity, place and community, whereas diasporic identity making has been understood to evolve around attempts to "fix" and closely knit identity and community. In addition to reflecting different theoretical and disciplinary approaches – globalization studies being informed by geography, economy and political science; diaspora studies being primarily informed by the humanities and concerned with the issue of identity; and transnational studies being primarily informed by the social sciences and concerned with the relationship between people and states – this division in approach and interest has obscured the fact that it is exactly in the duality of "transgression" and "fixation" that migrant diasporas' transnational engagement may contribute to development.

Conceptualizing the migration experience as taking place within transnational social space moves the analysis beyond those who actually migrate to those who do not necessarily move but are connected to migrants through the networks of social relations they sustain across borders. This insight is important, because it reveals that the so-called "development impact" of migration is not solely related to return. Because people who stay behind are connected to migrants through social networks, they are exposed to a constant flow of economic and social remittances on a regular basis (Levitt, 1999), which might change their identities, world views and aspirations. Similarly, locating migrants within transnational social fields makes clear that incorporation into a new state and enduring attachments to the countries of origin are not necessarily

binary opposites (Levitt and Sørensen, 2004). The economic, political and cultural practices of migrant populations are not merely a function of the opportunity structures in migrant receiving states. While more inclusive structures – which in principle allow for migrant incorporation – may weaken homeland ties, they may also facilitate mobilization around homeland developmental concerns.

Therborn (2004) describes changes in the family institution throughout the 20th century. Therborn applies a global historical and sociological perspective on the family and uses this to show how the development of different, territorially delimited geo-cultural family systems has been far from evolutionary. He concludes that despite the fact that the family institution has undergone profound changes, there is no empirical evidence for declaring the post-family society. Therborn's global perspective refers to the interconnectedness of social phenomena, variation and inter-communication, which he then juxtaposes with more universalistic and uni-linear understandings of socio-cultural development. His analysis incorporates the influence of international migration on historical changes in the family and is primarily concerned with hybrid/creole family forms that took shape after large-scale migrations.

Early transnational theorizing established that "family processes and relations between people defined as kin constitute the initial foundation for all other types of transnational social relations" (Basch et al., 1994: 238). Hondagneu-Sotelo (1994) found that in the case of Mexican migration to the US, several women embarked on migratory projects in order to change their relationships with spouses or other relatives that oppressed them back home. Their migration often involved leaving behind a set of limiting family relations and finding in the US opportunities to question their more traditional roles as mothers and housewives.

Current international migration, stimulated by uneven globalization and growing economic inequalities between northern and southern countries, has reversed the direction of traditional population flows and led to a growing complexity in migration practices and experiences. This emerging complexity of migration is also observed in the growing social heterogeneity and *informalization* of migration, as migrants from the same source country increasingly include individuals of different class background, the complexity manifests itself in the *feminization* of particular streams. The increase in independent female migration has led to a renewed focus on the centrality of gender as a defining vector of migratory experiences and consequences for family structures,

gender roles, and social organization in the source and destination countries of migrants. It has also led to various analyses of transnational family life, including work on transnational motherhood (e.g. Hondagneu-Sotelo and Avila, 1997), transnational childhood (e.g. Salazar Parrenas, 2003), and more recently transnational fatherhood (e.g. Pribilsky, 2004).

Levitt and Glick Schiller (2004) approach transnational family life as social reproduction taking place across borders. They draw on Bryceson and Vuerela (2002) who define transnational families as families that live some or most of the time separated from each other, but yet hold together and create a feeling of collective welfare and unity; a process they term "familyhood across national borders". Transnational families, Bryceson and Vuerela argue, have to cope with multiple national residences, identities and loyalties. Like other families, transnational families are not biological units *per se*, but social constructions or "imagined communities".

Method

By conducting interviews and qualitative research, we can examine the identity forming in the diaspora networks linked to the region. Qualitative research is thus often used for the study of social processes, or for a study of the reasons behind human behavior.

The topics dealt with in qualitative addiction research range from historical processes to treatment outcomes. Qualitative research is used increasingly to answer questions about rapid assessment of policy developments (Stimson et al., 2004). It is used to study program implementation and in the evaluation of various policy measures. And ethnographers have employed qualitative methods to increase the understanding of patterns of substance use in various population groups (Lalander, 2003).

Qualitative methods can be used for pilot studies, to illustrate the results of a statistical analysis, in mixed methods studies, and in independent qualitative research projects (Denzin & Lincoln, 1998).

The first and foremost aim of all social research, quantitative as well as qualitative, is to present a conceptually adequate description of a *historically specific* topic, subject or target. In qualitative research the determination of the subject is as important as the choice of a population in a statistical study. The description of the subject is always, in both types of study, a theoretical task because it requires a

conceptually well organized analysis.

The processes of classification, deduction and interpretation are in their fundamental aspects similar in both qualitative and quantitative research. Quantitative analyzing operations, however, are more clear-cut than qualitative operations in that various steps of quantitative research can be more clearly distinguished than those of a qualitative study.

In qualitative work, the collection and processing of data are more closely intertwined than in a quantitative study in that there is a) Significance of the data set and its social or cultural place; b) Sufficiency of the data, and coverage of the analysis; c) Transparency and repeatability of the analysis. Especially when the researcher personally collects the data, she will not be able to avoid problems of interpretation during the collection phase.

A specific issue in some qualitative research may be the fact that the methods used can change during the study, depending on interim results. It is a challenge to explain in a short article why this has happened, and why you have used a different method in the final phase of the data acquisition than in the previous parts; or why you changed a classification scheme and encoded the data in a different manner.

The researcher must also carefully consider her relations with the study objects. Many qualitative reports often discuss at length the character and psychology of the process of data collection.

The good researcher may keep a detailed field diary and make notes of all discussions and thus produce a corpus to which she limits her analysis. Nevertheless, during the analysis phase she may recall an important detail which she has not recorded in her notes, but has to take into account in the analysis.

The qualitative researcher has to describe this analytical process in an honest and convincing way. Diaspora networks have been the object of study by Social Science (Cuko and Traore,)

Result

The presentation of the results is easiest to follow if the structure is directly linked to the research question, moves in logical steps according to the theory and method, and consistently uses the concepts presented earlier in the article.

Present your data in a systematic way in the body of the text, so that quotations, field notes and other documentations are easily identifiable.

If it is observational material, state whether you collected the data yourself or if you used data collected by someone else.

Discussion

After a very short summary of your research question and the motivation for your wish to explore it, you can repeat in one sentence the main result of your study.

Following this, you can discuss how your findings relate to earlier research: do they fill out the picture of what we already know, or possibly challenge or even contradict earlier findings?

If possible, refer to earlier quantitative research. In what way has your study been important for the research community? Can the results change the picture of similar phenomena in other cultures?

Discuss the extent to which the findings with this data set may be relevant to the understanding of other situations. What are the concepts that can be transferred to other settings?

A good discussion will also contain a consideration of the limitations of this study. What problems with the sample and data collection restricted the possibility of getting a full answer to your research question? Could the answer have been more complete? Could you have used an additional or alternative method?

Finally, consider giving recommendations for further research that will improve knowledge about the topic you have studied. It is often more efficient to publish one or more articles in a scientific journal.

Conclusion

The word "diaspora" has crept into the migration-development vocabulary in an under-theorized way. As the introductory discussion of the limitations in conventional definitions of what constitutes a "diaspora" has hopefully shown, there is scope for more theoretical reflection and conceptual work. The act of migration, even to areas with high concentrations of migrants belonging to the same nationality or ethnic group, will not automatically nor necessarily lead to diasporic identifications. Finally, the maintenance of links to the homeland may, or may not, have a diasporic character.

That being said, however, the experience of Latino and Caribbean migrant collectivities in the United States – as well as the growing awareness of the potential benefits in sustaining diaspora links among home and host governments– points to new and interesting areas of development cooperation on a local, national and regional scale. Such links can be fruitfully explored by paying analytical attention to the factors enabling diaspora formation as well as to the different dynamics resulting from diasporic engagements. Finally, it is important to consider the relationship between state and diasporas. At least five elements are key to states effectively reaching out to their diasporas: recognition, communication, a mutual agenda, tangible diaspora involvement in the country of origin, and investment of resources.

1. State outreach policy towards the diaspora must recognize and validate its communities living abroad.

2. Second, states must establish a communication mechanism between themselves and organized diaspora groups.

3. Both state and diasporic groups must develop a joint agenda that addresses issues of common concern.

4. The diasporic community must be allowed a substantial presence and possible influence in the nation state.

5. States must invest tangible resources, both material and human, to implement outreach efforts. These efforts should be regarded as minimum considerations for an effective process of cooperation in an increasingly intertwined world between states, the international community, and diasporas.

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