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Outline

- Transnationalism and diaspora: brief theoretical considerations
- Transnational migrants, diasporas, and the development of the country of origin
- Remittances and their development potential
- Highly skilled migrants, Diaspora knowledge networks, and homeland development.
- Government initiatives to engage diasporas in homeland development.
- Conclusion and policy recommendations

Transnationalism and diaspora: brief theoretical considerations

Transnationalism: "(...) the processes by which immigrants build social fields that link together their country of origin and their country of settlement. Immigrants who build such social fields are designated "transmigrants". Transmigrants develop and maintain multiple relations – familial, economic, social, organizational, religious, and political that span borders. Transmigrants take actions, make decisions, and feel concerns, and develop identities within social networks that connect them to two or more societies simultaneously" (Glick Schiller et al. 1992: 1-2).

Transnational spaces: "relatively stable, lasting and dense sets of ties reaching beyond and across the borders of sovereign states. They consist of combinations of ties and their contents, position in networks and organizations, and networks of organizations that cut across the borders of at least two nation-states" (Faist, 2004: 3-4).

Transnationalism from above and transnationalism from below: Transnational from above: transnational activities operated by powerful institutions such as multinational corporations and states. Transnationalism from above: grassroots initiatives carried out by migrants and their national counterparts (Guarnizo 1997)

Various forms of transnationalism: **economic, political, and sociocultural** (e.g., Portes et al. (1999: 221).

Various transnational links: family, religious, cultural, economic, political, etc.

The concept of transnationalism is criticized as vague, "slippery" and ambivalent (Kivisto, 2001: 550).

Transnationalism and diaspora: brief theoretical considerations

- **Diaspora:** symbolic attachment to the homeland identity maintained over generations despite physical distance. Long-distance nationalism. Historically associated with the idea of dispersion, the feeling of nostalgia and desire to maintain homeland identity notwithstanding geographical distance (Cohen 2008, Lacroix 2024: 181).
- "populations of migrant origin who are scattered among two or more destinations, between which there develop multifarious links involving flows and exchanges of people and resources: between the homeland and destination countries" (Van Hear, Pieke, and Vertovec 2004: 3).
- Transnationalism: practices, linkages, experiences, transfers, communication, and circulation maintained by migrants, linking the host (here) and origin (there) country beyond national boundaries. Cross-border practices geared to the country of origin. Migrants' transnational practices and their potential to contribute to homeland development.
- Scholars' tendency to distinguish diaspora and transnationalism, is contentious:

Transnationalism and diaspora: brief theoretical considerations

- ➤ Diaspora and transnationalism: overlapping concepts. Diaspora and transnationalism cannot be reduced simply to symbolic attachments for the former and border-crossing practical engagement toward the homeland for the latter.
- Symbolic diaspora attachment can translate into transnational diaspora engagement for homeland development. Likewise, transnationalism can be regarded as an expression of a "common sense of belonging" (Lacroix 2024: 181).
- There is a need to question the essentialist vision of transnationalism and diaspora as a threat to national cohesion or a reflection of "divided loyalties" (Lacroix 2024: 181). Transnationalism or diaspora can have both positive and negative impacts on the homeland.

Transnationalism and diaspora: some theoretical considerations

- Paradigm shift in the study of contemporary migration due to increasing transnational practices and links connecting migrants and their homeland.
- Transnational and diaspora process, especially in the context of globalization reflects the need to go beyond the binaries such as origin versus destination country, brain drain versus brain gain, and integration (assimilation) versus ties with the homeland.
- The transnational approach challenges methodological nationalism, i.e., the tendency to view the Nation-State as the fundamental container of social life (e.g., Wimmer and Glick Schiller 2003).
- The transnational theoretical approach explores migrants' transnational experiences, social and financial remittances, human capital, and social networks.
- Transnational and diaspora studies: exploration of the development contribution of migrants and diaspora beyond return migration.
- Transnational migrants and diaspora can contribute to homeland development without necessitating their physical presence in the origin country (temporary or permanent return): transnational practices and links enabling social and financial remittances, investment and trade opportunities, knowledge transfer, and intellectual links (Levitt and Lamb-Nieves 2011).

Transnationalism and diaspora: some theoretical considerations

Selected theoretical approaches	Definition	Migration and development nexus
Neoclassical approaches	Migration as a response to gaps in income.	Migration as a contributing factor to national development (e.g., remittances, consumer goods).
(neoclassical equilibrium theory)	Migration as a strategy to access better employment and	Optimist viewpoint about the link between migration and development.
	remuneration opportunities.	
Structuralist and Marxist approach	Migration, a result of the asymmetric and unequal global capitalist	On the one hand, migration contributes to the deepening of poverty and economic marginalization of the
	system, colonialism, and neocolonialism.	sending developing countries, the development of underdevelopment.
	strengthening of economic development of developed countries.	On the other hand, migration contributes to strengthening the economic development of developed
	According to the Structuralist and Marxist approaches, migration	destination countries.
	is a major hindrance to developing countries in the South.	Pessimist viewpoint about the link between migration and development (brain drain, extroverted
		consumption lifestyle, socioeconomic inequalities, unproductive migrants' investments) (e.g., van Hear and
		Sorensen 2003).
Transnational theoretical approach	The ability to link here and there, to create and maintain	Development potential of transnational migrants and diasporas (social and financial remittances, skills, and
	transnational or cross-border links and practices, connecting the	human capital's enhancement of returning migrants, investment, trade, and intellectual opportunities,
	origin and host country.	transnational sociocultural links, potential brain gain) for the benefit of the homeland.
		Positive viewpoint about the link between migration and development. Development potential of
		transnational migrants not only linked to return migration.

Diaspora's contributions have both positive and negative impacts.

Positive impacts

- Economical: remittances transfer, investments, exports, tourism, return migration.
- Intellectual: Competencies, skills or human capital enhancement, transfer of knowledge and know-how, diasporas knowledge networks, e-learning, return of highly skilled nationals.
- Social: social remittances, strengthening civil society, human rights, volunteering, strengthening the education and health sector, ehealth.

- Philanthropy: charity and donations.
- > Political: lobbying, advocacy, soft power, contribution to the development processes.
- > Cultural: cultural mediation cross-cultural fertilization.

Negative impacts:

- Can fuel or deepen conflicts in the countries of origin (e.g., Turner 2007). Migrants and diaspora can reproduce mistrust, suspicions, rivalry, conflicts, and animosities in the host countries.
- Remittances can create a vicious cycle of dependency on individuals and families left behind on the money sent by migrants (Delgado-Wise and Covarrubias, 2006, Ionesco, Dia, and Guisse 2009).
- Strengthening the volume of remittances, mobilizing the skills of migrant workers and engaging migrant workers in development, facilitating pathways for regular labor migration opportunities, the portability of social security benefits, and recognition of skills and qualifications can contribute to enhancing the role of labor migration in the socioeconomic development of African countries.

- In some cases, remittances may reproduce existing gender inequalities (Teye et al. 2017, cited by Chikanda 2024: 172).
- Remittances may result in increasing demand for consumer goods, i.e., higher domestic prices. This alongside increasing foreign exchange can negatively impact exports' competitiveness and domestic industrial production (Chami et al. 2018, cited by Chikanda 2024: 172).
- Remittances may create new and reproduce old inequalities.
- Remittances can lead governments of origin countries to flee from their responsibility to address the social and economic needs of their population (Delgado-wise and Covarrubias 2006).

- Divergent views about the link between remittances and corruption: some studies link remittances with the likelihood of increasing corruption (Ahmed 2013, cited by Chikanda 2024: 173) or as a means of controlling corruption (Ajide and Olayiwola 2021, cited by Chikanda 2024: 173).
- Poor remittance transfer infrastructure and high remittance cost fees hinder the development potential of remittances, among other factors (Chikanda 2024: 173-174).
- Discussions on migration/diaspora and development have fundamentally focused on financial remittances. Need to go beyond financial remittances and consider other forms of migrants/diasporas contributions, including social remittances.
- Social remittances: circulation of ideas, norms, practices, and habits from the host and origin country (vice versa) that can catalyze societal transformations (for a definition of social remittances, see Levitt 2001). It's important to mention that social remittances are not only one-way (from host to origin countries). Also, migrants diffuse norms, ideas, practices, and behavior from their origin to the host countries.

Beyond remittances, taking into account migrants' and diasporas' concerns, aspirations, and needs:

Migrants and diasporas do not want to be seen as remittance providers, but also as human beings with their challenges, concerns, priorities, and aspirations that need to be taken into account and addressed by governments in the origin and destination country and international policymakers (e.g., Ionesco, Dia, and Guisse 2009).

Various forms of diasporas' transnational activities are oriented to the homeland, including the « 5 Five Ts »: Money Transfers, Tourism, Transportation, Telecommunication, and Nostalgic Trade (good from the origin country) (Orozco 2005: 309).

Transnational migrants' regular contacts with the country of origin, activities related to investments, remittances transfers, creation of enterprises in the country of origin, social and humanitarian initiatives through individual donations, philanthropic organizations, and hometown associations have significant development potential for the benefit of the homeland (e.g., Orozco 2005, Maimbo, S.M. and Ratha 2005).

In the 2000s, there was great enthusiasm for the potential of migrants and diasporas to contribute to development processes. However, many developing-origin countries cannot provide a conducive environment for diaspora engagement for homeland development and address the needs of their nationals abroad. This has curtailed the euphoria on the migration-diaspora and development nexus (Chikanda 2024: 168).

Remittances and their development potential

- Financial remittances: essential role in improving the living conditions of individuals and families in origin countries (e.g., access to food, shelter, healthcare, and education).
- Remittances sent by migrants to developing countries higher than official development assistance (ODA) (World Bank, 2017).
- Significant potential of diaspora bonds («bonds sold by the home country to its own diaspora as an alternative to borrowing from the capital markets" (Wickramasekara, Tennant, and Taran 2018: 53)) to contribute to financing development projects.
- High remittance costs and high recruitment cost hinder the volume of remittance transfer and its development outcomes for the benefit of developing origin countries.
- Remittance transfer as a substitute for the lack of governmental assistance or absence of effective policies and programs in terms of access to health, social protection, and welfare in developing-origin countries.
- Low share of remittances in GDP (less than 1%): lack of policies and measures to maximize the volume of remittances and their development potential.

Remittances and their development potential

- Diaspora savings were estimated at 700 million USD in 2016 (Wickramasekara, Tennan, and Taran 2018).
- Increasing volume of remittances from Africa: from 5.8 billion USD in 1980 to 86.3 billion USD in 2020. However, the share of global remittances received by Africa has declined: from 16% in 1980 to 12% in 2020 (World Bank 2020). (Chikanda 2024: 171).
- Diverging views about whether the COVID-19 pandemic resulted in reduced (e.g., Ratha et al. 2021) or stable or increasing volume of remittance (e.g., Tapsoba 2011) (Chikanda 2024: 171).
- Beyond the financial remittances transfer: need to consider social remittances.

Highly skilled migrants, Diasporas Knowledge Networks (DKNs) and homeland development

- Diasporas Knowledge Networks (DKNs) also known as scientific diaspora networks, or intellectual diasporas, have the potential to foster knowledge transfer and strengthen higher education, and the scientific and technological capacities of countries of origin if there is a conducive environment allowing scientific and technical diasporas to participate in homeland development (e.g., Meyer and Brown 1999, Meyer and Wattiaux 2005, Kuznetsov 2006).
- Kuznetsov (2006) has shed light on the DKN's activities geared to the development of origin countries.
- Diaspora Knowledge Networks underline the possibility of brain gain rather brain drain, i.e., highly skilled nationals abroad to contribute to national development without necessarily their physical return to the homeland (Meyer 2011).

Highly skilled migrants, Diasporas Knowledge Networks (DKNs) (or scientific and knowledge diasporas) and homeland development

- Highly skilled migrants can carry out transnational development linkages and activities mediated by Information Communication Technology (ICT) and act as key actors for homeland development by transferring remittances, knowledge, know-how, human capital enhancement, trade, investment opportunities, and soft power.
- Plethora of diaspora initiatives that aim to contribute to homeland development. However, one of the major challenges is how to sustain these initiatives and create favorable conditions for their significant contribution to homeland development.
- Various challenges hindering the potential of DKNs to foster knowledge transfer, scientific and technological capacities, and overall homeland development. Most of the DKNs are inactive or no longer operational (Lowell and Bertova).
- Countries such as Japan, China, South Korea, and India have set up various initiatives aimed to turn the so-called brain drain of their highly skilled nationals abroad into brain gain benefiting the country of origin (see examples related to China and India in the next section related «Selected government-led initiatives to engage diasporas in homeland development"). However, many developing countries do not have a conducive environment to attract or engage their highly skilled diasporas to strengthen science, technology, higher education, and socioeconomic development (e.g., Gaillard and Gaillard 1997).

Highly skilled migrants, Diasporas Knowledge Networks (DKNs) (or scientific and knowledge diasporas) and homeland development

- Failure of DKNs initiated by highly skilled nationals abroad and those supported by governments or international partners (Lowell and Bertova).
- Strong motivation to contribute to homeland development. However, contributions are primarily limited to individual initiatives, particularly among Indian and South African highly skilled migrants interviewed (Tejada, Dia, and Kwankam 2010, Dia 2010, Ionesco, Dia, Guisse 2009).
- Stable employment and resident status in the destination country are key elements to foster diaspora engagement for homeland development (Tejada, Dia, and Kwankam 2010, Dia 2010, Ionesco, Dia, Guisse 2009).
- Limited State support in the origin as well as destination country, hindering highly skilled migrants and scientific diasporas' engagement for homeland development (Tejada, Dia, and Kwankam 2010, Dia 2010, Ionesco, Dia, Guisse 2009).
- Limited integration of diasporas in development programs. Most countries emphasize remittance transfer at the expense of other potential development contributions of diasporas (e.g., Black and Sward 2009, Adepoju).

Selected government- and international organizations led initiatives to engage diasporas in homeland development

- Increasingly, origin countries devising policies and measures aimed at diaspora mobilization and engagement for homeland development: involving diasporas in strengthening national capacities, extending their rights (for instance: voting rights, obtaining dual citizenship), and extracting obligations from the diaspora (Gamlen 2006). For instance, dual citizenship rights: According to estimates, 49% of countries allow dual citizenship (Baranova, 5 June 2024)
- Typology of states of origin according to their level of engagement with their diaspora: exploitative (obligations without rights); generous (rights without obligations); and engaged (both rights and obligations) (Gamlen 2006).

African countries:

- Policy, legal, legislative, and institutional frameworks dedicated to diaspora adopted in many African countries.
- For instance, a ministry dedicated to nationals abroad (diaspora): Senegal and Mali.
- Voting rights provided by 33 African countries to their citizens abroad (European Union Global Diaspora Facility 2021, cited by Chikanda 2024: 176).
- More than 28 countries allowing dual citizenship rights (European Union Global Diaspora Facility 2021, cited by Chikanda 2024: 176).

India

- Database on Indian (scientific or knowledge) diasporas Shift in government policy in favor of strengthening Indian diasporas' engagement into national development. High Level Committee on Diaspora set up in 2001.
- Ramanujan fellowship (Science and Engineering Research Board SERB, 2019) led by the Department of Science & Technology, Government of India to encourage the return of Indian scientists and engineers abroad by offering suitable research positions in India (Pandey, Srinivas, Deepthi 2022: 5).
- In the same vein, "Ramalingaswami Re-entry Fellowship" under the Department of Biotechnology of the Government of India for Indian scientists abroad specializing in biotechnology and life sciences to allow them to return to India to hold research positions. Possibilities to gain regular research grants (Pandey, Srinivas, Deepthi 2022: 5).

China

As part of its strategy to catch up in science and technology and to strengthen its competitiveness in the international arena, the Government of China sent some of its outstanding students to the Global North for education and employment purposes and embarked on widening policies towards maximizing opportunities at the international education and labor markets for Chinese highly skilled nationals despite concerns about brain drain (Chen, 2009; Miao et al., 2009).

Thousand Talent Program: A key program of the Central Government of China to recruit overseas Chinese scientists and technologists with attractive remuneration and working conditions. It aims to attract back Chinese highly skilled nationals abroad, thereby addressing brain drain and promoting brain gain (Yu et al. 2014, Tan 2024)

Yangtze River Scholars Award Program (also known as the Cheung Kong Scholar and the Changjiang Scholar Award): This award aims to attract top talents to increase the international visibility of Chinese universities (Li, Miao, Yang 2015, Tan 2024).

Mexico: harnessing the development potential of hometown associations

Home Town Associations HTAs – for instance, HTAs created by Mexican nationals in the USA: transnational engagement of Mexican diaspora aimed at contributing to local socioeconomic development.

Philanthropic organizations set up by Mexican migrants carry out fundingraising activities to benefit their communities of origin in Mexico.

Local (provincial, state, municipal) and federal governments initiated the "3x1 Program" since 2002, "which matches donations the clubs make to community development projects in their hometowns with funds from the three levels of the Mexican government (federal, state, and municipal)" (Orozco and Welle 2005: 14).

The HTAs played a fundamental role in the 3 x 1 Program implemented by the Mexican government (Orozco and Welle 2005).

Collaboration with municipal authorities to achieve their projects aimed at addressing the needs of local communities (e.g., health, education, economic infrastructures, coping with natural disasters).

US-based Mexican migrants' transnational development activities focus on access to healthcare, education, and public infrastructures.

Low volume of funds raised, however, the HTAs have a significant impact on the rural communities.

UNDP TOKTEN: Knowledge transfer through expatriate nationals: an UNDP project that has been set up long time.

Individuals and groups can liaise and refer to multiple belongings rather than being contained in a fixed national entity.

If well managed, migration can contribute to development processes.

Migration is not the panacea to address the tremendous development challenges of countries of origin in the global South.

Transnational migrant and diaspora engagement can impact negatively or positively homeland development depending on the effectiveness of government policies directed to the diaspora, origin, and the host country's situation, and migrants' perception about their origin country among other factors.

While diaspora can contribute to homeland development, it also can fuel or exacerbate tensions, polarizations, and conflicts in the origin countries.

Knowledge gaps on the profiles of diasporas and the effectiveness of migrants' and diasporas' transnational initiatives to foster homeland development.

Diverse diaspora communities reflect the complexity of migration: various motives underlying their migration, various competencies, ethnic profiles, length of stay, various migrant statuses, different levels of integration in the host society, and various forms of transnational linkages with the country of origin, various destinations (South-North, South-South, and North-South).

Diaspora contribution takes various forms including remittances transfer, knowledge transfer, social remittances, investment and trade opportunities, development projects upon return, etc.

Various factors influence migrants' transnational engagement for homeland development, including host and origin country's political and socioeconomic situation, and migrants' integration in the host country, among other elements.

All diaspora groups (whether skilled or unskilled) can contribute to homeland development: however, policymakers tend to overlook the development contribution of low and unskilled migrants.

A significant gap between the promise or potential of the diasporas and the effective contribution of diasporas to homeland development: challenges to concretize the aspirations to contribute to homeland or hindrances from the origin and host country impeding the development potential of migrants and diasporas.

Migrants and diaspora communities also need government stakeholders' support to contribute effectively to the development of their country of origin.

Origin and destination countries can play a significant role in facilitating diaspora engagement for national development.

Ensure better integration of diaspora communities in host countries and respect for their rights, essential to foster their contribution to the development of their country of origin.

Origin countries should create a conducive environment for diaspora engagement in national development.

Create a synergy between stakeholders and government at all levels - central, provincial, regional, municipal, and community and their diasporas national for homeland development endeavors.

Host countries need to support diaspora mapping, strengthen diaspora organizations, and adopt visa policies that facilitate circular migration.

Embassies of origin countries should play a more important role.

Support capacity building; elite diaspora groups should also help other groups.

Mainstreaming diaspora into national development policies and programs should be more effective.

Need for stronger political will to engage the diaspora in national development by devising and implementing robust migration, diasporas, and development policies, programs, and measures.

Need for policies and measures to maximize remittances and diaspora savings through confidence-building measures between diaspora investors and the country of origin.

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