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A comparative analysis of diaspora policies

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ABSTRACT

Why are states increasingly developing policies aimed at embracing their populations abroad? This interest in diaspora policies has become relevant beyond the academic context, reflecting a growing practice of states and international organizations. To address this, the article first provides a description of the growing number of state practices aimed at their population abroad. Based on an original dataset of thirty-five states, it then uses multiple correspondence analysis (MCA) to establish an inductive typology of sending states policies: expatriate, closed, indifferent, global-nation and managed labor. Finally, it assesses three explanatory frameworks of diaspora policies, finding that, while explanations based on material factors and ethnic conceptions of citizenship provide insights into the determinants of diaspora policies, analyses in terms of governmentality provide a more fruitful framework for research.

Introduction

An increasing number of governments and international organizations have developed policies intended to incorporate populations abroad in a variety of domains, such as citizenship, economic development or diplomatic service. How can this proliferation of policies aimed at seducing, embracing, using or controlling populations abroad be explained? Such policies have been the subject of a growing body of literature in anthropology, sociology, political science and geography (Dufoix, 2012). Within the broader literature on diaspora and transnationalism that emerged in the 1990s (Vertovec & Cohen, 1999), these diaspora policies have been linked to a "diaspora turn" in policy discourse and practice (Agunias, 2009). With a few exceptions (Gamlen, 2008), however, the academic literature so far has focused on qualitative studies of single cases or small-scale comparisons, with few large comparative analyses of diaspora policies. This article aims to fill that gap.

In order to accomplish my objective, I proceed in four steps. First, I describe the diaspora turn in state policy over the past years. Drawing on secondary literature, I detail the development of the incorporation of populations abroad in symbolic, bureaucratic, legal, diplomatic, and economic terms. I argue that the relative absence of a broad comparative framework has led to the development of inaccurate typologies of diaspora policies. Next, I present an original dataset of thirty-five states characterized in terms of their symbolic policies, social and economic policies, religious and cultural policies, citizenship policies and government and bureaucratic control, coded in nineteen categorical variables. Based on a multiple correspondence analysis of the dataset, I map the relation between the thirty-five state policies and the categorical variables. This leads to an original typology of diaspora policies based on the statistical clustering of policy characteristics, including five broad types of state policies: the expatriate, the closed, the indifferent, the global-nation and the managed labor state. After this, I consider the established typology in relation to three existing explanatory frameworks of diaspora policies: what I term the structural–instrumental framework, based loosely on Marxian and utilitarian assumptions of state behavior; the ethnic framework, based on opposing theories of cosmopolitanism and transnational nationalism; and, finally, the political-economy hypothesis, related to the governmentality framework. I show that the structural–instrumental and ethnic framework provides only partial explanation for the development of diaspora policies, and the political-economy framework provides a better understanding of the process of transnationalization of state practices, suggesting that the governmentality framework is the most useful avenue of analysis. What best explains the development of diaspora policies is indeed not transnational material or nationalist interests, but the broader political-economic context and rationality within which these interests can be considered legitimate objects of government. I conclude by highlighting a few methodological, theoretical and political insights resulting from the analysis.

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A new relationship between governments and their diasporas?

Geographies of diaspora

Diaspora emerged in the 1990s as the signifier around which debates on cosmopolitanism and post-national belonging coalesced (Brah, 1996; Cohen, 1996; Clifford, 1994; Gilroy, 1994; Soysal, 1994). In geography, the concept was proposed as a new tool to "provide bridges between population geography and new human geographies" (Ní Laoire, 2003: 275; Ogden, 2000), introducing creolization and hybridity as analytical lenses (Boyle, 2001: 429). It allowed thinking about new geographies of social and political space, defined as transnational communities (Vertovec & Cohen, 1999), transnational spaces (Jackson, Crang, & Dwyer, 2004), informal political spaces (Mavroudi, 2008) or diasporic public spheres (Mohan, 2008). Diaspora also provided a framework for alternative geographies of gender (Gray, 1997; Preston, Kobayashi, & Man, 2006), as well as of citizenship and belonging (Dickinson & Bailey, 2007; Leitner & Ehrkamp, 2006; Mohan, 2008; Nagel & Staeheli, 2004).

In spite of all this, however, the virulent ethnic politics of some diasporic actors revealed that trans-territorial processes of identification and mobilization do not necessarily go toward more hybridity or emancipation from the national imagination. Many warned of the dangers of projecting progressive tropes onto the concept (Mitchell, 1997; Mohan, 2008; Yeh, 2007), calling for the analysis of diaspora as a performative category (Dickinson, 2011; Dickinson & Bailey, 2007; Mavroudi, 2008), or a category of everyday, political and economic practice, rather than as a normatively charged and potentially essentialist category of analysis (Adamson & Demetriou, 2007; Carter, 2005; Ní Laoire, 2003; Samers, 2003). The focus of the analysis then shifted from the processes of diasporas transnational identifications (Long, 2009; Mohammad, 2007) and mobilizations (Blunt, 2003; Werbner, 2002) to the transnational practices of power deployed by states (Ancien, Boyle, & Kitchin, 2009; Gamlen, 2008, 2012), i.e. the long-distance practices of state symbolic categorization (Dickinson & Bailey, 2007), bureaucratic classification (Ho, 2011: 759) and political and economic management (Ball & Piper, 2002; Gray, 2006; Larner, 2007). These studies echoed a broader interest in sociology and political science for state-diaspora relations (Itzighson, 2000; Levitt & de la Dehesa, 2003; Smith, 2003).

Paradoxically, while academia progressively distanced itself from a naïve belief in the promises of diaspora, the term gained renewed traction in policy, marked by an increasing attention from states and international institutions (Agunias, 2009; Agunias & Newland, 2012; Boyle & Kitchin, 2011), and it acquired the status of a new policy buzzword (Basch, Glick Schiller, & Szanton Blanc, 1995; Kunz, 2010; Laguerre, 1999; Østergaard-Nielsen, 2003; Ragazzi, 2009). Through political speeches, bureaucratic practices of surveillance and control, strategies of development, and citizenship regulations, governments from all corners of the world now embrace what they increasingly define as their "diasporas". While states have reached out to their populations abroad in an additional number of ways, through institutional change, philanthropy, tourism, knowledge networks, capital funds, the broad comparative framework of this article does not allow full exploration of all aspects of these policies (for more on these aspects, see Agunias & Newland, 2012).

The diaspora turn in policy

First, after being ignored or rejected from the national discourses for many years, populations abroad are now being symbolically represented as constitutive elements of the national population, passing from "traitors to heroes" as Jorge (2004) put it. The term "diaspora" itself has proliferated as a positive signifier to designate populations abroad and their symbolic link to the homeland (Dufoix, 2008, 2012; Green & Weil, 2007). Previously derogatory terms are now being inverted and used to praise those abroad, as in the Ecuadorian president's claim to head a "migrant's government", the changing value of *pochos* (Mexicans living in the US) and the declining social condemnation of the *yordim* (those who emigrate from Israel, as opposed to the *olim*, those who do *Aliyah*, i.e. immigrate to Israel) (Fitzgerald, 2006; Margheritis, 2011). Governments are also increasingly dedicating memorials and organizing conferences and commemorations to their diaspora, for example, the *Pravasi Bharatiya Divas* in India (Jaffrelot & Therwath, 2007) and the national Day of the Moroccan Community Abroad (Marocains du Monde, 2011). State-run television channels, websites, and information centers are also being deployed to inform the population abroad of the governments' activities, from Hungary's Duna TV to Turkey's TRT International (Turkish Ratio and Television Corporation) and Italy's RAI International (Italian Radio and Television Corporation).

Second, populations abroad are increasingly being included from a bureaucratic point of view. This attention paid by sending states implies a growing reshaping of institutional organizational charts within departments and ministries (Brand, 2006). I use here the term "sending states" to designate states of origin of populations abroad. Although these populations might not have been "sent" by their state of origin, this term is now generally accepted in the literature. In addition to the conventional consular services within ministries of foreign affairs, domestic ministries like health, welfare, labor, culture, and religion are developing sections to deal with populations abroad, for example Ghana's National Migration Unit (Ministry of Interior), the Philippines' Overseas Workers Welfare Administration (Ministry of Labor), and Ethiopia's Diaspora Coordinating Office (Ministry of Capacity Building) (Agunias & Newland, 2012: 78). More and more governments speak of an "*n*th" region, or a republic abroad, like Haiti's "tenth department" (Glick Schiller & Fouron, 1999). Several governments reinforce their service of imams to cater to – while also possibly controlling – their population abroad, for example, Turkey's Ministry for Religious Affairs (Çitak, 2010; De Haas, 2007). Governments also export educational systems along with culture and language professors (Kenway & Fahey, 2011), and cultural centers dedicated to populations are no longer the prerogative of West European governments (UK's *British Council*, France's *Alliance Française*, Italy's *Istituto Dante Allighieri*, Germany's *Goethe Institut*), as the new Turkish initiative of *Yunus Emre* cultural centers illustrates (Republic of Turkey Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 2012). Some governments have decided to coordinate these initiatives in interministerial agencies linked to ministries of foreign affairs, welfare, education or economy, like the Overseas Chinese Affairs Office of the State Council, Guatemala's National Council for Migrants or Sierra Leone's Office of the Diaspora (Agunias & Newland, 2012: 80). An increasing number of governments even have fully-fledged ministries entirely dedicated to the issue, like Armenia's Ministry of Diaspora, Haiti's Ministry of Haitians Living Abroad, and India's Ministry of Overseas Indian Affairs (Agunias & Newland, 2012: 73).

The legal and social link between the government and populations abroad is being reinforced in several ways. While some governments still restrict movement and police their population overseas, the global trend is in the opposite direction, with increasing numbers of governments facilitating the preservation of, or access to, citizenship for their nationals abroad (Barry, 2006; Faist, 2001; Ho, 2011; Smith, 2003; Tintori, 2011). When they do not, governments with large populations abroad often develop new