

Transnationalism and Development: Mexican and Chinese Immigrant Organizations in the United States

ALEJANDRO PORTES

MIN ZHOU

THE STUDY OF migration and development has focused traditionally on the forces driving persons from their home regions, the demographic and social consequences of their departure, and the subsequent effects of their remittances on local and regional economies. The unit of analysis has normally been the individual migrant—identified by classical economics as the central decisionmaker in the process; or the family—privileged by sociology and the “new economics” of migration as the actual determinant of migration decisions. When aggregated, the decisions of individual actors and family units can have major effects on the social and economic prospects of sending, as well as receiving, regions and countries (Thomas 1973; Borjas 1990; Massey et al. 1998; Stark 1991).

The recent literature on immigrant transnationalism has highlighted the continuing fluid contacts between expatriate communities and their sending localities, including the involvement of migrants in activities requiring regular back-and-forth travel and frequent contacts by other means with their home-country counterparts. This intense traffic has tended to be obscured by an emphasis on the assimilation of immigrants to the host societies, neglecting their enduring ties to those left behind (Vertovec 2004; Landolt, Autler, and Baires 1999; Bauböck 2003). The new school of transnational studies focuses on the individual and families. Numerous case studies have documented the diverse, sometimes surprising, forms that these cross-border activities take (Glick-Schiller and Fouron 1999; Ostergaard-Nielsen 2001; Itzigsohn and Saucido 2002).

The predominant emphasis on the individual and families has overlooked a third important actor: organizations. Organizational initiatives of

migrants themselves and their interface with home-country actors, including sending communities, regions, and states, bear directly on the migration–development relation. A major quantitative study of Latin American immigrant transnationalism, which examined individual family heads and their involvement in economic, political, and sociocultural institutions and activities in their home countries, yielded a number of significant findings. This study identified the greater transnational participation of older, better-educated, and more-established immigrants; it also found that cross-border activities conducted on an individual basis were atypical and that many such activities were channeled through organizations, including hometown associations and branches of home-country political parties (Portes, Haller, and Guarnizo 2002; Guarnizo, Portes, and Haller 2003). The logical next step is thus to examine immigrant organizations and their links with their home countries. In this article, we address the following questions: What are the types and scale of transnational activities initiated by immigrant organizations? How are organizational initiatives received and supported by sending countries? What bearing do these organizational forms have on homeland development?

Transnational organizations and homeland development

The most alert governments of immigrant-sending countries have established offices and programs that strengthen ties and stimulate dialogue with their expatriates. Many have done so as a result of a shift of emphasis in development thinking. Traditionally, scholars and policymakers viewed national development as an outgrowth of capital accumulation and investment; more recently, the emphasis has shifted to the quality and effectiveness of state institutions (North 1990; Evans 2004; Hoff and Stiglitz 2001; Iskander 2010). From either perspective, outmigration has been regarded as a symptom of underdevelopment or, in the case of professional migrants, as a net loss of talent—the so-called brain drain (Portes 1976; Cheng and Bonacich 1984). The possibility that expatriate communities could have a significant influence on the progress of the countries they left behind was seldom contemplated either in economics or sociology (Ariza and Portes 2007; Landolt, Autler, and Baires 1999).

The spectacular rise of migrant remittances has changed this state of affairs. Migrant remittances increased from an estimated global total of US\$43.3 billion in 1980 to US\$100 billion in 2000 (Gammeltoft 2002; Guarnizo 2003). By 2008, officially recorded remittances to developing countries reached \$336 billion; the major recipients of migrant remittances were India (\$49 billion), China (\$48 billion), Mexico (\$22 billion), and the Philippines (\$20 billion) (World Bank 2010). Nearly overnight, as it were, sending-country governments discovered that their nationals abroad were making hard-currency contributions that in many instances vastly exceeded what their countries

received in foreign aid and that often rivaled earnings from their principal commodity exports (Massey, Durand, and Malone 2002; Portes, Escobar, and Radford 2007). The World Bank and other international agencies responded with analyses of remittance flows and plans to channel them into productive investments. Annual remittance flows became prominent in the national accounts of sending countries and were even used as collateral for negotiations of external borrowings (Delgado-Wise and Covarrubias 2006; Guarnizo 2003).

Sending-country governments discovered, as well, that apart from remittances, expatriates were making philanthropic contributions often in the millions of dollars to their hometowns and significant transfers of technology and commercial know-how to their home-country counterparts (Saxenian 2002, 2006; Goldring 2002). To sustain, encourage, and guide such transfers, sending-country governments began to interact proactively with their expatriates. They did so not on an individual basis, but through representatives of the organizations created by the migrants themselves. Migrant organizations thus became the main focus of official attention at about the same time as immigration scholars were discovering the dynamics of transnationalism, and well ahead of the discovery that these phenomena extended far beyond individuals to comprise increasingly dense organizational webs (Vertovec 2004, 2009; Vermeulen 2005; Delano 2011).

The development literature remains focused on individual remittances, neglecting broader forms of migrant organization and their activities. In similar fashion, the immigration literature documents the myriad forms of individual and family transnationalism, but largely ignores the organizational structure of expatriate communities and their growing dialogue with their home governments (Portes, Escobar, and Radford 2007; Iskander 2010). Not all governments have initiated or taken part in these activities: weaker or less diligent sending states have been content to let remittances flow passively, with little action on their part. However, the proactive activities of the more alert states and their increasingly complex interactions with their nationals abroad have opened a new chapter in the study of development, while providing a fresh lens on the adaptation of migrant communities to their new environments.

Receiving societies are also reacting to this increasing transnational traffic, although their policies have not been uniform. Some host-country governments have reacted positively to the pro-development efforts of immigrant groups in their midst, while others have seen these activities as retarding the assimilation process or even compromising national security (Freeman 2004; Hollifield 2004). We return to this topic in our conclusion.

Methodology

The growing importance of immigrant organizations prompted a research team based at Princeton University to launch the Comparative Immigrant Organization Project (CIOP) to examine their presence and activities among

foreign expatriate communities in the United States. Valuable case studies preceded this effort, such as the work of Goldring (2002) on Mexican immigrant federations and that of Landolt, Autler, and Baires (1999) on Salvadoran associations. Until the CIOP, however, no comprehensive directories of US-based immigrant organizations and their types had been compiled, nor had face-to-face interviews been conducted with the leaders of the most important groups. We make use of data from this project to describe and compare organizations created by immigrants from the two major sources of US-bound migration: Mexico and China.

The research design for the study required developing directories of associations for each immigrant nationality and categorizing them by type, with particular attention to the difference between those involved in programs focused solely on the domestic needs of immigrant communities and those involved in cross-national activities. This effort was supported by consular personnel from the two sending countries, leaders of umbrella federations, and expert informants. Interviewees also provided leads to other associations, helping to complete each national directory. In the process of constructing the directories, researchers were able to identify the largest and most stable organizations operating with a transnational perspective. Leaders of the 30 or so largest were then selected for face-to-face interviews.

We found that the organizational structure of each immigrant community was composed of a few large and relatively well-funded federations and social service agencies, followed by a multiplicity of small associations, some of which manage to endure over time, while others emerged and disappeared in a short time span. Size and longevity were used as criteria for sample selection on the assumption that the largest, oldest, and better-established organizations are those most capable of initiating development projects in sending countries and of establishing dialogue with home-country governments.

The final part of the research design required traveling to each sending country to interview government officials responsible for maintaining ties with the expatriate communities and to meet with local institutional counterparts of organizations contacted in the United States. These interviews served a double purpose: first, to check the reliability of reports about programs and activities conducted in the US by immigrant leaders; second, to round out the picture by gaining a sending-country perspective on the developmental impact of transnational activities. Home-country interviews took an average of three months per country and were conducted between 2006 and 2008 in Mexico and other Latin American countries and in 2009–10 in China. Thirty-five interviews were conducted with Mexican federal officials, community leaders, and expert informants; in China, 62 interviews were conducted.

Three Latin American immigrant groups were originally identified for the Princeton study: those from Colombia, the Dominican Republic, and Mexico. Mexicans are the largest and oldest of the three immigrant groups and their country of origin the largest and most economically important.

Since passage of the North American Free Trade Agreement in 1994, the US and Mexican economies have become increasingly intertwined, with Mexico turning into a key platform for the production of automobiles and other industrial products for the American market (Shaiken 1994; Delgado-Wise and Covarrubias 2006). For this reason, we focus our analysis on Mexico, while summarizing findings for the other two Latin American countries when relevant.

The study combined a quantitative approach to the number and size of immigrant organizations with a qualitative focus on the views and activities of their leaders and their home-country counterparts. The informative results obtained with this cross-national methodology led the research team to extend it to the largest Asian immigrant groups. Following the same methodology, we compiled an inventory of Chinese immigrant organizations nationwide, but with a focus on the three major urban areas of Chinese immigrant concentration: Los Angeles, San Francisco, and New York. From this inventory, we selected the 55 largest and most stable organizations for detailed examinations and leader interviews.

In China, interviews with government and party officials took place at the national, regional, and local levels, but observations of sending-country counterparts were limited to the provinces of Guangdong and Fujian, which are overwhelmingly the main sources of historical and contemporary Chinese immigration to the United States. Twelve interviews were conducted in Beijing and 50 more at the provincial and local levels.¹ China is Mexico's principal competitor in the production and export of goods to the United States (Iranzo and Ma 2006), and the two countries have followed parallel courses in generating large-scale migrant outflows to the United States for over a century. Both have opened their economies to foreign investment and trade during the last three decades. Given their major economic ties to the US and the size of their expatriate communities in North America, it is informative to compare the character of their respective immigrant organizations and their bearing on home-country national and regional developments. An additional consideration is how US authorities have reacted to this proliferation of transnational activities among major immigrant communities in the country, a matter that we take up in the concluding section.

Mexican and other Latin American transnational organizations

Mexicans, as we have noted, are the largest contemporary immigrant group in the United States, numbering some 11.5 million in 2010 and representing close to one-third of the country's foreign-born population. Historically and at present, Mexico has functioned as the principal reservoir for manual labor for its northern neighbor. The end of the Bracero Program in 1964 led to the re-channeling underground of this labor flow and the rapid growth of

the category of illegal or unauthorized immigrants (Massey and Pren 2012). More than one-third of Mexican immigrants in the United States at present are estimated to be in this category (Passel 2009; Massey 2007).

Immigrants from Mexico have traditionally concentrated in the American Southwest and, secondarily, in the Midwest; 37 percent of Mexican immigrants live in California, 21 percent in Texas, and 6 percent in Illinois (Pew Hispanic Center 2011). In recent years, the Mexican labor force has moved eastward in search of employment in agriculture and industry and to escape increased border enforcement in the West. This has led to large increases in the Mexican-origin population in states where only a few years ago it was nonexistent. New York, New Jersey, and southern states such as Georgia and North and South Carolina have been recipients of this massive labor displacement (Smith 2005; Ansley and Shefner 2009).

Mexican immigrant organizations in the US are different from those created by other Latin American groups in several key respects. Not only is the Mexican immigrant population larger than all other Latin American groups combined, but it is predominantly rural (Cornelius 1998; Ariza and Portes 2007; Arias 2008). Traditional loyalties to places of origin result in a proliferation of hometown civic associations far more durable and numerous than those created by other immigrant groups. While other Latin immigrant organizations depend on raffles, dances, and similar events for fundraising, Mexican immigrants regularly contribute to their hometown associations, seeing such contributions as a continuation of their traditional duties (*cargos*) to their places of origin (Sanchez 2007).

Table 1 shows the types and numbers of immigrant organizations compiled among the three Latin American nationalities originally included in the Princeton study. The typology of organizations in this table is based on the self-definitions of their leaders rather than on an *a priori* classification by the research team. Mexican organizations are far more numerous than those from Colombia and the Dominican Republic, and they are predominantly hometown associations. Two-thirds of Mexican groups fall into this category, compared to under 4 percent among Dominicans and 2 percent among Colombians. Federations of hometown associations, grouped by state of origin, account for another 4 percent of Mexican organizations, while they do not exist among the other two nationalities included in the study.

The strong and proactive presence of the Mexican government in the transnational field is notable. Several Mexican states, starting with Zacatecas, created federations of their hometown committees throughout the United States in the early 1990s. The governor of Zacatecas, mayors of its principal cities, and state legislators travel frequently to Los Angeles, Houston, and other cities to build ties with leaders of immigrant federations who, in turn, visit the state regularly. Zacatecas was the leader and a strong supporter of the *dos-por-uno*, now *tres-por-uno* (three-for-one) program under which each dollar donated by immigrant organizations for public works in Mexico is matched

TABLE 1 Percent distribution of Latin American immigrant organizations in the United States by home country and type

Type	Colombia	Dominican Republic	Mexico	Total
Civic/cultural organization	47.3	30.0	6.8	16.2
Other cultural organization	10.2	15.3	0.5	3.7
Economic organization	4.4	2.4	0.7	1.5
Hometown association	1.9	3.5	63.8	47.0
Federations of hometown associations	0.0	0.0	4.3	3.1
State-of-origin association	0.3	1.2	8.7	6.5
International philanthropic organization (Lions, Rotaries, Kiwanis)	7.0	3.5	0.0	1.6
Home-country philanthropy	3.2	0.0	0.0	0.6
Political committee	7.9	10.0	0.5	2.7
Professional association	8.9	14.1	0.7	3.4
Religious group	1.6	1.9	0.2	0.6
Social service agency	2.9	17.1	3.3	4.5
Sports group	0.6	1.8	10.0	7.6
Student organization	3.8	0.0	0.5	1.1
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
N	315	170	1,290	1,775

NOTE: Organizations were classified according to the self-definitions provided by their leaders and their published materials.

SOURCE: Comparative Immigrant Organization Project (CIOP), Data bank, Princeton Center for Migration and Development «<http://www.princeton.edu/cmd/>».

by the federal, state, and municipal governments, thereby quadrupling the impact of these philanthropic investments (Goldring 2002; Guarnizo 2003; De la Garza and Hazan 2003).

According to the governor of Zacatecas, the *three-for-one* program has supported more than 1,000 projects in the state. Classrooms, playgrounds, and roads have been built with these funds. An estimated 600,000 residents of Zacatecas live in the United States, roughly equivalent to 40 percent of the state's population in the late 1990s. The *three-for-one* program is one of the key means for turning a looming demographic decline into a positive developmental force for the state. The governor has also instituted *Para los que Regresen* (*For Those Who Come Back*), a program offering scholarships to young Zacatecans abroad to return to study in the state (Joffe-Block 2010).

Other sending states, such as Jalisco and Michoacán, have adopted the Zacatecas model and promoted the creation of hometown federations in centers of Mexican migrant concentration such as Los Angeles, Chicago, and Houston during the 1990s. The example has been followed more recently, in most cases with the help of the Mexican consulates and states' governments, by migrants to nontraditional destinations. Thus, in New York, where the Mexican population comes predominantly from the state of Puebla, community organizations received strong support from the Mexican consulate and

the Puebla state government to create Casa Puebla in New York City. Since 1994, the state of Guanajuato has supported the establishment of 45 Casas Guanajuato in 14 US states, including five on the East Coast (Escobar 2007).

Still more influential is the presence of Mexico's federal government in the transnational field. This has taken the form of matching programs for immigrant philanthropic contributions, most recently the *tres-por-uno* program; the creation of *plazas comunitarias* in a number of US cities that provide library services, information, and language training (in English and Spanish) for Mexicans; the strengthening of legal defense programs for immigrants through a network of 55 consulates in the US and Canada; the creation of a *Matricula Consular*, a Mexican I.D. card that is accepted in the US by banks and other agencies; and the creation of "health windows" in several of these consulates providing basic medical services and information to Mexican migrants.

The creation of the Institute for Mexicans Abroad (Instituto de los Mexicanos en el Exterior, IME) represents the culmination of these efforts. IME, housed in the Mexican Secretariat of Foreign Affairs of the Mexican government, organizes biannual meetings of its Consultative Council of 125 elected representatives of immigrant organizations in the United States and Canada (Gonzalez Gutierrez 2005; Delano 2011). The Mexican government has moved in force to support and encourage these initiatives nationwide. Through dozens of Mexican consulates in both the US and Canada, the IME conducts a program to involve its migrant constituencies, defend their interests, and promote their continuing ties with Mexico. The general goal of the IME is to promote migrants' continuing links with their hometowns while also facilitating their integration within North American communities through such programs as English-language learning and civic education. This nonconfrontational approach has led IME to collaborate actively with US and Canadian municipal and state governments in programs assisting migrant workers (Gonzalez Gutierrez 2005; Delano 2011). Figure 1 illustrates the dense transnational traffic between Mexico and its expatriate communities.

Mexican transnationalism is thus different from that of other Latin immigrant communities, a difference that can be traced back to the immigrants' contexts of exit and incorporation. A mostly rural and frequently indigenous labor flow, these immigrants' low education and earnings prevent them from creating more middle-class forms of organization. No "Lions" or "Kiwanis" clubs, such as those created by Colombian immigrants (see Table 1), can be expected to emerge from migrants of rural origins occupying positions at the bottom of the American labor market (Portes, Escobar, and Radford 2007). Instead, traditional loyalties and duties are activated to bring Mexican immigrants together and sustain vibrant ties with their hometowns. Even unauthorized immigrants not infrequently lead hometown committees and dedicate many hours and hard-earned dollars to this effort (Goldring 2002; Roberts, Frank, and Lonzano-Asencio 1999; D'Aubeterre 2007).

FIGURE 1 Transnational connections of Mexican immigrant organizations: Selected examples

United States		Mexico	
Location	Name	Location	Name
55 US cities	Mexican consulates	Mexico City	Institute of Mexicans Abroad (IME)
Multiple (predominant in Los Angeles and the Southwest)	Immigrant confederations		
Multiple (predominant in large cities)	<i>Casas</i> (Puebla, Guanajuato, etc.)	State governments (e.g., Zacatecas, Guanajuato, Jalisco, Puebla)	Mexican state capitals
Throughout the US (hundreds)	Hometown committees	Municipal governments, local churches, local associations	Throughout Mexico (hundreds)

NOTE: Arrows indicate the predominant cross-national direction of programs listed in the rightmost column.
 SOURCE: Comparative Immigrant Organization Project (CIOP).

- Legal and health services for immigrants
 - Language courses and library supplies
 - Elected representation of immigrant organizations to IME's Council
-
- Promotion of statewide federations of hometown committees
 - Creation of state-dominated *casas* in areas of immigrant concentration
 - Donations for religious and secular public benefit projects
 - Provision of schools and clinics
 - Sponsorship of annual town festivities in honor of patron saint

An analysis of determinants of the emergence of transnational immigrant organizations conducted on the basis of the CIOP sample indicated that home-country government sponsorship is quite rare among other Latin American groups, but quite common among Mexican immigrants. Mexican organizations were over ten times more likely to have emerged through official sponsorship than those created by Colombians or Dominicans (Escobar 2010; Portes, Escobar, and Radford 2007). This result again reflects the unique involvement of the Mexican state with their expatriate communities. Nevertheless, results of the study also show that the preponderance of transnational organizations among all Latin American nationalities emerged at the initiative of the immigrants themselves, rather than at their government's behest.

A final set of findings concerned the characteristics of members of transnational organizations. Table 2 presents these findings, indicating that organizations are consistently supported by older, better-educated, and more-established migrants in their communities. About half of regular members from Colombia and the Dominican Republic were 40 years of age or older and had at least a college degree, in contrast with a fifth or less who were under age 30 or had less than a high school education. Relative to Colombian and Dominican associations, Mexican organizations attracted a larger proportion of young people and had as many poorly educated as well-educated members. This result is consistent with the young age structure and generally low levels of education of the Mexican migrant population as a whole; it also reflects the enduring loyalties of poor Mexican migrants to their rural origins, leading them to create hometown committees in large numbers.

Table 2 also shows that close to 70 percent of members of all Latin American immigrant organizations have lived in the United States for ten years or longer and that half have become US citizens. A partial exception is again Mexican associations, which draw about one-fourth of their numbers from unauthorized immigrants; even among them, however, naturalized US citizens outnumber the unauthorized. From these results we conclude that the motivation to engage in transnational activities among Mexican and other Latin American immigrants is primarily found among better-educated members of the communities and among those with longer periods of US residence and a more secure legal status. The process is one in which recent migrants seek to carve a niche for themselves in the receiving society and labor market, rather than concern themselves with collective endeavors. For the most part, collective initiatives emerge and influence home localities and countries only after the initial stages of migrant economic and social adaptation have been successfully completed. The data from the Princeton study showed that the immigrants most likely to participate in transnational organizations were also the most inclined to participate in local politics and civic associations in the US (Portes, Escobar, and Arana 2008; Escobar 2007).

TABLE 2 Characteristics of members of Latin American immigrant organizations in the US by nationality (percent)

	Colombian	Dominican	Mexican	Total in CIOP
Age				
30 years or less	12.1	11.1	24.8	15.2
40 years or more	53.2	53.8	33.6	48.3
Education				
Less than high school	7.4	29.7	28.7	20.9
College degree or higher	52.3	50.5	27.0	45.7
Occupation				
Manual laborer	18.0	26.4	40.1	26.6
Professional/business owner	49.8	61.5	36.0	50.3
Knowledge of English				
Very little	11.9	18.7	5.0	12.4
Good or very good	64.2	49.7	60.9	58.5
Legal status				
Does not have entry visa	6.3	3.5	27.9	10.7
US citizen	56.3	48.5	38.4	49.1
Length of US residence				
Less than 5 years	10.1	5.8	10.4	8.7
Ten years or more	68.9	66.8	69.5	69.3
Average frequency of trips to home country for organizational matters by organization leaders				
Never or rarely	6.7	3.6	30.0	11.5
At least three trips a year	40.0	35.7	20.0	33.3
N	50	56	133	247

N = number of organizations whose leaders were interviewed in person or by telephone.

SOURCE: Comparative Immigrant Organization Project (CIOP), Data bank, Princeton, Center for Migration and Development «<http://www.princeton.edu/cmd/>».

Mexican transnationalism in motion

Over the past decade, Armando Fernandez has helped raise tens of thousands of dollars for public works projects in his hometown of San Juan del Centro in Zacatecas. A civil engineer living in Corona, California, and a US citizen, he formed a club with other migrants to benefit their hometown. It began by making improvements to the elementary school that Fernandez once attended and followed with numerous other contributions. He is the fourth generation of his family to lead a transnational life (Joffe-Block 2010: 18).

The first accomplishment of the hometown association of San Miguel Comitipla in the state of Guerrero by its migrants in New York was the kiosk built in the central plaza. Later the town church was repaired and redecorated, and a large clock was bought for its tower. The *calzada* or avenue leading to the plaza was subsequently repaired and repaved with tile. For these projects,

migrant financial contributions were combined with local voluntary labor. The next large project planned (as of 2005) is the expansion of the plaza to make room for the town's annual *fiesta*. It is expected to cost about \$80,000 and with an added roof, \$260,000. Although hometown committees are not explicitly religious, it is common that the first projects accomplished with migrants' contributions are the repair of the town church and its environs. The president of the municipality to which San Miguel Comitipla belongs described the beginnings of this enterprise: "Around 1985, works began that benefited our town. They were all of a religious character to improve the sanctuary of San Diego de Alcala which is the most respected patron saint around here; then we bought street lights for the avenue where the procession takes place. Today, and with the help of the migrants in the US, public works are very advanced: the church is in good shape, redecorated and with gold leaf in the altars; now we are looking at rebuilding the school with the support from the municipality and the people we have in the United States."²

Chinese transnational organizations

China has an estimated population of 1.3 billion, the largest in the world. Its diaspora, composed of Chinese immigrants and their offspring, is estimated at 48 million, one of the world's largest. The majority of this diasporic population is found in Southeast Asia. The United States has an ethnic Chinese population of some 3.8 million, the largest of all non-European groups except for Mexicans. First-generation immigrants account for two-thirds of this population.

Chinese immigration to the United States started in the mid-nineteenth century in response to active labor recruitment for mining, railroad construction, and agriculture. Chinese laborers were found in large numbers in these activities until the Chinese Exclusion Act of 1882 put an end to the flow (Saxton 1971; Chan 1986; Zhou 2009). Chinese and, to a lesser extent, Japanese laborers were promptly replaced by Mexican peasants who were also deliberately recruited to work in the same activities. At many locations in the American West and Southwest, Mexican and Chinese laborers surely overlapped in large numbers at the turn of the twentieth century (Barrera 1980; Garcia 1981; Romero 2010).

Unlike Mexican migration of the earlier period, which was mostly temporary, Chinese immigrants, most of whom were men, sojourned in America for indefinite periods of time, even though they did not intend to stay permanently. Subjected to racial discrimination and legal exclusion, they banded together in urban enclaves performing the lowest kinds of menial jobs. These tightly knit bachelor societies were the forerunners of the contemporary Chinatowns in many American cities, particularly in California and New York (Nee and Nee 1973; Chan 1986; Zhou 1992).

Chinese immigration is noteworthy for its places of origin. Earlier emigration originated overwhelmingly in two southern provinces, Guangdong

and Fujian. Guangdong, the second most populous province in China, was the largest source of Chinese migrations and virtually the sole source of migration to the US between the late 1840s and the 1940s. Today, an estimated 30 million ethnic Chinese abroad—well over half the total—trace their origins to Guangdong. Main sources of out-migration to North America include the cities of Jiangmen,³ Zhongshan, and the surrounding rural areas in the Pearl River Delta. Fujian has historically been the second largest source of Chinese migrations. Fujianese migrants have been entering North America since the turn of the twentieth century, but the flow accelerated in the late 1980s, notably through the activities of organized smugglers—the so-called snakeheads (Chin 2000). About 9 million Chinese abroad trace their origins to Fujian. Major sending cities to North America include Lianjiang, Changle, Fuqing, and the capital city, Fuzhou (Zhou 2010).

Organizational development in old Chinatowns

During the last quarter of the nineteenth century and much of the twentieth, Chinese in the United States were segregated in Chinatowns on the West Coast and in other major American cities, such as New York and Chicago. While being isolated from the larger society, these ethnic communities—comprised mainly of male laborers—were neither atomized nor cut off from political and social events in China. In 1900, the ratio of Chinese males to females in the US was nearly 27-to-one. Over 60 percent of this population was concentrated in California, where its members earned a living in hand laundries, restaurants, domestic service, cigar and shoe manufacturing, agriculture, and other menial services (Chan 1986; Saxton 1971; Zhou 1992). Gradually, however, a dense web of coethnic networks and associational life emerged in segregated ethnic enclaves concerned with self-sufficiency, self-governance, and defense against external hostility. Three major types of organizations were dominant in the old Chinatowns: family/clan associations, district associations, and merchants associations, also known as *tongs* (Dillon 1962). All of these organizations emerged at the initiative of immigrants themselves, with little involvement of the Chinese state.

Family/clan associations were based on a combination of common surnames or kinship, ancestral descent, and villages of origin. District associations were organized around a common dialect or a common native place of birth, similar to Mexican hometown associations. Both family and district associations functioned like a traditional Chinese extended family. *Tongs* were mutual aid merchants associations, many of which included labor and operated as “brotherhoods” or secret societies. *Tongs* had a more diverse membership, and even an armed security force. Through secret languages and folk or religious rituals, *tongs* consolidated mutual solidarity and eventually dominated the economic life of the old Chinatowns (Chin 2000; Kwong 1987). Examples include the Suey Sing Associations, the On Leong Chinese Merchants Associa-

tion, and the Hip Sing Association. Traditional organizations established deep roots by owning properties and claiming territorial control within the enclave. In many of today's Chinatowns, their presence remains unmistakable, their buildings imprinted with the organization's name and flying the flag of either the Republic of China (Taiwan) or the People's Republic of China (PRC).

The organizational life of old Chinatowns culminated in the creation of the Chinese Consolidated Benevolent Associations (CCBA) in the mid to late nineteenth century. The Associations acted as umbrella federations, bringing together family, district, and merchant organizations and acting as the *de facto* government of the ethnic community (Kuo 1977). Each Chinatown had its own CCBA, whose functions included mediating internal conflicts, policing the behavior of community members, and representing their interests to the outside world. San Francisco's CCBA, founded in 1854, was composed of the seven largest district associations. The CCBA of New York was founded in 1883, federating up to 60 organizations; its Los Angeles counterpart was established in 1889, bringing together 27 organizations. Many of these federations celebrated their 100th anniversary in recent years.

Because anti-Chinese immigration legislation largely prohibited female migration, hence stifling the formation of families in the US, Chinese immigrants remained strongly oriented toward return. Despite their poor economic circumstances, they sent money home regularly to support parents, wives, and children and contributed to their villages of origin through family or district organizations. More-successful Chinese merchants traveled back and forth, building elaborate houses in their home villages and investing in land and businesses there. Transnational ties were thus quite common at the turn of the twentieth century, countering the image of isolated immigrant communities. Along the same lines, CCBAs and larger family or district associations and *tongs* became involved in the political life of China, most notably in fundraising to support the revolution that overthrew China's last imperial dynasty, the Qing, in 1911. This revolution was led by the founding father of the Republic of China, Sun Yat-sen (1866–1925), a physician who migrated to Hawaii as a teenager, abandoned his professional career, and founded the Hsing Chung Hui (Revive China Society) in Honolulu as the overseas basis for his nationalist movement (Lai 2004). Sun once called the overseas Chinese "the mother of the revolution" to recognize their contributions.

Contemporary organizational development

The Chinese population of the United States declined to about 85,000 in the 1920s and hovered around 100,000 for decades until two events brought about a sharp increase. The first was passage of the 1965 US Immigration Act, which re-opened the door to Asian immigration on the basis of family reunification and occupational qualifications; the second was the end of the Cultural Revolution in China and the normalization of diplomatic relations between

China and the US in the late 1970s. In the wake of these developments, the flow of immigrants from China re-emerged and grew exponentially over the next three decades. This was, however, a very different movement from the labor migration of a century ago (Chan 1986). Although clandestine immigration, primarily from Fujian, grew during this period to fuel the expanding Chinatown economies, the bulk of the new immigration was composed of professionals and their families. The majority of Chinese immigrants already in America had immediate relatives in China. The new policy not only permitted the migration of parents, spouses, and children, but also opened up new channels for family-chain migration. Meanwhile, the Chinese flow assumed the form of a steadily rising "brain drain," initially from China during the late 1940s, then from Taiwan in the 1960s, and more recently from the People's Republic (Portes and Rumbaut 2006; Zhou 2009).

The immigration of highly skilled Chinese took place in three waves. The first comprised a few thousand exchange students and scholars studying in the United States during the post-World War II period. Following the defeat of the Nationalist government in 1949, the United States cut diplomatic ties with the new mainland government, the People's Republic of China, and granted permanent residency to all Chinese students and scholars already in the US. The second wave occurred between the 1960s and 1980s when the Nationalist government in Taiwan permitted and encouraged thousands of students to attend American universities. Most of these students decided to stay and pursue their careers in North America. The third group of Chinese students and scientists started arriving in the 1980s in the wake of a radical change in China's official policy, following the end of the Cultural Revolution.

China sent more than 755,000 students abroad between 1978 and 2008, half of them to the United States. Less than 15 percent returned. The protests in Tiananmen Square in 1989 prompted the US Congress to allow about 60,000 Chinese students and their families already in the United States to stay permanently. Passage of the H-1B legislation in the 1990s facilitating the hiring of highly skilled technicians and professionals by American firms further accelerated the flow to the US. In 2002, for example, close to 19,000 H-1B visas were granted to Chinese college graduates; they joined an additional 18,000 professionals and highly skilled workers admitted for permanent residence (Portes and Rumbaut 2006: 80).

Unlike earlier Chinese immigrants who came from low socioeconomic backgrounds and rural origins and were segregated in Chinatowns, contemporary Chinese immigrants are highly diverse both in their socioeconomic status and in their places of origin and settlement. Their organizational life differs from that of their predecessors as well. Since the 1970s, there has been a surge of new Chinese immigrant organizations, many established outside old Chinatowns. Although the Chinese government has become increasingly involved in the transnational field, the large majority of existing organizations have been created by the migrants themselves.

Table 3 presents the inventory of Chinese organizations compiled by the Princeton research team during six months of field work in 2009–10 in Los Angeles, San Francisco, and New York. Construction of this registry was facilitated by Chinese-language telephone directories in the three cities and by the cooperation of Chinese consular officials. Even so, the inventory is by no means exhaustive. Chinese officials estimate that Chinese ethnic organizations in Southern California alone number more than 2,000. As a partial reflection of this trend, the 2010 Chinese Consumer Yellow Pages serving Southern California runs to 2,800 pages.

Despite this limitation, the list in Table 3 captures the diversity of Chinese immigrant organizations, including the largest and most stable ones. As in the case of Latin American organizations in Table 1, the classification of organizations is based on their self-definitions rather than on any *a priori* typology. From this list of more than 1,300 organizations, 55 of the best-known and most-established ones were selected for study on the assumption that they were the most capable of engaging in significant transnational activities. Leaders of these groups were also seen as the best informed about other associations in their communities and, hence, most qualified to report about the character of their respective organizational fields. They were interviewed face-to-face or by telephone.

Table 3 shows that traditional organizations, such as family and district associations and *tongs*, continue to be dominant in Chinese immigrant communities. Jointly, they represent 40 percent of the total. Along with them, more modern forms of organizations have grown rapidly. In particular, educational, alumni, and professional organizations now represent about 22 percent of the total. District associations have also modernized, many expanding beyond clan and village to encompass larger regions and even provinces. They have also become more transnational by maintaining closer ties with local and provincial officials back home; many have been created expressly for this purpose.

Formal Chinese professional organizations in the United States are registered as nonprofit groups. They are well represented in science, engineering, medicine, and finance. Membership ranges from a few dozen to several thousands. Over 90 percent of these organizations are transnational, maintaining ties with Chinese government agencies at the national, provincial, and district levels. They regularly hold conferences in both North America and China. Examples include the Chinese Association for Science and Technology–USA (national, with 15 regional chapters), the Silicon Valley Chinese Engineers Association (based in California), and the Chinese Biopharmaceutical Association (based in Washington, DC).

As is true for professional organizations, few alumni associations existed in the traditional Chinatowns since the large majority of their inhabitants lacked even a secondary education. Unlike traditional Chinese organizations,

TABLE 3 Number and percent distribution of Chinese immigrant organizations in Los Angeles, San Francisco, and New York, 2010

Type	Number	Percent
Civic organization	130	9.5
Cultural organization	53	3.9
Health affairs	12	0.9
Music/arts	48	3.5
Sports	19	1.4
Federation	4	
Single organization	15	
Social service agency	38	2.8
Political	83	6.1
Federation	4	
Single organization	79	
Religious	63	4.6
Federation	2	
Single organization	61	
Alumni	142	10.4
Federation	3	
College	111	
High school	28	
Educational	17	1.2
Federation	2	
Single organization	15	
Economic	74	5.4
Federation	22	
Single organization	52	
Professional	146	10.6
Federation	3	
Single organization	143	
Hometown	381	27.8
Federation	43	
Clan/family association	102	
Village association	44	
District association	127	
Provincial association	65	
Merchant brotherhood (<i>tong</i>)	165	12.0
Total	1,371	100.0

SOURCE: Comparative Immigrant Organization Project (CIOP) (compiled from telephone directories, organizations' newsletters, consulate list, and Internet searches).

alumni associations are formed on the basis of colleges and universities and, to a lesser extent, high schools from which immigrants graduated in China. The main mission of alumni associations is networking and information ex-

change among members. Their transnational activities are mainly oriented to supporting their respective graduates. Members of these organizations are also commonly members of professional and civic associations whose scope of activity is much broader.

Unlike the old Chinatown *tongs*, new economic organizations depend heavily on transnational networks to operate and expand their businesses. These business organizations generally express a strong desire to integrate into the American economy and polity. They view themselves as agents of change, standing at the forefront of the global economy and serving as the "Gateway to the Pacific Rim." These organizations combine their pro-integrationist stance with promotion of co-ethnic solidarity among the Chinese, both for economic purposes and for cultural maintenance (Zhou 2010).

Chinese transnationalism in motion

In 1978, the Overseas Chinese Affairs Office of China's State Council (national *Qiao-ban*) and similar offices in selected provinces and cities were reactivated after being dormant in the years of the Cultural Revolution. The policies of the Chinese Communist Party changed dramatically, from viewing its expatriates as potential spies and traitors, to welcoming them as "supporters, pioneers, and promoters" of China's economic reform.⁴ In May 1989, the State Council reiterated the important role of the overseas Chinese in implementing China's new open-door policy by making investments in China and transferring technology. Policy toward students abroad, which initially emphasized return, was also relaxed in the 1990s to recognize that returning to China "is not the only way to serve the country."⁵

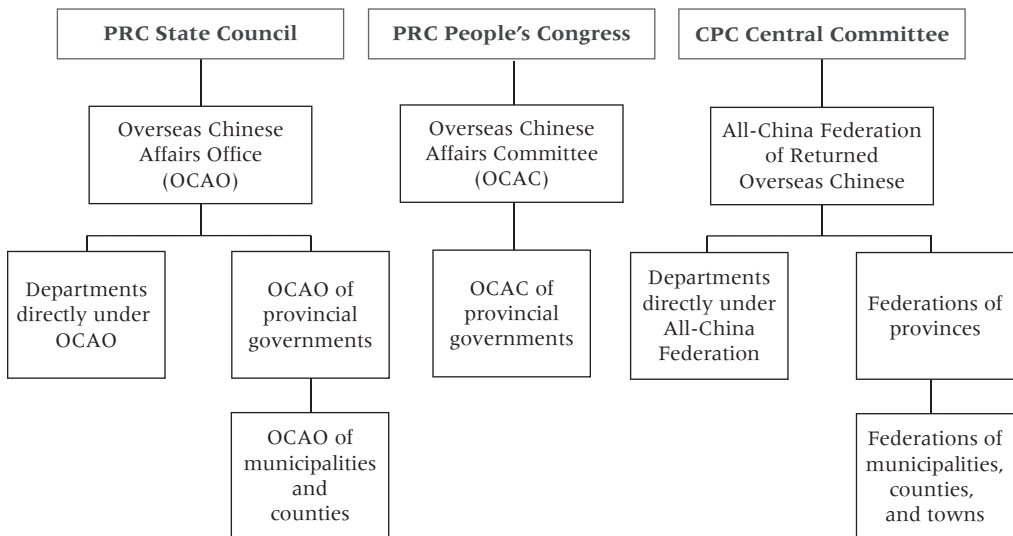
Parallel to these developments was the reactivation of the various levels of the Federation of Returned Overseas Chinese (*Qiao-lian*). The *Qiao-lian* was established by the Communist Party in the early 1950s with functions parallel to the *Qiao-ban*. Both the *Qiao-ban* and the *Qiao-lian* have offices at the national, provincial, district, and city levels, staffed by paid officials whose role is to maintain regular contact with immigrant communities worldwide and to promote their transnational activities. This complex bureaucracy, resting on the twin pillars of State and Party, intersects with the vast web of Chinese immigrant organizations, creating a strong synergy. Contributions by hometown organizations and other civic, professional, and alumni associations have funded everything from roads and schools to entire universities. Wuyi University in Jiangmen, Guangdong province, was created, for example, with contributions from expatriates in the United States, Canada, and Southeast Asia. One of its main buildings, named "Ten Friends," containing a vast auditorium and other conference facilities, was paid for (as its name indicates) by ten wealthy Chinese businessmen overseas.⁶

Figure 2 depicts the structure of Chinese government and party agencies dealing with China’s overseas population. Figure 3 provides selected examples of activities in the Chinese transnational field.

Overseas Chinese investment is credited with the rapid economic development of the coastal zones, especially Shanghai and other smaller cities in the Yangtze River Delta and Guangzhou and other smaller cities in the Pearl River Delta. Through its agencies at various levels, the State and Party have assiduously cultivated these developments by receiving and honoring leaders of expatriate organizations and major investors, funding professional and business conferences, and hosting festivals and celebrations both in China and through its network of consulates in North America and elsewhere in the world. Examples of these activities include summer and winter camps for overseas Chinese youths, organized by *Qiao-ban* at various levels, and Chinese language training programs, defined by the government as “a highly significant, strategic job” and organized by the Chinese Language Council through a network of Confucius Institutes (CIs) abroad. As of June 2010, there were 64 CIs in 37 US states, with the first one established in 2005 (Chiu 2010).

Chinese officials realize that an excessively visible presence in the United States may trigger unfavorable reactions among the American public. For this reason, they confine their activities mostly to Chinatowns and consulates, while seeking to cultivate US officials in the name of Sino–American coop-

FIGURE 2 Structure of overseas Chinese affairs organizations of China (PRC) and the Communist Party Central Committee (CPC)



SOURCE: See text.

FIGURE 3 Transnational connections of Chinese immigrant organizations: Selected examples

United States	←	China
Training programs for leaders of overseas immigrant communities World Chinese Entrepreneurial Association Language maintenance through 64 Confucius Institutes	←	National <i>Qiao-ban</i> and <i>Qiao-lian</i>
China root-seeking camps for overseas Chinese youth Professional and business conferences Provincial and local festivals	←	Provincial (Guangdong, Fujian) <i>Qiao-ban</i> and <i>Qiao-lian</i>
CCBA of New York	→	\$90,000 donation for victims of 2009 typhoon in southern China
CCBA of San Francisco and Suey Sing Association	→	Organizing Beijing Olympic Torch welcome ceremonies in 2008
Chinese Association for Science and Technology (CAST-USA)	→	Co-sponsorship of 2009 Wuhan International Conference on the Environment
Baisha Village Association	→	Wedding donations (<i>xi-juan</i>) and happiness donations (<i>le-juan</i>) for Baisha infrastructure improvements (Fujian Province)

NOTE: See text for explanation of the names of agencies and associations.

eration (Zhou 2010). *Qiao-ban* and *Qiao-lian* officials regularly visit the United States, hosted by leaders of major Chinese organizations in various cities. On 1 October (the PRC National Day), the government hosts elaborate parties at its four consulates general (New York, San Francisco, Los Angeles, and Houston) to which leaders of all major Chinese immigrant organizations, entrepreneurs, and prominent American public officials are invited. China’s sustained economic growth during the last few decades has made the goal of encouraging further investments from overseas Chinese less important than previously. In the twenty-first century, government policy has shifted toward strengthening networks with immigrant organizations, fostering technological and cultural exchanges, and supporting the development of Chinese communities abroad as a means of promoting the “good image” and growing status of China.⁷

Mexican and Chinese transnational organizations compared

Table 4 presents summary characteristics of Mexico and China and of their respective immigrant populations in the United States as background for the following discussion. While, as we saw above, there are many similarities be-

TABLE 4 Characteristics of the populations of China and of Mexico and their immigrant communities in the US

	China	Mexico
Country of origin		
Population, 2010 (millions)	1,336	114
Urban population (percent)	47.0	78.0
Life expectancy at birth (years)	74.7	76.5
GDP per capita, 2011 (US\$)	7,519	15,204
Gini index of inequality, 2010	.47	.47
Educational attainment		
Percent university graduates, adults 25–64	9.0	15.9
Percent secondary graduates	14.0	19.3
Unemployment rate, % civilian labor force (2010)	4.1	5.4
Labor force participation, % adult population (2009)	61.8	61.4
Immigrants in the US		
Number, 2009 (millions)	2.2	11.4
Legal immigrants, 2010	70,863	139,120
Percent of total US legal immigration, 2010	6.8	13.3
Rank in total legal immigration, 2010	2	1
Professional specialty occupations, %	52.8	15.5
College graduates, %	50.8	9.0
Median household income, 2010 (US\$)	69,037	39,115
Poverty rate, 2010 (percent)	11.0	29.0
Types of immigration	Mostly legal, some unauthorized	About equally divided between legal and unauthorized migrants
Principal US cities of destination	New York San Francisco Los Angeles	Los Angeles Chicago Houston

SOURCES: US Bureau of the Census, 2009 and 2010 American Community Surveys. Office of Immigration Statistics, Department of Homeland Security, 2010 Annual Report. CIA, *World Fact Books* «www.cia.gov/library/publications». OECD Observer, *OECD in Figures 2009*, Supplement #1, www.oecd.org/publishing. OECD, “Country Statistical Profiles” (China and Mexico) 2011, «<http://stats.oecd.org/>». Jeffrey S. Passel, “The economic downturn and immigration trends,” Washington DC: Pew Hispanic Center Report, March 2009.

tween the countries, the differences are marked. Both governments switched attitudes toward their expatriates, from regarding them with indifference or hostility to actively cultivating their allegiance. The shift took place first in China, with the end of the Cultural Revolution and the activation of national, provincial, and local *Qiao-ban* and *Qiao-lian*. In Mexico, it took place in the early 1990s under the administration of President Vicente Fox and culminated with the creation of the Institute for Mexicans Abroad and its consultative Council, first elected in 2002 (Escobar 2007; Iskander 2010).

The actions of neither government created the transnational field. It developed, in multiple forms, as a consequence of the initiative and efforts of

the immigrants themselves. However, the activities implemented by governments have greatly strengthened these interactions and extended the developmental impact of transnationalism in new directions. Both governments have profited from the strong loyalty of their expatriates toward their places of origin, which gave rise to hundreds of family/clan and district associations among the Chinese and similar numbers of hometown committees among Mexicans. As Escobar (2007: 257) writes: "One of the principal characteristics of Mexican organizations in the United States is its important rural base, and that makes the hometown committee the predominant form of association. These committees reproduce, in some form or another, the local structures of the places of origin and their modes of operation."

At higher levels of organization, on the other hand, there is a notable disjuncture between the two groups, marked by the creation of institutions of self-governance by Chinese immigrants—the *tongs* and the umbrella benevolent organizations (CCBAs) and, subsequently, the proliferation of modern professional, civic, and alumni associations. Little activity of this sort exists among Mexican expatriates, despite their much more numerous presence in the United States. Federations of hometown committees do represent higher associative forms, but many were created at the behest and with the support of the Mexican home states (Goldring 2002; Iskander 2010). Nor do these federations provide any form of self-governance since they are essentially vehicles for dialogue with and demand-making toward Mexican authorities. While professional and other modern organizations exist among Mexican immigrants (see Table 1), they lack the depth and numbers found among the Chinese. This contrast essentially reflects the very different human capital profiles of the two expatriate communities as shown in Table 4.

Thus, the Chinese government, at all administrative levels, is in a much better position to interact and engage with its expatriates since they are largely self-reliant and enjoy a more secure legal and economic status. In order to interact with its immigrants in the US, the Mexican government has had to invest more resources and be much more proactive. This effort has taken multiple forms, including creation of the *tres-por-uno* program to encourage migrant philanthropic contributions; the funding of more than 100 *plazas comunitarias* in US cities where English, Spanish, and high school extension courses are taught to migrants and their children; and the creation of the *matricula consular* to provide unauthorized immigrants with some form of identification.

None of these initiatives finds a parallel among those undertaken by the Chinese government, with the exception of language training through the Confucius Institutes. This is so because the Chinese community in North America is more resourceful in providing these services, being generally well-educated, affluent, and with secure legal status. Even language training is different because the *plazas* are largely engaged in teaching basic writing and

reading skills to poorly educated migrants, while the mission of the Confucius Institutes is to propagate Chinese language and cultural literacy among both Chinese Americans and members of other national-origin groups. Chinese government activities are thus focused on promoting the continuing loyalty of their expatriates and fostering and celebrating their culture as a way of improving the image of China abroad (Zhou 2010).

This goal can be achieved at relatively modest cost through recognition ceremonies honoring prominent scientists and entrepreneurs; the organization of conferences, festivals, and banquets; and the sponsorship of Chinese artistic troupes traveling abroad to perform before expatriate audiences. Because neither the immigrant community nor the Chinese government is in dire need of economic transfers, honor and status recognition have increasingly become the main “currency” of their transnational exchanges.

In both countries, the interface between the state and the expatriate community is facilitated by common interests that include material and status considerations. For government officials, immigrants represent an important source of economic contributions, through individual remittances and investments and organized philanthropy. They are also the “face of the nation” abroad and, as such, help define the image and relative standing of the country in the global system. For immigrants, and especially their leaders, recognition by home-country authorities validates the legitimacy of their organizations and their own status. In this fashion, migrants with modest means, and of little consequence in their home localities before going abroad, can become respected and prominent figures. In this sense, the interface represents a “win-win” situation that stimulates the emergence of new transnational organizations and the consolidation of those already in existence.

Conclusion

The intense transnational traffic involving immigrant organizations and sending-country governments has aroused concerns among authorities and some public commentators in the United States for reasons given previously: a likely slowdown of the process of assimilation to American society and possible breaches of national security. These concerns are negated, however, by the strong pro-integrationist stance of immigrant organizations and the fact that sending-country consulates and officials have sought to quell any anti-American or isolationist sentiments or actions among their expatriates. The Chinese and Mexican government agencies in contact with their nationals abroad envision transnational activities as a benefit for the home country, but not as a barrier to host-country integration. Leaders of immigrant organizations interviewed during the successive phases of our study consistently supported acquisition of US citizenship and participation in American civic life and saw no contradiction between such activities and maintaining a con-

tinuing dialogue and philanthropic activities in the home country (Portes, Escobar, and Arana 2008; Zhou 2010).

Both Mexico and China are at one with the United States in opposition to violent fundamentalist sects. Perhaps as a result, American authorities have taken a benign stance toward their transnational activities and, on occasion, supported them. The cooperation of the Institute for Mexicans Abroad with municipal US authorities in providing health and language services to immigrants and the presence of American officials at community events and festivities sponsored by Mexican and Chinese consulates in the US provide examples. Because our study is limited to the US case, these conclusions cannot be generalized to other migrant-receiving societies. Whether the same pattern occurs in Western European countries, for example, remains an open question (Lacroix 2005; Bäübock 2003).

The traditional literature on national development paid scant attention to international migration. When it did, the viewpoint tended to be that such flows were a symptom of underdevelopment, or that these flows further contributed to that condition by emptying entire regions and draining scarce talent, attracted by higher remuneration abroad (Frank 1967; Cheng and Bonacich 1984; Diaz-Briquets and Weintraub 1991). The increasing volume of migrant remittances has changed these perceptions by highlighting the important role of transfers both in alleviating domestic poverty and in improving national currency balances. International organizations such as the World Bank have endorsed this view, seeing migrant remittances as an unexpected "gold seam," potentially able to finance development projects in lieu of scarce international assistance.

By contrast, scholars from migrant-sending countries have recently criticized this perspective by emphasizing the negative aspects of out-migration. Not only, in their view, does migration hold the potential to depopulate entire regions, but the volume of remittances sent by expatriates provides a safety valve for domestic poverty, allowing governments and elites to avoid responsibility for alleviating it. According to this perspective, out-migration serves to consolidate inequality and economic stagnation, instead of helping to overcome them (Delgado-Wise and Cypher 2007; Castles 2010).

A more nuanced perspective defines the developmental costs and benefits of international migration as contingent on a number of factors, including the institutional capacity of sending-country governments and the type and duration of migration. *Permanent* out-migration generally has negative consequences since it may lead to population decline and a distorted age structure in sending areas and deprive poor countries of scarce human capital. Permanent migrants also tend to bring their families along, removing their incentive for continuing to send remittances home. *Circular* migration can have beneficial consequences because of the transfer of monetary resources, information, and know-how that returning migrants can bring home. This

is especially the case if these contributions are combined with a proactive stance from home governments, capable of supporting migrant initiatives and properly channeling them (Massey, Durand, and Malone 2002; Saxonian 2002). The difficulty is that many migrants resist returning because of the scarcity of opportunities at home and the experience or at least the prospects of a better life abroad. This explains, among other things, why it has been so difficult for sending-country governments to reverse the "brain drain" by persuading expatriate professionals to return (Diaz-Briquets and Weintraub 1991; Cheng and Bonacich 1984).

Enter transnationalism. The creation of transnational organizations means that migrants, even when settled permanently abroad, do not have to abandon connections with their home countries (Baübock 2003). Moreover, the empirical evidence we and others have presented indicates that more-established and more financially and legally secure migrants are most likely to engage in transnational activities, including routine travel back and forth between expatriate countries and home countries. If the traffic reaches sufficient volume, it has the potential of rendering permanent migrations circular. That is, the transnational field paves the way for settled expatriates to return home regularly, make monetary and knowledge transfers, and generally take part in the social life of their places of origin while still consolidating their lives abroad.⁸

Alert sending-country governments, including those of Mexico and China, have become aware of this potential and have largely abandoned attempts to attract the return of their professionals, instead encouraging them (as well as less-educated migrants) to become involved in the transnational field. Given the size of expatriate communities, the developmental potential of these activities is significant, as shown by the hundreds of public works projects financed by migrant contributions and, in the case of China, as shown by the decisive role of overseas Chinese investors in the economic development of the country's coastal regions (Leung 2008). It is clear that China has the edge over Mexico in this respect because of the more diverse socioeconomic composition of its migrant population, its higher level of education, and its entrepreneurial prowess.

Research has shown that transnational activism is, by and large, a one-generation phenomenon, as the process of assimilation inevitably leads members of the second generation to turn their attention inward toward their new country (Konczal and Haller 2008). Nevertheless, while it lasts, transnational activism brings together populations dispersed around the globe, supports infrastructure projects and technological advancement in poorer countries, and provides a basis for more productive communication between sending and receiving countries (Guarnizo, Portes, and Haller 2003; Vertovec 2004, 2009).

We conclude that development theory and practice can no longer depict migration as simply a symptom of underdevelopment nor reduce its role

to individual remittances. The increasingly complex web of transnational organizations and their growing interactions with governments at all levels compel scholars and policymakers alike to incorporate expatriate communities into any definitive analysis of the development prospects of sending countries. Mexico and China, each in its own manner, have paved the way, demonstrating how such potential can be tapped. The large number of less-developed migrant-sending countries may learn from these experiences when seeking to interact with their own communities abroad. Academic theories of development have not yet caught up with these realities, thereby neglecting an important developmental dynamic in an increasingly globalized world.

Notes

The data on which this article is based were collected as part of the Comparative Immigrant Organization Project (CIOP) supported by grants from the Russell Sage Foundation and the MacArthur Foundation. The authors gratefully acknowledge the support of program officers Aixa Cintron at Russell Sage and John Slocum at MacArthur, as well as Russell Sage Foundation president, Eric Wanner. Responsibility for the contents is exclusively ours.

1 We held a focus group discussion with four officials in the Overseas Chinese Affairs Office (*Qiao-ban*) of the State Council and with officials of the Communist Party's Federation of Returned Overseas Chinese (*Qiao-lian*) in Beijing. We also interviewed the directors or deputy directors of provincial *Qiao-ban* and *Qiao-lian* in Guangdong and Fujian. These interviews were followed by similar meetings with directors or deputy directors of *Qiao-ban* in the cities of Fuzhou, Fuqing, Changle, and Lianjiang in Fujian Province; and Guangzhou, Jiangmen, Taishan, Kaiping, and Zhongshan in Guangdong Province. We also visited and interviewed authorities of 16 migrant-sending villages in these two provinces.

2 Field interview for the CIOP project conducted in Guerrero, Mexico in 2005.

3 Known as Wuyi *qiao-xiang*, encompassing five original counties: Taishan, Kaiping, Enping, Heshan, and Xinhui.

4 See «<http://qwgzyj.gqb.gov.cn/qwhg/146/1346.shtml>», accessed 22 January 2010.

5 See «<http://202.205.177.9/edoas/en/level3.jsp?tablename=1242702622613408&infolid=1253167200778185>» accessed 22 January 2010.

6 Wuyi University recently held an international symposium on Immigration and the Contributions of Overseas Chinese to Regional Development (September 2010). The symposium took place at the Ten Friends Building.

7 Interview with the head of the Guangdong *Qiao-ban*, summer 2009.

8 Recent work of the Global Forum on International Migration and Development has emphasized the growing significance of these connections. The theme for the Forum's 2011 meeting was "Taking Action on Migration and Development: Coherence, Capacity, and Cooperation." «www.gfund.org».

References

- Ansley, Fran and Jon Shefner. 2009. *Global Connections, Global Receptions: New Latino Immigration to the Southeastern United States*. Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press.
- Arias, Patricia. 2008. "Mexico's rural agenda: themes and dilemmas," lecture delivered at the Center for Migration and Development, Princeton University, April.
- Ariza, Marina and Alejandro Portes. 2007. "La migración internacional de Mexicanos: Escenarios y desafíos de cara a un nuevo siglo," in Marina Ariza and Alejandro Portes (eds.), *El País Transnacional*. Mexico DF: IIS/National University of Mexico Press, pp. 1–51.
- Barrera, Mario. 1980. *Race and Class in the Southwest: A Theory of Racial Inequality*. Notre Dame, IN: Notre Dame University Press.
- Bauböck, Rainer. 2003. "Toward a political theory of migrant transnationalism," *International Migration Review* 37: 700–723.
- Borjas, George. 1990. *Friends or Strangers: The Impact of Immigrants on the U.S. Economy*. New York: Basic Books.
- Castles, Stephen. 2010. "Understanding global migration: A social transformation perspective," *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies* 36 (December): 1565–1586.
- Chan, Sucheng. 1986. *This Bitter Sweet Soil: The Chinese in California Agriculture, 1860–1910*. Berkeley: University of California Press.
- Cheng, Lucie and Edna Bonacich. 1984. *Labor Migration Under Capitalism*. Berkeley: University of California Press.
- Chin, Ko-lin. 2000. *Smuggled Chinese: Clandestine Immigration to the United States*. Philadelphia: Temple University Press.
- Chiu, Michael. 2010. "Map of Confucius Institutes in the U.S.," *US-China Today*, University of Southern California. «http://www.uschina.usc.edu/article@usct?map_of_confucius_institutes_in_the_u_s_14774.aspx».
- Cornelius, Wayne. 1998. "The structural embeddedness of demand for Mexican immigrant labor: New evidence from California," in M. Suarez-Orozco (ed.), *Crossings: Mexican Immigration in Interdisciplinary Perspective*. Cambridge: Center for Latin American Studies, Harvard University, pp. 115–155.
- D'Aubeterre, Maria A. 2007. "Aquí respetamos a nuestros esposos: Migración masculina y trabajo femenino en una Comunidad Nahua," in M. Ariza and A. Portes (eds.), *El País Transnacional*. Mexico D.F.: IIS/National University of Mexico Press, pp. 513–546.
- De la Garza, Rodolfo and Miriam Hazan. 2003. *Looking Backward, Moving Forward: Mexican Organizations in the U.S. as Agents of Incorporation and Dissociation*. Claremont, CA: Tomas Rivera Policy Institute.
- Delano, Alexander. 2011. *Mexico and its Diaspora in the United States*. New York: Cambridge University Press.
- Delgado-Wise, Raul and Humberto Márquez Covarrubias. 2006. *The Reshaping of Mexican Labor Exports under NAFTA: Paradoxes and Challenges*. Zacatecas, Mexico: University of Zacatecas, International Network of Migration and Development.
- Delgado-Wise, Raul and James M. Cypher. 2007. "The strategic role of Mexican labor under NAFTA: Critical perspectives on current economic integration," *Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science* 610 (March): 120–142.
- Diaz-Briquets, Sergio and Sidney Weintraub. 1991. *Migration, Remittances, and Small Business Development: Mexico and Caribbean Basin Countries*. Boulder, CO: Westview Press.
- Dillon, Richard. H. 1962. *The Hatchet Men: The Story of the Tong Wars in San Francisco's Chinatown*. New York: Ballantine Books.
- Escobar, Cristina. 2007. "Migración y derechos ciudadanos: El caso Mexicano," in M. Ariza and A. Portes (eds.), *El País Transnacional*. Mexico D.F.: IIS/National University of Mexico Press, pp. 231–274.
- . 2010. "Colombian organizations and their relationships with home communities," paper presented at the Seminar on Immigrant Transnational Organizations and Development, Center for Migration and Development, Princeton University, April.

- Evans, Peter. 2004. "Development as institutional change: The pitfalls of monocropping and the potentials of deliberation," *Studies in Comparative International Development* 38 (Winter): 30–52.
- Frank, Andre Gunder. 1967. *Capitalism and Underdevelopment in Latin America*. New York: Monthly Review Press.
- Freeman, Gary P. 2004. "Immigrant incorporation in Western democracies," *International Migration Review* 38(3): 945–969.
- Gammeltoft, P. 2002. "Remittances and other financial flows to developing countries," Working paper prepared for the Center for Development Research. Copenhagen, Denmark, March.
- Garcia, Mario. 1981. *Desert Immigrants: The Mexicans of El Paso, 1880–1920*. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press.
- Glick-Schiller, Nina and Georges Fouron. 1999. "Terrains of blood and nation: Haitian transnational social fields," *Ethnic and Racial Studies* 22 (March): 340–366.
- Global Migration Forum. 2011. "Taking action on migration and development," Geneva, Switzerland. «www.gfund.org».
- Goldring, Luin. 2002. "The Mexican state and transmigrant organizations: Negotiating the boundaries of membership and participation," *Latin American Research Review* 37: 55–99.
- Gonzalez Gutierrez, Carlos. 2005. "Mexico's relation to its diaspora," keynote address to the Hispanic Summit of the Plains Conference, sponsored by the Office of Latin and Latino Affairs (OLLAS), University of Nebraska-Omaha, April.
- Guarnizo, Luis E. 2003. "The economics of transnational living," *International Migration Review* 37 (Fall): 666–699.
- Guarnizo, Luis, Alejandro Portes, and William Haller. 2003. "Assimilation and transnationalism: determinants of transnational political action among contemporary immigrants," *American Journal of Sociology* 108 (May): 1211–1248.
- Hoff, Karla and Joseph Stiglitz. 2001. "Modern economic theory and development," in G. Neier and J. Stiglitz (eds.), *Frontiers of Development Economics*. New York: Oxford University Press, pp. 389–460.
- Hollifield, James F. 2004. "The emerging migration state," *International Migration Review* 38(3): 885–912.
- Iranzo, Susana and Alyson C. Ma. 2006. "The effect of China on Mexico–U.S. trade: Undoing NAFTA?," Report, University of California, San Diego. «http://www.sandiego.edu/peacestudies/documents/tbi/iranzo_ma_TBI.pdf».
- Iskander, Natasha. 2010. *Creative State: Forty Years of Migration and Development Policy in Morocco and Mexico*. Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press.
- Itzigsohn, Jose and Silvia G. Saucido. 2002. "Immigrant incorporation and sociocultural transnationalism," *International Migration Review* 36 (Fall): 766–798.
- Joffe-Block, Jude. 2010. "Immigration viewed from the other side," *Berkeley Review of Latin American Studies* (Spring-Summer): 18–20.
- Konczal, Lisa and William J. Haller. 2008. "Fit to miss, but matched to hatch: Success factors among the second generation's disadvantaged youth in South Florida," *The Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science* 620: 161–176.
- Kuo, Chia-ling. 1977. *Social and Political Change in New York's Chinatown: The Role of Voluntary Associations*. New York: Praeger Publishers.
- Kwong, Peter. 1987. *The New Chinatown*. New York: Hill & Wang.
- Lacroix, Thomas. 2005. *Les Réseaux Marocains du Développement*. Paris: Presses de la Fondation Nationale de Sciences Politiques.
- Lai, Him Mark. 2004. *Becoming Chinese American: A History of Communities and Institutions*. Alta Mira Press.
- Landolt, Patricia, Lilian Autler, and Sonia Baires. 1999. "From 'hermano lejano' to 'hermano mayor': The dialectics of Salvadoran transnationalism," *Ethnic and Racial Studies* 22 (March): 290–315.

- Leung, Maggie. 2008. "Homeward-bound investors: The role of overseas Chinese in China's economic development," in T. van Naerssen, E. Spaan and A. Zoomers (eds.), *Global Migration and Development*. New York: Routledge, pp. 288–308.
- Massey, Douglas S. 2007. "Borderline madness: America's counterproductive immigration policy," in C. M. Swain (ed.), *Debating Immigration*. New York: Cambridge University Press, pp. 129–138.
- Massey, Douglas S. et al. 1998. *Worlds in Motion: Understanding International Migration at the End of the Millennium*. Oxford, UK: Clarendon Press.
- Massey, Douglas, Jorge Durand, and Nolan J. Malone. 2002. *Beyond Smoke and Mirrors: Mexican Immigration in an Era of Economic Integration*. New York: Russell Sage Foundation.
- Massey, Douglas S. and Karen A. Pren. "Unintended consequences of US immigration policy: Explaining the post-1965 surge from Latin America," *Population and Development Review* 38(1): 1–29.
- Nee, Victor and Brett de Bary Nee. 1973. *Longtime California: A Documentary Study of an American Chinatown*. Berkeley: University of California Press.
- North, Douglass C. 1990. *Institutions, Institutional Change, and Economic Performance*. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press.
- Ostergaard-Nielsen, Eva. 2001. "Transnational practices and the receiving state: Turks and Kurds in Germany and the Netherlands," *Global Networks* 1: 261–281.
- Passel, Jeffrey S. 2009. "The economic downturn and immigration trends," lecture delivered at the Center for Migration and Development, Princeton University, 26 March. «<http://cmd.princeton.edu/papers.shtml>».
- Pew Hispanic Center. 2011. "Statistical portrait of the foreign-born population of the United States," «<http://pewhispanic.org/factsheets>».
- Portes, Alejandro. 1976. "Determinants of the brain drain," *International Migration Review* 10:489–508.
- Portes, Alejandro, Cristina Escobar, and Renelinda Arana. 2008. "Bridging the gap: Transnational and ethnic organizations in the political incorporation of immigrants in the United States," *Ethnic and Racial Studies* 31 (September): 1056–1090.
- Portes, Alejandro, Cristina Escobar, and Alexandria Walton Radford. 2007. "Immigrant transnational organizations and development: A comparative study," *International Migration Review* 41 (Spring): 242–281.
- Portes, Alejandro, William Haller, and Luis E. Guarnizo. 2002. "Transnational entrepreneurs: An alternative form of immigrant adaptation," *American Sociological Review* 67 (April): 278–298.
- Portes, Alejandro and Ruben G. Rumbaut. 2006. *Immigrant America: A Portrait*, 3rd edition. Berkeley: University of California Press.
- Roberts, Bryan R., Reanne Frank, and Fernando Lozano-Asencio. 1999. "Transnational migrant communities and Mexican migration to the United States." *Ethnic and Racial Studies* 22 (March): 238–266.
- Romero, Roberto Chao. 2010. *The Chinese in Mexico, 1882–1940*. University of Arizona Press.
- Sanchez, Martha J. 2007. "La importancia del sistema de cargos en el entendimiento de los flujos migratorios indigenas," in M. Ariza and A. Portes (eds.), *El Pais Transnacional*. Mexico D.F.: IIS/National University of Mexico Press, pp. 349–390.
- Saxenian, Anna Lee. 2002. *Local and Global Networks of Immigrant Professionals in Silicon Valley*. San Francisco: Public Policy Institute of California.
- . 2006. *The New Argonauts: Regional Advantage in a Global Economy*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
- Saxton, Alexander. 1971. *The Indispensable Enemy: Labor and the Anti-Chinese Movement in California*. Berkeley: University of California Press.
- Shaiken, Harvey. 1994. "Advanced manufacturing and Mexico: A new international division of labor?," *Latin American Research Review* 29: 39–72.
- Smith, Robert C. 2005. *Mexican New York: Transnational Worlds of New Immigrants*. Berkeley: University of California Press.

- Stark, Oded. 1991. *The Migration of Labour*. Cambridge, UK: Basil Blackwell.
- Thomas, Brinley. 1973. *Migration and Economic Growth: A Study of Great Britain and the Atlantic Economy*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Vertovec, Steven. 2004. "Migrant transnationalism and modes of transformation," *International Migration Review* 38 (Fall): 970–1001.
- . 2009. *Transnationalism*. New York: Routledge.
- Vermeulen, Floris. 2005. "Organizational patterns: Surinamese and Turkish associations in Amsterdam, 1960–1990," *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies* 31: 951–973.
- World Bank. 2010. "Migration and development brief, 12," Migration and Remittances Team, Development Prospects Group, 23 April «<http://remittancesgateway.org/index.php/factbook>».
- Zhou, Min. 1992. *Chinatown: The Socioeconomic Potential of an Urban Enclave*. Philadelphia: Temple University Press.
- . 2009. *Contemporary Chinese America: Immigration, Ethnicity, and Community Transformation*. Philadelphia: Temple University Press.
- . 2010. "Traversing ancestral and new homelands: Chinese organizations in the United States and hometown development in China," Final project report, Center for Migration and Development, Princeton University. «<http://cmd.princeton.edu/papers/wp1002.pdf>».

Copyright of Population & Development Review is the property of Wiley-Blackwell and its content may not be copied or emailed to multiple sites or posted to a listserv without the copyright holder's express written permission. However, users may print, download, or email articles for individual use.