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THESES OF PhD DISSERTATION

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Migration and diaspora policies for development in Latin America

PhD thesis

Supervisor:

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Institute of International Studies

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1. Background and relevance of the topic

1.1. Thematic background of the thesis

Middle- and lower-middle income countries all around the globe are getting increasingly affected by outward migration processes. While it is debated whether the overall effects of mass emigration are harmful, neutral or beneficial to their development, it is sure that several mechanisms exist to design and implement policies that capture economic contributions from emigrants and channel them to local development projects.

The “migration-development nexus” refers to the *effects of migration on development*. The idea is charged ideologically, as different authors evaluate it differently. In one narrative, it might help to reduce global inequalities, while in another, it only increases dependency.

The concept is operationalized around *remittances*, i.e. private savings that migrants send back home. The flow of remittances in many Latin American countries is the single largest capital inflow category from abroad. Family members can spend them either on non-durable and durable consumer goods (creating multiplier effects in the economy), or save them for investment. Remittances are also more resistant to crises than FDI.

From a governmental perspective, remittances might act as a substitute for resources of the central budget. However, they are difficult to tax, because it would drive remittances to informal or semi-formal channels. Other forms of ‘*remittance capture programmes*’ are necessary to capitalize on them.

In this context, many Latin American countries have created *public policies addressing the diaspora with the implicit or explicit objective of channeling remittances to development projects*. Many times, these policies were framed as if they were able to change migration trends significantly, i.e. reduce the flow and stock of emigrants.

The thesis analyzes these policies within the institutional framework they were created in, and with regards to their developmental impact. By policies, institutionalized and regularly implemented measures are understood in the thesis, while ‘diaspora policies’ stand for policies which are managed by the government of the country of origin and aim at the diaspora. Other measures by other actors (e.g. NGOs, international organizations, companies) are not included.

1.2. Novelty of the thesis

Systematic research on migration policies and their institutional background is a rather new area of studies, and the literature focuses mostly on immigration, not on emigration policies. This thesis is among the rather limited number of works that observe the issue from the perspective of the government of a country from where a large number of people emigrate.

The novelty of this thesis is that it analyses, in a common conceptual framework, the different policies that Latin American countries have implemented in order to get some developmentally useful economic input from their diaspora. While many analyses exist on parts of the topic, these are generally written focusing on a given country or region, or on an aspect other than policymaking.

The thesis is, therefore, an evaluative synthesis of the possibilities of the government of a country with significant emigration rate and with a growing diaspora. Although it contains only Latin American cases, it can be understood as a source of information and inspiration for scholars and policymakers in the field of diaspora policies in other regions of the world, including Hungary and the whole Central and South Eastern European region.

2. Methodology and structure

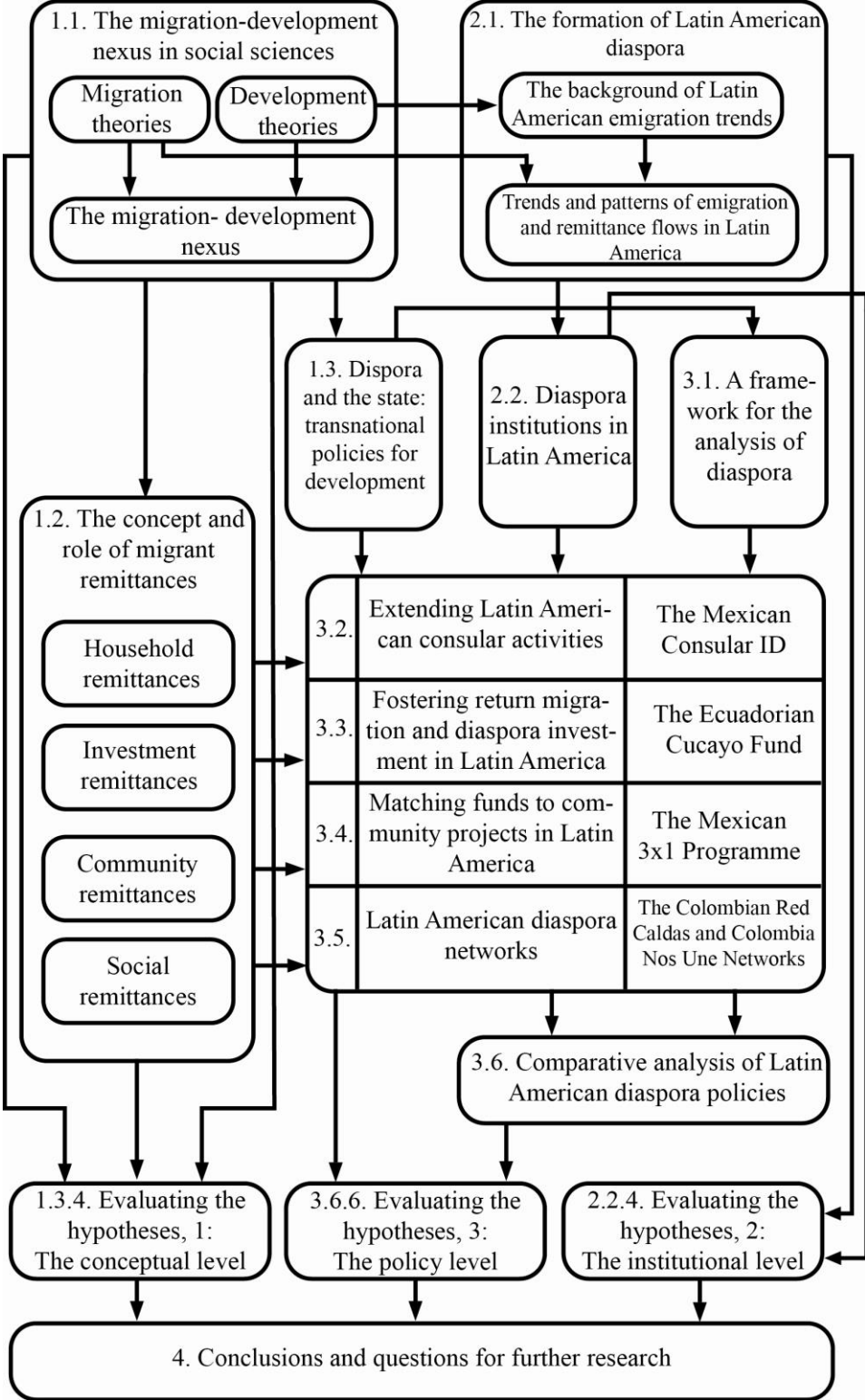
2.1. Methodology and structure

The thesis relies on literature analysis, the analysis of primary sources (statistical data and survey data) and the comparative analyses of policy cases within a framework built from different relevant conceptual notions found in the migration and development literature.

Primary sources of information include the results of a survey, to be referred as Diaspora Unit Survey [DUS, 2014-2015]. For the latter, I sent out a questionnaire for all Latin American governments through their embassies accredited to Hungary. Ten countries provided information. The compilation of the responses is presented at the end of the thesis, in the Annex.

The structure of the thesis is presented in Table 1.

Table 1. Migration and Diaspora Policies for Development in Latin America: the structure of the thesis



The thesis builds a conceptual framework relying heavily on theoretical works of two researchers of the International Migration Institute at University of Oxford: Hein de Haas [2008; 2010; 2011] and Alan Gamlen. [2006; 2008, 2010, 2014] De Haas's theory of "three policy gaps" in migration policy [Czaika and de Haas, 2011] is used to highlight the discrepancies between stated and achieved 'policy' objectives. First, a "discourse gap" stands between the politicians' statements and the concrete policies. Second, the "implementation gap" is the disparity between policy documents and their implementation. Third, the "efficacy gap" is the difference between the aimed and the actual changes of migration flows through the implementation of the given policy measure. Gamlen's notion of "extending rights" and "extracting obligations" [2006] describes how governments of the countries of origin can use policy tools for reaching out to the diaspora, giving them extra rights and services, and asking for their contribution in turn.

The three chapters of the thesis (numbers in brackets refer to chapters) contain threads of arguments leading: (1) from the general theories concerning migration and development through the features and effects of remittances to the possibilities of the governments of countries of origin to design and implement policies to address the topic; (2) from the overall trends of migration and remittance flows in Latin America to the institutional and policy settings of Latin American countries regarding diaspora policies, (3) from the identified developmental challenges of mass emigration to concrete policies, programmes and projects in Latin America.

Chapter 1 summarizes what migration theory says about the 'migration-development nexus' using de Haas's analysis of the developmental discourse [2008]. Developmental effects are presented in a challenges versus opportunities framework and one part thereof (opportunities for the country of origin) is chosen for further analysis, as the main field of diaspora policies for development. The main 'opportunity' for countries of origin, the concept of 'remittances' is presented in details, in a model of 'six circles of remittances definitions'. After that, it is described how these transfers can be reached by policies, using Gamlen's notion of "extending rights" and "extracting obligations" [2006], from the point of view of the government of the country of origin.

Chapter 2 describes the historical, demographic, economic, social and political background of emigration from Latin America, followed by the presentation of the actual emigration trends (and their effects to Latin American societies), in order to present the historical circumstances under which policymaking got its start. Then, the relative importance of the emigration issue and the governmental capacities to implement policies are assessed, in

order to analyze the capabilities of the given government to tackle with the issue. Finally, an institutional history of the formation of Diaspora Units within Latin American governments (the Ministries of Foreign Affairs, more precisely) and the analytical presentation of the most important laws, institutions, mechanisms and an overview of the main fields of activity completes the picture.

Concrete public policies and case studies are analyzed in Chapter 3. They are selected as a function of their relevance on development: the four policy areas which were defined and described by Gamlen [2006] and which could be connected to the four types of remittances described in 1.2, are in the focus of the analysis. Analysis for each policy area follows a similar logic: first, theoretical notions and concepts are cleared. Second, all relevant public policies of the given category that can be found in Latin America are presented in a taxative way. Third, a relevant case study on a concrete policy programme is exposed.

Table 2. Overview of the structure of policy areas, remittance types and case studies analyzed in the thesis

Chapter	Policy area	Remittance type addressed	Case study
3.2.	Extended consular activities for enhancing the amount of remittances	Household remittances	“Matrícula Consular” or Consular ID Card, Mexico
3.3.	Incentives for returning migrants	Investment remittances	“Cucayo Fund”, Ecuador
3.4.	Matching funds programmes for community remittances	Collective remittances	“3x1 Programme” matching funds scheme, Mexico
3.5.	Diaspora networks for knowledge transfer programmes	Social remittances	“Red Caldas” and “Colombia Nos Une” networks, Colombia

2.2. Case studies

Case studies were chosen with the objective of showing the most representative piece of their kind for each policy. Also, they represent four types of remittances involved: household, investment, community and social remittances, respectively.

The formative period of each concrete policy is analyzed according to Kingdon’s concept of “policy windows” [Kingdon, 1984], while the evaluation of their basic idea (in other words, the ‘deal’ between the state and the migrants) relies on Gamlen’s “extending rights – extracting obligations” dichotomy. Policy mechanisms are presented in a flowchart where six different types of actors are presented. Finally, policy evaluation is elaborated in a

retrospective way for the achievements of these policies since their introduction, and their perspectives for further development are also assessed.

A comparative analysis closes Chapter 3, in which the four case studies are compared, following the structure of their template.

Final conclusions are drawn in Chapter 4, feeding from the three evaluative chapters of the hypotheses: Chapter 1.3.4 for the findings on the conceptual level, Chapter 2.2.4 for the institutional level and Chapter 3.6.6 for the policy level, respectively.

2.3. Hypotheses

The hypotheses of this thesis suppose that, although policies for obtaining developmentally useful contributions from emigrants are conceived in Latin America with the promise of reducing emigration through development projects,

- (H1) none of these policies can change the ongoing migratory trends significantly, but
- (H2) they create a transnational space in which developmentally positive economic and social transfers can take place, of which
- (H3) the government of the country of origin as well as the diaspora can obtain political, economic and symbolical benefits.

3. Main findings

3.1. The effect of diaspora policies on migratory trends

(H1) stated that: *“None of the developmentally relevant diaspora policies of Latin American governments can change the ongoing migratory trends significantly.”*

Hypothesis 1 can be declared as valid on the concrete policy level. Theoretically, a well-managed, well-funded, well-focused government unit could implement diaspora policies which have a significant impact on the migratory flows, i.e. retaining or bringing back more people through diaspora-driven development programmes. In the practice, however, no Latin American country has been able to do this: no significant change in emigration stock or flows could be identified through the implementation of diaspora policies.

On the theoretical level, the ‘Migration-development nexus’, the neoclassical approach in the literature is positive, while the dependency/world system approach is negative towards the possibilities of the reduction of emigration through development (projects). Remittances can have a development effect, although on a conceptual level it is not clear whether it balances the loss of human capital through emigration, neither if they reduce emigration on the long run.

On the institutional level, it was found that diaspora policies have (modest but existing) capabilities to enhance the development potential of remittances, this does not necessarily reduce outward migration. Latin American countries which have created specific laws, institutions and policies, institutionally deal with the problem, but the scale of efforts is rather low.

On the policy level, none of the four case studies (which, in turn, had been selected as being representative of their kind) has a significant effect on the emigration trends, i.e. they do not retain prospective migrants or bring them back from the country of destination in large numbers. The top three reasons for this are the following:

- 1) All policy initiatives run on an insufficient budget.
- 2) There can be an adverse effects on the migration flows, some measures might even increase the emigrant stock (or slow down its decrease).
- 3) There is a divergence in interests: while governments of countries of destination expect a reduction of immigration flows, it might be more convenient for a government of a country of origin to keep on letting people to emigrate, instead of retaining them, so they can send (a part of) it back as remittances.

Thesis 1: Diaspora policies that Latin American governments have implemented do not change the ongoing migratory trends in a significant way.

3.2. The increase of remittances through diaspora policies

(H2) stated that: *“Diaspora policies of Latin American governments create a transnational space in which developmentally positive economic and social transfers can take place”*

Hypothesis 2 is valid in all three levels of analysis. Countries identified as ‘engaged’ and ‘capable’ for undertaking diaspora policy activities for development, have created Diaspora Units, diaspora councils and several concrete outreach programmes. The

‘transnational space’ came into being and was filled with content. Increase in (household, investment, community and social) remittances has been identified in all four policy areas and case studies, respectively.

On the theoretical level, if we understand the flow of remittances (of household, investment, community and social type) as a fundamentally positive feature, the conceptual possibilities of a state was shown to enhance developmentally positive transfers by diaspora policies. There are tools to be used (see Table 2.) in order to create transnational spaces for remittance flows.

On the institutional level, ‘liberal’ regimes of double citizenship and voting rights, the founding and enhancement of the Diaspora Units, the councils of diaspora members at the consulates and the concrete outreach programmes are all creating the ‘transnational space’, on one hand, and its ‘content’ or ‘transfers’ on the other, which can be found within this space.

On the policy level, in all four policy areas analyzed, there is a type of remittance flow that can be clearly identified and which – if the policy’s other features, such as budget constraints or weak management do not hinder it – tend to grow as the policy is implemented.

Regarding the case studies, the following features were identified:

- The Matrícula Consular helped Mexican migrants in irregular legal status to access to the banking system, thus reducing the costs of sending household remittances with a rough estimation of 425 USD per year.
- The Cucayo Fund helped approximately 10 thousand returning migrants in investing their savings in Ecuador.
- The 3x1 Programme has been running for 15 years, currently benefiting between 30 and 50 thousand people per year in rural communities of Mexico, where infrastructure projects are being undertaken using community remittances.
- The Red Caldas and the Colombia Nos Une networks, while active, contributed to the flow of knowledge between the diaspora and Colombia.

Other policy attempts, not covered by the case studies but identified in the thesis have also created flows of household, investment, community and social remittances, respectively. While cost-effectiveness, outreach, impact and other relevant factors might not be optimal in most cases, it is shown that diaspora policy activities do create or broaden transnational spaces and channels for these flows of remittances.

Thesis 2: Diaspora policies of Latin American governments create a transnational space in which developmentally positive economic and social transfers take place in the form of increased flow of remittances (of household, investment, community and social type).

3.3. The benefits of the government of the country of origin and the diaspora

(H3) stated that: *“Latin American governments as well as the diaspora can obtain political, economic and symbolical benefits from diaspora policies”*

Hypothesis 3 can also be declared as valid, with the restriction that the diaspora has less ‘objective’ benefits from the cooperation, than the government of the country of origin. While the latter can calculate with more consumption to be taxed, and more additional sources for financing institutions or meso level actors that otherwise would need transfers from the central budget, members of the former will receive legal and administrative help at the consulates, if needed, and assistance for the return if they wish to do so. Otherwise, the benefits they have from cooperating are mostly symbolical.

On the theoretical level, there are possible benefits on both sides, while – based on the conceptual content of these benefits – there is a bias towards economic benefits on the side of the government of the country of origin, and towards political benefits on the diaspora’s side.

On the institutional level, the specific laws and the outreach programmes are very likely to yield other benefits as well. Institutional legal help, repatriation help, enhanced capabilities for resolving administrative issues are all possible sources of political benefits for the diaspora, while more active linkages and a more likely future repatriation of economic and/or human capital can materialize in economic benefits for the country of origin. ‘Diaspora Units’ within the Ministries of Foreign Affairs are very important in enhancing these mutual benefits, as they explicitly came into being for improving the channels of these transfers.

On the policy level, there are indeed many economic (and some political) benefits for the government, while for the diaspora the (mostly political/legal) benefits are not that evident. The government of the country of origin also has political and symbolical benefits from running a diaspora policy activity. Taking up the diaspora issue could benefit political parties which, in turn, started to implement policies on the topic, once elected. However, the ‘diaspora’ benefits from the ‘deal’ are less evident. With the exception of the Matrícula Consular, the rest of the policies analyzed here suppose a significant spending of money, time

or efforts. The 3x1 Programme and the Red Caldas / Colombia Nos Une projects provided little else than symbolical recognition for all this, only the Cucayo Fund provided a considerable grant. It is, therefore, another ‘benefit’ that acts as driver for migrants in most cases: the psychological reward. Diaspora policies might therefore serve migrants in a rather symbolic but very important way, by reinforcing their identity through involvement in doing something useful for those who are left behind.

Thesis 3: Latin American governments as well as the diaspora do obtain political, economic and symbolical benefits from diaspora policies. The benefits of the government are more quantifiable and more significant, while the benefits of the diaspora are more symbolical.

3.4. The role of institutions and governance capabilities in diaspora policymaking

(4.): A fourth, cross-cutting finding is that among Latin American countries, it is not the countries with the highest emigration rate are those which have created the largest diaspora institutions and the most overarching policies. There is a group of countries with high emigration rate but with low governmental capacities (e.g. Bolivia, Honduras) where no significant diaspora institutions and policies were created. Another group of countries had the government capacities, but the emigration issue was not seen as very relevant, thus diaspora institutions and policies were also not created – or were created only for specific groups, such as the highly skilled emigrants (e.g. Brazil, Chile). Finally, a group of countries with medium to high emigration rate and medium governmental capacities created the most innovative and robust diaspora institutions and policies (e.g. Mexico, Ecuador).

Table 3. A possible categorization of Latin American countries based on the economic importance of their diaspora and the governmental capabilities for diaspora policymaking (as of 2015)

	Development level	Governance effectiveness (for diaspora policymaking)	Economic importance of the diaspora	Countries
1	High	High or intermediate	Low	Argentina, Brazil (2), Chile, Uruguay
2	Intermediate	Intermediate	Intermediate	Bolivia (3), Colombia, Costa Rica, Ecuador, Mexico, Panama, Paraguay (3), Peru
3	Low	Low or intermediate	High	Dominican Republic (2), El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, Nicaragua
4	Asymmetrical	Low	Controversial	Cuba, Venezuela

Numbers in brackets show that the given country could arguably be classified to another category.

Thesis 4: Latin American countries where emigration is an important issue but governmental capacities were missing for policymaking, could not create developmental policies to enhance remittance flows. Other countries where governmental capacities were given but the emigration issue was not seen as very important, did create policies for specific diaspora groups only (the highly skilled). Finally, countries with medium to high emigration rate and medium governmental capacities created the most innovative and robust diaspora institutions and policies.

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