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Globalization, Immigrants' Transnational Agency and Economic Development in their Homelands

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Globalization is accused of exacerbating poverty and inequality in developing countries. Critics point to the millions in Latin American, Caribbean, Asian and African countries living in rising poverty and attributed this to the march of globalization. International migration is the human dimension of globalization. Overlooked in the raging debate is the fact that at least this one element of globalization is working at the grassroots level to reduce poverty—the rise of immigrant communities worldwide described as “transnational.” These communities are comprised of millions of immigrant families and individuals from poor countries, who have not abandoned their homelands following emigration. Instead, they masterfully deploy the tools of contemporary globalization to forge, maintain and expand their homeland network ties and to create significant new opportunities for economic, political and social exchange across national borders. The most directly visible evidence of this is the growth of remittances into a multi-billion dollar market linking rich and poor countries from below. In contrast to past dispositions, both national governments and international development authorities currently perceive the remittance market as a source of development funds with considerable untapped potential.

Together with the USA and Australia, Canada is one of the three major immigrant-receiving countries in the world. In 2002, there were approximately 4,000,000 immigrants from developing countries, 52% of whom are from Asian developing countries. As a proportion of total population, this places Canada ahead of the USA and Australia in accepting immigrants from poor countries. While there is an increasing body of research information on the emergence of transnational immigrant communities in the other major immigration countries and their bearing on development in poor countries, there is a marked absence of research on transnational immigrant communities in the Canadian context. However, the absence of research evidence on the existence of these communities in Canada is not evidence of their non-existence.

This paper addresses these issues; in particular, the issue of remittance market development and some of the most recent initiatives that rich countries and some international development authorities have either launched or are contemplating to improve remittance market efficiency. The paper categorizes these initiatives into initiatives “from above” and “from below” and cautions against initiatives “from above” that could hinder rather than facilitate remittance flows into poor households. The paper addresses some of the key issues relating to transnational immigrant communities in the Canadian context and their bearing on Canada's domestic and international development policies. It proposes a research agenda within a multidisciplinary comparative framework to stimulate academic and policy discussion and to carry forward investigation of these and other kindred issues.



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RÉSUMÉ

On reproche à la mondialisation d'accentuer la pauvreté et les inégalités dans les pays en développement. Ses détracteurs parlent de millions de personnes dans les pays d'Amérique latine, des Caraïbes, d'Asie et d'Afrique qui vivent dans une pauvreté croissante et attribuent cette situation à la progression de la mondialisation. La migration internationale est la dimension humaine de la mondialisation. Dans le feu du débat, on a négligé le fait que cet élément de la mondialisation contribue au niveau local à la réduction de la pauvreté - en favorisant l'expansion, à travers le monde, des communautés d'immigrants dites « transnationales ».

Le Canada est, avec les États-Unis et l'Australie, l'un des trois pays qui reçoivent le plus d'immigrants. En 2002, il y avait au Canada environ 4 000 000 immigrants de pays en développement, dont 52% de pays asiatiques en développement. En proportion du nombre total d'habitants, ces chiffres placent le Canada devant les États-Unis et l'Australie pour ce qui est du nombre d'immigrants provenant de pays pauvres. Même si l'on dispose d'une quantité grandissante de données de recherche sur l'émergence des communautés d'immigrants transnationales dans les autres grands pays d'immigration et sur leur effet sur le développement des pays pauvres, il y a une absence marquée de recherches sur les communautés d'immigrants transnationales dans le contexte canadien. Toutefois, l'absence de recherches sur l'existence de ces communautés au Canada n'est pas une preuve de leur non-existence.

Ce document aborde ces questions, en particulier celle du développement du marché des envois de fonds, et examine quelques-unes des initiatives les plus récentes mises en place ou envisagées par les pays riches et certains responsables du développement international pour améliorer l'efficacité du marché des envois de fonds. Ce document classe ces initiatives par catégorie selon qu'elles viennent « d'en haut » ou « d'en bas » et met en garde contre les initiatives « d'en haut » qui pourraient entraver plutôt que faciliter les envois de fonds destinés aux ménages pauvres. Le document traite de certains des grands enjeux liés aux communautés d'immigrants transnationales dans le contexte canadien et de leur incidence sur les politiques nationales et internationales du Canada en matière de développement. Il propose un programme de recherche à l'intérieur d'un cadre comparatif multidisciplinaire pour favoriser les débats universitaires et politiques et les recherches sur ces questions et d'autres questions connexes.

RESUMEN

Muchos culpan a la globalización de exacerbar la pobreza y la desigualdad en los países en vías de desarrollo. Los críticos apuntan a los millones de personas en América Latina, el Caribe, Asia y África que viven en condiciones de pobreza cada vez peores y lo atribuyen al avance de la globalización cuya dimensión humana haya expresión en la migración internacional. Los debates que se sostienen sobre este tema pasan por alto que dentro del fenómeno de la globalización, este es un elemento que, al menos a nivel de base, está ayudando a aliviar la pobreza a partir del auge de las denominadas comunidades "transnacionales" que crean los inmigrantes en todo el planeta.

Además de EE.UU. y Australia, Canadá es una de las tres naciones que acogen mayor número de inmigrantes en el mundo. En 2002, la cifra de inmigrantes procedentes de países en desarrollo alcanzó unos 4 millones, 52% de los cuales provenientes de Asia. En proporción con su población total, Canadá sobrepasa a EE.UU. y a Australia en cuanto a las cifras de inmigrantes que recibe de las naciones pobres. A pesar del creciente número de estudios sobre el surgimiento de comunidades transnacionales en las otras dos naciones y su impacto sobre el desarrollo de los países pobres, existe una evidente carencia de investigaciones sobre el tema en el contexto canadiense. No obstante, tal ausencia no es prueba de la inexistencia de estas comunidades.

Este documento aborda particularmente la problemática del desarrollo del mercado de remesas de divisas, así como algunas de las más recientes iniciativas para mejorar su eficiencia, implementadas o en fase de estudio, por parte de países desarrollados e instituciones para el desarrollo internacional. Para los efectos de este estudio, estas iniciativas han sido agrupadas en dos categorías, a saber, iniciativas "desde arriba" o "desde abajo," y advierte que, en lugar de facilitarlas, las iniciativas "desde arriba" podrían dificultar el flujo de remesas destinadas a familias pobres. En segundo lugar, el trabajo aborda algunas de las cuestiones claves concernientes a las comunidades inmigrantes transnacionales radicadas en Canadá y su influencia sobre las políticas de desarrollo nacional e internacional del país. Por último, se propone una agenda de investigaciones en un marco multidisciplinario comparativo para estimular el debate de políticas y perspectivas académicas, así como promover el estudio de estas problemáticas, y otras afines al tema.

The Emergence and Significance of Transnational Immigrant Communities

The only thing that the poor in the developing world can afford to care about is simple, straightforward and down-to-earth solutions that can help them reduce their income poverty. They are not concerned about such things as global architecture and global governance or similar stratospheric notions of development designed to make them behave the way the rich countries want them to behave. Contemporary globalization stands accused of exacerbating their poverty. Transnational migrant communities are uniquely the product of contemporary globalization. Overlooked in the raging anti-globalization debate is the fact that at least one element of globalization contributes to poverty reduction and growth in developing countries: the role of millions of immigrant families and individuals worldwide who organize themselves into transnational communities to contribute to two countries, two economies and two cultures simultaneously.¹ This is particularly evident in their masterful deployment of the time-space-compressing tools of contemporary globalization to forge and maintain durable economic, political and cultural network ties with their homelands. Through these ties, they positively contribute directly to economic growth and poverty reduction at the grassroots level in their countries of origin.

The emergence of transnational migrant communities is a grassroots level phenomenon compared to other forms (such as activities of multinational corporations) of contemporary transnationalism. It arises from the initiatives of ordinary people to establish, maintain, and expand durable economic, political and social ties with their non-migrant families and communities of origin as they adapt in their host countries.² The existence of these communities and their transnational development activities was unnoticed for decades. Today, there is an increasing amount of ethnographic research evidence that has demonstrated the existence of these communities worldwide. The accumulated evidence has firmly placed before the eyes of the international development community (including governments of emigration countries) the potential impacts of these communities on poverty reduction and growth in sending countries. Members of these communities have not severed their social, economic and political ties with their homelands following settlement and integration in their new country in the way traditional international migration

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of contemporary
globalization***

and immigrant integration theorizing predicted. Instead, with the aid of the tools of globalization - modern transportation, telecommunication and a global financial infrastructure - these ties have evolved and matured into transnational migrant communities. Members of these communities, individually and collectively, simultaneously distribute their time, ideas, material resources and loyalty between their host countries and communities of origin in their homelands. Their cross-border activities also strengthen trade, business, economic, and cultural linkages between immigration and emigration countries. Not all immigrants engage in cross-border economic development activities, however,³ and not all immigrants who engage in cross-border activities engage in economic development-oriented activities

The discovery of these communities and their transnational economic development activities has exposed the limits of traditional international migration theorizing. These developments have broadened understanding of successful immigrant adaptation in host countries, redefined the scope for action-oriented migration research and hence operational policy understanding of the relationship between the process of immigrant adaptation and the economic development of poor countries. Therefore, the existence of these communities and their transnational development activities has significant implications for a range of policies and practices in both migrant receiving and migrant sending countries.

In terms of openness to immigrants from all regions of the world, and access and receptivity to immigrants from poor countries in particular, current world migration statistics show that Canada is *the leader* among the major immigrant-receiving countries (R. Robinson, forthcoming). For example, 18% of Canada's population are immigrants whereas the percentages for the United States and Australia are 11.4% and 21.2% respectively. In terms of immigrants from emigration countries in all regions of the world, Canada outranks the United States in every category, except the Americas, and outranks Australia in every category except Oceania. In terms of demographic access and receptivity and labour force access by immigrants from developing and transition countries, Canada again outranks the United States and Australia, respectively. Asian developing countries are the single largest source of immigration (52%) to

Canada. Some immigration researchers are of the view that by 2012, immigrants will account for all of Canada's net labour force growth.⁴ While there is an abundance of accumulated research evidence on immigrants' transnational organizing in the other major immigrant-receiving countries, the research evidence of the existence of these communities in the Canadian context is invisible. However, the absence of research evidence of the existence of transnational immigrant communities in Canada is not evidence of the absence of their existence in Canada.

The wider international development community currently perceives transnational immigrant communities, their potential for earnings and savings, their commitment to their countries of origin, and their philanthropic orientation as a source of considerably untapped resources for financing sustainable development in poor countries.⁵ Consequently, their existence and potential development-financing roles are recurrent priority agenda items for deliberation and policy actions at the highest international levels (e.g., the World Bank, the International Monetary Fund, the Inter-American Development Bank, the European Union, the UK Department for International Development, the US Agency for International Development and the International Labour Organization). In some migrant-sending countries (such as Mexico, El Salvador, Grenada, Haiti, Ghana, Somaliland, Turkey) these communities are recognized in national policy as potential partners in economic and political development of their homelands. These are important trends in current policy thinking on the part of both the international development community and on the part of governments of emigration countries. These trends are in marked contrast to the negative attitudes displayed in the past, when "development specialists" and academics in rich countries viewed migration from poor to rich countries as inherently counter-productive to the development prospects of poor countries, and when governments of poor countries viewed their emigrants as traitors to their native land.

Transnational Immigrant Agency and the Expansion of the Remittance Market

The discovery of the existence of transnational immigrant communities has led international and national development authorities' to re-discover immigrants' transnational agency as an important parameter in development planning and policy. The consensus emphasis in the re-discovery is on migrant

remittances as a new and more stable source of external money than Official Development Assistance (ODA) and foreign investment flows for financing development projects and programs in poor countries. This re-discovery is one of the most significant by-products of contemporary globalization. It is also a significantly productive consequence in the contexts of declining growth in developing countries and declining ODA and foreign investment flows to poor countries. The re-discovery of the development importance of the remittance market is due to the hard work (in most cases "3-D work in their host countries")⁶ of the millions of immigrants worldwide, their risk-taking abilities, altruism, durable ties to their homelands and initiatives in deploying the tools of contemporary globalization. As a consequence of immigrants' hard work, initiatives and commitment to their families and communities in their homelands, the remittance market has expanded from small store-front business operations that originated in immigrant communities into a multi-billion dollar high-margin industry that has attracted the interest of institutionalized players

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personal flows*

and governments worldwide. Global remittance flows in the aggregate are officially estimated to average over US\$100 billion annually during the past ten years, approximately US\$90 billion of which is estimated to have flowed into developing countries. Approximately US\$40 billion is officially estimated to have reached Latin America and

Caribbean (LAC) countries in 2003 from the United States alone.⁷ These amounts underestimate actual remittances flows, but they far exceed annual average global ODA flows from rich countries. This obviously makes the continued portrayal of immigrants in traditional migration models as people who abandon their homelands patently unacceptable to the international development community and to governments of emigration countries.

The G8 Summit and Remittance Market Development "From Above"

Remittances are grassroots transnational personal flows. Researchers emphasize the personal altruistic and household/family social welfare investment motives behind these flows. However, because of their officially estimated high volumes (which are suspected to be lower than actual total remittances) flowing annually from the United States in particular, post-9/11 heightened geo-political security considerations have generated political and media fears in rich countries that remittances could be diverted from their intended pro-poor development

to non-developmental activities.⁸ The G8 Summit held in the United States in June 2004, recognized that remittances are “the fruits of the work of immigrants” and that they “play an increasing role in the financing of development in the workers' home countries”. However, the Summit also implicitly argues that remittance flows are a loose canon that has become entrenched in the international financial system. The Summit drew up a *Global Poverty Action Plan* that includes an annex devoted to remittance facilitation through rich-country driven regulatory action, and the areas in which each government of the G8 countries should contemplate such regulatory action to better manage the direction of these transnational flows. Although the Plan emphasizes the fact that remittances are poor families' and households' monies that they are entitled to use for their own social and economic development, it also speculated that the sheer volume of remittances flowing into poor countries makes these flows susceptible to organized diversion from their intended household and family development uses into activities that could potentially undermine stability in the global financial, economic and political systems.

Hence, the stated goal of the Action Plan is attracting and influencing a greater amount of remittances to flow through formal government and institutionalized private sector channels, where they can be better regulated and managed to strengthen the global financial system, and to reduce the risk that remittances will be used to finance activities that would destabilize financial markets. Accordingly, the Action Plan lists the following programmatic areas in which each of the G8 countries should contemplate planned actions:⁹

- Make it easier for people in sending and receiving countries to engage in financial transactions through formal financial systems, including providing access to financial literacy programs where appropriate, and by working with the private sector to extend the range and reach of these activities.
- Reduce the cost of remittance services by up to 50% or more through the promotion of competition, the use of innovative payment instruments, and by enhancing access to formal financial systems in sending and receiving countries.

(...) remittance flows are a loose canon that has become entrenched in the international financial system

- Promote better coherence and coordination of international organizations that are working to enhance remittance services and heighten the positive development impacts of remittance receipts in developing countries.
- Encourage cooperation between remittance service providers and local financial institutions, including micro-finance entities and credit unions, in ways that strengthen local financial markets and improve access by recipients to financial services.
- Encourage the creation, where appropriate, of market-oriented local development funds and credit unions that give remittance-receiving families more options and incentives for productively investing remittances flows.
- Support dialogue with governments, civil society, and the private sector to address specific infrastructure and regulatory impediments, for example, discriminatory access to payment systems for the private sector, weak supervisory standards and practices, and archaic financial infrastructure.

International Development Authorities and Remittance Market Development “From Above”

In October 2003, the World Bank, DIFID and the International Organization for Migration (IOM) sponsored an international conference in the UK. The conference examined the potential impacts of transnational migrant communities on the wider economic and social development in emigration countries as viewed through the volume of remittance flows. Discussions focussed on the opportunities and future prospects for banks and non-bank financial intermediaries to stake out a larger role in trans-border management of these flows for the public good in remittance-receiving countries. Scrutiny of the list of attendees reveals that the participants included developed country elites, academics and the business and politically well connected from the “more important” developing and transition emigration countries. One observed outcome of that conference was the wealth of well-written technical papers advocating a larger intermediating role for banks and non-bank financial institutions in the remittance marketplace in order to change the character of remittances from private goods to semi-public goods.

The United States Government and Remittance Market Development “From Above”

The interests demonstrated in the United States Congress in the remittance market further illustrate the new emphasis on the development significance of the remittances as the key dimension of immigrants' transnational organizing. In 2003, the House Financial Services Committee held hearings on the transparency of transactions at the United States end of the remittance market. Following those hearings, Senators Charles Schumer and Jon Corzine co-sponsored the *Money Wire Improvement and Remittance Enhancement Act*, which requires companies that provide international money wire transfer services to disclose the hidden costs they charge for those transactions. Luis Gutierrez introduced the House version of the Act, the *Wire Transfer Fairness and Disclosure Bill*, which also intends to make the remittance market more transparent and to bring down costs to remittance senders and receivers. Both have yet to be passed. In 2002, the USAID'S provided US\$.50m to the World Council of Credit Unions (WOCCU) to finance new programs that would enhance remittance flows from Mexican immigrant communities into so-called “productive investment” activities in Mexico.¹⁰

The IDB and IAF and Remittance Market Development “From Below”

The above and similar initiatives represent a takeoff from the past and continuing work of the Inter-American Foundation (IAF) and Inter-American Development Bank (IDB). However, the initiatives of these organizations are explicitly and directly facilitative of concrete efforts at the grassroots level in making remittances work better for the poor in developing countries. The strategic approach behind the IDB and IAF initiatives is the creation of partnerships with grassroots level organizations and institutions. The key emphasis is best practices in ensuring that remittances are concretely pro-poor and development friendly. The IDB and IAF approaches are a study in the efficacy of remittance market development “from above” and “from below”. A very notable feature of either approach is that both Foreign Affairs Canada (FAC) and the Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA) are virtual on-lookers from the sidelines.

Caveats on Remittance Market Development “From Above”

The research on transnational communities has re-oriented development authorities to the policy discovery that migrant remittances are a “significant and stable source of external development finance”.¹¹ While the intent of the various initiatives at both the international and country levels is to increase and channel remittance flows into development projects that both generate social and private benefits, a few important caveats regarding official government intervention in the remittance market are in order. Remittances are personal family-to-family, or household-to-household and individual-to-individual transnational financial resource flows. They are flows that immigrants typically earmark for specific non-migrant family, household, or individual purposes. Therefore, they are inherently personal income flows to, and for the recipient population. Unlike financial ODA flows, which are government-to-government flows and are of a public goods nature, remittances

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are private goods that directly reach the hands of millions of poor non-migrant families, households and individuals. Unlike financial ODA flows, the sender and the receiver jointly share the decision-making power behind the use of remittances. Therefore, the shared decision-making is transnationally dispersed throughout the recipient and sender populations of private households and individuals at the grassroots level rather than concentrated in the hands of a few political and business elites in developing countries' capitals. Consequently, attempts to “change” the character of remittances through policies that treat them as public goods or semi-public goods may inhibit flows that are a large contributor to household poverty reduction and economic growth at the grassroots level. This, in turn, would convert a simple, straightforward, grassroots level initiated development solution into a magnified development problem by slowing down transition rates out of income poverty.

Transnational Immigrant Communities and Economic Development: An Evolving Field of Academic Theorizing and Applied Research

Transnational immigrant communities and their role in the development of poor countries is a new and rapidly evolving field of academic theorizing and applied research investigation at some of the world's

leading institutions. American and European academic social scientists and policy researchers are the pioneers in this field. Canadian academics and government policy researchers have been slow in broadening the scope of migration research beyond immigrant labour market assimilation and cultural adaptation studies to *systematically* investigate transnational migration and economic development studies. As a result, research on migrant transnationalism in the Canadian context is currently spotty at best and non-existent at worst.¹² This is due largely to the Canadian-state centric approach that dominates the immigrant integration discourse in Canada at both the policy, academic and non-academic levels (Robinson, forthcoming). In addition, NGOs that are strategically placed to conduct or to support action-oriented research on transnational immigrant communities and their grassroots level impacts on poverty reduction in LAC, Asian, African and Middle-Eastern emigration countries are constrained in their research efforts due to the very limited funding opportunities available to them. The outcome places the Canadian public, policy-making community and immigration scholars behind the knowledge and information curve on the potentially transforming influences of immigrant communities in Canada and on the development of migrant sending countries and communities.¹³

SOME KEY ISSUES FOR POLICY RESEARCH ON TRANSNATIONAL IMMIGRANT COMMUNITIES AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT IN THE CANADIAN CONTEXT

The Scope of Immigrants' Transnational Agency

The financial remittance market is the most visible, exemplary, and easily measurable dimension of migrant transnational development activities. Hence, the emphasis on migradollars as the key dimension is admissible. However, migradollars are not the only significant and measurable forms of border-spanning economic activities embedded in immigrant communities, and, neither are border-spanning economic activities the only dimension of immigrants' transnational agency. Migradollars stimulate related economic activities such as bilateral trade flows, business investment in sending countries, corporate capital mobility, emerging markets development, labour markets and rural development. A number of researchers have called attention to these migradollar-induced economic activities.¹⁴ Secondly, some researchers have called

attention to the importance of knowledge, skills, and technology transfers (human capital) that accompany migrants returning to their home countries after years in a host country; others have emphasized the transfer of social capital that accompany immigrants and returning migrants. The former they classify as "technological remittances", the latter they designate "social remittances."¹⁵ The embeddedness of non-financial forms of remittances in transnational immigrant communities has led some scholars to call for a re-thinking of remittances.¹⁶ Immigrants also engage in political transnationalism and philanthropic transnationalism, which positively impact political democracy and social welfare improvement, respectively, in their homelands.¹⁷ In addition to financial remittances, these other economic and non-economic dimensions of immigrants' border-spanning activities cumulatively impact changes in income and poverty transition rates in significant ways of those at the bottom of the economic ladder in developing countries. Therefore,

they are also of global import in the poverty reduction and growth equations. The emphasis on financial remittances alone in international development policy thinking as the "new development mantra", and how governments of emigration countries might transform them into public goods leads to underestimation of migrants' transnational agency, and thus to policy marginalization of the global import of the several other dimensions of immigrants' transnational organizing.¹⁸

Canadian academics and government policy researchers have been slow in broadening the scope of migration research (...)

Canada's Domestic Context and Immigrants' Transnational Agency

The host-countries' domestic context is not neutral to migrants' transnational development activities. The degree of immigrant receptivity in a host society and economic access shapes the economic prospects of all immigrants and consequently, the timing, contours, scale and stability of their international development activities. From the socio-cultural adaptation standpoint, multicultural receptivity is more conducive to immigrants' transnational practices than rigid assimilation policies, which encourage immigrant conformity to a monolithic socio-cultural order. From the economic standpoint, business cycle conditions can affect immigrants' economic welfare more than they affect the native born. Immigrants' economic welfare, in turn, affects the timing, intensity and scope of their transnational development activities. Although statistical analysis shows that compared to the United States and

Australia, Canada is the most receptive to immigrants from developing countries (R. Robinson, forthcoming), there are labour market employment practices that are impediments to the robustness of immigrants' transnational organizing. More specifically, the internal structure and functioning of the labour markets and institutions, still impedes the so-called "visible minority" and female immigrants access to employment opportunities commensurate with their education, skills, and experience.¹⁹ Labour market structural and institutional impediments shape the timing, contours, scale and stability of immigrants' transnational development activities by inhibiting immigrants' employment and earnings growth. Consequently, in addition to the economic and non-economic dimensions of migrant transnationalism, policymakers need to be sensitized to, and advised on, the underlying causal relationship between the host-countries' domestic policies and immigrants' transnational organizing, and the impacts of these policies on poor countries' development via the scope and intensity of their transnational development activities.

Immigrants' Transnational Agency and the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs)

Canada is, reportedly, one of the industrial countries committed to the MDGs. Goal 8 of the MDGs calls for "a global development partnership" to address poverty-reduction in developing countries. At the same time, net ODA and the level of foreign investment flows to the poorest countries are at an all-time low. In the context of these developments, international development authorities and their country-level practitioners are wrestling with a number of issues. These include strategies for accelerating timely progress towards the MDGs; resources for financing sustainable attainment of those Goals; and the way attainment of those Goals will impact different socio-economic groups in poor countries.²⁰ The potential contributions of transnational immigrant communities to the MDGs attainment have not figured prominently and systematically, as they should at the policy-level or in fora discussions on strategies for financing their sustainable attainment.²¹ Yet, the vast majority of the people at whose welfare improvement these Goals seem targeted are poor families, children, relatives and friends that immigrants left behind in their homelands. If transnational migrant communities are a significant development resource potential as currently perceived in the international development community, then harnessing the development

*(...) a need to
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resource potential embedded in these communities through strategic development partnerships based upon a best practices' framework can significantly contribute to acceleration of progress towards the MDGs.

Policy Coherence and Immigrants' Transnational Agency

Policy coherence is the positive interplay of various policies at the national and international levels. Under contemporary globalization, immigration, integration, citizenship, labour market, trade, financial, foreign investment, ODA, agricultural, geo-political security and development policies are inexorably linked. Canadian policymakers need to be sensitized and advised that within this mix, the emergence of migrant transnationalism as a global phenomenon is a development that matters for both migrant-receiving and migrant-sending countries, rather than merely to Canadians. It is a phenomenon whose structure is shaped by the policy actions of authorities in host and sending countries and by the

actions of migrants themselves. In an increasingly globalized world, the question of policy coherence extends to migrant transnationalism since priorities and objectives in the various policy areas shape modes of migrant transnationalism and its development outcomes. In some areas of policy there may be complementarities and synergies between migrant transnationalism and the objectives to be achieved at both the national and international levels, whereas

in other policy areas there may be tension. The potential for complementarities, synergies and tensions suggests a need to integrate migrant transnationalism within the architecture of national and international policies. In this way, it might be possible to more accurately assess the feasible scope of the potential contribution of transnational migrant communities to sustainable attainment of those objectives and identify best practices' options to maximize that contribution.

RECOMMENDATION: RESEARCH DIRECTION ON TRANSNATIONAL COMMUNITIES IN CANADA

Remittances and Immigrants' Transnational Agency in the Canadian Context

There is an abundance of research data and publications on remittance flows from other developed countries to developing countries. Such information on remittance flows from Canada is non-existent. In a conversation with Statistics Canada in

2003 on the availability of remittance data, that organization was not even familiar with the term migrant remittances and their relation to economic development in poor countries. When explained, the response was that Statistics Canada's mandate is an "inward", not "outward" looking mandate. At the same time, remittances from Canada are withdrawals from the Canadian economy and injections into poor countries' economies. The withdrawals and the injections affect national income growth on both sides, albeit in different ways. In this regard, policymakers need to be sensitized to, and advised on whether Canada's total net foreign aid to poor countries in any one-year exceeds total net remittance flows from Canada in that same year (as well as over time) and whether the economic benefits of immigration from poor countries to Canada come at the expense of the economic benefits to poor countries. Such a study would give significant indications as to whether the Canadian economy benefits more from immigration than poor countries. Such indications are not possible from fashionable ad-hoc surveys designed to merely count up remittance dollars and re-cycle US-based remittance market information.

The Multidimensionality of Immigrants' Transnational Agency

Migrant transnationalism is multi-dimensional in scope and intensity. Therefore, financial remittance flows are not the only dimension of migrants' transnational agency. Although remittances flows from the major immigrant receiving countries and their uses in emigration countries have been widely investigated, there is a very large deficit of quantitative and qualitative research information on remittance-induced bilateral trade flows, investment, labour market, corporate capital mobility, and emerging securities market developments. There are also the dimensions of social and technological remittances, and immigrants' transnational political participation. Hence, the measurable development scope of migrants' transnational agency remains solidly underinvestigated.

The Impacts of Canada's Domestic and Foreign Policies on Poor Countries' Development

In addition to foreign aid, trade and investment, international migration is a key area in which the impacts of Canada's domestic and foreign policy on the prospects of poor countries can be fruitfully measured and assessed. Excluding immigrants from rich countries, 12.6% of the total population of Canada

comes from developing countries. This implies a two-way flow of human and financial resources from a poor to a rich country.²² Yet, to date, the measurement and assessment has been in the direction of the economic impacts of immigrants on the Canadian economy and society in the interest of perfecting immigration and integration policies to give Canada a greater competitive edge in the global economy. In a global context, Canada's domestic and international policies cannot be only "pro-Canada", although this is understandable. Consequently, policymakers need to be sensitized to, and be advised of, Canada's domestic and foreign policies on poverty reduction and growth prospects of developing countries, than current research on aid, trade, investment and immigrant economic assimilation permits.

A Multidisciplinary Comparative Quantitative and Qualitative Research Framework

Although migrant transnationalism is a relatively young and evolving field of academic theorizing and research investigation, there is a tendency in the

(...) Canada's domestic and international policies cannot be only "pro-Canada" (...)

existing ethnographic literature to treat the immigrant communities studied as similar and homogenous in structure and to generalize across regions and countries to those not studied. While such an approach is useful, it is not universally useful from the standpoint of development policy and practice.

Transnational immigrant communities are not homogenous in character, and neither are they structurally similar across countries and regions. For example, the Dominican Republic and El Salvador immigrant communities may share the same cultural and linguistic heritage, but the scope and intensity of transnational practices within these communities may be quite different. As another example, African and Caribbean immigrant communities may be of similar ethnic or racial heritage, but there is no reason to assume *a priori*, that generalizations about the adaptation experiences and transnational practices of Caribbean immigrants can be fruitfully extended to African immigrant communities and vice versa. Not much insight of significant policy value can be gained from generalizations and conclusions about one transnational immigrant community extended to another that may be otherwise quite different in adaptation experiences and transnational economic, political and socio-cultural behaviour. Therefore, the approach proposed is not to focus only on one region or one or two immigrant communities from the same region, but rather, an approach that emphasizes regional, across regions, within regions and cross-

national comparisons. Consequently, the efficacy of policy formulation respecting migrant transnationalism and economic development would be better guided by multi-country, regional and cross-region comparative case study analysis of transnational immigrant communities within and across destination countries and their development consequences within and across countries of emigration.

A comparative research enterprise of the type and scale proposed would warrant a multidisciplinary approach and institutional collaboration among academic institutions and policy research organizations with strong financial support from government and private foundations. The real beneficiaries would be the Canadian population including immigrant communities, immigrants' non-migrant families, and governments of emigration countries. The target audience would include the Canadian Government, bilateral and multilateral development agencies, supranational, inter-governmental agencies, civil society actors and other development practitioners, remittance market operators, business leaders, policy research organizations, academic institutions and foundations that finance applied social science research projects.

Two integrated goals should motivate such a multidisciplinary research enterprise. The first would be to establish the existence of transnational immigrant communities in Canada. This would include the number, type, and characteristics of transnational actors, delimiting the scope and regularity of their border-spanning economic, political, philanthropic, and cultural activities. It would also include identification and empirical analysis of the underlying causal processes and structures of these activities. The objective would be to develop and provide the real beneficiaries and target audience with multidisciplinary comparative analysis of the actual and potential cumulative development consequences of migrant transnationalism for the LAC, Asian, Middle-Eastern and African countries. The second would be to provide the real beneficiaries and target audience with a framework of practical policies on best practices. The objective would be to initiate, facilitate and enhance development partnerships between transnational migrant communities and their home-country governments on the one hand, and between transnational migrant communities and international development agencies on the other.

CONCLUSIONS

Transnational immigrant communities are a grassroots level phenomenon and uniquely a product of contemporary globalization processes. They are communities of migrants who have not abandoned their homelands when they resettle, integrate and become citizens in their new country, as traditional migration theory predicted. Instead, they have utilized the tools of globalization, which are also utilized by multinational corporations modern telecommunications, transportation and a global financial infrastructure to forge, maintain and expand their social, economic and political ties at the grassroots level in their communities of origin in their homelands. Transnational migrants distribute their time, money, resources and loyalty between their host and home countries simultaneously. By distributing portion of their time, money and loyalty to their communities of origin in their homelands, transnational immigrants positively contribute to

(...) the expansion of the remittance market is only one manifestation of the emergence of transnational immigrant communities as development agents

poverty reduction and growth at the grassroots level in their homelands. International development authorities together with governments of the emigration countries perceive transnational immigrant communities as a significant source of untapped resources for financing sustainable development in poor countries. Accordingly, they have launched a number of initiatives to tap into the development resources embedded in these communities. These initiatives focus on remittance market development facilitative of economic development in migrant-sending countries. However, the

expansion of the remittance market is only one manifestation of the emergence of transnational immigrant communities as development agents. Bilateral trade flows, transnational investments, labour market employment growth, capital mobility, securities market development and rural social and economic development are other dimensions of global import.

Along with the United States and Australia, Canada is one of the three countries in the world with the largest immigrant population. As a proportion of its population, Canada admits relatively more immigrants from all regions of the world than the United States, and more significantly, relatively more immigrants from poor countries than either the United States or Australia as a proportion of its total immigrant population. This makes Canada the leader in the international migration market. Yet, despite its leadership position, its membership in the

international development community and the importance of migrant transnationalism to its domestic and international policies, Canada is noticeably on the sidelines in both transnational migrant community research and initiatives to maximize the contribution of its immigrant communities to development in poor countries. One reason is the “inward-oriented” (State-centric) approach to migration studies that dominate the immigration and immigrant adaptation discourse at the policy, academic and popular levels in Canada.

Migrant transnationalism can be viewed as an alternative mode of immigrant adaptation. Therefore, in an increasingly globalized world, the immigration and immigrant adaptation discourse cannot only be “Canada-centric”. Canadian domestic, international development, foreign trade, investment, geo-political security policies and migrant transnationalism are inexorably linked. Consequently, policymakers need to be sensitized and advised through policy research on transnational migrant communities in Canada of these linkages and how to maximize them in a way that contributes to enhancement of Canada's role in an increasingly globalized world.

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