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The State and the Grassroots: Immigrant Transnational Organizations in Four Continents

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Overall, their book breaks new ground on the topic of transnational policy networks, revealing how power works through these technocratic, expert-driven networks. *Fast Policy* is a brisk, engaging read, full of analytically rich and empirically driven substance that teaches us much about new experiments of statecraft, their lure and agendas as they travel, and the tensions which arise as they confront the structural inequities that they are often designed to mask or ignore.

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*The State and the Grassroots: Immigrant Transnational Organizations in Four Continents*, by **Alejandro Portes** and **Patricia Fernández-Kelly**, eds. New York: Berghahn Books, 2015. 338 pp. \$120.00 cloth. ISBN: 9781782387343.

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*The State and the Grassroots: Immigrant Transnational Organizations in Four Continents* reports findings from a set of ten related projects on the migrant organizations of eighteen different national-origin groups, which are spread across the United States, France, Spain, the Netherlands, and Belgium. The volume, edited by Alejandro Portes and Patricia Fernández-Kelly, provides a wealth of empirical detail on the activities of these organizations and makes substantial advances toward answering major questions in the literature on migrant transnationalism. The central contributions are fourfold. The book brings together 1) the U.S. and western European destination contexts, 2) national-origin groups with highly variable relationships with the governments of their countries of origin, and 3) migrant groups that vary widely in the extent to which they are predominantly working class or highly skilled. Finally, it includes surveys of migrant organizations that enable some comparisons across national origin and destination country cases.

Early scholarly accounts of migrant transnationalism, by which the authors mean engagement of various kinds across state borders, paid insufficient attention to how

source and destination country governments shape the contours of migrant organization. The accounts in this volume are far more attuned to the political constraints and opportunities in part because the studies include such different contexts. For example, the relaxation of hostilities between source and destination countries opens up spaces for migrant activities oriented toward the homeland. The growth of such activities in the Vietnamese American case following the establishment of diplomatic relations in the 1990s is the most vivid such example. The political economy of the origin country also structures migrant ties. Market reforms in China and India set the conditions for intensified relationships and investments of overseas Chinese and Indians.

On the destination country side, governments vary widely in their interest in assisting organizations oriented toward the homeland. France, Spain, and Belgium have provided government support for "co-development" in migrants' countries of origin, though this has been more difficult in Belgium given its complex federal system. The Spanish government has made co-development a condition of much support for migrant organizations, thus shaping their agendas. Reliance on state resources can carry a price. Budget cuts in Spain during the 2008 to 2012 financial crisis dealt a "death-blow" to the organizations (p. 267). Destination country factors may also inhibit migrant organization. The political culture in France, which emphasizes national republican unity, restrains the development of national-origin migrant associations with a strong political focus.

Destination country policies may have different effects on cross-border organizing over different time scales. In his introductory essay, Portes notes that permanent outmigration is accompanied by a weakening of the local productive structure in places of origin, whereas circular migration encourages greater investment. In the case of Mexican migration to the United States, the 1986 Immigration Reform and Control Act's legalization provisions and stricter U.S. border enforcement have shifted Mexican migration from a pattern of circular mobility to permanent settlement. I would argue that in the short run, mass legalization created the conditions

for a cadre of elite migrants to develop all manner of ties with their places of origin. In the long run, however, legalization encouraged permanent family settlement in the United States, which weakens the logic for trying to create economic development in communities of origin. Many cross-border ties are becoming weaker as well, as a result of border-enforcement policies that make circularity too expensive and dangerous for most migrants to tolerate. Thus, we may already be seeing the high-water mark of Mexican migrant transborder activities, as U.S. policies create more separation between the societies.

One of the major debates in the transnationalism literature is whether transborder activities are a complement or substitute for host country integration. There is evidence in this volume that the forces of assimilation pull migrants away from transborder activities in some ways while promoting them in others. The migrants most engaged in cross-border activities are those who have the legal status and surplus income to afford to be involved. Migrants may establish ties with host governments around integration issues and then leverage those ties around transborder issues, or vice versa. On the other hand, the tendency to organize along pan-ethnic rather than national-origin lines in countries as diverse as France and the United States promotes a focus on host country issues at the expense of country of origin concerns.

The steep intergenerational fall-off in cross-border activities is the strongest evidence that assimilation is a substitute for transborder action. Although the concluding essay emphasizes the durability of transborder ties, the consistent empirical finding in the case studies is that the second generation is rarely involved. Within the organizations, first-generation migrant complaints about the apathy of the second generation are endemic. Some of the partial exceptions to this rule are interesting, such as the small number of second-generation Vietnamese Americans who engage in unusually intense activities in Vietnam because they do not carry the burden of exile in the same way as their parents. But make no mistake; transborder activity is overwhelmingly a first-generation phenomenon.

It is difficult for scholars to assess the extensity of transborder migrant activities and the size of their impact, which ranges from substantial to purely symbolic. The studies in this volume take an important step in that regard by seeking to study all transborder organizations of particular national origins in particular countries. The question of what percent of all migrant organizations are involved in transborder activities remains on the research agenda. The chapters on Latin Americans in the United States include surveys of organizations that vary in the extent to which they engage in transborder activities, but the studies of European cases and some of the other U.S. cases sample on the dependent variable by selecting organizations with transborder activities. Different methodologies thus warrant caution when interpreting results across cases.

The book draws a major contrast between the overseas Chinese organizations and networks, which are involved in the investment of billions of dollars, and the Latin American migrant organizations in the United States that invest much more modest sums in their homelands. This is surely a real contrast, but it's not clear that the discussions of Mexican and Chinese organizations are based on comparable data. The analysis of Mexican transborder investment is overwhelmingly at the level of hometown associations primarily organized by working-class migrants, while the study of Chinese organizations examines a much wider range of organizations that includes business elites. It would be instructive to examine the role of the United States Hispanic Chamber of Commerce or the United States-Mexico Chamber of Commerce in forging business links with Mexico. One would expect that the economic impact of Mexicans and Mexican Americans investing through these associations is far greater than that of the handful of "productive projects" of the hometown associations, which typically involve a few tens of thousands of dollars.

Nevertheless, *The State and the Grassroots* makes an important contribution. It will be of interest to scholars and students of all levels concerned with international migration. Select chapters would be appropriate for undergraduate course adoption.