

## 4

# Ireland's diaspora strategy: diaspora for development?

*Mark Boyle, Rob Kitchin and Delphine Ancien*

### Introduction

In 2011, when the population of the Irish Republic stood at 4.58 million, over 70 million people worldwide claimed Irish descent, and 3.2 million Irish passport holders, including 800,000 Irish-born citizens, lived overseas (Ancien *et al.*, 2009). Despite being varied and complex, it is often assumed that a strong relationship has prevailed between the Irish diaspora and Ireland, with the diaspora operating transnationally, bequeathing a flow of various exchanges (e.g. information, goods, money, tourist visits, political will) between diaspora members and family and social, cultural, economic and political institutions in Ireland. Nevertheless, throughout the early 2000s, Ireland's relationship with its diaspora was seen to be entering a new era in which ties to Ireland were seemingly weakening as the traditional imperatives that helped to maintain a strong Irish identity across generations were becoming less relevant: anti-Irish racism in host societies, while still present to a certain extent, had decreased significantly; the economic position of Ireland had been radically transformed during the Celtic Tiger years and the need to provide remittances and philanthropy had dissipated; the need to mobilize in relation to the 'Irish question' in the North had lessened given the peace process; and, for younger members of the diaspora, long-established groups such as the Ancient Order of Hibernians no longer appealed, resulting in ageing membership and slow decline.

Somewhat ironically, at the same time the Irish government was beginning to recognize its obligations to its diaspora, while also viewing it as a potential resource to aid Ireland's first booming and later ailing economy. While contemporary analysis has largely focused on Ireland's attempts to forge and implement migration policy with respect to immigrants to Ireland,

there has been insufficient analytical focus on policy initiatives to engage with Irish emigrants and their descendants abroad. And yet, in response to the changing nature of diaspora\_homeland relations, a raft of programmes are now being instituted, administered across a range of government departments and semi-state agencies, to manage Ireland's relationship with its diaspora and there are nascent moves to link these together into a single diaspora strategy. In this chapter we examine the development of Ireland's diaspora strategy from 2000. We first provide an analytical framework through which diaspora strategies might be best understood, and ruminate on some important criticisms of the diaspora for development agenda. We then isolate three aspects of this framework for further scrutiny: motives, institutions and strategies, and supporting infrastructures. We conclude by identifying a number of questions which the further development of an Irish diaspora strategy might usefully address.

### Diaspora and development: an analytical framework

Growing interest in the role of global diasporas in the development of countries of origin signals a potential paradigm shift within Development Studies and the practitioner field of Development Policy (see Bakewell, 2009; Dewind and Holdaway, 2008; Faist, 2008; Kuznetsov, 2006; Leblang, 2010; Lowell and Gerova, 2004; Piper, 2009; Saxenian, 2006; Solimano, 2008; Vertovec, 2007; Yossi and Barth, 2003). Historically, emigration has been viewed as a barometer of the success or failure of national economic development strategies. The loss of talent from a country was a sign that the strategy being pursued by that country was not working. In turn, the emigration of skilled labour from any country constituted 'brain drain' and was assumed to further weaken that country's ability to develop. In the past two decades, however, countries of origin have begun to explore the ways in which emigrant populations can and do impact upon the development of their homelands from their new overseas locations and, as a result, how the energy and talent of émigrés might be managed, levered and harnessed to best effect.

It is possible to identify up to ten transnational practices through which diasporic populations impact upon the development of sending states (see Figure 4.1).

1. *Diaspora advocacy and diplomacy* – advocates, activists, agitators and ambassadors within diasporic communities can exploit their knowledge, contacts, linguistic skills and cultural insights to promote peace and security in their homelands and to enhance the strategic, diplomatic and foreign policy objectives of homelands.
2. *Diaspora capital markets* – diasporic members can fuel capital markets (portfolio investment) through holding deposit accounts, securitizing

remittance flows, providing transnational loans to diaspora groupings, buying diaspora bonds and supporting diaspora mutual funds.

3. *Diaspora direct investment* – diasporic members can invest in homelands as senior executives in transnational corporations, venture capitalists, investors and by outsourcing contracts to small and medium-sized enterprises in countries of origin.

4. *Diaspora knowledge networks* – diaspora can assist companies in sending countries by providing knowledge and contacts; sharing knowledge; mentoring organizations; training talented colleagues; and joining think-tanks, consultation groups and advisory councils.

5. *Diaspora philanthropy* – diasporic communities can provide private and voluntary donations for charitable and public good, through such vehicles as private and voluntary organizations, religious organizations, corporations, foundations, volunteer citizens, and university and college alumni associations.

6. *Diaspora remittances* – diasporic remittance flows entail private or person-to-person transfers from migrant workers to recipients in the worker's country of origin.

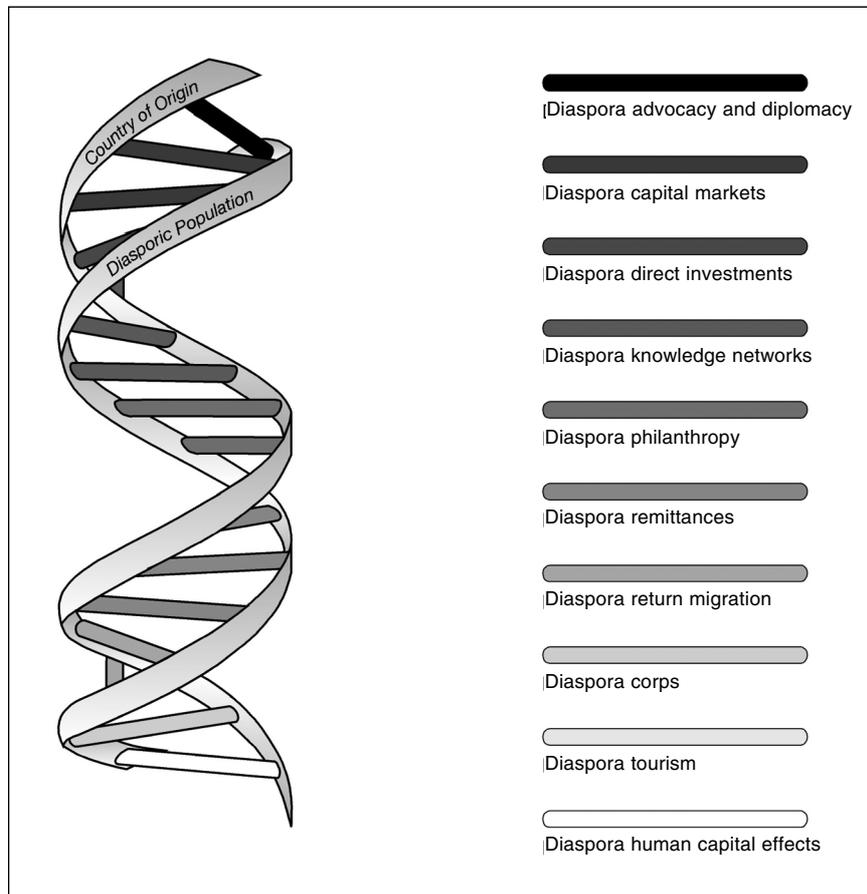
7. *Diaspora return migration* – diasporic populations can promote bilateral and multilateral agreements to restrict recruitment from especially vulnerable and at-risk countries; increase accountability among recruitment specialists and employers; establish protocols for the treatment of foreign workers; and facilitate return migration.

8. *Diaspora corps* – diaspora groupings can establish volunteering schemes to promote short-term assistance in countries of origin by skilled diaspora volunteers and youth diaspora volunteers, especially in relation to the support of vulnerable populations, the provision of skills that are in short supply, and to assist in the administration of aid, not least following a natural or a human-induced disaster.

9. *Diaspora tourism* – diaspora visits to homelands provide an important source of revenue and foreign currency, incorporating: medical tourism, business-related tourism, heritage (or 'roots') tourism, exposure or 'birthright' tours, education tourism, VIP tours and peak experience tours (one that provides people with a deep emotional experience by bringing them to ancestral homes).

10. *Diaspora human capital effects* – the prospect of joining the ranks of sometimes more wealthy diaspora can result in a pre-departure boost in the human capital of sending states: migrants prepare for a potential exit by upgrading their competencies and skill set and increasing their likelihood of securing a relocation to a more developed labour market.

We offer an analytical framework which proposes that the role of global diasporas in the development of countries of origin is conditioned by: a) the development of an effective diaspora strategy in sending states; b) the scale, history, geography and nature of a particular diaspora; and c) the external aid, trade, diplomatic, security; and immigration priorities of states (see Figure



**Figure 4.1** How diaspora can impact upon the development of sending states

4.2). The empirical focus of the chapter is on the first of these strands: the changing motives of the Irish state towards its diaspora, the institutions and strategies which are overseeing Ireland's diaspora policies, and the quality and effectiveness of the supporting or flanking infrastructures upon which Ireland depends.

Given the potential contributions which diasporic populations can make to the enhancement of the global economic competitiveness of sending states, it is not surprising that many sending states are becoming motivated to better harness their overseas cohorts. Concomitantly, a new area of public policy, referred to as 'diaspora strategy', has started to come of age. A diaspora strategy is an explicit policy initiative or series of policy initiatives enacted by a state, or its peoples, aimed at managing and developing relationships with diaspora populations. While more commonly championed by developing

countries, newly emerging countries and countries from the global South (including Armenia, India, Mexico, China, Chile, Argentina, South Africa, Jamaica, El Salvador, Nigeria, South Africa, Tunisia, Ghana and Morocco), diaspora strategies are also being pursued by such advanced capitalist nations as New Zealand, Australia, Canada and Israel, and by a number of peripheral countries within the European Union, including Scotland, Ireland and Lithuania (Aikins and White, 2011; Boyle and Kitchin, 2011; Gamlen, 2008; Kuznetsov, 2006; Levitt and Jaworsky, 2007; Newland, 2010).

International practice suggests that countries seek to engage their diasporas for a variety of reasons, but that increasingly global economic competitiveness is becoming an important driver. Moreover, those who are seeking to fortify and develop their relations with diasporic communities are viewing it as necessary to erect new institutional capacities to accomplish this task. Among the models of governance which are emerging are the creation of dedicated new government ministries, the establishment of diaspora units within government departments, the establishment of nimble and flexible cross-department working groups, and the outsourcing of diaspora strategy to voluntary and/or private sector groups. Some diaspora strategies vary from muscular state interventions designed to create and support new schemes through to the light incubation of already established schemes which might benefit from seed funding and periodic assistance. Diasporic contributions to the development of countries of origin are most effective when diasporic groupings are motivated to help (feel a loyalty to the nation), are able to exploit modern transport and information and communications technology connections, and are capable of exercising a wide range of rights as citizens of both the sending and the destination country (dual citizens). Consequently sending states are attending to a number of critical support infrastructures, including processes of nation-building, the development of information and communications technology (ICT) infrastructure and the creation of new citizenship rules.

It is important to note that there exists a growing body of critics of the diaspora for development agenda. Five areas of concern would seem to be germinating. First, notwithstanding the rich intellectual history of Development Studies, there exists no credible intellectual foundation, beyond pure pragmatism, for the claim that diaspora-centred development provides a viable approach to development. Secondly, the agenda is being increasingly pedalled by what amounts to a cottage industry, both within and beyond states which are benefitting from its new centrality. A series of new institutions and projects is being built largely by vested interests for vested interests. Thirdly, diaspora strategies rarely pause to question who is being counted as a legitimate member of the diaspora and who is not; in other words, how strategies are in and of themselves making and excluding members of the

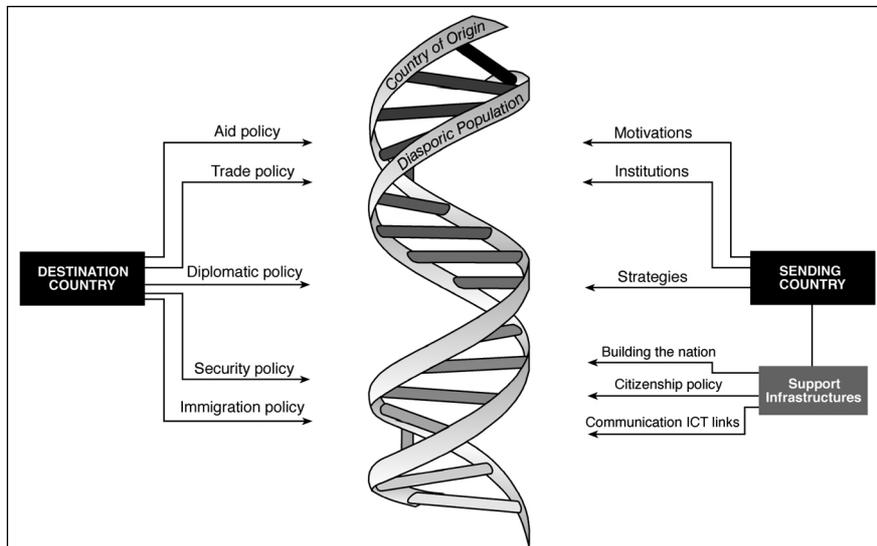


Figure 4.2 An analytical framework for the study of diaspora strategies

national collective. Fourthly, diaspora strategies attend insufficiently to the range of stakeholders who might make or break their effectiveness; relationships between sending states and diasporas constitute only part of the story; stakeholder groups within both sending countries and destination countries need to be engaged and aligned. Finally, more attention needs to be paid to the winners and losers of the development which diaspora-centred development promotes; which kind of development results, where and involving which social groups. While we recognize the significance of these potential pitfalls we would describe ourselves as sympathetic critics; we would wish to see how the agenda further unfolds before reaching premature conclusions as to its merits.

### Ireland's diaspora strategy

In the remainder of this chapter we focus on how Ireland is seeking to refresh, re-energize and build anew its relationships with its diaspora. Drawing upon the analytical approach outlined and where appropriate locating the Irish case in international context, our discussion focuses upon three central questions: why is Ireland now turning with renewed vigour to its diasporic populations? What kinds of public, private and non-governmental organizations are being asked to interface in new ways with Irish diasporic populations and what kinds of strategies is Ireland adopting vis-à-vis leveraging diasporic assistance? How effective is Ireland in building a parallel set of support

infrastructures to undergird its diaspora policies (with respect to narratives of the nation propagated to build a new generation of diasporic patriotism, channels of communication to connect homeland and diasporic groupings, and the citizenship rights it bestows on diasporic populations)?

*Motives underpinning a diaspora strategy for Ireland*

Why at this historical moment are a growing number of sending countries seeking to develop explicit and systematic strategies aimed at creating, managing and energizing relationships with their diasporic populations? For Israel, motivation derives principally from the desire to protect and defend the right of the state of Israel to exist; for Scotland, concern initially was with low fertility levels and the social, economic, political and cultural consequences of a shrinking population; for New Zealand, the diaspora is seen as a means of countering geographical isolation from the global economy; for Armenia, the diaspora is being seen as a resource in the reassertion and reclamation of a post-Soviet national identity and trajectory; for India and China, diasporic groups are being deployed to broker integration into the global economy at a moment when the global distribution of power is being realigned; while for Mexico, the efficient harnessing of diasporic remittances is being promoted to counter the effects of population flight from the global South.

For Ireland, diaspora strategizing was initially conceived as an opportunity to spend the fiscal surpluses of the Celtic Tiger boom on the protection and welfare of vulnerable and forgotten overseas migrants. In 2002, in the midst of the buoyant Celtic Tiger economic boom, Ireland commissioned a Task Force on Policies Towards Emigration which recommended using the country's new-found wealth to extend welfare assistance to overseas populations, especially vulnerable groups (the elderly, infirm, sick, the poor and prisoners) who left Ireland in the 1950s and the 1980s to move to British cities. At the same time there was a growing concern that the strength of diasporic attachment and affiliation to Ireland might be waning (ironically not least because of the developing peace in Northern Ireland). The Irishness of the Irish diaspora could no longer be taken for granted. As a consequence, priority was being given to the nurturing of the social and cultural life of the diaspora and its continued enthusiasm for matters Irish. Recently however, Ireland's policy towards its diaspora has undoubtedly been motivated by a further critical consideration. Given the dramatic rise of the Irish economy from 1993 to 2007, and the equally dramatic collapse of the Irish economy, banking system and property sector thereafter, there is growing recognition that diasporic networks have a role to play in brokering the country's economic development. The Irish diaspora has been viewed as a resource to be harnessed to fortify the Celtic Tiger economy and now to rescue a country which is quite literally bankrupt.

With remittances dwindling in importance over the course of the twentieth century, initially the impact of Irish diasporic philanthropy and return migration on the economic development of the country was given priority. Ireland has a very poorly developed indigenous philanthropic landscape, but has been successful in cultivating philanthropy in the diaspora. The Ireland Funds, International Fund for Ireland (IFI), and Atlantic Philanthropies (AP) are prime examples. Over the past thirty years, the Ireland Funds have raised more than €300 million to be spent on projects in Ireland, IFI more than €850 million and AP more than €1.2 billion. In the main, these funds have been targeted at social disadvantage, education and welfare, and supporting community development and local economic initiatives with the aim of increasing social and economic capital. Moreover, US-based diasporic philanthropy organizations and philanthropists have worked to support directly and indirectly the peace process in Northern Ireland. Since 1993, approximately 40 per cent (in excess of 200,000) of all migrants to Ireland have been returnees (primarily those who left Ireland in the 1980s and to a lesser extent the 1950s). During the years of the Celtic Tiger, given the strength of the Irish economy and the lure of well-paid jobs, proactive programmes were perhaps not needed to entice Irish people to return to Ireland. But nevertheless public and privately funded recruitment fairs were held in key diaspora centres, in part in an effort to ease bottlenecks in key labour markets.

More recently, the Irish state has turned its attention to business networks, and in particular diaspora knowledge networks. The Irish government has invested heavily and successfully in the promotion of inward investment and in building business partnerships with the Irish diaspora globally. The Industrial Development Agency, with fourteen offices outside of Ireland, is responsible for the attraction and development of foreign investment in Ireland. While it targets any company which might potentially locate in Ireland it has a successful track record of recruiting businesses owned and/or run by Irish or Irish-descent entrepreneurs and managers. Enterprise Ireland, with thirty-one offices outside of Ireland, is the state agency responsible for the development and promotion of the Irish business sector and in assisting international companies and entrepreneurs who are searching for Irish suppliers or are interested in investing in Irish companies. At present, Enterprise Ireland supports, through in-kind or financial aid, over sixty Irish business networks around the world with over 30,000 members.

These networks are used to support the work of members whether they are located in Ireland or not, but are also used strategically to help market Irish business and products and to enable Irish companies to expand into new territories and markets, and to encourage inward investment into Ireland. An example of the latter is the recently established Irish Technology Leadership

Group (ITLG), comprising Irish people in senior positions in the high-tech world in Silicon Valley, who are seeking to invest in Irish companies, partly because they want to make a contribution to promoting Ireland but also because they see this initiative as a good and profitable enterprise for their members as well. The ITLG comes closest to mimicking the work of the Chinese, Indian and Taiwanese diaspora outlined in Saxenian's (2006) much vaunted work on diasporas in Silicon Valley, California.

Unlike other countries such as Scotland and Chile, which have placed emphasis on developing a single elite business network of high-level achievers among the diaspora, Ireland has adopted a much more plural approach that aims to foster a number of business networks and to develop a wide base of contacts and expertise. Some of these, such as Techlink UK and Biolink Ireland USA, were initially seeded by Enterprise Ireland and others were started by the diaspora. In the main, networks are owned and run by their members and function as social/business networking sites, many of whom also organize regular face-to-face meetings. In addition there are numerous Irish business forums and chambers of commerce. For example, the Asia Pacific Business forum links eleven Irish business groups in the Asia Pacific and the Gulf to facilitate an exchange of ideas and resources and to leverage reputation and connections, while the Irish Chamber of Commerce USA is a transnational economic network with thirteen chapters across the USA. The Ireland Funds events also provide an important business networking function. The breadth and depth of these business networks, given the size of Ireland, are exceptional, although there are still many possibilities for expansion, especially with respect to both generalist and specialist networks (O'Neill, 2009).

It is now impossible to ignore the impact of the global financial crisis on diaspora strategies and the potential contributions a diaspora might make to national programmes of recovery. One strategy has been to look at competitive assets such as pools of talent overseas as potential critical brokers of success. In September 2009, the then Minister for Foreign Affairs, Mr. Micheál Martin T.D., convened the first Global Irish Economic Forum which brought together nearly 250 of the most influential Irish diasporians from around the world to explore how the Irish diaspora might contribute to crisis management and economic recovery and how Ireland might create a more strategic relationship with its diaspora. This has led to the creation of the Global Irish Network comprising 300 Irish diasporic 'thought leaders' from thirty-seven countries (Department of Foreign Affairs, 2010). A series of 'regional meetings' of this network are held on an ongoing basis, and the second Global Irish Economic Forum was held in October 2011. Following the creation of this network projects that have been instituted include the establishment of a National Solidarity Diaspora Bond, the opening of a New

Arts Centre in New York, the advancement of a plan to set up a new university for the performing arts in Ireland, the launch of a major diaspora return tourism initiative, 'the Gathering' scheduled for 2013, and the introduction of a student intern scheme to facilitate up to 2000 interns to work for a period with companies in Asia (including China, India, Singapore and South Korea).

### *Institutions and strategies*

While it is relatively easy to identify branches of state which deal with immigration, it is more difficult to establish who governs over matters of emigration. Cognate state departments and administrative units such as Departments of Foreign Affairs, Departments of Home Affairs, Departments of Heritage and Culture, and Enterprise and Development Agencies, devise and implement solutions to emigration problems normally in an ad hoc and isolated way. Gamlen (2008) develops the useful notion of the 'emigrant state' to capture the totality of the work this range of state actors performs. Diaspora strategies emerge when particular states decide it is necessary first to secure an overview of the range of actually existing public, private and voluntary diasporic ties (to map the existing range of transnational connections) and secondly to articulate and enact a preferred orientation as to how these ties might best be developed. A diaspora strategy, it should be noted, does not necessarily demand the development of a coherent and formalized top-down, bureaucratically regulated, centralized and managerialist, blueprint. But it does imply a strategic understanding of the full extent of the emigrant state and the ways in which the emigrant state might be better deployed.

India has a well-developed diaspora strategy which is produced and managed by a dedicated Ministry of Overseas Indian Affairs, which came into existence in May 2004 as the Ministry of Non-Resident Indians' Affairs. Likewise, the Armenian diaspora strategy is governed by a dedicated Ministry of Diasporas. The Scottish government's International Projects Division seeks to promote joined-up thinking and coordination across branches of the state, for instance with respect to the diasporic relevant work of Scottish Enterprise, Scottish Development International and VisitScotland. New Zealand's diaspora strategy is coordinated and managed by Kea New Zealand, a not-for-profit organization which works in close relation with, but which exists independently from, government. The Irish Abroad Unit, a division within the Department of Foreign Affairs, oversees Ireland's diaspora strategy. As such, Ireland's strategy is not governed by a powerful Ministry of Diaspora, but equally is not discharged to an NGO or private organizations. The Irish Abroad Unit seeks to promote joined-up thinking and coordination across branches of the state, for instance with respect to the diasporic-relevant work

of Enterprise Ireland, the Industrial Development Agency, The President's Office and other departments within the state.

With respect to the policies of these agencies, the motif of the Irish state is 'let a thousand flowers bloom', with the state at best 'lightly incubating' existing initiatives or seeding new initiatives. Government interventions in homeland engagements with diasporic populations can take one of five forms: absent, custodian, midwife, husbandry and demiurge. These terms can be taken to mean (O'Neill, 2009):

- *Absent* – the state leaves the formation of links between the homeland and the diaspora to the market or to autonomous social, cultural and political movements, with the diaspora often self-organizing its engagement with its homeland.
- *Custodian* – the state nurtures, protects, regulates and polices new and emerging diasporic connections.
- *Midwifery* – the state identifies potential engagements, champions/leaders and mobilizes and cultivates them but leaves ownership of initiatives in the hands of the diaspora.
- *Husbandry* – the state works with and re-energizes existing diaspora organizations and networks.
- *Demiurge* – the state directly creates and runs diasporic initiatives and networks, perhaps with the intention of letting the market assume responsibility at a later date.

The Irish schemes are slowly transferring to more managerialist interventions, especially with regards to accountability and transparency of spend, but there remains an underlying inclination to leave diaspora organizations and networks to run themselves, providing only minimal resources (basic funding, advice, speakers, etc.), only when an organization or network needs to be re-energized. Ireland's engagement with its diaspora then embodies for the most part forms of custodian, midwifery and husbandry relationships. Ireland's engagement has been developed on an ad hoc basis, often seeded by the diaspora itself rather than the state. There is no overall diaspora strategy in place, nor a specific agency to formulate and manage it, though the state is slowly moving towards a more formal connection with and management of the diaspora through new state-led initiatives.

Borrowing Alan Gamlen's (2008) terminology, Ireland then has a complex but fractured 'emigrant state', pursuing a 'strategy without tactics'. As a result, many countries are envious of the perceived relationship between Ireland and its diaspora, even if the reality lacks coherence and such a situation runs counter to common discourse in Ireland that the Irish state

does relatively little to engage its diaspora and has a scarcity of programmes (see Ancien *et al.*, 2009).

### *Support infrastructures*

A prerequisite for a successful diaspora strategy is a motivated diaspora, willing and minded to contribute to national development. While perhaps historically taken for granted, the social and cultural condition, empathy and inclinations of diasporic communities are now emerging as an important arena for intervention. Diasporic patriotism varies in time and space, with the patriotic flame being doused and ignited by a variety of origin- and destination-specific triggers. But states can play a role in incubating, fostering and building diaspora social and cultural networks. It is recognized that the nation needs to be strategically and consciously built in the diaspora first if the diaspora is to contribute to nation-building in the homeland. Although at first glance a reasonably straightforward proposition, in fact such a project might imply and encourage a profound shift in the ways in which nations and territory are imagined. For Agnew (2005), contemporary interest in building nations at home and in diaspora points to a preparedness to de-territorialize the nation and to cast or re-territorialize the nation as a global network. To think of Ireland, for instance, as a globally networked community of 70 million people distributed across the globe and exerting influence on the world's leading business centres is arguably more powerful than to cast Ireland as a small country on the periphery of Europe with a population of less than five million (Department of Foreign Affairs, 2010).

In the main, culture and nation-building activities are organized by the diaspora for the diaspora. For example, the Ireland Funds, various business networks, societies and clubs all host events and in some cases provide virtual platforms that help members of the diaspora find and interact with their peers. In general, the Irish state's involvement is limited to helping to facilitate such social networks through some in-kind or financial aid. However, in 2005 Culture Ireland was established as a state agency to promote the best of Ireland's arts and culture internationally and to assist in the development of Ireland's international cultural relations. Mostly the aim is to create international opportunities for Irish artists and cultural practitioners, but it also serves to promote Ireland and Irish-mindedness. Ciste na Gaeilge of the Irish Department of Community, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs is a fund which supports the teaching of Irish at third institutions outside of Ireland. Students sit the TEG (European Certificate) examinations upon completing the course, and the most successful students are provided with scholarships to intensive summer courses in Carraroe, Co. Galway. A different type of scheme is that run by the Aisling Return to Ireland Project, financed under the Emigrant Support Programme, which provides annual supported

holidays to Ireland for long-term, vulnerable Irish in Britain who cannot afford to visit Ireland.

Building the sense of nationhood in a diaspora also necessitates opening up new dialogue with diasporic communities, increasingly through the use of ICTs. Norway (Norgestinget), Finland (Ulkosuomalaisparlamentti), Sweden (Utlandssvenskarnas parlament), France (Assemblée des Français de l'étranger) and Switzerland (Organization des Suisses de l'étranger) have recently established expatriate parliaments to consult with their diaspora about domestic and diaspora matters. India has established the Prime Minister's Global Advisory Council of Overseas Indians, and also hosts events to meet with its diaspora twice a year. Many countries seek to inform the diaspora as to what is happening in their home country through newsletters and websites. Yu (2010), for instance, has mapped the existence of over 60 Canadian diasporic media outlets, 53 media organizations and 110 alumni publication outlets in twelve selected destinations in Asia, Europe, North America and the Middle East. Website portals, both state-sponsored (such as Connect2Canada) and run by NGOs or private organizations or even individuals (such as the Canadian Expatriate Network), detailing useful information to the diaspora in situ and also about the home country, are seen by many in the diaspora and those seeking to serve the diasporic community as vital infrastructure. In addition, many diaspora can also keep in contact with their homeland through broadcast media via satellite and Internet.

In the Irish case, the development of broad-based information portals for the diaspora has been left to independent organizations to develop, although some receive finance and advice from government departments. Through the Emigrant Support Programme, for example, funding has been allocated to support a number of online information services, including Crosscare Migrant Project ([www.migrantproject.ie](http://www.migrantproject.ie)), the Irish Network of Great Britain ([www.in-gb.co.uk](http://www.in-gb.co.uk)) and, before it discontinued operations, the Emigrant Advice Network ([www.ean.ie](http://www.ean.ie)). Emigrant News, an independent organization, provides a weekly news summary through its website ([www.emigrant.ie](http://www.emigrant.ie)) and its database of over 30,000 subscribers. Irishabroad.com, EuropeanIrish.com and Rendezvous 353 provide a wide range of information about Ireland, the diaspora and links to other Irish-related websites, as well as providing a range of social networking options including blogging, discussion forums, public groups, community forums and dating. In addition, RTE and other national and local radio stations broadcast across the Internet, and most national and local Irish newspapers are available online.

Diaspora strategies depend upon the citizenship rights and obligations that are available to overseas citizens. Four issues are at stake. First, embassy and consular services provide a first line of defence and assistance, and the geography, resourcing and remit of these services needs continual updating.

Secondly, states are confronted with the question of the extent to which they are to continue to provide and extend civil, political, social and economic rights to overseas citizens, for how long after departure, in what form and to what degree. Thirdly, the question of raising taxes on overseas emigres is important. To date only the United States taxes its citizens on wealth created irrespective of their location of residence and, even in this case, a number of exemptions and exceptions are possible. But other taxes related to remittances, philanthropy, capital investment, pensions, savings, inheritance and foreign direct investment are levied universally. Finally, there exists the possibility of creating new models of citizenship specifically for overseas populations and, indeed, for any population claiming ancestral ties no matter how distant. These models provide a graduated diminution in rights from tangible to symbolic.

While services to Irish citizens overseas have extended, Irish citizenship and the rights that it entails have not. In September 2004, the Irish Abroad Unit was established within the Department of Foreign Affairs to coordinate a new centralized programme of service provision – the Emigrant Support Programme. The emphasis of the Emigrant Support Programme is on supporting culturally sensitive, frontline welfare services, targeted at the most vulnerable members of Ireland's overseas communities. Elderly Irish emigrants, including those who emigrated in the 1950s, are among the major beneficiaries of this support; however, funding is also directed to support other vulnerable or marginalized groups, including the undocumented Irish in the US, the homeless in Britain and those suffering from particular difficulties, including alcohol or mental health issues. The programme also funds the Irish Commission for Prisoners Overseas, which supports Irish citizens incarcerated abroad. But expanded service provision does not entail an expansion of rights. Perhaps the question of voting rights for overseas citizens is the most sensitive example of the difficulties which Ireland faces when extending citizenship beyond national territorial borders. Although the question of voting rights for overseas Irish citizens has been explored on a number of occasions and is still the object of much debate (Honohan, 2011), Ireland is one of a number of countries that at present do not allow members of the diaspora to vote at any level of governance (Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance (IDEA), 2007). And although the government has committed to re-examining the potential role of the diaspora in serving in the Senate, it is unlikely that this situation will change in the short term.

### Conclusion

Diaspora strategy is rapidly emerging as an important new policy field for nation-states that have experienced significant out-migration, often over

several generations. Already, it is clear that there is a wide range of different diaspora strategies and schemes (institutions, instruments, policies, programmes and initiatives) being developed and implemented across countries dependent on aspiration, context and circumstance. These differences notwithstanding, through joint 'policy transfer' workshops, seminars, publications and conferences, a growing global dialogue is emerging as to the optimum design and implementation of diaspora strategies. Many countries now consider that their approach to diaspora strategizing might be enhanced if they set their case into international context and if they draw from and contribute to the emerging global dialogue on diaspora strategies.

We have proposed that Irish diaspora policies and programmes have developed over time in response to specific needs, but observe the dominance of economic priorities recently. Fortuitously, when taken together these policies and programmes provide a reasonably comprehensive set of instruments through which to engage the diaspora. While Ireland has largely practised a form of developmental managerialism based upon the mantra of light incubation (custodian, midwifery and husbandry forms of engagement), more recently there has been a degree of creeping institutionalism. The relative success of the Global Irish Economic Forum will determine the course of this trend. To date the most distinctive lesson that Ireland might offer to the developing global debate on international best practice is the importance of resisting overly muscular strategies and of working to support the self-organization of the diaspora. Finally, while Ireland has benefited from a strong degree of Irish-mindedness in the past it is clear that it is now aware of the necessity of working in partnership with diasporic groups to fortify and extend diasporic patriotism, connectivity and citizenship entitlements. But whether Ireland will ever be reimagined as a de-territorialized networked nation remains to be seen.

It would be remiss not to conclude by revisiting the five emerging areas of critique of diaspora-centred development identified above. Our claim is that it is simply too early to make definitive judgements on Ireland's performance relative to these five areas of concern; now is not the time to draw up a final scorecard. In fact, given the progress which has been made to date, we see merit in the agenda and identify ourselves at least for now as sympathetic critics. We can conclude with some speculative observations on each of the five areas:

- *Intellectual bases of the agenda* – notwithstanding references to the 'knowledge economy', the 'smart economy' and 'social capital-led development', it appears the Irish state has no clear intellectual or political project in mind when it invokes the diaspora as a potential agent of development. More sustained dialogue between Ireland's over-

arching economic development strategy and approach and the logic of using the diaspora as a partner in development would seem useful.

- *Cottage industry* – as described above, Ireland's approach to its diaspora strategy to date has been remarkably light in touch. Certainly there has been no great investment in the creation of whole new diaspora institutions. Moreover, most diaspora programmes have been developed by existing arms of the state each pursuing the Irish diaspora with a concrete objective in mind. Ireland's case is marked by the comparative absence of a cottage industry and a refusal to engage the diaspora for engagement's sake.
- *Cultural exclusion/inclusion* – undoubtedly the Irish strategy has attended to the cultural fortification of Irish-mindedness in the Irish diaspora. There is an undoubted risk that in so doing a narrow, exclusive and essentialist notion of Irishness might result, incorporating but also marginalizing certain diasporic communities from the national narrative. The Irish strategy has taken cognizance of the idea of the 'affinity diaspora', certainly a more inclusive idea. But a key question will be how might Ireland define its diaspora so as to be inclusive and so as to avoid an unhelpful racialization of its national economic recovery strategy.
- *Stakeholder alignment* – Ireland has traditionally benefited from a strong degree of stakeholder alignment. For example, arguably the Northern Irish peace process would not have been possible without the cooperation of not only the Irish diaspora and the Irish and British states, but also the Clinton administration and political movements across the island of Ireland. But there remains scope to continue to strengthen the involvement of multiple stakeholders if the Irish diaspora is to be effectively leveraged.
- *Development for whom?* Finally, work remains to be done to map the development outcomes of diaspora-centred development across Ireland and between social groupings. Nevertheless, it is clear that the Irish diaspora is doing more than simply consolidating socio-spatial inequalities across Ireland. The investment by Atlantic Philanthropies in the Campus at the University of Limerick; the impact of the Irish diaspora in Dubai and Abu Dhabi on the horse-breeding industry in Counties Kildare and Limerick; investment by the San Jose-based Irish Technology Leadership Group in small ICT companies across Ireland; and the impact of the Gathering 2013 on rural tourism, all point to more complex development outcomes.

## References

- Agnew, J. (2005) 'Sovereign regimes: territoriality and state authority in contemporary world politics', *Annals of the Association of American Geographers*, 95, 437–61.
- Aikins, K. and N. White (2011) *Global Diaspora Strategies Toolkit*. Dublin: Ireland Funds.
- Ancien, D., M. Boyle and R. Kitchin (2009) 'Exploring diaspora strategies: lessons for Ireland'. Available online at [www.nirsa.ie/nirsa/diaspora/PDFs/Exploring%20Diaspora%20Strategies%20Lessons%20for%20Ireland.pdf](http://www.nirsa.ie/nirsa/diaspora/PDFs/Exploring%20Diaspora%20Strategies%20Lessons%20for%20Ireland.pdf). Accessed 5 December 2011.
- Bakewell, O. (2009) 'Migration, diasporas, and development: some critical perspectives', *Jahrbucher f. Nationalokonomie und Statistik*, 229, 787–802.
- Boyle, M. and R. Kitchin (2011) *A Diaspora Strategy for Canada? Enriching Debate through Heightening Awareness of International Practice*. Vancouver: Asia Pacific Foundation of Canada. Available online at [www.asiapacific.ca/sites/default/files/filefield/capp11\\_1\\_boyleandkitchin.pdf](http://www.asiapacific.ca/sites/default/files/filefield/capp11_1_boyleandkitchin.pdf). Accessed 17 December 2011.
- Department of Foreign Affairs (2010) *Report on the Farmleigh Global Irish Economic Forum*. Dublin: Department of Foreign Affairs.
- Dewind, J. and J. Holdaway (eds) (2008) *Migration and Development Within and Across Borders: Research and Policy Perspectives on Internal and International Migration*. Geneva: IMO.
- Faist, T. (2008) 'Migrants as transnational development agents: an inquiry into the newest round of the migration–development nexus', *Population Space and Place*, 14, 21–42.
- Gamlen, A. (2008) 'The emigration state and the modern geopolitical imagination', *Political Geography*, 27:8, 840–56.
- Honohan, I. (2011) 'Should Irish emigrants have votes? External voting in Ireland', *Irish Political Studies*, 26:4, 545–61.
- IDEA (2007) *Voting from Abroad: The International IDEA Handbook*. Stockholm and Mexico: International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance and Federal Electoral Institute of Mexico. Available online at [www.idea.int/publications/voting\\_from\\_abroad/](http://www.idea.int/publications/voting_from_abroad/). Accessed 29 January 2011.
- Kuznetsov, Y. (ed.) (2006) *Diaspora Networks and the International Migration of Skills – How Countries can Draw on their Talent Abroad*. Washington, DC: World Bank Institute.
- Leblang, D. (2010) 'Familiarity breeds investment: diaspora networks and international investment', *American Political Science Review*, 104, 584–600.
- Levitt, P. and B.N. Jaworsky (2007) 'Transnational migration studies: past developments and future trends', *Annual Review of Sociology*, 33, 129–56.

- Lowell, B.L. and S.G. Gerova (2004) *Diasporas and Economic Development: State of Knowledge*. Washington, DC: Institute of the Study of International Migration, Georgetown University.
- Newland, K. (ed.) (2010) *Diasporas: New Partners in Global Development Policy*. Washington, DC: Migration Policy Institute.
- O'Neill, A. (2009) 'Diaspora knowledge networks'. Presentation at 'Exploring Diaspora Strategy' workshop, National University of Ireland, 26–28 January 2009. Available online at [www.nuim.ie/nirsa/diaspora/PDFs/aineoneill.pdf](http://www.nuim.ie/nirsa/diaspora/PDFs/aineoneill.pdf). Accessed 5 December 2011.
- Piper, N. (ed.) (2009) 'Rethinking the migration–development nexus: bringing marginalized visions and actors to the fore', *Population Space and Place*, 15, 93–203.
- Saxenian, A. (2006) *The New Argonauts: Regional Advantage in a Global Economy*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
- Solimano, A. (ed.) (2008) *The International Mobility of Talent: Types, Causes, and Development Impact*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Vertovec, S. (2007) *Circular Migration: The Way Forward in Global Policy*. Oxford: International Migration Institute.
- Yossi, S. and A. Barth (2003) 'Diasporas and international relations theory', *International Organization*, 57, 449–79.
- Yu, S.S. (2010) *Mapping Canadian Diasporic Media: The Existence and Significance of Communicative Spaces for Overseas Canadians*. Vancouver: Asia Pacific Foundation of Canada.