

CONCEPTUALIZATION OF DIASPORA RELATIONS FROM THE GOVERNMENT  
VIEWPOINT: AN EXPLORATORY QUALITATIVE STUDY OF DIASPORA RELATIONS  
IN THE CASES OF COSTA RICA AND EL SALVADOR

By

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To my mom, Carmen Herrera, and my dad, Alfonso Bravo, who made all this possible. (A mi mamá, Carmen Herrera, y a mi papá, Alfonso Bravo, quienes hicieron todo esto posible. Los amo.)

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Go Gators!

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Abstract of Dissertation Presented to the Graduate School  
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This dissertation studies, from the perspective of global public relations, how two Central American governments establish relations with a specific public, their diasporas, and how contextual variables in the home country, in the host country, and in the diaspora group itself influence the strength of those relations. This dissertation defines diasporas as publics of global public relations, defines what State-diaspora relations are, and explains that diasporas do not fit previous typologies of publics offered by public relations researchers.

This dissertation studied, in particular, the cases of Costa Rica (where relatively few migrants leave the country to pursue “the American dream”), and El Salvador (where war and poverty have forced more than 25% of the population to migrate to the United States) (ECLAC, 2005; Cohen, 2006; Leitón, 2010; Menjívar, 2000). By studying those two countries, this dissertation produced not only original research, but original research in a region that has been under-researched in any field of human knowledge, including global public relations.

The methodology used in this dissertation was collective case study, based, on one hand, on 12 in-depth interviews conducted with high-level government officials and journalists in Costa Rica, and on eight in-depth interviews conducted with high-level government officials and journalists of El Salvador. Besides, as part of a collective case study methodology, other data came from observations, secondary interviews, and the analysis of documents such as reports, annual plans, memories, websites, Congress minutes, long-term national plans of development, speeches, and news releases.

In summary, factors such as the specific projects advanced by the Executive Power in each country, the type of political system each country has, the level of government's need for legitimacy, the level of activism of the diaspora, and the economic situation of each nation influenced the strength of the State-diaspora relations, besides more obvious factors such as the size of the diaspora community and the impact of remittances in the home economy.

CHAPTER 1  
CONCEPTUALIZATION OF DIASPORA RELATIONS FROM THE GOVERNMENT  
VIEWPOINT: AN EXPLORATORY QUALITATIVE STUDY OF DIASPORA RELATIONS  
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With globalization or globalism, the field of international public relations has grown rapidly in the last 20 years. One of its main characteristics is its evolving nature, both in its theoretical framework and in its practice around the world. But when it comes to describe or define the field of international public relations, the task has not been simple. Some authors believe that there is a misunderstanding on what constitutes international public relations, because it is not just applying public relations principles and practices outside the United States. For instance, Wakefield (2008) stated:

Not long ago, a typical example of this misconception surfaced when a colleague told me that he had included a case of ‘international public relations’ in a university campaigns course. The case, as it turned out, was a company in Japan that was compelled to clear up misunderstandings with publics that were located entirely within Japan. Although it is instructive for public relations students and practitioners to learn about problems that arise in other countries, this particular case does not constitute international public relations; rather, it is an example of domestic public relations (p. 140).

Instead, for international public relations to happen and exist there has to be an organization conducting business in different countries and dealing with publics in different countries at the same time: the home country and the host countries, as a minimum. For instance, Wakefield (1997) defined international public relations as “a multinational program that has certain coordination between headquarters and various countries where offices and/or publics are located, and that carries potential consequences or results in more than one country” (p. 355). Wilcox, Cameron, Ault and Agee (2007) described international public relations as “the planned and organized effort of a company, institution, or government to establish mutually beneficial relations

with the publics of other nations” (p. 516). And Molleda and Connolly-Ahern (2002) further stated that international public relations involve three types of publics at various geographical levels: the ones in the home country, the ones in the host country (or countries), and the transnational publics, such as NGOs, activist groups, global media outlets, international news agencies, pan-regional media, and shareholders (cited by Molleda & Laskin, 2007).

As Wilcox et. al (2007) explained, international public relations can be conducted, among other organizations, by national governments. Kunczik (2003) indicated that “public relations for the nation-state comprises persuasive communicative acts directed at a foreign audience” (p. 400), and that public relations for the nation-state “implies the planned and continuous distribution of interest-bound information by a state aimed (mostly) at improving the country’s image abroad” (p. 400).

The practice of global public relations is also evolving and, although many times a global public relations strategy is not called by that name, every time multinational corporations or governments deal with publics located in the home country and in the host country (countries) at the same time, global public relations are being performed. For instance, in the mass media, the concept of international government public relations is not commonly mentioned. Nevertheless, readers can frequently find news stories in which government officials are actually performing international government public relations, even though the concept is not being called that way.

One instance in which a government performs international government public relations is when a president meets with his/her country’s diaspora in foreign countries. Another example of international government public relations occurs when presidents

travel abroad and meet with non-government groups or audiences, such as youth exchanges from the home and/or host countries, investors or members of the media. In different countries around the world, foreign countries also organize cultural activities – from jazz festivals to holidays’ celebrations-- in which the ambassadors of those foreign countries send messages to audiences formed by reporters, educators, politicians and the general public in the host country. And just another example of international government public relations happens when presidents meet with visitors from their country’s diaspora in their own countries. All the initiatives described before –and many more that can be found every day in the mass media around the world—may not be labeled as international government public relations strategies and tactics, but they are.

The field of global public relations, specifically what concerns the area of international government public relations, can contribute to and inform the efforts of nation states to establish long-term relations with their diaspora. The field of global public relations can eventually contribute to define the area of diaspora relations, and it can help governments establish goals, objectives, strategies and tactics to better communicate with and engage their diasporas. This dissertation contributes to define the field of diaspora relations and contributes by developing the theoretical framework for the study of State-diaspora relations.

### **Purpose**

This dissertation studies, from the perspective of international public relations, how Central American governments establish relations with a specific public, their diasporas, and how contextual variables in the home country, in the host country, and in the diaspora group itself influence that relation. To better understand the topic of this study, the definitions of diaspora, contextual variables, home country, and host country follow.

A diaspora is defined as group of people who share the same nationality and who live out of their home countries. The word Diaspora (capitalized) was first used (and is still used) to describe “the settling of scattered colonies of Jews outside Palestine after the Babylonian exile,” “the area outside Palestine settled by the Jews,” and “the Jews living outside Palestine or modern Israel” (Merriam Webster Online Dictionary, 2010). Through time, the word diaspora (lowercased) started being used as synonymous of “the movement, migration, or scattering of a people away from an established or ancestral homeland (i.e., the black diaspora to northern cities)”, of “people settled far from their ancestral homelands (i.e., the African diaspora),” and “the place where these people live” (Merriam Webster Online Dictionary, 2010).

The contextual variables mentioned before refer to aspects such as a country`s political ideology, government organization style, economic system, level of development, infrastructure, degree of activism, societal culture system, media system, legal system, and language, among others (Vercic, Grunig and Grunig; 1996; Sriramesh and Vercic, 2009; Holtzhausen, 2007; Wakefield, 2007; Newsom, Vanslyke & Kruckeberg, 2001; Zaharna, 2001, 2000; Taylor, 2001; Valentini, 2007). A home country is the country of origin of the migrants (in this case, El Salvador and Costa Rica), and the host country refers to the country where the migrants decided to move to (in this case, the United States).

The purpose of this study is to understand how two nation states in Central America build relations with their diasporas in the United States, in order to establish a model of state-diaspora relations that accurately reflects the process, from the government viewpoint, for the case of these two Central American nations and their

U.S.-based diasporas. This model will take into account contextual variables and government communication goals and objectives. The aim is that this model will serve as a starting point for studying and understanding state-diaspora relations in other parts of the world, contributing to the understanding of state-diaspora relations at a global scale.

A model is a representation of a portion of reality that highlights “what are considered to be key elements or parts of the object or process and the connections among them. A model is not a mirror image of reality but merely makes salient certain aspects of reality” (Shoemaker, Tankard, & Lasorsa, 2004, p. 110). A model is used to focus the attention on certain parts of the process, and how those parts are interconnected, and, because it is a simplification of reality, a model is an efficient tool for theory building (Shoemaker, Tankard, & Lasorsa, 2004).

This dissertation followed an interdisciplinary approach to achieve its purpose because it borrowed definitions, concepts and theoretical perspectives from public relations, sociology, anthropology, political science and international relations. The interdisciplinary theoretical framework was used to explicate and investigate this transnational phenomenon, and it was also used to inform the model of State-diaspora relations. In the area of public relations in particular, this study drew definitions and theoretical perspectives from the fields of international public relations (including the areas of contextualized –or comparative research—, and of cross national –or cross-cultural—research), international government public relations, and contingency theory.

### **Relevance of the Topic**

Knowing how governments establish relations with their diasporas is important in a globalized world, where diaspora members are increasingly in contact with their home

country (Portes & Rumbaut, 2006; Menjívar, 2000; Margheritis, 2007; González, 2000; González Gutiérrez, 1999, 2006; Massey, Durand & Malone, 2002). This is a trend that has been facilitated thanks to the increase of international immigration in the last 30 years, through democratization processes happening both in home and host countries, and through the revolution in communications and transportation (Koslowski, 2005a).

Diaspora members are increasingly getting involved in their home country`s politics (Østergaard-Nielsen, 2003a; Koslowski, 2005a; Smith, 2005) and in their home country`s economic development (Schiller, Basch, & Blanc-Szanton, 1999; Portes & Rumbaut, 2006; Menjívar, 2000; Massey, Durand & Malone, 2002; González Gutiérrez, 1999, 2006). The political participation of the diaspora members in the home political processes is facilitated by the double citizenship status, which allows immigrants to vote and to run for office in their home countries (Levitt & de la Dehesa, 2003; Smith, 2005; Félix, 2010). The political participation in the home politics also happens through financial support (Østergaard-Nielsen, 2003a; Smith, 2005) and “moral” support to political parties at home (Østergaard-Nielsen, 2003a; Smith, 2005).

The participation of the diaspora members in their home country`s economic development occurs, mainly, through remittances (González Gutiérrez, 1999, 2006; Leitón, 2010; Menjívar, 2000; Portes & Rumbaut, 2006), through productive investment in their hometowns (González Gutiérrez, 1999, 2006; Menjívar, 2000; Levitt & de la Dehesa, 2003), through the money immigrants spend when they travel to their home country to visit relatives and friends (González Gutiérrez, 1999, 2006; Smith, 2005; Koslowski, 2005a; Østergaard-Nielsen, 2003b), and through consumerism, given that

immigrants also contribute to the home economy by consuming products and services developed in the home country (González Gutiérrez, 1999, 2006).

The importance of the diaspora members is so strong in Latin America that, in some countries, the money received through remittances constitutes somewhere between 10% and 25% of those countries' Gross Domestic Product or GDP (Levitt & de la Dehesa, 2003). This is especially true in countries such as El Salvador, Haiti, Nicaragua, Jamaica, Ecuador, and the Dominican Republic. In El Salvador, for instance, not only remittances sustain significantly the local economy, but diaspora members are extremely important because it is estimated that more than 25% of El Salvador's population lives in the United States (Levitt & de la Dehesa, 2003; Menjívar, 2000).

Even though the importance political and economic importance of diaspora members has been recognized by scholars in the fields of sociology, anthropology, political sciences, and international relations, the literature in public relations in general, and in international or global public relations, in particular, has ignored the relevance of this group as a constituent, as an investor, as a member of the national community living abroad, and even as a customer of home products abroad. In brief, it has ignored diaspora groups as a key public in global public relations, in particular for global government public relations.

There is strong agreement among many scholars in the field of public relations that one of the most important functions of public relations is to establish relationships between an organization and its publics; therefore, relationship building, development, and maintenance should be the focus of public relations inquiry (Ferguson, 1984; L. Grunig, J. Grunig, & Ehling, 1992; Broom, Casey, & Ritchey, 1997; Hon & J. Grunig,

1999; Bruning & Ledingham, 2000; Ledingham, 2001; Heath, 2001; Ledingham & Bruning, 2001; J. Grunig, 2002; Bruning, 2002; Ledingham, 2003; Ledingham, 2006; Ki & Hon, 2009). Nonetheless, the field of public relations, until now, has overlooked the process by which governments establish relations with their diasporas and the contextual factors that influence those relations.

This dissertation fills this gap by acknowledging the importance of diasporas as publics of global public relations, by defining, for the first time, the concept of diaspora relations, by analyzing how diasporas do not fit previous typologies of publics offered by public relations researchers, and by exploring how governments establish relations—at different levels—with these diaspora groups. This dissertation also explores how those different levels in the State-diaspora relations are influenced by contextual factors in the home country, in the host country, and in the diaspora group, which is an important consideration in public relations, where different researchers have established that the contextual variables of a country or region play an important role in the practice of public relations in that particular country or region (Culbertson & Jeffers, 1992; J. Grunig, 1992; Culbertson, Jeffers, Stone & Terrell, 1993; Vercic, J. Grunig & L. Grunig, 1996; Sriramesh & Vercic, 2003, 2009; Parkinson & Ekachai, 2006; Valentini, 2007; Neuliep, 2008). For that reason, governments need to understand the contextual factors that can affect or impact their efforts to establish relations with their diasporas.

### **Contributions to the Field**

This dissertation used the literature review and a collective case study methodology (Yin, 2003; Stake, 1998; VanWynsberghe & Khan, 2007; Creswell, 2007) to conduct original research that helps provide the following contributions to the field of global public relations. First, this dissertation provides the field of global public relations

with a description of the contextual variables of the home country, of the host country, and of the diaspora itself that influence communication and public relations efforts with the diaspora groups.

Second, this study describes, for the first time, the diaspora groups as a specific public of global public relations, one that is affected by both the context in which it is located and by the context where it comes from, as well as the circumstances by which the group migrated to a new country. In this regard, it was important to analyze the different “contexts of exit” (Portes & Rumbaut, 2006) or reasons why these groups left their home countries; the different “contexts of reception” (Portes & Rumbaut, 2006) or ways in which these groups inserted themselves in the host country, the characteristics that differentiate them from other publics, the process by which the “diasporic identity” (González-Gutiérrez, 1999, 2006) is built, and the way these groups needed to be studied using different typologies from those offered by public relations scholars such as J. Grunig and Hunt (1984), L. Grunig (1992), Hallahan (2000), Wakefield (2008) and Molleda (2010). In brief, this dissertation offers the elements to justify that diaspora groups are unique as publics of global public relations.

Third, this dissertation studied, in particular, two cases (countries) where the realities of the countries and the realities of the diaspora groups are different—in terms of social, political, and economic characteristics—to explore and explain how the different contexts influence the way home governments build diaspora relations. Those countries were Costa Rica (where few emigrants leave the country to pursue “the American dream”), and El Salvador (where war and poverty have forced more than 25% of the population to migrate to the United States) (ECLAC, 2005; Cohen, 2006; Leitón,

2010; Menjívar, 2000). By studying those two countries, this dissertation produced not only original research, but original research in a region that has been under-researched in any field of human knowledge, including public relations and global public relations.

Fourth, this dissertation interpreted the different perspectives from global public relations to develop theoretical propositions about how and why different home governments establish diaspora relations. This interpretation was developed based on the literature analyzed, on the in-depth interviews conducted, and on the documents collected. An interdisciplinary approach was used, given that there is no general theory developed in this area, and given that the literature available is limited. Fifth, this study also developed a model of factors that can strengthen or weaken the relation that a State tries to establish with its diaspora, from the government viewpoint, in a case such as the Central American sociopolitical environment.

### **Quick Glance to the Methodology**

This dissertation used qualitative research methods to gather the information and to analyze the results. The detailed description of the methodology is presented in Chapter 3, but a quick, general description is offered in this section. In particular, this dissertation used a collective case study (Yin, 2003; Creswell, 2007) to study the subject of State-diaspora relations in Central America. In this methodology of collective case study, the data is collected through multiple sources of information: observations, interviews, documents, and audiovisual materials (Yin, 2003; Creswell, 2007).

For this particular research project, observations, previous literature about State-led transnationalism, in-depth interviews with government officials, and a diverse range of documents collected in the two countries studied (El Salvador and Costa Rica) were used to provide a holistic analysis of the cases (Yin, 2003; Creswell, 2007), with the

goal of discovering themes and lessons learned, “not for generalizing beyond the case, but for understanding the complexity of the case” (Creswell, 2007, p. 75).

This dissertation followed the traditional procedure of collective case study, providing first a description of each case (or within-case analysis) to follow with a cross-case analysis, in which a thematic analysis across the cases was offered (Creswell, 2007). After that, the results were interpreted to point out the “lessons learned” (Lincoln & Guba, 1985, as cited by Creswell, 2007, p. 75). These lessons learned informed the model of State-diaspora relations.

Because this dissertation explored a topic where limited information exists from the perspective of global public relations, research questions were used instead of hypotheses. The main initial research questions that were developed to guide the data collection and the in-depth interviewing were the following:

- How do Central American governments establish their communication goals and objectives with their diasporas? What are their motives? What are their expectations?
- What entity or entities in the government are in charge of developing and accomplishing these communication goals and objectives with the diasporas?
- How do governments integrate the diasporas in these communication objectives?
- What is the impact of contextual variables such as the availability of resources on the part of the governments to engage the diasporas, or the political relevance ascribed by each government to its diaspora community, on this relationship building process?

The previous questions were just the general, broad research questions that guided the study. In order to obtain details beyond the answers to those general questions, more specific sub-questions were used to obtain specific information about why governments were doing what they were doing in terms of establishing relations with their diaspora groups, why governments were not following other strategies, what

were the challenges, what were the opportunities, what were the strengths and weaknesses governments had, what were the lessons learned so far, what were the priorities, and what were the short and long term goals to achieve with this particular public, among other sub-questions.

As will be described in more detail in Chapter 3, this dissertation used a pre-defined research design that guided the process of data collection. For instance, there were two countries selected in advance, a possible number of in-depth interviews to conduct in each country (about five to 10 interviews with government officials per country, until the point of saturation was reached), an intention of conducting most or all of these interviews in a face-to-face or over-the-phone setting during the spring of 2011, and even an initial questionnaire to use as a reference during those in-depth interviews. Nevertheless, this design was emerging by nature, as it happens in qualitative research, so the research design was adapted as the research process developed and as new relevant documents surfaced.

### **Benefits of This Study**

This dissertation benefits the scholarship of global public relations by setting the ground for the study of diaspora relations. In this regard, it opens a new area of study of global government public relations. This study also benefits the practice of global public relations by analyzing the government efforts to establish relations with diaspora groups, and by describing the factors or contextual variables that impact these State-diaspora relations.

More directly, this dissertation benefits both government officials and diaspora groups by pointing out the circumstances in which these relations develop, by offering case studies of success and failure (because, as part of the literature review, this

dissertation offers short descriptions of how different governments have tried to connect with their diasporas in Mexico, the Dominican Republic, Haiti, Brazil, and Argentina), by describing two new cases in an under-researched geographic area such as Central America, by providing propositions and a model of State-diaspora relations, and by outlining some initial pointers about best practices in the State-diaspora relations field, from the government viewpoint, at least for the case of the Central American region.

This dissertation constitutes a serious effort to explore a relevant topic in the field of global public relations: how does a specific kind of organization (governments) establish relations with a specific, unique type of public: the diasporas. In this effort, this dissertation avoided a normative point of view, or a “this is the way diaspora relations should be built” perspective, favoring, instead, a contextual approach, by analyzing the contextual variables in the home country, in the host country, and in the diaspora group itself that influenced the establishment of State-diaspora relations in the case of the two countries studied.

In this respect, this dissertation acknowledges that there are not fixed recipes to accomplish this task, but there are important nuances and characteristics that governments have to identify, understand, and analyze before establishing communication goals, objectives, strategies and tactics targeted to engage their diasporas.

### **Structure of the Dissertation**

This dissertation is divided in seven chapters. The first three chapters explain the purpose of this study, review the literature, and describe the methodology used: Introduction (Chapter 1), literature review (Chapter 2), and methodology (Chapter 3). Chapters four and five constitute the description of the individual cases: El Salvador

(Chapter 4), and Costa Rica (Chapter 5). In Chapter 6, this dissertation provides the cross-case (comparative) analysis, where the differences, similarities and lesson learned through comparing the cases is offered. Finally, Chapter 7 contains the conclusions, the statement of future research, the limitations, the model of State-diaspora relations, and the propositions offered for future testing through qualitative and quantitative research methods.

## CHAPTER 2 LITERATURE REVIEW

### **Interdisciplinary Approach**

This dissertation follows an interdisciplinary approach in order to borrow definitions, concepts and theoretical perspectives from public relations, sociology, anthropology, political science and international relations that inform the model of State-diaspora relations. In the area of public relations, this study draws definitions and theoretical perspectives from the fields of international public relations (including the areas of contextualized —or comparative— research, and of cross national —or cross-cultural—research), of international government public relations, of relationship management, and of contingency theory.

### **International Public Relations**

To define what is international public relations, some authors start by explaining what international public relations is not: It is not just applying public relations principles and practices outside the United States. For instance, Wakefield (2008) stated:

Not long ago, a typical example of this misconception surfaced when a colleague told me that he had included a case of 'international public relations' in a university campaigns course. The case, as it turned out, was a company in Japan that was compelled to clear up misunderstandings with publics that were located entirely within Japan. Although it is instructive for public relations students and practitioners to learn about problems that arise in other countries, this particular case does not constitute international public relations; rather, it is an example of domestic public relations. (p. 140)

Instead, for international public relations to happen and exist, there has to be an organization conducting business in different countries and dealing with publics in different countries at the same time: the home country and the host countries, as a minimum. For instance, Wakefield (1997) defined international public relations as “a

multinational program that has certain coordination between headquarters and various countries where offices and/or publics are located, and that carries potential consequences or results in more than one country” (p. 355). Wilcox, Cameron, Ault and Agee (2007) described international public relations as “the planned and organized effort of a company, institution, or government to establish mutually beneficial relations with the publics of other nations” (p. 516).

Molleda and Connolly-Ahern (2002) further stated that international public relations involve three types of publics at various geographical levels: the ones in the home country, the ones in the host country (or countries), and transnational publics, such as NGOs, activist groups, global media outlets, international news agencies, pan-regional media, and shareholders (cited by Molleda & Laskin, 2007).

In public relations there is no grand or general theory of international public relations. For that reason, in this dissertation I adopted the definition of international public relations offered by the aforementioned authors: international public relations as public relations strategies and tactics developed by an organization that has publics in the home country, in the host country and transnational publics.

### **International Government Public Relations**

One area of international public relations is the field of international government public relations. Kunczik (2003) is one of the few authors who have tried to define what the area of study of international government public relations is. He indicated that “public relations for the nation-state comprises persuasive communicative acts directed at a foreign audience” (p. 400), and that public relations for the nation-state “implies the planned and continuous distribution of interest-bound information by a state aimed (mostly) at improving the country’s image abroad” (p. 400). Wilcox, Cameron, Ault, and

Agee (2007) also acknowledged that national governments are actors that try to influence policies and actions of other nations through public information efforts and through lobbying.

Kunczik (2003) indicated that the main objective of international government public relations is “to establish (or maintain existing) positive images of one’s own nation or to appear trustworthy to other actors in the world system” (p. 413). Trust, Kunczik argued, is an important factor in the field of international policy for “mobilizing resources such as receiving political and/or material support from other nations, for example . . . Put simply: trust is money and money is trust” (p. 413).

Kunczik (2003) pointed out that the body of research on this topic has large gaps and that, in general, the field has concentrated on the study of image cultivation by nations. Studies of this sort have been recently conducted by authors such as Lee (2007) and Kiousis and Wu (2008). The main reason for this gap in research in international government public relations is, Kunczik (2003) said using a critical perspective, “the often highly sophisticated methods that states adopt to influence world opinion,” and that these persuasive activities “very often take place far from public view” (p. 399).

International government public relations, then, do not happen in isolation and utilize similar strategies to other areas of international public relations:

It is almost impossible to make a clear distinction between the nature of international public relations activities of nation-states, international social/economic organizations (e.g., the World Bank, Greenpeace), international political organizations (e.g., United Nations, NATO, etc.), and multinational corporations (MNCs). Furthermore, the same public relations agency often counsels nation states and MNCs. (Kunczik, 2003, p. 406)

Kunczik (2003) classified those who use international public relations using two dimensions: for-profit versus non-profit organizations and public versus private organizations: "This is only a rough classification. Other actors are also in the field such as individual international influence brokers (e.g., former diplomats and government officials such as Henry Kissinger) and international public relations agencies (e.g., Interpublic, Omnicom Group, Wire & Plastic Products), who often give advice and influence, or at least try to influence, world politics" (p. 407).

Some of the tactics used in international government public relations, Kunczik (2003) explained, are opening increasing access to foreign journalists; preparing news releases, direct mailings, newsletters, and brochures; training embassy personnel on how to speak about sensitive issues such as terrorism or human rights; organizing field trips for the news media; visiting editors; organizing lunches with business groups; staging visits by heads of state and releases of political prisoners; establishing information offices; and promoting sporting events.

International government public relations play a central role in providing information and in facilitating two-way communication: "Given the structural conditions of the international flow of news, countries which need to have a positive image in a certain geographical region for economic or political interests (including those nations that are at a disadvantage from the outset because of the standard processes of gathering and reporting by mass media) must mount active publicity campaigns" (Kunczik, 2003, p. 411).

Other authors have also studied the field of international government public relations, but they have focused not on how governments can establish relations with

publics abroad, but on how multinational corporations (MNCs) can develop good relations with governments in different countries (Steiner & Steiner, 2003; Hillman & Wan, 2005; Chen, 2004). This field is better known as public affairs.

There is a third field of study that is sometimes confused with international government public relations: diplomacy (the management of international relations). What is the difference between them? “While the business side treats the planned establishment of relations with publics of other nations under international public relations (and hence the domain of public relations), the management of communicative relationships of nation-states, countries or societies remains largely in the academic home of international relations (as a part of political science)” (Signitzer & Wamser, 2006, p. 436).

While traditional diplomacy has cared about government-to-government relationships (Goldstein, 1994, and Deutsch, 1966, as cited by Signitzer & Wamser, 2006, p. 437), there is one area of diplomacy that has emerged in the past decades and studies two main areas: the way non-government actors influence the diplomatic relations between countries, and also the way government actors influence foreign, non-governmental publics. This field is called public diplomacy (Leonard, 2002; Parkinson and Ekachai, 2006; Tuch, 1990; Fisher, 1972; Signitzer and Wamser, 2006; Wang, 2006).

This dissertation argues that the separation between public diplomacy performed by a government and international government public relations is basically fictitious: In both cases, there is a government trying to communicate ideas and political positions to publics located abroad. For the purpose of this study, then, this field in which a

government communicates ideas and political positions to publics located abroad is called international government public relations. This dissertation borrows the definition of Kunczik (2003) and understands international government public relations as the public relations efforts led by governments with the purpose of building relationships, communicating –and influencing—publics located abroad. This study also shares the idea that through conducting international government public relations, governments try to establish positive relationships with those publics located abroad.

### **Contextual Variables in International Public Relations**

The contextual variables of a country or region play an important role in the practice of public relations in that particular country or region (Culbertson & Jeffers, 1992; Grunig, 1992; Culbertson et al., 1993; Vercic, Grunig & Grunig, 1996; Sriramesh & Vercic, 2003, 2009; Parkinson & Ekachai, 2006; Valentini, 2007; Neuliep, 2008).

Vercic, Grunig and Grunig (1996) defined five environmental variables, described as specific to each country, considered important in the practice of international public relations: political ideology, economic system (including level of development), degree of activism, culture, and media systems. Sriramesh and Vercic (2009), borrowing concepts and categories from Vercic, Grunig and Grunig (1996), collapsed those five environmental variables into three contextual variables that should be taken into account by public relations practitioners when designing communication strategies for an specific country: a country`s infrastructure, its media environment, and its societal culture (p.4). In the variable “infrastructure,” Sriramesh and Vercic (2009) included three “infrastructural ingredients” that are key to international public relations: “a nation`s political system, its level of economic development, and the level of activism prevalent

in that country” (p.4). They also related the type of legal system to the infrastructure of a country.

Sriramesh and Vercic (2009) argued that the higher the level of democratization of a country, the higher “the level of sophistication of the public relations profession” (p.7). Also, they defended the idea that “developed (market) economies tend to favor strategic public relations more than developing (managed) ones” (p. 8) and that because in developed economies there are more organizational players and more competition among organizations, “these multiple suppliers of goods and services obviously need to compete for public attention, approval, and support—a prime reason to employ public relations professionals as in-house staff or consultants” (p.8). In regards to activism, Sriramesh and Vercic (2009) indicated that “the body of knowledge of international public relations has yet to study the linkage between activism and public relations” (p.8) and that it is critical for public relations professionals to “assess the nature of activism prevalent in a society and determine how it influences the public relations activities of that country” (p. 8).

In the variable “societal culture,” Sriramesh and Vercic (2009) cited Kaplan and Manners (1972) to establish four determinants of culture (technoeconomics, social structure, ideology and personality), and then cited Hofstede (1980, 2001) to identify five dimensions of societal culture: power distance (including social mobility), collectivism, masculinity-femininity, uncertainty avoidance and long-term orientation. The variable of “societal culture” was deemed important by the authors in order to identify “the influence that societal culture has on organizational culture or corporate culture” (p. 12). Identifying this influence of societal culture on organizational culture

could be useful to understand how organizations form their public relations strategies and how different publics react to organizational messages and how they perceive and behave toward the organization (Sriramesh & Vercic, 2009).

In terms of the media environment, Sriramesh and Vercic (2009) argued that mass media have the power to influence public opinion and shape public discourse. For those reasons, “to conduct effective media relations, international public relations practitioners need to understand the nature of media environment in a particular country” (p. 15). That can be achieved by looking at three factors: media control, media diffusion, and media access. Media control refers to “who controls the media organizations in a country and whether such control extends to editorial content” (p. 15); media diffusion refers to the extent of the media saturation in the countries where the media operate (including audience exposure, message comprehension and changes in knowledge, attitudes and behaviors); media access “denotes the extent to which the various segments of a society can approach the media to disseminate messages they deem important” (p. 18). Media access is influenced, among others, by poverty rates and literacy rates.

For each variable of the three main variables offered by these authors, Sriramesh and Vercic (2009) offered lists of questions that public relations practitioners can use to assess the type of infrastructure, societal culture, and media environment a country has. These questions can help in the operationalization of (or, in other words, in defining the procedure to measure) these variables.

Often cited, Holtzhausen (2000) has linked public relations to activism and social change. In her view, nurtured by postmodern theory, the field of public relations is a

product of democracy and capitalism, but the discipline should defend different publics' points of view, not only the organization's point of view. "As a discipline that has far-reaching effects on society, public relations needs to be understood and examined in a broader social, cultural, and political context rather than in a narrowly defined organizational function" (p. 95).

As part of that view, Holtzhausen (2007) referred to Excellence Theory (Grunig, Grunig & Dozier, 2002) to recognize that public relations is affected by a country's contextual conditions such as activism, culture and language, political system, economic system, media system, and level of development. This conceptualization is similar to Wakefield's (2007) perspective that supported that contextual variables affect public relations practices in different countries. Wakefield (2007) listed the following contextual variables: potential for activism, cultural environment, language differences, political situation, economic situation, media systems (role of the mass media) and level of development.

Besides taking into account national and regional cultures (for instance, differences between urban and rural areas in the same country), Newsom et al. (2001) adopted Hall's (1995) point of view to argue that organizations have their own culture, based on their levels of assertiveness and responsiveness. Depending on those levels, the organizations "behave" in different ways in terms of how much is harmony valued, how loyal or trusting the environment is within the organization, how quickly or slowly the organization moves or adapts to new situations and challenges, and how authoritarian the management levels are.

To the national and regional cultures, and to the organizational cultures, one more level has to be added: government organization style (Newsom et al., 2001). Even if a group of countries share the same type of government—for instance, a democracy that uses a federal system—the organization of those governments can be very different among the individual countries. “The differences are in the distribution of power” (Newsom et al., 2001, p.653). Those differences have to be understood by public relations practitioners. “Public relations practitioners need to know who has the power to do what under which circumstances” (Newsom et al., 2001, p.652). This power involves several areas: sources of power (the military, religious groups, written documents), laws, economics (for instance, ownership of private property, community services, social benefits, personal communication tools), and media structure, access and ownership (Newsom et al., 2001).

All these factors—national and regional cultures, organizational culture and government culture—play a role in defining communication strategies and tactics. “Culture and tradition impose a style of communication and result in certain types of behavior” (Newsom et al., 2001, p.652). They also matter in the process of building relationships. “The nuances of a culture are an important part of building relationships. Public relations practitioners must understand and appreciate cultural differences and be responsive to them” (p.653).

Zaharna (2001, 2000), Taylor (2001), and Valentini (2007) also mentioned contextual variables as important factors in the practice of international public relations.

Zaharna (2001) explicated the value of intercultural communication theories in the field of public relations. To practice public relations in an international setting, Zaharna

recommended creating home and host countries` profiles, including their infrastructure and their political, economic, mass media, legal and social structure. She also advocated the idea of developing home and host countries` cultural profiles, which should include aspects such as if the culture is a low-context or a high-context one, if the society is monochronic or polychronic in terms of the time management, if the society emphasizes more on doing or on being, if the culture is past-tense (one that values traditions and history) or future-tense (one that values innovations and advancements), and if the society tends to be linear or non linear.

Taylor (2001) mentioned societal culture, language, media structure and ownership, ethics, and levels of social-political development as factors that will influence the practice of public relations at an international level. Valentini (2007) favored the cultural approach versus the global approach in public relationship management, after analyzing case studies in the European Union, stating that “in each country different publics may behave similarly or differently depending on situational and contextual matters” (p. 122) and recommending that organizations consider “all the possible factors of a specific culture before, during and after defining the best strategy for external and internal relationship management” (p. 122).

Besides factors mentioned by other authors, such as political and economic structure, Valentini (2007) mentioned the need of taking into account the level of involvement (high or low, active or passive) that the target public has with the country in which it resides or with the organization this target public deals with, and analyzing what are the goals the organization wants to achieve. “If the organization aims at building a strong sense of community among its different publics, then the cultural approach has

proved to be the best tool for analyzing and planning strategies in different national cultural contexts. If the organization is more concerned with creating functional organization-public relationships, that is, the organization is not necessarily interested in establishing good relationships with all its publics, but only with the active ones, then the global approach could work” (p.128).

### **Contextualized (Comparative) Research**

As stated by the aforementioned authors, the contextual variables of a country, of an organization and of a government matter in the practice of public relations. The study of the influence of the contextual variables in the practice of public relations in a specific country or region is what is called contextualized or comparative research. This dissertation agrees with and is grounded in the contextualized (comparative) research approach.

Since 1996, Culbertson and Chen described two types of research being conducted in the international arena in public relations: comparative research (contextualized research), and international research (cross-cultural research) (Culbertson & Chen, 1996). Comparative or contextualized research “investigates the practice [of public relations] from country to country, noting similarities or differences in public relations based on cultural norms and on social, political, and economic environments” (Culbertson & Jeffers, 1992, as cited by Wakefield, 2008, p. 143). Its purpose is to “identify more or less universal problems that challenge many or all nations, and to search for generic principles that apply widely” (Culbertson & Chen, 1996, p.2). Also, contextualized research is “like building a puzzle piece by piece (or, in this case, nation by nation) until universal theories emerge” (Wakefield, 2008, p. 143).

The advantage of contextualized research is that it offers “both scholars and practitioners insights into the practice of public relations in different nations and regions” (Taylor, 2001, p. 634). “Such comparison offers vital glimpses into public relations practices around the world, and help multinational entities know how to understand and respond effectively to the nuances of culture, politics, and economics wherever they operate” (Wakefield, 2008, p. 143).

Contextualized research in public relations has been conducted by developing case studies in countries all around the world. Besides journal articles published in journals such as *Journal of Public Relations Research* and in *Public Relations Review*, and besides thesis and dissertations that used contextualized research as their approach (Odubela, 2007), there are entire books dedicated to the area of contextualized research in international public relations.

For example, Sriramesh and Vercic’s *Global Public Relations Handbook* (2009) includes 18 chapters of case studies in 19 different countries. This book is divided by regions: Asia and Australasia, Africa, Europe, and The Americas. Another book that offers several case studies of contextualized research is *The Handbook of Public Relations* (Heath & Vasquez, 2001). This book includes six case studies of four countries and two regions (the European Union and the Middle East). And Tilson and Alozie’s (2003) *Toward the common good: Perspectives in international Public Relations* contains case studies conducted in “emergent democracies” such as Mexico, Ecuador, Peru, Slovenia, Romania, Russia, Kenya, Nigeria, Ghana, South Africa, Singapore, Indonesia and Malaysia.

Other academicians have also conducted contextualized research as part of the field of international public relations. For instance, Molleda (2008) studied the pressures of socioeconomic and political environments on public relations in Venezuela; Molleda and Moreno (2008) observed how the practice of public relations in Colombia, Mexico and Venezuela is influenced by those countries' transitional socioeconomic and political environments; Molleda, Athaydes and Hirsch (2003) studied the practice and education of public relations in the context of the Brazilian society; and Molleda, Moreno, Athaydes, and Suárez (2009) studied the differences in the profession and the practice of public relations in Latin America, surveying more than 600 professionals.

Conflicts and crises have also been studied in the light of how contextual variables in international settings play a role in the public relations management of the conflict or the crisis. For instance, the cross national conflict shifting (CNCS) theory explains how conflicts in one country can shift to another nation, affecting both the home and the host countries' publics, when those publics have interests in or are engaged with both the home and host countries. Different nations manage the crises in different ways, according to their contextual variables. Cases of CNCS have been studied by Taylor (2000); Freitag (2001); Molleda and Quinn (2004); Molleda, Connolly-Ahern and Quinn (2005); Kim and Molleda (2005); Molleda and Laskin (2007); Molleda, Solaun and Parmelee (2008), Molleda (2010), and Molleda, Bravo, Giraldo and Botero (2011).

From a critical perspective, Gaither and Curtin (2008) suggested using the cultural-economic model, based on the circuit of culture, to study international public relations. Although these authors recognized that the cultural-economic model lacks predictive power, they argued that the model helps to take into account not only

generalized cultural indexes such as the ones by Hofstede (2001), Trompenaars and Hampden-Turner (1997), and Hall (1977), but also factors such as identity, culture and power in the practice of public relations. For them, normative values and context should be combined to obtain best results. “Any resulting theory of international public relations practice must make use of culturally normative tools while remaining grounded in the particular situational context, allowing for responsiveness to emerging situations, which is crucial in a crisis” (Gaither & Curtin, 2008, p. 132).

### **Contingency Theory**

While the Excellence Study (Grunig, 1992), a survey sponsored by the International Association of Business Communicators (IABC), established that there are both generic (normative) and specific (contextual) principles in the practice of public relations, several authors have defended the idea that the generic principles established by the Excellence Study do not apply to every national reality if they are not adjusted first to different cultures and political systems (Vercic et al., 1996), especially in “a centralized, authoritarian, or totalitarian political-economic system in which propaganda, rather than two-way, lateral communication, is used to instill awareness of constraints that disable the communication behavior of publics” (Vercic et al., 1996, p.62).

Other authors have expressed that the generic principles of the excellence theory “reflect a U.S./Western-centered stance and are normative in nature, which precludes undertaking alternative methods for doing public relations in transitional political and economic systems” (Molleda & Moreno, 2008); that the environmental (contextualized, or comparative) approach makes more sense (Taylor, 2001; Sriramesh & Vercic, 2003; Molleda & Moreno, 2008), or that it is not possible to talk about generic principles at all,

but of different contexts that require different approaches in every case (Choi & Cameron, 2005).

This last view is defended by contingency theory, which is a theoretical approach that is applied in different fields: marketing, organizational psychology, management, and public relations, among other areas. In public relations, contingency theory basically asserts that there are no generic principles (Cancel, Cameron, Sallot, & Mitrook, 1997; Yarbrough, Cameron, Sallot, & McWilliams, 1998; Cancel, Mitrook, & Cameron, 1999; Cameron, Cropp, & Reber, 2000; Reber, Cropp, & Cameron, 2003). Instead, organizations should define their strategies and tactics using a continuum that goes from advocacy in one extreme to accommodation in the other. Where the organization will choose to be in that advocacy-to-accommodation continuum will depend on the specific characteristics of the public the organization is trying to reach, and on the contextual variables the organization encounters. For contingency theorists, the normative principle defended by the excellence theory of always using two-way, symmetrical communication with the different publics is not always the best approach to use in public relations. For contingency theorists, it depends.

This dissertation assumes the position of the “contextualized researchers” and shares the concern of the “contingency researchers” that environmental variables have to be analyzed before choosing public relations strategies and tactics. In international public relations, the environmental variables have to be analyzed for at least three situations: the context of the home country, the context of the host country, and the particular characteristics of the public the organization is trying to reach. This analysis has to inform the relationship management efforts.

## **Relationship Building and Management**

Currently, there is strong agreement among many scholars in the field of public relations that one of the most important functions of public relations is to establish relationships between an organization and its publics; therefore, relationship building, development, and maintenance should be the focus of public relations inquiry (Ferguson, 1984; L. Grunig, J. Grunig, & Ehling, 1992; Broom, Casey, & Ritchey, 1997; Hon & J. Grunig, 1999; Bruning & Ledingham, 2000; Ledingham, 2001; Heath, 2001; Ledingham & Bruning, 2001; J. Grunig, 2002; Bruning, 2002; Ledingham, 2003; Ledingham, 2006; Ki & Hon, 2009).

The relationship building process between an organization and a public—in other words, the process by which an organization establishes and maintains relationships with a public—has been called, concisely, organization-public relationship (OPR) (Broom, Casey, & Ritchey, 1997; Hon & J. Grunig, 1999). The three stages at which the OPR is studied and measured are the following: relationship antecedents (reasons why an organization and a public decide to or happen to establish relationships), relationship cultivation or maintenance (strategies put in place by the organization to establish and nurture the relationship), and relationship quality outcomes (the perception of the organization and/or of the public about the quality of the relationship established) (Broom, Casey, & Ritchey, 1997; Ledingham & Bruning, 1998; Hon & J. Grunig, 1999; J. Grunig & Huang, 2000; Hallahan, 2004; Ledingham, 2003; Ki & Hon, 2009).

One of the first scholars to point out that public relations scholarship should focus on studying OPR was Ferguson (1984). Since then, several researchers have conceptualized and developed scales to measure OPRs (Hon & J. Grunig, 1999;

Bruning & Ledingham, 1999; Huang, 2001; Kim, 2001; Bruning & Galloway, 2004; Jo 2006; Ki & Hon, 2009).

Although they use slightly different indicators or variables, most authors have borrowed concepts from interpersonal communication to conceptualize the dimensions of OPR. Some of the indicators most conceptualized and operationalized by scholars for the purpose of studying OPR are the following: trust (L. Grunig, J. Grunig & Ehling, 1992; Huang, 1997, 2001; Ledingham & Bruning, 1998; Hon & J. Grunig, 1999; Kim, 2001; Jo, 2006); commitment (Huang, 1997, 2001; Ledingham & Bruning, 1998; Hon & J. Grunig, 1999; Kim, 2001; Bruning & Galloway, 2004; Jo, 2006); control mutuality (Huang, 1997, 2001; Hon & J. Grunig, 1999; Jo, 2006), which is related to Ferguson`s (1984) indicator of distribution of power; mutual satisfaction or satisfaction (Ferguson, 1984; L. Grunig, J. Grunig & Ehling, 1992; Huang, 1997, 2001; Hon & J. Grunig, 1999; Bruning & Ledingham, 2000; Bruning, Langenhop, & Green, 2004; Jo, 2006), and openness (Ferguson, 1984; L. Grunig, J. Grunig & Ehling, 1992; Ledingham & Bruning, 1998, Hon & J. Grunig, 1999).

Other scholars have added additional indicators of OPR: mutual understanding (Ferguson, 1984; L. Grunig, J. Grunig & Ehling, 1992); reciprocity (L. Grunig, J. Grunig & Ehling, 1992); face and favor (Huang, 2001; Jo, 2006); credibility (L. Grunig, J. Grunig & Ehling, 1992); mutual legitimacy (L. Grunig, J. Grunig & Ehling, 1992); mutual agreement (Ferguson, 1984); dynamism (Ferguson, 1984); involvement (Ledingham & Bruning, 1998); investment (Ledingham & Bruning, 1998); local and community involvement (Kim, 2001); reputation (Kim, 2001); personal networks (2006); and admiration (Bortree, 2007).

In terms of the types of relationships, the main typologies divide them in either professional relationships, personal relationships, or community relationships (Bruning & Ledingham, 1999; Bruning & Ledingham, 2000); or in communal relationships and exchange relationships (Hon and J. Grunig, 1999). Some authors have conducted research to explore only one or a few of the indicators or variables mentioned before. For instance, in Ledingham and Bruning`s (1998) study, trust happened to be an important component in the scale of OPR that they created. One year later, Bruning and Ledingham (2000) studied the case of the relationship between a bank and its customers, in terms of personal, professional, and community relationships, to relate the perceptions of the relationship to the levels of satisfaction. Customers who were satisfied with their personal and professional relationship with the bank ranked highly the overall satisfaction with the organization.

In another case, Bruning, Langenhop, and Green (2004) examined housing satisfaction and evaluation of city services among residents of a specific city to see how those perceptions affected the residents` overall perceptions of satisfaction with the city`s municipality. Also, Bruning and Galloway (2004) found that commitment, which indicates the level of dedication of a person to an organization, is a key component of a high-quality OPR. Finally, Bortree (2007) added another predictor of overall quality between publics and nonprofit organizations: admiration. She defined admiration as the degree to which a public feels respect for an organization and the degree to which the organization shows respect for that public.

In this dissertation, I mainly consider the indicators of relationship cultivation and of relationship quality outcomes offered for measuring relationship building in public

relations by Hon and J. Grunig (1999), J. Grunig (2002), and Ki and Hon (2009), described in the next section.

### **Measuring Relationship Quality Outcomes**

Hon and J. Grunig (1999) utilized definitions and concepts widely used and empirically tested in the field of interpersonal communication, and adapted those definitions, concepts and indicators to the study of the relationship-building process between organizations and publics. Besides that, Hon and J. Grunig (1999) created a multiple-item scale to measure relationship quality outcomes between an organization and its publics.

Hon and J. Grunig (1999) defined control mutuality, satisfaction, trust, commitment, exchange relationship, and communal relationship as the six indicators to be analyzed when measuring relationship quality outcomes. The first four indicators (control mutuality, satisfaction, trust, and commitment) refer to outcomes or quality results in the relationship. The last two (exchange relationship and communal relationship) refer to “the kinds of relationships that public relations programs attempt to achieve, in comparison with the nature of relationship outcomes produced by other fields such as marketing” (Hon & J. Grunig, 1999, p.20).

Control mutuality is “the degree to which parties agree on who has rightful power to influence one another” (Hon & J. Grunig, 1999, p.19), and although these authors recognize that “some degree of power imbalance is natural in organization-public relationships . . . for the most stable, positive relationship, organizations and publics must have some degree of control over the other” (p.19). Trust, according to Hon and J. Grunig (1999), is “one party’s level of confidence in and willingness to open oneself to the other party” (p.19). The concept of trust, Hon and J. Grunig (1999) said, is

complicated and has several underlying dimensions: integrity (“the belief that an organization is fair and just”), dependability (“the belief that an organization will do what it says it will do”), and competence (“the belief that an organization has the ability to do what it says it will do”) (p. 19).

Satisfaction, Hon & J. Grunig (1999) said, is:

the extent to which one party feels favorably toward the other because positive expectations about the relationship are reinforced. Or, a satisfying relationship is one in which the benefits outweigh the costs. Satisfaction can also occur when one party believes that the other party’s relationship maintenance behaviors are positive (p.20).

Commitment is “the extent to which one party believes and feels that the relationship is worth spending energy to maintain and promote” (Hon & J. Grunig, 1999, p.20). These same authors defined an exchange relationship as one in which “one party gives benefits to the other only because the other has provided benefits in the past or is expected to do so in the future. . . . In essence, a party that receives benefits incurs an obligation or debt to return the favor”(Hon & J. Grunig, 1999, p. 20). One example of exchange relationships, Hon and J. Grunig (1999) said, is the marketing relationships created between organizations and customers.

In establishing relationships with a public, Hon and J. Grunig (1999) argued, an organization cannot be satisfied with just establishing exchange relationships. They explained: “Publics expect organizations to do things for the community for which organizations get little or nothing in return” (p.21). A communal relationship, on the other hand, is one in which “both parties provide benefits to the other because they are concerned for the welfare of the other—even when they get nothing in return. The role of public relations is to convince management that it also needs communal relationships with publics such as employees, the community, government, media, and

stockholders—as well as exchange relationships with customers” (Hon & J. Grunig, 1999, p.21).

In Hon and J. Grunig’s (1999) view, in a communal relationship between an organization and a given public, the public receives benefits, but organizations benefit as well, by building a good reputation. In the long run, showing concern about communal relationships will help the organization to “encounter less opposition and more support over the long term from their publics” and to “greatly reduce the likelihood of negative behaviors from stakeholders mentioned above—litigation, regulation, strikes, boycotts, negative publicity, and the like” (p.21). Because building communal relationships is the expertise that “distinguishes public relations from similar professions such as marketing . . . a measure of the degree to which a public perceives that it has a communal relationship with an organization is perhaps the purest indicator of the success of the public relations management function” (Hon & J. Grunig, 1999, p.22).

Using these indicators (control mutuality, trust, satisfaction, commitment, exchange relationship, and communal relationship), Hon and J. Grunig (1999) explained that each indicator can be measured through the use of a multiple-item survey with questions or statements for which the respondent can choose one option in a nine-point scale. Hon and J. Grunig (1999) developed a list of statements that can be used to measure each of the six indicators.

For instance, to measure control mutuality, one statement that can be presented to the respondent is “This organization really listens to what people like me have to say,” and the respondent has to choose one point in a scale that goes from 0 (I totally disagree) to 9 (I totally agree) (Hon & J. Grunig, 1999, p.29). Once the respondent fills

the questionnaire, the researcher should average the answers to all of the statements, in order to calculate mean scores for each of the six indicators. Hon & J. Grunig (1999) offered a questionnaire with 46 items for a long scale, with 26 items for a short scale, and with 30 items for a short scale with one additional item per indicator. What is the best number of items to use? Hon and J. Grunig (1999) said: “They [researchers] can choose the number of items that best fit their research needs. But, in most cases, using the shorter index is likely to increase the completion rate” (p.28).

Later on, J. Grunig (2002) borrowed Hon and J. Grunig’s (1999) definitions, indicators and their measurement scale to argue that the study of the relationship building process between organizations and publics (from now on, organization-public relationships, as conceptualized by Broom, Casey, & Ritchey, 1997) can also be studied through qualitative research methods such as focus groups and in-depth interviews. In fact, J. Grunig (2002) defended the idea that there are topics that can be studied better through a qualitative approach, especially when the researcher needs more detail on the nature of the relationship, and especially when certain interviewees are not prone to answer written questionnaires—for instance, “leaders of activist groups, government officials, and journalists” (p.3).

Instead of asking the respondent to fill a survey with questions or statements that use a scale, the respondent will be asked open-ended questions. For instance, using the same category of control mutuality mentioned before, instead of asking the respondent to rank a statement from 0 (totally disagree) to 9 (totally agree) when offering a statement such as “This organization really listens to what people like me

have to say,” J. Grunig (2002) listed the following set of open-ended questions to be used in an in-depth interview:

To what extent do you believe that (organization) (public) is attentive to what (organization) (public) says? Why? Can you provide any examples that show (organization) (public) actually has taken (organization) (public)´s interests into account in its decisions and behaviors or that show it has failed to take those interests into account? To what extent do you feel you have any control over what (organization) (public) does that affects you? Why? (p. 4)

J. Grunig (2002) offered a full list of possible open-ended questions to use — based on the indicators mentioned before: control mutuality, trust, satisfaction, commitment, exchange relationship, and communal relationship—to study organization-public relationships through qualitative methods. The analysis of the results, in this case, is not done through statistical methods but through qualitative techniques, such as the analysis of common themes, of “outliers,” and of connections or linkages between topics, through modeling building, and more.

### **Measuring Relationship Cultivation Strategies**

In 2009, Ki and Hon acknowledged that although Hon and J. Grunig (1999) provided the scale for measuring relationship quality outcomes, they did not provide a scale for measuring relationship cultivation strategies. For that reason, Ki and Hon (2009) developed a multiple-item scale to fill this gap. In this case, instead of control mutuality, trust, satisfaction, commitment, exchange relationship, and communal relationship, the six indicators used to measure relationship cultivation strategies were access, openness, positivity, sharing of tasks, assurances, and networking (Hon & J. Grunig, 1999; Ki & Hon, 2009).

Ki and Hon (2009) defined relationship cultivation strategies as “any organizational behavioral efforts that attempt to establish, cultivate, and sustain relationships with

strategic publics” (p.5), and assured that positive evaluations among publics of relationship cultivation strategies “lead to better relational outcomes” (p.5). After adopting the six indicators for relationship cultivation strategies from Hon and J. Grunig (1999), Ki and Hon (2009) defined these six indicators and operationalized them, from the point of view of the organization. In other words, Ki and Hon (2009) chose, as a first step, to help the organization in its efforts to measure its relationship cultivation strategies by operationalizing the six indicators emphasizing the measures of the organizational efforts (rather than the measures of the public’s efforts).

For that reason, Ki and Hon (2009) borrowed concepts from interpersonal communication studies and from Hon and J. Grunig (1999) to define access as “the degree of effort than an organization puts into providing communication channels or media outlets that assist its strategic publics in reaching it” (p.6), and positivity as “the degree to which members of publics benefit from the organization’s efforts to make the relationship more enjoyable for key publics” (p.7). Ki and Hon (2009) defined openness/disclosure as “an organization’s efforts to provide information about the nature of the organization and what is doing” (p.8), and sharing of tasks as “an organization’s efforts to share in networking on projects or solving problems of mutual interest between the organization and its publics” (p.8).

These authors defined networking as “the degree of an organization’s effort to build networks or coalitions with the same groups that their publics do, such as environmentalists, unions, or community groups” (Ki & Hon, 2009, p.9). Finally, Ki and Hon (2009) defined assurances as “any efforts by an organization to assure its strategic publics that they and their concerns are attended to” (p.9).

Through a pilot test and a survey answered by 429 respondents from the Florida Farm Bureau (FFB), Ki and Hon (2009) developed a measurement scale to evaluate the success of relationship cultivation strategies (access, positivity, openness/disclosure, sharing of tasks, networking and assurances). Ki and Hon (2009) developed an initial list of statements for each of the six indicators that the respondents had to rate using a nine-point scale that goes from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (neutral) to 9 (strongly agree). For instance, in the case of the “access” indicator, three of the statements that the respondents had to rate –from 1 (strongly disagree) to 9 (strongly agree)—were the following: “(The organization) provides members with adequate contact information,” “(the organization) provides members opportunities to meet its staff,” and “when members have questions or concerns, (the organization) is willing to answer their inquiries” (p.16).

Using exploratory and confirmatory factor analysis, Ki and Hon (2009) refined the initial list of statements and ended including 23 statements that showed reliability and validity in the final scale: four statements for the “access” indicator, five statements for the “positivity” indicator, four statements for the “openness” indicator, three statements for the “sharing of tasks” indicator, three statements for the “networking” indicator, and four statements for the “assurances” indicator. This list of 23 statements can be used verbatim or can be slightly adjusted for evaluating relationships of particular organizations with particular publics. Once the respondent fills the questionnaire, the researcher should average the answers to all of the statements, in order to calculate mean scores for each of the six indicators.

In the same way that J. Grunig (2002) explained that the indicators used for measuring relationship quality outcomes could be applied to develop open-ended questions to study relationship quality outcomes from a qualitative methods perspective, this study argues that the indicators used for measuring relationship cultivation strategies (openness, task sharing, assurance, etc.) can be used to guide the development of an open-ended questionnaire to study relationship cultivation from a qualitative methods perspective. Both the indicators of relationship quality outcomes (control mutuality, satisfaction, etc.), and the indicators of relationship cultivation (openness, task sharing, etc.), can be used to develop pertinent “generic” questions to measure the relationship between any given organization and any given public. This dissertation, then, used qualitative research methods and open-ended questions to study OPR, as will be detailed in the Methodology (Chapter 3).

### **More Empirical Research About OPR**

Many authors have used indicators, variables and scales offered by scholars such as Hon and J. Grunig (1999), Bruning and Ledingham (1999), Huang (2001), Kim (2001), Bruning and Galloway (2004), Jo (2006), and Ki and Hon (2009) to measure the impact of relationship building in different organizations. For instance, Kim (2001) found that the perceptions of the publics about organizations are indicators of the overall quality of the OPR. Bortree and Waters (2008) explored the way that the types of organization influence the nature of the OPR. They examined volunteer, consumer, and political organization using six dimensions or indicators of the relationship: trust, control mutuality, satisfaction, commitment, admiration, and conflict. Through a survey, they found significant differences in the relationship quality outcomes among organizations deemed high, medium, and low in communality.

Later on, Waters (2008) applied relationship management theory in the case of fundraising efforts of nonprofits and their relationship with major individual gift donors and annual giving donors, and, using survey methodology, he found that “major gift donors were more likely to have stronger feelings of trust, satisfaction, commitment, and control mutuality with the organization than annual gift donors,” and that “donors who gave multiple times to an organization evaluated the relationship stronger than one-time donors” (p.73). Also, Waters (2008) found that having feelings of trust, satisfaction, commitment, and control mutuality toward the organization predicted future donations. Bortree (2010) also studied three relationship maintenance strategies (guidance, assurances, and shared tasks) between volunteer-nonprofit organizations and adolescents, and she found that control mutuality plays a key role in this type of OPR. She also found that the satisfaction these adolescents obtained in the OPR was a predictor of their intention to volunteer in the future.

The study of the relationship between an organization and its publics have been analyzed using the case of one organization at a time (Bruning & Ledingham, 2000; Ledingham, 2001; Bruning, 2002; Bruning, Castle, & Schrepfer, 2004) or using the cases of several organizations at the same time (Bortree & Waters, 2008). OPR has also been studied by described the types of relationships that can be developed in OPR. For instance, Hung (2005) developed a continuum of relationships that go from communality relationships (those that are not selfish and place the priority on the other`s interests) to exploitive relationships (those that are focused on self-interests and place the priority on their own interest).

Besides, some researchers have focused their efforts on developing models. For instance, Yang (2007) developed a theoretical model in which he integrates the concepts of OPR and organizational reputation, using a multidisciplinary approach in the literature review. Also, Yang and J. Grunig (2005) tried to relate OPR outcomes (satisfaction, trust, etc.) to overall evaluations of organizational performance.

In recent years, OPR has been studied when it happens through the Internet. For example, Jo and Kim (2003) discovered that interactivity is important when organizations want to develop relationships with stakeholders using web-based media. Kelleher and Miller (2006) found out that certain relational strategies such as conversational human voice and communicated relational commitment were significantly correlated with relational outcomes such as trust, satisfaction, control mutuality, and commitment, when used in organizational blogs. Waters (2009) studied the use of social media by nonprofit organizations through a diffusion of innovations perspective, and he found that nonprofits are using Facebook™ and other social media applications to make more efficient their management tasks, to interact with volunteers and donors, to disseminate information about programs and services and to develop relationships with key publics. And Waters, Burnett, Lamm, and Lucas (2009) determined that disclosure, usefulness and interactivity are relevant virtual strategies when cultivating relationships in OPR.

For this particular dissertation, the indicators of relationship quality outcomes developed by Hon and J. Grunig (1999), and the indicators of relationship cultivation strategies developed by Ki and Hon (2009) are used, but following the qualitative approach defended by J. Grunig (2002), to explore the organization-public relationships

between governments and diasporas from Central America through a collective case study approach (see Methodology, in Chapter 3).

### **Diaspora Relations: A Specific Type of Relation in the Field of Global Public Relations**

Diasporas are a special public in global public relations, a public with unique characteristics and traits. This section defines what is a diaspora, it analyzes previous typologies of publics developed by scholars in the field of public relations to conclude that the diaspora, as a public, does not fit the categorization offered by those previous typologies, and it offers a categorization of the diasporas as publics of global public relations.

#### **What is a diaspora?**

Diasporas are an important public for global public relations, specifically for national governments, a field that Kunczik (2003) defined as “persuasive communicative acts directed at a foreign audience” (p. 400) performed by nation-states, and a field that “implies the planned and continuous distribution of interest-bound information by a state aimed (mostly) at improving the country’s image abroad” (p. 400).

The word Diaspora (capitalized) was first used (and is still used) to describe “the settling of scattered colonies of Jews outside Palestine after the Babylonian exile,” “the area outside Palestine settled by the Jews,” and “the Jews living outside Palestine or modern Israel” (Merriam Webster Online Dictionary, 2010). Through time, the word diaspora (lowercased) started being used as synonymous of “the movement, migration, or scattering of a people away from an established or ancestral homeland (i.e., the black diaspora to northern cities)”, of “people settled far from their ancestral homelands

(i.e., the African diaspora),” and “the place where these people live” (Merriam Webster Online Dictionary, 2010).

This concept of diaspora, or of a group of people who share the same nationality and who live out of their home countries, has been studied profusely by anthropologists and sociologists, among other social scientists. One of the characteristics of a diaspora is that the immigrants who form it, at least at the beginning, think of themselves as living abroad temporarily, and they tend to have the idea or hope of returning, sooner or later, to their home country. “At least, initially, most international migrants view their stay in the host country as transitory” (Margolis, 1994, p. xvii). They see themselves “here today and gone tomorrow” (Margolis, 1994, p. xvii).

Although in this study both terms are used interchangeably, there is a subtle difference between a diaspora and a transnational community. The diaspora lives out of its country of origin, with different levels of interconnection to its home country, but considering themselves closer to the home country than to the host country. In contrast, the process of immigrant adjustment that occurs when immigrants draw their new and old societies into a single unit is called transnationalism (Basch, Schiller, & Szanton Blanc, 1994).

Lessinger (1995) explained that, currently, many immigrants “not only move back and forth between societies but maintain social relationships and networks which cross-national borders. Rather than moving out of an old society and into a new one, they participate simultaneously in several social arenas located in several different parts of the world” (p.88). This type of immigrants is “intimately connected with people and events” (Lessinger, 1995, p. xv) in their home country; tends to travel back and forth

between the home and the host country; follows the fashions, political debates, cultural developments, and religious movements of the host country; and, at the same time, it still can influence the home country and its political developments (Lessinger, 1995). For this reason, Lessinger described cultural identities of transnational communities as “complex, fluid, multi-layered and [of] contextual nature” (p. xvi).

This complexity has made different authors redefined the concept of immigrant: “The word immigrant evokes images of permanent rupture, of the uprooted, the abandonment of old patterns and the painful learning of a new language and culture. Now, a new kind of migrating population is emerging, composed of those whose networks, activities, and patterns of life encompass both their host and home societies” (Schiller, Basch, & Blanc-Szanton, 1999, p. 26). Transnational communities bring “two societies into a single social field” (p. 26).

The growth of transnationalism has been possible thanks to the advancements in technology and to the expansion of communications. “Telephones, faxes, videos and jet travel allow the new immigrants to stay in close touch with the people and places they left behind, in a way impossible to those earlier waves of immigrants who reshaped American society in earlier generations” (Lessinger, 1995, p. xvi).

It is true that not every diaspora member has this mobility, as different diaspora communities have different socioeconomic conditions, different legal statuses, and live in different contexts (Portes & Rumbaut, 2006; Massey et. al, 2002). Nevertheless, even the more disadvantaged diaspora members can have now a connection to their home countries that was not possible years before, thanks to affordable access to certain communication technologies and resources. For instance, a five-dollar calling card can

allow a person to call home for more than one hour (in the case of Latin Americans), and many Internet cafés offer cheap access to the Internet. Again, not every diaspora member knows how to use the Internet, but some are savvy enough to send e-mails, use social media, and access news sites from their countries, activities that keep them connected to their home countries in ways that were not possible even a few decades ago. For those reasons, these immigrants maintain stronger links with the home countries than in the past, which is a characteristic of transnationalism.

Schiller et al. (1999) defined transnationalism as “the processes by which immigrants build social fields that link together their country of origin and their country of settlement” (p. 26). According to Schiller et al. (1999), transmigrants (a word that refers to the immigrant that is also a transnational being) “develop and maintain multiple relations—familial, economic, social, organizational, religious, and political that span borders. Transmigrants take actions, make decisions, feel concerns, and develop identities within social networks that connect them to two or more societies simultaneously” (p. 26).

Many transnational communities form hometown associations or “colonies” to invest in their home countries or to help in social projects at home (Schiller et al., 1999; Portes & Rumbaut, 2006; Menjívar, 2000; González Gutiérrez, 2006). “These associations differ dramatically in the activities and audience from hometown associations of earlier immigrants whose main, if not only thrust of activity was to help the newcomers face social welfare issues in the new land” (Schiller et al., 1999, p. 27). The transmigrants maintain a complex web of social relations and multiple identities with roots both in their home society and in their host society. They are linked to more

than one nation at a time (Schiller et al., 1999). “By maintaining different racial, national, and ethnic identities, transmigrants are able to express their resistance to the global political and economic situations that engulf them, even as they accommodate themselves to living conditions marked by vulnerability and insecurity” (p. 36).

### **Characteristics of a diaspora or transnational community: Why they migrate**

Given the complexity of the topic, authors such as Portes and Rumbaut (2006); Menjívar (2000); González (2000); and Massey, Durand, and Malone (2002) have written full books (several of them, in many cases) to study the phenomenon of immigration. It is beyond the scope of this study to provide a complete, in-depth, detailed panorama of the origin, composition, and expansion of immigrant communities. Nevertheless, the authors cited before have pointed out certain defined characteristics of diaspora groups that are important to note in order to understand the way immigrant communities behave and react to home government public relations and communication efforts in a host country.

First, immigrants leave their home countries and migrate to a host country not just to escape poverty. It is neither just a rational choice made after measuring the costs of migrating to a new country against the benefits of doing so (Massey et al., 2002; Portes & Rumbaut, 2006). If it was simply a rational choice of leaving the home country to improve the living standards in a better-off host country, most poor people in the world would migrate to richer areas, but that is not really the case. In 2000, international agencies calculated that only three percent of the global population migrates (Portes & Rumbaut, 2006). Furthermore, the poorest groups in the world are not the prime sources of migration. According to Portes and Rumbaut (2006),

[M]igration, in general, and the flow coming to the United States, in particular, do not originate mostly in the poorest countries or most destitute regions. They often come from middle-income nations and among groups that are relatively advantaged with respect to the source population. This explains why the average educational and skill credentials of the immigrant population of the United States at present are not much inferior to those of the native-born. (p.15)

The decision-making process to migrate, then, is more complex than that; it cannot be explained just by the cost-benefit theory of neoclassical economics (Portes & Rumbaut, 2006). “These [neoclassical economics] predictions are made despite ample evidence that actual labor migrations do not occur in this manner” (Portes & Rumbaut, 2006, p.15). Massey, Durand, and Malone (2002) argued that in order to understand the phenomenon of international migration, one has to understand four things: “the forces in sending societies that promote out-migration (...); the forces in receiving societies that create a demand for immigrant workers (...); the motivations, goals and aspirations of the people who respond to these forces by migrating internationally (...); and what are the social and economic structures that arise in the course of migration to connect sending and receiving societies” (p.9).

Instead of just using neoclassical economics principles, Massey, Durand, and Malone (2002) and Portes and Rumbaut (2006) defended the idea of looking at different lines of theoretical reasoning, such as the new economics of labor migration, the world systems theory, the segmented labor market theory, the social capital theory, and the cumulative causation of migration theory, to explain international migration.

In regards to the new economics of labor migration, Massey et al.(2002) explained: “Unlike the neoclassical model, it does not assume that migration decisions are made by isolated actors, but that they are taken within larger units of interrelated people, typically families or households but sometimes entire communities. Within these

units, people not only act individually to maximize expected income but also work collectively to overcome failures in [access to] capital, credit, and insurance markets” (p.11).

Portes and Rumbaut (2006) added that for the migration economic alternative to emerge in the new economics of migration, three conditions need to happen: a demand for migrant labor must exist (migrants are wanted in the host country), labor demand must be made known (through recruiters, the mass media, and/or social networks), and the opportunities must be desirable (in terms of what the migrant’s economic advantages in the host country would mean for households and communities in the home country).

The world systems theory is also used to understand migration patterns because this theory posits that structural changes in any given society alter the probability of international migration happening (Massey et al., 2002; Portes & Rumbaut, 2006). Massey, Durand, and Malone (2002), explained: “Driven by a desire for higher profits and greater wealth, owners and managers of large firms in developed nations enter poor countries on the periphery of the world economy in search of land, raw materials, labor, and markets. Migration is a natural outgrowth of the disruptions and dislocations that occur in this process of market expansion and penetration” (p.13). Portes and Rumbaut (2006) agreed and pointed out the effects of the mass media: “Efforts by transnational corporations to expand their markets abroad through advertising and promotion of new consumer needs create a direct incentive for migrating in search of the incomes that would make satisfaction of these imported aspirations possible” (p.18).

The segmented labor market theory is also utilized to analyze international migration because it explains the role that receiving societies play in attracting immigrants. Massey, Durand, and Malone (2002) cited Michael Piore (1979) to explain that some scholars believe that international migration “stems from a relatively permanent demand for unskilled labor that is built into the economic structure of developed nations” (p.15). In Piore’s views, immigration is “not caused by push factors in sending countries (such as low wages or high unemployment), but by pull factors in receiving societies (a chronic and unavoidable need for low-wage workers)” (Massey et. al, 2002, p.15).

These authors explained that the market in developed nations “create a demand for a particular kind of worker: one who is willing to labor under unpleasant conditions, at low wages, in jobs with great instability and little chance for advancement” (Massey et. al, 2002, p.17). While in the past this demand “was met by women, teenagers, and rural-to-urban migrants” (p.17), in today’s advanced industrial societies, women have incorporated to the job market in higher-status positions, the declining birthrates, and the expansion of formal education have produced less availability of teenagers wishing to enter the labor force at the bottom of the pyramid, and the urbanization of societies have diminished the availability of farmers and rural workers as potential sources for low-level jobs in the cities (Massey et. al, 2002). This panorama generates a “long-run demand for immigrants in developed countries” (p. 18).

Finally, social capital theory can explain why people continue to migrate, why international migration gets perpetuated (Massey et. al, 2002; Portes & Rumbaut, 2006). Social capital is “the sum of the resources, actual or virtual, that accrue to an

individual or a group by virtue of possessing a durable network of more or less institutionalized relationships of mutual acquaintance or recognition” (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992; as cited by Massey et. al, 2002, pp.18-19). Migrant networks, which are sources of social capital, stimulate the continuation of migration by reducing the costs of migrating and the risks associated with it. Massey et al. (2002) explained:

Everyday ties of friendship and kinship provide few advantages, in and of themselves, to people seeking to migrate abroad. Once someone in a person’s network has migrated, however, the ties are transformed into a resource that can be drawn upon to gain access to foreign employment and all it brings. Each act of migration creates social capital among people to whom the migrant is related, thereby raising the odds of their migration. (p.19)

This process, first identified by Myrdal (1957), and developed in a model by Douglas Massey (Portes & Rumbaut, 2006) is called cumulative causation of migration (Massey et. al, 2002). All these theories used to explain international migration (new economics of labor migration, the world systems theory, the segmented labor market theory, the social capital theory, and the cumulative causation of migration theory) can exist and interact at the same time. Massey et al. (2002) explained:

It is entirely possible for individuals to engage in cost-benefit calculations; for households to seek to minimize risk and overcome barriers to capital and credit; for both individuals and households to draw upon social capital to facilitate international movement; and for the socioeconomic context within which migration decisions are made to be determined by structural forces operating at the national and international levels, often influenced by migration itself. Thus, a synthetic approach to theory construction is in order. (p.21)

International migration can decrease, Massey et al. (2002) argued, if developing nations grow economically, if international wage gaps diminish and if well-functioning markets for capital, credit, insurance, and futures arise. At that point, a developing nation can become integrated into the global economy and can start importing labor.

“Historically, this process of development, emigration, and transition took European nations eight or nine decades, but by the late 20th century the process seemed to have been compressed into just 30 or 40 years” (p. 23).

### **The diaspora as a public of global public relations**

In public relations, different definitions have been used to characterize a public, from “classical” to contemporary ones. Dewey (1927), for instance, defined a public as “a group of people who (1) face a similar problem, (2) recognize the problem exists, and (3) organize to do something about it” (Dewey, 1927, as cited by Hallahan, 2000, p.500). Blumer (1946) also used the “active public” approach in the sense that he defined a public as a group of people who are “(1) confronted by an issue, (2) divided in their ideas about how to meet the issue, and (3) engaged in discussion about the issue” (Blumer, 1946, as cited by Hallahan, 2000, p.501).

More recent definitions compiled by Hallahan (2000) describe publics as groups with higher or lower levels of awareness and organization, with uneven levels of consciousness about facing a problem. Hallahan (2000) listed definitions of publics such as “potential or actual *audiences*, that is, receivers of messages” (p.501); “*segments*, such as a market segment, that is, a group of people who share particular demographic, psychographic or geodemographic characteristics and thus are likely to behave or respond to organizational actions or messages in a similar way” (p.501); “*communities*, that is, groups drawn together by shared experiences, values or symbols” (p.501); “*constituents*, that is, groups (such as voters) that an organization serves and to whom the organization is ethically or legally responsible” (p.501); and “*stakeholders*, that is, people who are impacted by the actions of an organization” (p.501).

In settling the discussion on whether publics have to be active and/or aware or not to be considered publics, and on whether they have to interact or not among themselves, Hallahan (2000) concluded:

One way to reconcile this problem is to define all groups to which public relations efforts are directed as publics, but to recognize that they differ in their levels of activity-passivity. . . . Thus, a public might be defined simply as a group with which an organization wishes to establish and maintain a relationship. Alternatively, a public can be defined as a group of people who relate to an organization, who demonstrate varying degrees of activity-passivity, and who might (or might not) interact with others concerning their relationship with the organization (pp. 501-502).

This study agrees with Hallahan's (2000) view that a public is a group of people that an organization wants to interact with, even if this public is not an organized entity in which their members interact and in which members recognize an issue as a common problem. In global public relations, publics have been categorized using either L.Grunig's (1992) or Hallahan's (2000) typologies, or following the geographic distinctions described by Wakefield (2008), and by Molleda (2010b), Molleda and Quinn (2004), and Molleda, Connolly-Ahern, and Quinn (2005). Nevertheless, this paper argues that those typologies and descriptions do not suffice to "place" a diaspora community in a specific segment or category.

Diaspora groups do not fit the categories or typologies of publics developed for the field of public relations by L.Grunig (1992) and Hallahan (2000), which are based on internal characteristics of the public: mainly, on the levels of collaboration or opposition toward an organization (in the case of L.Grunig's categorization), and on the levels of involvement and knowledge about an organization or issue (in the case of Hallahan's typology). Diaspora groups do not fit, either, the geographic distinction of publics in the field of global public relations offered by Wakefield (2008); and by Molleda (2010b),

Molleda and Quinn (2004), and Molleda, Connolly-Ahern, and Quinn (2005). These geographic categorizations divide the publics into publics from the home country (home public), publics from the host country (host public), and transnational publics.

### **Internal characteristics of the diaspora as a public in public relations**

Factors such as levels of collaboration, opposition, involvement, and knowledge of a public in relation to an organization are not useful to characterize a public such as a diaspora. For instance, L. Grunig (1992), based on a study of 48 organizations located in the Washington D.C. area, developed a categorization or typology of publics centered on their level of collaboration or friendliness towards the organization these publics interact with. She categorized them in a continuum that goes from the publics who tend to collaborate with the organization most of the time, to publics that tend to oppose the organization most of the time.

In L. Grunig's (1992) view, from a list of publics that include the mass media, the clientele, the community, the government, the stockholders, the activists, the labor unions, the suppliers, and the competitors, three main different groups could be formed: cooperative and autonomous publics (typically, the mass media), somewhat cooperative publics (for example, the clientele, the community, and the government), and publics who oppose the organization (stockholders, activists and, to a lesser degree, labor unions). The problem with L. Grunig's (1992) typology, for the purpose of categorizing the diaspora as a public, is that she places all the members of the same public as having the same level of collaboration or the same level of opposition towards the organization they interact with. For instance, L. Grunig's (1992) assumes that all the members of the community will have the same level of collaboration, or that all the stockholders will have the same level of opposition.

Hallahan (2000) takes L. Grunig's (1992) categorization as a starting point, and also uses Grunig and Grunig's (1992) description of models of public relations, and J. Grunig and Hunt's (1984) mention of the existence of "nonpublics," "latent publics," "aware publics," and "active publics" (p.145) to come up with a more refined typology of publics. Hallahan's (2000) main contribution is the addition of one new type of public: the inactive public.

The inactive public, according to Hallahan (2000), has a low level of knowledge and a low level of involvement with the organization. Hallahan (2000) also refined J. Grunig and Hunt's (1984) definition of the no-public by stating that the no-public has no knowledge of and no involvement at all with the organization. Hallahan's (2000) typology is, then, more detailed than L. Grunig's (1992) and J. Grunig and Hunt's (1984) descriptions, because it uses the level of involvement and the level of knowledge of the public towards the organization to define five different categories of publics: the no-public, the inactive public, the aroused public, the aware public, and the active public (Hallahan, 2000, p. 504).

Nevertheless, neither L.Grunig's (1992) categorization, J. Grunig and Hunt's (1984) description nor Hallahan's (2000) typology can be effectively used to describe the relation of a government with its diaspora. The diaspora, as a specific public for public relations, cannot be categorized in the same way as a group of stockholders or activists, because even though the diaspora group is formed by persons who share the same national origin, the composition of this public tends to be very heterogeneous and is shaped by many different influences (Portes & Rumbaut, 2006; Menjivar, 2000; Margheritis, 2007; González, 2000; González Gutiérrez, 1999; Massey et al., 2002).

The relationship that the diaspora can establish with its home government is dynamic, complex, and is influenced by many different factors.

To start with, L. Grunig's (1992) categorization is not applicable to diaspora relations because some members of the same diaspora group are going to be more collaborative and involved with the home government than others; some members are going to be more oppositional than others; some members do not really establish relationships with the home governments at all. The levels of collaboration and engagement of the diaspora members will depend, among other factors described later on in this study, on the context of exit from the home country and on the context of reception on the host country of those diaspora members (Portes & Rumbaut, 2006; Massey et. al, 2002; Menjívar, 2000; Margheritis, 2007). For that reason, the diaspora cannot fit only one of the categories L. Grunig (1992) established.

In fact, depending on variables such as the context of exit, the context of reception, the motivations of the diaspora member to migrate, the existence of social networks, and the geographic location of the diaspora member in the host country, among other factors (Portes & Rumbaut, 2006; Massey et. al, 2002), public relations academicians and practitioners could situate each diaspora member in one of the categories L.Grunig (1992) proposed, but not all the diaspora members would fit the same category: They would be placed all over the typology, depending on their specific circumstances. As a public, the diaspora community could not be placed in just one category, as L.Grunig's (1992) typology established.

Hallahan's (2000) typology is not completely useful, either, because although it considers not just the level of collaboration but also the level of involvement and the

level of knowledge of a public towards an organization, the diaspora members, as explained before, do not fit all in the same group: each member's circumstances need to be analyzed before placing the specific diaspora member in one of the categories offered in Hallahan's (2000) typology.

Hallahan's (2000) separate categories of publics are no-public, inactive public, aroused public, aware public, and active public, but a diaspora group of any national origin cannot be placed in just one or two of those categories: Its members can potentially fit all the categories, from some members being very involved and knowledgeable towards their home government and their home government's presence in the host country (through embassies, consulates, and different communication programs) to some members being not involved and not knowledgeable at all. A diaspora community is not a monolithic group; instead, segments of this group may be placed into different categories of either L.Grunig's (1992) or Hallahan's (2000) typologies.

Instead of the levels of involvement and knowledge about an organization (Hallahan, 2000), and instead of the level of collaboration or opposition towards the organization (L.Grunig, 1992), experts in anthropology, sociology, international relations, political science, and immigration, such as Portes and Rumbaut (2006); Massey et al. (2002); Menjivar (2000); González (2000); and Margheritis (2007), have indicated that the factors that seem to influence a diaspora member's level of connection with an organization such as a home country's government are diverse and complex.

**Context of exit.** One of those factors a home government has to analyze when trying to establish a relationship with a diaspora member in the host country is the reason why the person left the home country: from looking for economic advancement to escaping from war and civil conflicts. This is known as the context of exit (Portes & Rumbaut, 2006; Massey et al., 2002; Menjívar, 2000; González, 2000).

This variable could be related to the level of trust of the diaspora member in the home government. “Depending on this variable geometry of places of origin and destination, immigrant communities may be passionately committed to political causes back home, either in support of or in opposition to the existing regime; they may see themselves as representatives of their nation-state abroad; or they may turn away from all things past and concentrate on building a new life in America” (Portes & Rumbaut, 2006, p.120).

This correlation needs to be studied and needs to be proved empirically with further research, but it is expected that a person who left his or her country because of war, civil conflicts, or repression will have lower levels of trust in his or her home government, and, for that reason, will have a lower tendency to establish relationships with the home government once he or she establishes residency in the host country. This situation could change if there is a radical change in the government (for instance, a new government led by a different political party with a different political orientation) that could generate higher levels of trust.

**Context of reception.** Another factor for the home government to consider is the socioeconomic situation and the legal status that the immigrant has in the host country. This is known as the context of reception. (Portes & Rumbaut, 2006; Menjívar, 2000).

Portes and Rumbaut (2006) offered a typology of immigrants based on their legal status (unauthorized, legal, refugees, asylees), on their length of stay in the host country (temporary, permanent), and on the type of human capital they bring with them to the host country (unskilled or semiskilled laborers, skilled workers and professionals, or entrepreneurs).

In regards to the economic situation factor, and following Portes and Rumbaut's (2006) typology of immigrants, the appropriate questions to ask by the home government seem to be the following: Is the person who migrated a labor migrant, with low wages and subsistence challenges (and for that reason more concerned with making ends meet than with engaging in relationships with the home country); a short-term professional migrant (who is in the host country for a short term, for whom sending remittances is not a concern in the long run); or a long-term professional immigrant (one who tends to develop more financial stability but is then prone to relate less to their own ethnic group? Is the person an entrepreneurial migrant (whose investments may be funneled to productive projects in the host country, not in the home country), or a refugee or asylee (who is not supposed to maintain close relationships with his or her home country)?

And, besides the individual status of the immigrant, the economic context of the host country also needs to be considered by the home government when trying to establish relations with the diaspora members. For instance, when recession hits a host country, it has been established by experts in immigration that the level of remittances tend to decrease and, in some cases, immigrants decide to go back to their home country (Portes & Rumbaut, 2006). Nevertheless, this trend typically gets reversed

when the host country economy gets better: Then, immigrants tend to migrate again to the host country. These trends generated by the economic context of the host country will have an effect in the level of remittances the immigrant will send back home and in the level of investments an immigrant will undertake in the home country at a given time.

One more important variable that a home government should consider when establishing relations with diaspora members is the legal status of each diaspora member (Portes & Rumbaut, 2006; Massey et al., 2002). If the immigrant holds a legal visa or a work permit, it has a more stable situation in the host country. Although the following statement needs to be studied through empirical research, it is expected that if the immigrant has an illegal status in the host country, he or she will try to be as invisible as possible. For that reason, the level of participation of this type of immigrant in organized groups and the level of engagement of this type of immigrant with the home government will be lower, unless the diaspora member feels that the relation with the home government will, somehow, help him or her in legalizing his or her situation or defense his or her human rights in the host country.

Related to the legal status of each diaspora member is the context of reception of the host country toward a specific ethnic group (Portes & Rumbaut, 2006). The policies of the receiving government toward a specific foreign group are usually included in one of the following three possibilities: exclusion (for instance, of illegal immigrants), passive acceptance (for instance, of skilled workers deemed to be in short supply domestically), and active encouragement (for instance, of selected refugee inflows) (Portes & Rumbaut, 2006). The context of reception is important because “it affects the probability

of successful immigration and the framework of economic opportunities and legal options available to migrants” (p.93).

The social network acquired by the immigrant in the host country is another factor that a home government should consider when establishing relations with its diaspora (Portes & Rumbaut, 2006; Menjívar, 2006; González Gutiérrez, 1999). Related to the social networks is the factor of the location of the immigrant in the host country (metropolitan area versus rural settlement, for instance) (Portes & Rumbaut, 2006). Typical questions to ask are the following: Is the immigrant isolated or does he/she has a social support group? Is there a community, an association or a “colony” of persons of the same home country in the area of the host country where the home government is trying to build relations with? Is this social network conducive to job opportunities and economic advancement for the immigrants? Is this social network open to the idea of collaborating with the home government?

**Characteristics of the diaspora itself.** Another factor that should be considered by the home government when trying to establish relations with its diaspora is the immigrant’s intention (or not) of returning to his or her home country. As Margolis (1994) explained, diaspora members tend to think, at first, that their relocation in the host country is going to be temporary; in fact, many immigrants, especially from Mexico and Central America, follow a pattern of “circular migration” (Portes & Rumbaut, 2006; Massey et al., 2002; Menjívar, 2000; González Gutiérrez, 1999), in which they emigrate to the host country, work there for some years until they accumulate some capital, go back to their home country to invest that capital and, when and if the money runs out, the person goes back to the host country to work again and return again.

This “circular migration” has been studied profusely, although some scholars have noted that the trend is decreasing (Massey et al., 2002). These researchers argued that, in the case of the United States, the immigration authorities have made so difficult and so costly to cross the border in recent years, than, instead of inducing immigrants to go back to their countries for good, many immigrants are staying longer in the host country or are deciding to settle in the host country permanently (Portes & Rumbaut, 2006).

Another important factor for a home government to consider when interacting with its diaspora members is the number of years the immigrant has been living in the host country (Portes & Rumbaut, 2006; Menjivar, 2000; Massey et al., 2002): Is the person the home government trying to engage a “recent arrival” in the new environment, and, for that reason, more concerned with finding employment, paying the bills, sending money home as fast as possible, etcetera; or is this a person with more years in the host country, a person who has established a new lifestyle: a home, friends, connections with the community, and even political participation or leadership in the new environment?

Related to the previous variable is the generation to which the diaspora member belongs. Home governments should enquire if the diaspora member is a first-generation immigrant or is a second or third-generation in the host country. Research by immigration experts (Portes & Rumbaut, 2006) has shown that first-generation migrants tend to keep more in touch with the home country than second or higher generations. The second and third generations tend to go through a process of assimilation in which they acquire from language proficiency to some cultural traits of the new environment. For that reason, in varying degrees, for second and third-generation members there

tends to be a lower level of identification with the home country than for first-generation immigrants. This is a challenge for home governments that try to encourage the maintenance of a “diasporic identity” (González Gutiérrez, 1999) among its diaspora.

From the side of the home government itself, an important factor to consider is the effort placed by the home government to reach its diaspora in the host country. This effort is going to be influenced by the economic and human resources available and by the motivations the government has to reach its diaspora (González Gutiérrez, 1999; Margheritis, 2007), but also by factors such as “the existence of specific political projects, the role of some domestic actors and processes, and the nature of international agreements” (Margheritis, 2007, p. 87).

### **Geographic characterization of the diaspora as a public**

Molleda (2010b) defined home publics, host publics, and transnational publics (for the field of global public relations) from a corporate point of view, based on the location of a given public in relation to the location of the headquarters of a transnational organization (TNO) that the given public establishes relationships with. This study borrows Molleda`s (2010b) definitions but, instead of explaining the location of the public in relation to the headquarters of the TNO, it explains the location of a given public –in this case, a diaspora group—in relation to the “headquarters” of its home government. We can think of a government as a transnational organization in the sense that it has “headquarters” (all the State apparatus located in the country of origin of the diaspora group) and also transnational locations (for instance, embassies, consulates, and cultural centers located in foreign countries). So, for instance, while for Molleda (2010b), “home publics are in the country where the TNO has its headquarters” (p.682),

for this study a home public is defined as a public located in the same country as the home government.

While for Molleda (2010b), “host publics inhabit the countries where the TNO operates or intervenes in domestic affairs” (p.682), for this study a host public is defined as a foreign public, as a public located not in the government`s country of origin but in a foreign country, where the government operates through embassies, consulates, and cultural centers, but where the intervention of the government in domestic affairs is limited to the scope of diplomacy. And this study shares Molleda`s (2010b) characterization of transnational publics as publics located in several countries at the same time, which are interconnected and support each other to achieve similar goals and to advocate similar causes.

And while Molleda`s (2010b) typology of home publics, host publics, and transnational publics help to categorize many publics in global public relations, it does not suffice to categorize a diaspora group as a public in global public relations.

First, a diaspora group cannot be considered a home public. A diaspora group shares a national origin, but it is not a home public because their members are not living permanently in the home country. They are living in a host country that offers a different reality (political, economical, social, educational, and cultural) than the one in the home country. Also, the home government is not dictating, anymore, the rules this group has to follow. The diaspora is mainly following the rules of the host government.

Although the diaspora has to follow a few of the rules of the home country`s government in terms of consular issues (requirements to renew their passports, for example), the diaspora follows mainly the rules and laws of the host country (in terms of

following a process for acquiring a certain immigration status, paying taxes, benefiting from the educational system, following the rules for trade, and even in terms of following very specific conventions, such as the driving signals and rules).

Second, a diaspora group cannot be considered a host public. When defining host publics, experts like Wakefield (2008); Molleda (2010b); Molleda and Quinn (2004); and Molleda, Connolly-Ahern, and Quinn (2005) were mainly thinking of foreign publics. For instance, if a U.S. company started operations in Brazil, the publics in the host country were thought of as being the Brazilian publics, with the characteristics that Brazilians share because of their national identities. In the case of a diaspora group, it is true that their members inhabit a foreign country where the home government operates in a limited fashion with embassies, consulates, and cultural centers –and, in this regard, the diaspora group partially fits Molleda`s (2010b) definition of a host public. Nevertheless, the members of the diaspora group are not a foreign public to its home government; they just live in a context that is not the one of the country of origin.

Diaspora groups live in a host country and, although the members of the diaspora group can be more or less integrated to the host economy, society, political system, and culture, they share a national origin and a national identity (with traditions, norms, values, and beliefs) that is not erased just because this group is now living in a host country (Portes & Rumbaut, 2006; Menjívar, 2000; González Gutiérrez, 1999; Massey et al., 2002). Also, as the literature on transnationalism and on transnational communities establish, the diaspora groups, in many cases, live in the two worlds at the same time: They are physically located in the host country but they retain some or many

of their connections (social networks, political interests and even financial investments) with the home country (Basch et al., 1994; Lessinger, 1995; Schiller et al., 1999).

In the case of the diasporas of Latin American countries living in the United States, especially the ones of Mexico and Central America, the ties with the home country tend to remain strong, if not for any other reason, for the fact that they send remittances that significantly impact the economy of the home country and the well being of their relatives at home (González Gutiérrez, 1999; Leitón, 2010; Menjívar, 2000). Besides that, some diaspora members tend to invest their money in productive projects in their countries of origin and tend to spend vacations in the home country as well (González Gutiérrez, 1999). In a way, these diaspora members may be also investing in their future back home, as many of them have the intention of returning, sooner or later, to the home country. For all these reasons, the diaspora cannot be conceptualized as a typical public from the host country.

Finally, diasporas cannot always be defined as transnational or multinational publics, as Molleda (2010b) and Wakefield (2008) defined them, respectively. For Molleda (2010b), transnational publics are located in several countries at the same time, are interconnected, and support each other to advocate similar causes. For Wakefield (2008), some publics, such as activist groups, have recently been able to organize “across traditional boundaries” (p. 147) and, using the Internet to communicate, have become “multinational entities in their own right” (p. 147). Activists groups, Wakefield (2008) argued, had gained strength and global reach, and behave like transnational or multinational publics. For example, being physically located in a given country, activist groups can exert pressure in another country. Wakefield (2008) cited Friedman (2000)

to explain that groups that being in one country exert pressure against the government or multinational entities in another countries are part of a “cross-border process” (p. 150) known as “globalution or revolution from beyond the borders of any given nation” (p. 150).

In brief, transnational publics are groups that share an identity regardless of the country where they are located, and they tend to communicate with each other and to organize to achieve common goals. Diaspora groups do not always fit this definition. Even though diaspora groups sometimes associate in the same cities (for example, hometown associations or colonies), these groups tend to serve as social networks in the same city or State, but it is not all the time that these groups keep close contact with similar groups in other states, or in other countries, for that matter. Until now, some of these groups have lacked the organizational skills and cohesion to advance common goals in different countries at the same time.

So, for example, while environmentalist groups in different countries tend to communicate with each other and fight against common causes (global warming, shark fins, whale hunting, etc.), some diaspora members have tended to associate, until now, at the local and State level, not at the national level and not at the transnational or multinational level. Some diaspora groups, until now, have not reached this point. They are many times organized locally (in the same city), or at the State- or national level (in the same State or nation), but there is no organized efforts, yet, to communicate among diasporas located in different countries or to advance common goals.

There are several exceptions to this isolationist tendency, nonetheless, and it is possible to find diaspora groups that show, indeed, transnational characteristics

because their members interact with each other among different countries to advocate for common causes. This transnational trend has been facilitated by the Internet, in general, and by social media in particular, but is not the reality across all cases. These last groups described, which communicate and advocate across borders, are indeed transnational, in the sense that Molleda (2010b) and Wakefield (2008) visualized them, but not all the diaspora groups are transnational: While some are, many others lack the transnational connection with similar organizations and the common advocacy road envisioned by Molleda (2010b) and Wakefield (2008).

For all the reasons stated above, this study argues that the relationship-building process between an organization (in this case, a home government) and a diaspora group should be studied and analyzed on its own, given the particular characteristics of this public, as part of a field that this study calls diaspora relations.

### **Diaspora relations in the field of global public relations**

The authors cited throughout this paper have studied the impact of a complex list of factors in the levels of engagement and participation with an organization (such as a national government) showed among the immigrants living in a host country. Based on those authors' contributions, this study offers a definition of the diaspora as a specific public of global public relations. This study conceptualizes the diaspora as a complex public that is influenced by contextual factors both in the home and in the host country, as well as by contextual factors of the diaspora members themselves, such as socioeconomic condition, legal status, and level of organization in the host country.

The diaspora is a public that has many sublevels, and its members can be placed in different segments that can fit different categories in the typologies of public relations publics, but not just one category. The diaspora is also a mixed public in the sense that

it is not a home public, it is not a host public, and it is not, necessarily, a transnational public, but has elements of these three categories. For that reason, the diaspora is a public that should be studied in its complexity, analyzing the contextual variables of the home country, of the host country, and of the diaspora members.

To facilitate this analysis of the diaspora as a public of global public relations, it is necessary to analyze, jointly, the factors or variables of a) the home government, b) the host country, and c) the diaspora member situation in the host country, to guide the establishment and management of relationships between a home government and its diaspora.

### **Factors that Influence the Role of the Nation State in its Relation With its Transnational Communities**

While the literature on migration is abundant on the topics of immigration control by and migrant integration to the receiving countries, it is much less extensive in the analysis of “policies of sending countries (and homelands) towards their nationals abroad” (Østergaard-Nielsen, 2003b, p. 3). Within migration studies —typically developed in areas such as international relations and political science—, the attention has been focused on the receiving countries, the challenges they face, and the ways they develop or not integration policies for migrants (Østergaard-Nielsen, 2003b).

In contrast, in the “rapidly emerging research field” (Østergaard-Nielsen, 2003b, p. 3) of transnational communities and diaspora studies (typically developed in disciplines such as anthropology and sociology), the focus has been in the ties that develop—or not—between those groups and their countries of origin (Koslowski, 2005a). It has been just in the most recent years of this young 21<sup>st</sup> century that the fields of international relations and political science are starting to recognize the need and the relevance of

studying whether nation states establish relations with their transnational communities, with different levels of success. Depending on whether that relationship has been fostered initially by the nation state or by the transnational community, this field of study has been labeled State-led transnationalism or migrant-led transnationalism (Margheritis, 2007; Levitt & de la Dehesa, 2003; Goldring, 2002).

This study adopts the theoretical framework presented by authors such as Østergaard-Nielsen (2003b), Portes and Rumbaut (2006), Levitt and de la Dehesa (2003), and Koslowski (2005a) that explains how the interest of the nation-states in their diasporas has grown with the increasing participation of the diasporas in the political processes in their host countries. The terms diasporas and transnational communities are used interchangeably in this paper.

This increasing political participation by the diaspora groups or transnational communities—Koslowski (2005b) called this phenomenon “the globalization of domestic politics” (p. 25)—is explained by the aforementioned authors using three main macro structural, worldwide reasons: (1) the increase in international migration in the last 30 years, (2) the technological revolutions in transportation and in communications brought about by the Internet, and (3) the democratization processes that have occurred in both the home countries and the host countries (Koslowski, 2005b). The impact of these three factors is explained by Koslowski (2005b) as follows: “The combination of international migration, advances in transportation and communications technology, and spreading democratization fosters a globalization of the domestic politics of many States that is similar to the globalization of national economies” (p. 5).

In this section, this study reviews the literature that explains what are the macro structural, worldwide reasons why political participation of the diasporas in their host countries has increased in recent years, and the reasons why some nation states that ignored or even neglected their diasporas in the past have been recently trying to get closer to their transnational communities. It also offers an overview of the micro structural reasons identified by several authors that explain why different nation states choose specific strategies and tactics to get closer to their diasporas, or decide not to initiate this “acercamiento” (this “getting closer” or relationship building approach).

Finally, this section briefly describes some cases in Latin America where different nation states have implemented different specific tactics to approach their diasporas, with higher or lower degrees of success. The cases of Mexico, the Dominican Republic, and Argentina are briefly described as a preamble to the main goal of this dissertation: To study the cases of El Salvador and Costa Rica, and the efforts—or lack thereof—of these nation states to establish relations with their transnational communities.

### **Macro structural reasons for the increasing political participation of diasporas in their home countries**

As stated before, the three macro structural, worldwide factors that have propelled the political participation of diasporas in their home countries political life (what Koslowski, 2005b, has called “globalization of domestic politics”) are the expansion of international migration, the transportation and communications revolution, and an increasing adoption of democracy among many nation states around the world (Koslowski, 2005b).

In the case of the international migration, Koslowski (2005a) and Portes and Rumbaut (2006) explained that international agencies estimated that in the year 2000

about 175 million people around the world were living outside their State of nationality. These migrants “are coming from a greater variety of source countries and moving to a greater variety of host countries” than in the past (Koslowski, 2005b, p. 5). In absolute and relative numbers, actions of migrants have a stronger impact on their home countries now simply because of their growing number and their augmented weight.

The second factor in this equation is “the transportation and communications revolutions, which enable emigrants to maintain contact with their home states more easily” (Koslowski, 2005b, p. 25). It is true that different migrants have different socioeconomic standards in the host country, and some have legal status while others do not, which means that some can travel and communicate with more ease than others. Nevertheless, even the migrants with lower wages and an illegal status have more access to international calling cards and Internet cafes than in the past. With an investment of a few dollars, immigrants are able to call home more frequently and for longer periods (for instance, a five-dollar calling card allows a person to call from the United States to anywhere in Central America for more than one hour). Also, with a few dollars, immigrants can use the equipment in an Internet Café to communicate with their relatives and friends by e-mail or instant messaging systems such as Messenger or Skype™, and they can access information about their countries (through websites and electronic newspapers) that was not easily available one or two decades ago. Immigrants with a better socioeconomic situation and a legal status are able to even travel to their host countries more frequently than years ago, when airfares were more expensive and there were not so many discount airlines available.

The third factor that comes into play is the democratization trend that many countries around the world have experienced in the last decades. This democratization has contributed to the extended political participation of diasporas in their home countries. Koslowski (2005b) explained: “Democratization in host countries provides more conducive environments for emigrant political activity while democratization of home countries increases the chance that emigrants are able to influence their homelands’ politics” (p. 5).

Levitt and de la Dehesa (2003) explained that the shifting policies of sending country States towards their communities living abroad “are redefining the relationship between the State and its territorial boundaries” and are reconfiguring “conventional understandings of sovereignty, citizenship and membership” (p. 587). Koslowski (2005a) and Østergaard-Nielsen, (2003b) argued that the result is a type of political participation where diasporas influence both the host- and home-country foreign policies, a type of political participation that no longer can be restricted to domestic politics but in practical terms becomes the realm of international politics as traditionally understood. In this regard, Koslowski (2005b) explained:

When the domestic politics of one state actually takes place in several states, it is a dimension of politics that is neither within the individual states nor between several states. In that this political practice is not captured by state-centric international relations theories that conceptualize the world in terms of international anarchy in contrast to domestic hierarchy, the globalization of domestic politics challenges traditional conceptualizations of world politics. (pp. 5-6)

### **Reasons why nation states are getting closer to their transnational communities**

The increasing international migration, the communication and transportation revolutions, and the democratization processes around the world have combined with other factors at the national level to contribute to a growing recognition by nation states

that it is relevant and necessary for them to get closer to their transnational communities. This is happening even in the cases where these transnational communities were ignored or neglected by the nation states in the past).

The national factors that make nation states be more aware of their diasporas' strategic importance can be condensed into three main categories: the economic impact of transnational communities in the home country; the political influence that the transnational communities can exert in the sending country; and the growing expectation that nation states will defend the human rights of their migrants abroad (González Gutiérrez, 1999, 2006; Koslowski, 2005a; Smith, 2005; Levitt & de la Dehesa, 2003; Østergaard-Nielsen, 2003a, 2003b, 2003c).

The economic impact of transnational communities in the home country is felt mainly, in order of importance, through the remittances the immigrants send to their home countries, the direct investments of these immigrants in productive projects in their hometowns, and their touristic activities when they travel back home for vacations, to celebrate a national date such as independence, or to spend the holiday season with relatives and friends (González Gutiérrez, 1999, 2006; Smith, 2005; Koslowski, 2005a; Østergaard-Nielsen, 2003b).

In countries such as Mexico, El Salvador, and Dominican Republic, remittances have become an essential part of the home economy, accounting, in some cases, for more money than foreign direct investment or foreign aid (Levitt & de la Dehesa, 2003). In some of the countries mentioned before, the reception of remittances mean the difference between being above or below the poverty line for thousands of families, and it also supports the establishment of small businesses by relatives of the immigrants

who sent the money from abroad (González Gutiérrez, 1999, 2006; Délano, 2010). Tourism is also a component, because for immigrants who have a legal status and a stable socioeconomic situation in the host country, returning home one or several times a year includes spending money in the home country and bringing gifts for relatives and friends (González Gutiérrez, 1999, 2006). This economic power, in turn, provides diaspora groups with political strength in their home countries (Koslowski, 2005a).

The political impact of transnational communities in the home country is felt, mainly, in the possibility of these transnational communities influencing political decisions through direct or indirect means. Direct means include the possibility of voting in national elections by having dual citizenship, if this option is offered by both the home and host countries (Smith, 2005; Østergaard-Nielsen, 2003b). Indirect means include the possibility of voicing their opinions (without the right to vote) when dual nationality is offered as an option by both the home and host countries (Koslowski, 2005a; Østergaard-Nielsen, 2003b).

Political influence is also exerted through the financial donations to political parties and through symbolic political support (Østergaard-Nielsen, 2003b). While some host countries have rewarded transnational communities with the double citizenship and the right to vote, or at least with the opportunity to voice their points of view, other host countries have limited the influence of the transnational communities at home, worried that providing too much political power to transnational communities could backfire and jeopardize the power of the government or of the ruling political parties (Østergaard-Nielsen, 2003b; Levitt & de la Dehesa, 2003).

The size and social capital of the transnational communities explain the possibility they have of influencing the economy and the political process at home. The size and social capital the transnational communities have also explain the moral obligation that nation states feel to get involved in defending the human rights of the migrants in the host country (González Gutiérrez, 1999, 2006; Koslowski, 2005a; Smith, 2005).

The intensity and the effectiveness of this defense, though, will depend on whether the nation state is really concerned with the nationals abroad or if it is just a rhetorical game (Østergaard-Nielsen, 2003a). Also, the power of the nation state to protect the human rights of their nationals abroad will depend on the power disparity or leverage between the home and the host countries (Østergaard-Nielsen, 2003b), and on the presence of international agreements between those countries (Østergaard-Nielsen, 2003b, Levitt & de la Dehesa, 2003). In some cases, even in the absence of international agreements, the desire to follow international norms of “modern international relations” will pump up the position of the nation state as a defender of the human rights of its transnational communities (Levitt & de la Dehesa, 2003).

### **Specific (micro structural) reasons why home governments choose certain strategies and tactics, over others, to get closer to their diasporas**

Even when the reasons for the increase of political participation of the diasporas are explained, and even when the reasons for governments’ desire to get closer to their diasporas are listed, there is no simple way to predict the way nation states will behave toward their transnational communities. Even among countries with large transnational communities, where the impact of the diaspora’s actions are felt strongly in the home economy and in the home politics, governments have reacted in dissimilar ways (Østergaard-Nielsen, 2003c; Smith, 2005; Levitt & de la Dehesa, 2003). At this point it is

important to recall the literature on the relevance of contextual variables in communication, public relations, and even diplomatic processes (reviewed in a previous section in Chapter 2), as these contextual variables will give shape to different responses from the nation states.

Several authors have conducted case studies and have compared them to understand the micro structural reasons why governments choose certain strategies and tactics, over others, to get closer to their diaspora—or why these nation states have been apathetic toward this goal (Østergaard-Nielsen, 2003c; Koslowski, 2005a; Margheritis, 2007; Levitt & de la Dehesa, 2003, González Gutiérrez, 1999, 2006; Délano, 2010). Although the following list is not exhaustive, because with more case studies more variables can arise, the following are some of the contextual variables described by the aforementioned authors that can influence the response of the nation state toward its transnational community: The specific characteristics of the emigrant community (Margheritis, 2007), the existence of specific political projects that the nation state wants to promote with its diaspora (Margheritis, 2007; González Gutiérrez, 1999, 2006), the importance of specific political contexts and the role of domestic actors in influencing the relationship-building process between the nation state and its diaspora (Margheritis, 2007), the analysis of the economic and political costs versus the economic and political benefits of involving the transnational community in the political life at home (Levitt & de la Dehesa, 2003; Østergaard-Nielsen, 2003b), the nature of the international agreements developed between the home and the host countries (Margheritis, 2007; Østergaard-Nielsen, 2003b, 2003c), the desire of the nation state to follow up-to-date international norms (Levitt & de la Dehesa, 2003), the ideological

position of political parties toward the transnational communities (Levitt & de la Dehesa, 2003), and the availability of financial and human resources to accomplish this task of establishing a long-term relationship with the diaspora (Levitt & de la Dehesa, 2003; Østergaard-Nielsen, 2003b).

To expand on some of the eight contextual variables listed before, the specific characteristics of the emigrant community (Margheritis, 2007) refers to aspects such as the migrant's "level of engagement, their sense of commitment and their confidence in local and national authorities" (Østergaard-Nielsen, 2003b, p. 6). In turn, the former aspects are related to the contexts of exit from the home country and of reception in the host country experienced by the diaspora (Portes & Rumbaut, 2006).

The existence of specific political projects that the nation state wants to promote with its diaspora refers to particular goals that the governments want to accomplish, such as Mexico's goal of creating a sense of "diasporic identity" among the Mexicans living in the United States (González Gutiérrez, 1999, 2006), or such as Argentina's intent of "reversing the trend and compensating for the loss of human capital", given the high socio-economic and educational profile of the Argentines in Spain (Margheritis, 2007, p. 99). The role of political actors deal with the involvement of key, influential players who defend the standpoint of approaching the diasporas with more intensity than in the past. In Argentina, for instance, former president Nestor Kirchner played a pivotal role in the process of getting closer with that country's migrants; this had an immediate impact. Margheritis (2007) explained:

As usual, in a highly centralized presidential system with a strong tendency towards personalism and concentration of decision-making power, the President's stance translated into a rapid advance of several initiatives. This suggests the importance of specific political contexts (namely unstable

democracies with serious institutional deficiencies and crisis legacies) and actors (the executive rather than the political parties) in shaping transnational policymaking. (pp. 100-101)

The analysis of the economic and political costs versus the economic and political benefits of the participation of the diaspora in the home political life deals with aspects such as balance of power between the nation state and its diaspora, and the opposition of political parties to expanding benefits. In this respect, Østergaard-Nielsen (2003b) stated: "In particular, promises of overseas citizens' right to vote and stand in elections of their country of origin have proved difficult to push through national parliaments, because some domestic actors see more disadvantage than advantage in allowing this or it simply proves too difficult and costly to implement in practice" (p. 5).

The nature of international agreements signed (or about to sign) between home and host countries can also have an impact in the relationship established by the State with the diaspora (Margheritis, 2007), as was the case of Mexico (Østergaard-Nielsen, 2003c), which approached its diaspora in a specially intense way when trying to gain support towards signing NAFTA (the North American Free Trade Agreement, between Mexico, the United States, and Canada).

The effectiveness of all this repertoire of State-led transnational policies listed above will depend on many factors, one of the most essential being the perception, on the part of the diaspora group, that the relationship being established bring benefits to both parties (the nation state and the diaspora). On this particular, Østergaard-Nielsen (2003b) argued:

While sending countries are quick to call for their expatriate population's economic and political contribution to development in the country of origin, it is clear that most expatriates and their representative organizations expect this to be a two-way deal. Emigrants want their country of origin to support their struggle for equal rights and against discrimination in the labour

market. More established migrant and diaspora groups demand more transparency and good governance in order to feel that their remittances and foreign direct investment are spent in the best possible way. And if migrants are expected to be good representatives and to do some lobbying for their country of origin abroad, then they would often like some influence on the homeland policies that they are expected to represent. (pp. 4-5)

### **Governmentality Perspective and its Impact on the Discourse Toward the Diaspora**

In very recent years, some authors have started explaining the reasons why State-led transnational policies are increasingly using a framework that involves changes in the government's discourse and changes in the government's way of conceptualizing itself and of governing over its citizens, or, as it has been named, changes in the "governmentality" (Ragazzi, 2009; Kunz, 2008), meaning the type of governing process undertaken by the State.

Based on Michel Foucault's governmentality approach, authors such as Ragazzi (2009) and Kunz (2008) have described a trend in which, more and more, nation states have started sharing authority with non-State actors, such as the diaspora, as part of a neo-liberal governmentality, or way of governing, where the State tends to reduce its size, tends to decentralize its power, tends to weaken its welfare, and tends to responsabilize and discipline civil society actors to contribute to the common good (Kunz, 2008). As part of this new "governmentality," or governing conceptualization, States have restructured themselves in moments of crisis and have restructured their authority, but not on the basis of territory (a deterritorialized perspective), as it traditionally occurred in the past, but on the basis of membership. Ragazzi (2009) explained: "The terms `diaspora` and `global nation` imply a remapping of the boundaries of belonging, and constitute a new dichotomy between the `included` and the `excluded` which is independent of territorial considerations" (p. 389). Kunz (2008)

also indicated that “the state and civil society no longer necessarily stand in opposition, but the involvement of non-state actors in governing can be seen as a *way of governing*” (p. 4, italics in the original).

In this view, sharing the *governing* process between the State and non-State actors does not mean an erosion of the power of the State, but a different way of governing, a different governability, a different conceptualization of what governing means and of who belongs –or not—to the nation state. “Hence, a core advantage of the governmentality perspective is that instead of arguing that the state is losing the ability of regulation and control, it examines the qualitatively different ways of governing within the current era of neo-liberalism, i.e., the means through which policies are devised and implemented” (Kunz, 2008, p. 9).

As financially and politically influential non-State actors, diaspora members have recently been given the space to participate in the public life at home by some neoliberal governments (which typically gravitate toward the trend of reducing public welfare). With this participation, the boundaries between the public and the private spheres have been blurred (Ragazzi, 2009; Kunz, 2008), the responsibility of the social welfare has been placed not only in the State but also in private or social actors (the diaspora being one of those actors), and the governing process has been decentralized (Ragazzi, 2009; Kunz, 2008).

Given this blurring between the public and the private, and given this decentralization of the governing process, some governments are going through a process in which they have had to ask themselves how to turn diasporas into a political subject, how to use governmental techniques to give the diaspora a specific identity

and, as a final step, how to govern on that political subject (Ragazzi, 2009). This alternative way of governing adopts the notion that having institutionalized relations with the diaspora is a normal process (Kunz, 2008; Gamlen, 2008), but creates the challenge, for the State, of protecting the citizens' rights, including the ones of the diaspora, in a context of neoliberal restructuring and of securitization of borders (Margheritis, 2010). It also requires the evolution into a creative State (Iskander, 2010), where the State partners, negotiates and interacts with the civil society in new, more flexible ways, and it requires an underlying shift in the conceptualization of the governing process where the State is seen as an institutional complex, as an institutional bureaucracy that governs over a population, not as a rigid form of political organization based solely on the territory (Ragazzi, 2009; Kunz, 2008; Gamlen, 2008). It also requires a State that does not only serve or interact with the domestic population but with what Varadarajan called the domestic abroad (Varadarajan, 2010).

At the discourse level, as the diaspora has become an important private actor, the State has tried to re-conceptualize it and redefine it, changing its discourse and treating diaspora members not as the forgotten or as traitors but as heroes, as essential participants in the reconstruction of their nation and in the development of their nation's future (Cohen, 1996; Martínez-Saldaña, 2003; Fitzgerald, 2006). In that regard, diaspora members are seen as agents of development, but are also expected to cooperate and contribute to the home country's welfare: they are made responsible to the State (Kunz, 2008), they are pointed out as key actors in the recovery and development of their country of origin.

As a result of this redefined governing process (“governmentalité” or governmentality, in the Foucaultian perspective), the field of diaspora politics has emerged, in an effort to turn diasporas from simply an object of politics into an active subject of politics (Ragazzi, 2009). At the discourse level, as part of the diaspora politics, the governments have had to ask themselves how to use governmental and communication techniques to approach the diaspora in a different way (or “courting the diaspora”), to give the diaspora an identity and to address the diaspora in a new way (or “constructing the diaspora”), and, at the same time, to govern on this political subject (or “governing the diaspora”) (Ragazzi, 2009; Kunz, 2008; Margheritis, 2010).

### **Cases of State-Diaspora Relations in Latin America: Highlights of an Uneven Panorama**

Although it is not the purpose of this study to analyze, in depth, the cases of State-diaspora relations in countries such as Mexico, the Dominican Republic, Brazil, Haiti, and Argentina, a short description of how the nation states in those countries are establishing relations with their diasporas is included in this section because these examples guide the analysis of the cases of Central America that were studied in this dissertation. The short descriptions of these five cases in Latin America were useful to compare them to the cases of El Salvador and Costa Rica.

For the sake of consistency, these short descriptions for the cases of Mexico, Dominican Republic, Brazil, Haiti, and Argentina follow the order of the typology of State policies offered by Levitt and de la Dehesa (2003): “1) ministerial or consular reforms; 2) investment policies which seek to attract or channel migrant remittances; 3) extension of political rights in the form of dual citizenship or nationality, the right to vote from overseas, or the right to run for public office; 4) the extension of State protections or

services to nationals living abroad that go beyond traditional consular services; and 5) the implementation of symbolic policies designed to reinforce emigrants' sense of enduring membership" (pp. 589-590).

### **Mexico: the pioneer and the leader in Latin America**

Mexico is one of the few countries in Latin America that has established serious and sustained efforts to maintain long-term relations with its diaspora or transnational communities (González Gutiérrez, 1999, 2006; Délano, 2010; Smith, 2005; Massey, Durand & Malone, 2002; Goldring, 2002; Martínez-Saldaña, 2003; Félix, 2010). For example, Mexico started cultivating and expanding long-term relations with the Mexican diaspora in the United States since the 1970s (González Gutiérrez, 1999, 2006), and it formally established, in 1990, its General Directorate for Mexican Communities Abroad (Levitt & de la Dehesa, 2003; González Gutiérrez, 1999, 2006). Many more initiatives have been started ever since.

**Ministerial or consular reforms.** The General Directorate for Mexican Communities Abroad was part of Mexico's Secretariat of Foreign Affairs and was created in 1990 (González Gutiérrez, 1999, 2006; Levitt & de la Dehesa, 2003), in part, by pressure of Mexican-American organizations (Levitt & de la Dehesa, 2003). This program maintained linkages with Mexican-American hometown organizations in the United States and offered different services to emigrants.

In 2001, it was also created the Presidential Office for Mexicans Abroad, a cabinet-level agency. As this office was criticized for having duplicate functions with the general directorate, in 2002 President Vicente Fox merged both entities together under the National Council for Mexican Communities Abroad (NCMCA), under the Secretariat of Foreign Affairs (Levitt & de la Dehesa, 2003). Along with the general directorate and

the presidential office and, later, the NCMCA, the Mexican consulates have assumed a stronger role with Mexican communities in the United States. Levitt and de la Dehesa (2003) explained: “Whereas twenty years ago, the purview of Mexican consulates was limited to the standard of issuing documentation, today each consulate has a section in charge of extending protection and legal advice to emigrants, as well as at least one staff person linked to the DGMCA [now NCMCA]” (pp. 590-591).

The consulates are trying to help Mexican immigrants in the United States in the following ways: They help immigrants to keep in touch with State and municipal authorities for the promotion of productive investment and for the construction of local infrastructure; the consulates organize events that foster solidarity (for example, sports competitions, business meetings, legal counseling, etc.), and the consulates recognize migrants as valid spokespersons and back their efforts as organizations (González Gutiérrez, 1999). Also, the consulates are trying to offer respect to emigrants by facilitating consular processes. In this regard, González Gutiérrez (1999) explained: “The growth and consolidation of such government programs as the Paisano Program, created in 1989 to combat the extortion, abuse of authority, and burdensome administrative procedures that Mexicans living abroad frequently experienced when they returned temporarily, give concrete content to the sense of belonging that the Mexican government promotes abroad” (González Gutiérrez, p. 565).

**Investment policies to attract or channel migrant remittances.** Remittances are an important source of foreign currency in Latin America and, in six Latin American countries (Haiti, Nicaragua, El Salvador, Jamaica, Ecuador, and the Dominican Republic), the money sent home by migrants constitute at least 10% of the GDP (Levitt

& de la Dehesa, 2003). For those reasons, attracting migrant remittances is a key activity for the nation states in the region.

Mexico is aware of the importance of remittances and has implemented several measures to channel this money. Initially developed at the State level in the 1990s, different Mexican states started developing matching-fund programs where state offices matched “remittances sent by emigrants to support public work projects” (Levitt & de la Dehesa, 2003). Today, there is also a federal program, popularly known as the “tres por uno” (three for one), in which the Mexican government gives three dollars for every dollar sent by emigrants to fund public work projects. From the three dollars given by the government, one dollar goes to municipal projects, one goes to state projects and one goes to national projects (Félix, 2010). Mexican authorities have also negotiated with the money-transferring industry in the United States to obtain lower rates from the remittance sending agencies for Mexicans who transfer money back home (Levitt & de la Dehesa, 2003).

**Extension of political rights.** Since 1996, Mexico offers dual nationality (the possibility of having State membership in two different countries). Dual citizenship, which, as Levitt and de la Dehesa (2003) explained, also includes right and benefits such as voting or holding office in two different countries, was also instituted in 1996, but “contingent upon the creation of a new National Citizens Registry and the issuance of a new National identity Card”, tasks that were not completed in time for the 2000 presidential elections (Levitt & de la Dehesa, 2003, p. 595).

Without the option of absentee voting, the political strength of immigrants was not as intense as expected because many of them could not leave the United States in

order to go and vote in Mexican territory. It was just in the last Mexican presidential election, in 2006, that constitutional reforms were finally put in place so that Mexican immigrants could use the absentee vote (the possibility of voting while being physically in the United States instead of in Mexico). Still, as the process is new, of more than one million people eligible and registered to take advantage of the absentee vote, only about 40,000 immigrants actually voted in the 2006 Mexican elections (Félix, 2010). In terms of holding office, emigrants have been included on the candidate lists for federal deputy and as candidates for the state legislature since 2001 (Levitt & de la Dehesa, 2003).

**Extension of State protections or services.** Besides consular services, Mexico has extended State protections or services to its diaspora. For instance, the government created, through its consulates, “a programme providing literacy training and primary and secondary schooling for adults” (Levitt & de la Dehesa, 2003). Also, the Mexican government promotes campaigns and produces informational materials to advance causes such as enrolling the repatriated children in Mexican schools or fostering good health between communities of Mexican origin in the United States (González Gutiérrez, 1999). As part of this, the Mexican government sends books to elementary schools and public libraries in the United States (González Gutiérrez, 1999).

Besides, the government sends advisers to train teachers in the United States, making it possible for Mexicans in that country to obtain their high school equivalency (Levitt & de la Dehesa, 2003). It also created, in cooperation with U.S. school boards, the Document for Transference of the Emigrant Bi-national Student, which facilitates “a student’s passage from one country to the other without having to repeat grades” (Levitt & de la Dehesa, 2003, p. 597). Finally, the Mexican government offers emigrants health

insurance packages that cover their families in Mexico, and it uses communication strategies (news conferences, speeches, news releases, etc.) to condemn human rights abuses against Mexicans in the United States (Levitt & de la Dehesa, 2003).

**Symbolic policies to reinforce the diasporic identity.** To reinforce the diasporic identity, the Mexican government uses strategies and tactics that involve communication and relationship building. For instance, the Mexican government establishes community relations through visits of Mexican-American delegations to Mexico, through meetings between the leaders of immigrant clubs and immigrant organizations and the authorities in their states and regions of origin (both in Mexico and in the United States), through soccer tournaments in the United States, and through youth encounters in Mexico for Mexican-American youth (González Guitérrez, 1999). The Mexican government also promotes culture through folklore and art exhibitions, informational campaigns about the Mexican holidays and celebrations, and art contests for children, among other initiatives (González Gutiérrez, 1999).

Mexico is promoting this diasporic identity through short-term goals and long-term policies: The former include government policies; the latter refer to State policies. Government policies try to establish short-term connections with elites and leaders in the community; State policies try to develop long-term relations with immigrants of first generation and their children (González Gutiérrez, 1999). The ultimate goal is to promote “the notion that the government cares for its nationals abroad” (Levitt & de la Dehesa, 2003, p. 598). Specifically, besides the activities mentioned before (such as development of information materials, organization of art exhibitions, etc.), Mexico has gotten involved in many other initiatives: organization of international sports events,

annual pilgrimages for national holidays, and promoting fundraising efforts by Mexican Americans to benefit their communities of origin, among others (González Gutiérrez, 1999).

**Using technology to connect with the Mexican diaspora.** Currently, the Mexican “connection” with its diaspora keeps functioning through different means. One of the ways the Mexican State “connects” with the Mexicans living in the United States is through information and networking tools offered on its website, at <http://www.ime.gob.mx>, which is the Web portal for the ‘Instituto de los Mexicanos en el Exterior’ (Institute of the Mexicans Abroad).

In a search conducted on June 22, 2011, it was possible to find, in this website, useful information for Mexican immigrants in the United States, such as cultural activities, sports activities (tournaments, associations, training clinics, etc.), educational opportunities, financial education, gastronomy information, a directory of community organizations, a list of productive and investment projects, information about remittances, health content, and information on how to get loans to buy a home. There were also news of interest for the immigrants in the United States, as well as services such as a directory of Mexican organizations in the United States, a calendar of events, statistics about the number of Mexicans living abroad, statistics specific for the state of Arizona, and related links to organizations such as embassies, consulates, and the Mexican Institute of Immigration. The website seemed to keep the information up to date (for instance, it was offering information about the immigration law that was recently put into effect in Arizona, and it included an updated calendar of events), and it had a simple design, with clean lines and a simple navigation.

## **The Dominican Republic: Trying to follow the Mexican example**

The case of the Dominican Republic is similar to the Mexican case in the sense that this Caribbean country has a large number of emigrants in the United States that profoundly impact the Dominican economy through their remittances. It is estimated that remittances constitute, at least, 10% of that country's GDP (Levitt & de la Dehesa, 2003). For those reasons, the Dominican government has implemented some measures to establish a closer relation with its diaspora, but to a lesser extent than the Mexican government.

**Ministerial or consular reforms.** The Dominican Republic has focused on restricting immigration, mainly from Haiti, rather than in opening spaces for its migrants through ministerial or consular reforms. In this regard, Howard (2003) explained: "In sum, enduring transnational ties between households and individuals have not been replicated or acted upon by Dominican governments whose policies confront the fear of a perceived demographic threat from immigration, rather than enhance the economic possibilities for migration-led development" (p. 75).

**Investment policies to attract or channel migrant remittances.** With a limited scope, Dominican consulates try to attract investments of migrants in the island by creating home-province organizations. These entities serve several purposes: They help maintain the diasporic identity, attract donations, and organize events to raise funds for the communities they represent. Through these events, the home-province organizations have bought ambulances, medical equipment, schools buses, fire-fighting equipment, and other donations that are sent to the home country (Levitt & de la Dehesa, 2003).

**Extension of political rights.** Dual citizenship has existed in the Dominican Republic since 1994. In fact, several presidents of the Dominican Republic have also had citizenship of the United States and, frequently, political candidates court the vote of Dominican Americans by paying visits to New York, by organizing parades and fundraisers there during election periods, and by opening offices in the United States, mainly in New York (Howard, 2003). A law from 1997, Electoral Law 275-97, which went into effect in 2004, finally permitted Dominican citizens living in the United States to vote in the Dominican presidential elections from abroad and to run for office (Levitt & de la Dehesa, 2003). This happened, for the first time, in the elections of May 2004 (Castro, 2004). The extension of political rights was granted after a long process in which Dominican emigrants in the United States, especially in New York, organized meetings, in the 1980s and 1990s, to request constitutional reforms to allow dual citizenship (Levitt & de la Dehesa, 2003).

**Extension of State protections or services.** Different than in Mexico, the services that the Dominican government offers to its emigrants in the United States “do more to promote their continued participation in island life than to ease their lives in the United States” (Levitt & de la Dehesa, 2003, p. 597). Those services include the following: When migrants return home, they can import their belongings, including one car per household, without paying taxes; customs officers in each Dominican consulate help migrants complete their paperwork before they leave the United States; and returnees can buy housing units built by the government specifically for them to purchase (Levitt & de la Dehesa, 2003). The system, Levitt & de la Dehesa (2003) explained, works in the following way: “Prospective buyers take out mortgages with

designated U.S. banks. They have up to 15 years to repay their loans, with the government covering 60% of the original down payment” (p. 597).

**Symbolic policies to reinforce diasporic identity.** The Dominican consulates organize cultural events and the government has opened ‘casas de cultura’ (cultural houses) in areas where Dominican population is large in the United States (Levitt & de la Dehesa, 2003). Contrary to the Mexican case, the Dominican Republic is not using the opportunities that the Ministry of Foreign Affairs’ website could provide in connecting with the Dominican diaspora. In the homepage of the Ministry’s website, located at <http://www.mirex.gov.do/default.aspx>, there was not even a single mention, let alone a defined section, for information devoted to Dominicans living abroad. The search was performed on November 30, 2010. At least in the website, the diaspora group seems to be invisible.

#### **Haiti: limited resources limit initiatives**

Haiti is another country with a large amount of emigrants living in the United States. Nevertheless, as a poorer country than Mexico or the Dominican Republic, Haiti has had limited resources to establish strategies and tactics to get closer to its diaspora. It has given, though, a few steps toward that direction.

**Ministerial or consular reforms.** According to Levitt & de la Dehesa (2003), Haiti’s government created the Office of Diasporic Affairs in the late 1980s and placed it under the Office of the President in 1991. The Office of Diasporic Affairs has maintained contact with the large numbers of Haitian immigrants who have even created committees of citizens in some cities of the United States. In 1994, Haiti opened the Ministry for Haitians Living Abroad.

**Investment policies to attract or channel migrant remittances.** Attracting and channeling migrant remittances is essential for Haiti, a country for which remittances account for at least 17% of its GDP (Levitt & de la Dehesa, 2003), although others calculate it reaches 25% of its GDP (Speri, 2010). Nevertheless, the Ministry for Haitian Communities Abroad has not been effective in establishing a program to attract funds (Levitt & de la Dehesa, 2003), “in part because officials felt the government had to earn emigrants’ trust before approaching them for support” (p. 593). There is, nonetheless, a database to keep track of the human capital of emigrants. The database lists the skills of Haitians living in the United States (Levitt & de la Dehesa, 2003).

**Extension of political rights.** The extension of political rights has been an unreach goal in Haiti. There have been attempts to reform this rule, but the 1987 Constitution establishes that Haitians who adopt another nationality cannot vote or hold office in Haiti (Speri, 2010). Furthermore, Haitian immigrants cannot run for office unless they have lived in Haiti the five consecutive years previous to the elections for which they run for office. Moreover, absentee voting is not allowed in Haiti (Speri, 2010). These situations have created resentment among the Haitian diaspora members, as they feel the country looks for their support during difficult times, such as after the earthquake of January 2010, but gives them no political power in the island. No special extensions of State protections or services or symbolic policies to reinforce the diasporic identity were identified in the case of Haiti.

### **Brazil: a different context**

Brazil has been fast in promoting measures that benefit its diaspora, but this can be explained by the fact that only about 1% of Brazilians live abroad, so, implementing these advances is an easier task than doing so in countries such as Mexico or the

Dominican Republic, where the diaspora is large and its political impact is strong (Levitt & de la Dehesa, 2003).

**Ministerial or consular reforms.** In 1995, the Brazilian government transformed its office responsible for consular affairs into a General Directorate and, as part of it, created a Unit for Assistance to Brazilians, to deal with emergency situations faced by Brazilians abroad (Levitt & de la Dehesa, 2003). One year later, consulates started organizing the Councils of Citizens to attract community leaders living abroad and also initiated a program of “mobile consulates” to bring consular services to Brazilians living far from the official consulates (Levitt & de la Dehesa, 2003).

**Investment policies to attract or channel migrant remittances.** After Mexico, Brazil receives the second largest volume of remittances in Latin America. Nationally, given the large size of Brazil, the impact of remittances is important, but it is even stronger at the local level. For instance, the city Governador Valadares, in the state of Minas Gerais, has 15% of its population living abroad and remittances have caused the dollarization of the economy there (Levitt & de la Dehesa, 2003).

Compared to Mexico, the Brazilian federal government has been “much less active in initiating programs to attract funds” (Levit & de la Dehesa, 2003, p.593), but certain state and municipal governments in Brazil have played this role. With different levels of success, cities such as Governador Valadares have created funds with high interest rates for monies invested by emigrants. In 2001, the federal government created the Mutual Fund for Investment in Emerging Enterprises, which is mainly targeted toward living-abroad Brazilians who want to open businesses at home. This initiative started to attract, mainly, Brazilians living in Japan (Levitt & de la Dehesa, 2003).

**Extension of political rights.** Brazil's diaspora had a unique situation in terms of obtaining political rights: Emigrants received them without even asking, through a top-down process (Jones-Correa, 2001). The right to vote abroad was included in Brazil's electoral code since 1965, and dual citizenship was granted in 1994 "with little pressure from Brazilians overseas" (Levitt & de la Dehesa, 2003, p. 596). Different politicians have expressed that these reforms were taken to follow international norms, modernization processes, democratization trends, and globalization outgrowth (Levitt & de la Dehesa, 2003). In that regard, international norms "do not just open new opportunities for migrants. They also function to set limits on how far sending states are willing to go" (p. 600).

**Extension of State protections or services.** Brazilian consulates, in a smaller scale than Mexican consulates, have also offered some special State protections or services to their emigrants. For instance, the Ministry of Education of the state of Paraná started a pilot program in Japan offering emigrants the possibility of earning the high-school degree from abroad. In Boston, the consulate distributes books to bilingual education programs in the region and it supported the non-government Brazilian Business Network, which promotes the development of emigrants' small businesses (Levitt & de la Dehesa, 2003).

**Symbolic policies to reinforce diasporic identity.** There have been a few initiatives to reinforce the diasporic identity. For instance, in 1997, the Brazilian consulate in Boston organized the Brazilian Conference on Science and Technology at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology. More than 80 representatives from Brazil attended the three-day event "to discuss work options in Brazil for Brazilian students in

science and technology” (Levitt & de la Dehesa, 2003, p. 594). Activities like this show an interest of the government to keep in touch and to “stem the flow of brain drain” (p. 594). Also, Brazil’s highest civilian award, the Order of Rio Branco, has been given a couple of times to Brazilians living abroad, which helped recognize the work done by Brazilians overseas and, at the same time, received media coverage both in the United States and Brazil. Other activities have been the organization of creative-writing contests among second-generation immigrants by the consulate in Boston (Levitt & de la Dehesa, 2003).

### **Argentina: specific steps to connect with the diaspora in Spain**

Argentina has a different situation than countries such as Mexico and the Dominican Republic. This South American country has a relatively small emigrant community and these emigrants are, in general, well educated or highly skilled. Besides, they have a relatively low level of organization in emigrant associations or groups (Margheritis, 2007). Probably for those reasons, the relatively scarce efforts of the government to connect with them have been targeted to attract back the highly skilled professionals who have fled the country.

**Ministerial or consular reforms.** As early as 1984, after the return to a democratic government, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in Argentina created a commission “to advise the presidency on matters of return migration and other issues” (Margheritis, 2007, p. 92). This was followed by the creation or expansion of offices that addressed emigrants’ demands and the expansion, in terms of personal and functions, of the Argentines Abroad Office, which is part of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. This office was also upgraded from Department to Dirección (directorate) in the organizational structure of the ministry. Besides, in 1998, the International Affairs Office

was created as part of the National Migration Office (Ministry of the Interior) (Margheritis, 2007).

**Investment policies to attract or channel migrant remittances.** Attracting or managing remittances has not been a priority for the Argentine government, but there are certain initiatives that have been taken to facilitate processes such as sending remittances or obtaining tax exemptions for returnees who want to send home their personal belongings (Margheritis, 2007). That is the spirit of Title IX of Migration Law 25,781, passed in 2003 and effective in January 2004.

**Extension of political rights.** Argentines living abroad have the right to vote since 1991, after Law 24,007 was passed (Margheritis, 2007). In 2004, the Province 25 Program (Programa Provincia 25) was launched by the Ministry of the Interior. It was implemented just after 2007, and although this program has ambitious goals, such as facilitating some procedures (such as passport and ID renewals), increasing emigrants' electoral participation, homogenizing the format of the emigrants' associations, and allocating seats in congress for emigrants' representation (Margheritis, 2007). In a search done by the author of this dissertation in the Argentine's Ministry of Interior's website (at [www.mininterior.gov.ar](http://www.mininterior.gov.ar)), on October 8, 2010, the 'Programa Provincia' 25 was just one Web page out of the whole online portal, in which the Ministry asked the migrants to fill a form (full name, e-mail, country of residence, Argentine province where the person was originally from), to get to know how many Argentines conform the nation. The Web page linked to another page with a list of functions that Program 25 will have (in future tense).

**Extension of State protections or services.** Through bilateral agreements and through the work of some consulates, the Argentinean government has tried to facilitate certain procedures for emigrants, “such as being connected to embassies and consulates, voting, renewing IDs and other paperwork” (Margheritis, 2007, p. 96), including validating driving licenses.

**Symbolic policies to reinforce diasporic identity.** Some embassies and consulates have tried to get closer to the Argentines living abroad. For instance, the embassy and consulate in Madrid, Spain, has collaborated, formally and informally, with the cultural activities organized by the Casa Argentina (the Argentine “house”), an association of Argentines living in that Spanish city. Other “casas” exist in other cities, but their contact with the Argentine government has been uneven, sporadic (Margheritis, 2007). The contacts between the government and the emigrants’ associations in Spain has been “friendly but have not yet acquired a regular or formal character” (Margheritis, 2007, p. 95).

Another initiative is the ‘Raíces’ (roots) Program, implemented by the Ministry of Education in the mid 2000s, which promotes “the permanent residence of national researchers in Argentina and collaboration links with Argentine researchers residing abroad” (Margheritis, 2007, p. 96). It includes subsidies to encourage professionals to return home, for instance, by organizing scientific activities in Argentina during the researcher’s sabbatical year.

### **Lessons learned from these five cases**

After briefly describing the cases of Mexico, the Dominican Republic, Haiti, Brazil and Argentina, it is clear that the approach these governments have had toward their diasporas has been uneven and has been marked by contextual factors. Mexico, the

Dominican Republic and Haiti share the strong dependency of their economies from the remittances sent by the diaspora groups living in the United States. They also share the large number of diaspora members they have residing in that country.

Nevertheless, while Mexico has had a progressive behavior –started in the 1970s and developed with more strength since the 1990s—to connect with its nationals living abroad, the Dominican Republic and Haiti have lagged behind in these efforts. It is true that Mexico is a larger, richer country than the Dominican Republic or Haiti, and that Mexico shares its border with the United States, which is not the case of the other two countries, but yet, besides the geographical closeness, Mexico has exhibited political determination to improve the living standards of Mexicans living in the United States through modernizing consular processes, through different cultural and educational activities, and through the diplomatic defense of their human rights. Also, the Mexican discourse toward the diaspora has changed over the last decades, from diaspora members being forgotten, or even pointed out as traitors, to be considered saviors of the home economy, almost heroes (Martínez Saldaña, 2003).

Argentina and Brazil are located on the other side of the continuum: These are big countries, with better developed economies than Dominican Republic or Haiti, and even though these countries are farther from the United States and do not depend from the remittances sent from that country to their local economies, in some regards they have exhibited a more forward-looking approach to connect with their diasporas than Haiti or the Dominican Republic. Even though Brazil and Argentina are less dependent from the remittances sent from the United States, they have showed a more defined political strategy towards approaching the diaspora, a more coherent discourse, and more

involvement in these issues on the part of the executive power and of the political parties. This reality of doing more for their diasporas even if they are farther from the host country than other countries such as Haiti and the Dominican Republic could sound contradictory, but it is also true that both Brazil and Argentina have less nationals living abroad, which makes easier to handle the policies toward them and to bring the political parties to agreements. What these five examples show is that, for establishing diaspora relations, it is necessary to analyze the contextual factors of the home country, of the host country, and of the diaspora group itself, because different realities will determine and explain the different responses from the nation states.

### **Other cases around the world**

Many more cases around the world can be found where States (home countries) have started to get involved with their diasporas living in one or several host countries. The reasons why these interactions occur fit the previous macro structural factors described by Koslowski (2005a) and the micro structural reasons listed by Margheritis (2007), Levitt and de la Dehesa (2003), and Østergaard-Nielsen (2003b), among others.

It is beyond the scope of this study to describe in detail cases outside of Latin America, but State-supported transnational processes have also occurred between States and diasporas of Turkey (Ögelman), Israel (Lahav & Arian, 2005), China (Freedman, 2005), India (Kurien, 2005), Russia (Saunders, 2005); Armenia (Panossian, 2003), Cyprus (Demetriou, 2003), and in the case of the Kurds in Germany (Lyon & Ucarer, 2005).

In Central America, the most relevant case is the one of El Salvador citizens in the United States (Menjívar, 2000), but the specific relation between the State and the Salvadorans abroad has not been studied in depth. The rest of Central America is even

more under researched, which is why this study contributes to the development of knowledge in the field and tries to fill a gap in the literature by exploring the type of relation established between the States of El Salvador and Costa Rica, and their respective transnational communities.

In order to fill this gap and understand the Costa Rican and Salvadoran government viewpoint about their diaspora relations' efforts and motives, the following research questions guided the inquiry for this dissertation:

- How do Central American governments establish their communication goals and objectives with their diasporas? What are their motives? What are their expectations?
- What entity or entities in the government are in charge of developing and accomplishing these communication goals and objectives with the diasporas?
- How do governments integrate the diasporas in these communication objectives?
- What is the impact of contextual variables such as the availability of resources on the part of the governments to engage the diasporas, or the political relevance ascribed by each government to its diaspora community, in this relationship building process?

### CHAPTER 3 METHODOLOGY

As stated in the introduction and as referenced in different occasions in the literature review, this dissertation tries to understand how and why the governments of two different countries in Central America—Costa Rica, and El Salvador—interact with their diasporas. This study also offers theoretical propositions and a model of State-diasporas relations from the government viewpoint or, as I call them from now on, interchangeably, of diaspora relations.

A model is a representation of a portion of reality that highlights “what are considered to be key elements or parts of the object or process and the connections among them. A model is not a mirror image of reality but merely makes salient certain aspects of reality” (Shoemaker, Tankard, & Lasorsa, 2004, p. 110). A model is used to focus the attention on certain parts of the process, and how those parts are interconnected, and, because it is a simplification of reality, a model is an efficient tool for theory building (Shoemaker, Tankard, & Lasorsa, 2004).

To inform this model of diaspora relations, theoretical perspectives from public relations, sociology, anthropology, political sciences, and international relations were used to borrow definitions, concepts, and descriptions of processes, following an interdisciplinary approach. Also to inform this model, this dissertation accepts the views of contextualized research and of contingency theory that environmental variables of the home country, of the host country, and of the diaspora itself have to be analyzed to understand the process by which a government, such as the one of Costa Rica or El Salvador, establishes diaspora relations.

The methodology this dissertation used is the case study approach, in which an in-depth description and analysis of a case or several cases is used to study a phenomenon (Stake, 1995; Yin, 2003; VanWynsberghe & Khan, 2007; Creswell, 2007). In this study, I used the collective case study approach, as two different cases were analyzed to study diaspora relations: the government viewpoint in the cases of Costa Rica and El Salvador.

### **Use of Qualitative Research**

I used qualitative research because the topic and the research questions of this dissertation lent themselves to an interpretive perspective, given that the aim was to understand how and why governments in two countries in Central America try to establish relations with their diaspora communities in the United States, and how the contextual variables affect the process. Qualitative research is appropriate to use, among many other occasions, when a researcher needs to explore a phenomenon that has not been explored before among a specific group or population, when the researcher wants to identify variables that can later on be measured or when the researcher wants to hear new or different voices (Creswell, 2007).

Qualitative research is also used when the researcher needs to investigate present day concerns (Yin, 2003) and when he/she needs “a complex, detailed understanding of the issue. This detail can only be established by talking directly with people, going to their homes or places of work, and allowing them to tell the stories unencumbered by what we expect to find or what we have read in the literature” (Creswell, 2007, p. 40).

Qualitative research was also appropriate for this dissertation because it is used when “we want to understand the contexts or settings in which participants in a study

address a problem or issue. We cannot separate what people say from the context in which they say it—whether this context is their home, family, or work” (Creswell, 2007, p. 40). Finally, qualitative research was appropriate in this case because it was a good fit. “We also use qualitative research because quantitative measures and the statistical analyses simply do not fit the problem. Interactions among people, for example, are difficult to capture with existing measures.” (Creswell, 2007, p. 40)

Qualitative research, according to Creswell (2007), follows specific procedures, from the conceptualization of the study to the presentation of the final report. Creswell (2007) explained:

Qualitative research begins with assumptions, a worldview, the possible use of a theoretical lens, and the study of research problems inquiring into the meaning individuals or groups ascribe to a social or human problem. To study this problem, qualitative researchers use an emerging qualitative approach to inquiry, the collection of data in a natural setting sensitive to the people and the places under study, and data analysis that is inductive and establishes patterns or themes. The final written report or presentation includes the voices of participants, the reflexivity of the researcher, and a complex description and interpretation of the problem, and it extends the literature or signals a call for action (p. 37).

The previous definition, which emphasizes in the process of research, lists the main characteristics of qualitative research, one of the most important being its emerging approach to inquiry. This means that, in qualitative research, researchers use an emergent design. Creswell (2007) concisely summarized its characteristics:

The research process for qualitative researchers is emergent. This means that the initial plan for research cannot be tightly prescribed, and that all phases of the process may change or shift after the researchers enter the field and begin to collect data. For example, the questions may change, the forms of data collection may shift, and the individuals studied and the sites visited may be modified. The key idea behind qualitative research is to learn about the problem or issue from participants and to address the research to obtain that information. (p. 39)

In this regard, this dissertation used a pre-defined research design that guided the process of data collection. For instance, there were two countries selected in advance, an intention of analyzing documents such as government strategic plans and presidential speeches, a possible number of in-depth interviews with key informants to conduct in each country (from five to 10 interviews per country), an intention of conducting most or all of these interviews face to face or over the phone, and even an initial questionnaire to use as a reference during those in-depth interviews. Nevertheless, this design was emerging by nature, and it was adapted as the research process developed.

### **Philosophical Assumptions of Qualitative Research**

When a researcher realizes or decides that conducting qualitative research is the most appropriate methodology for the issue being studied, he or she is also making some assumptions about the nature of reality (ontology), about the role of the researcher (epistemology), the role of values (axiology), the language of research (rhetoric), and the process of research (methodology) (Guba & Lincoln, 1988). In qualitative research, the researcher is usually also upfront about the paradigm or worldview he or she supports when doing research. For those reasons, I will briefly discuss the assumptions and the paradigms that guide my research project.

#### **Assumptions**

By choosing to conduct qualitative research, I endorsed the idea that reality is not unique: There is a real world out there, but that world can be seen differently through different eyes. In qualitative research, the opinions and points of view of the participants in the research project are essential to understand the phenomenon at hand (Guba & Lincoln, 1988). For that reason, reality is understood as multiple, because each

participant sees and understands reality in different ways (Guba & Lincoln, 1988). The implication of the subjective nature of reality for qualitative research is that the researcher should use “quotes and themes in words of the participants” and should provide “evidence of different perspectives” (Creswell, 2007, p. 17).

In terms of the epistemology (or how do we know what we know), in qualitative research it is expected that the researcher interacts closely with the participants, that he or she “collaborates, spends time in the field with the participants, and becomes an insider” (Creswell, 2007, p. 17). In terms of the axiology (the role of values), in qualitative research there is no quest for objectivity: It is accepted and acknowledged that the researcher bring his or her own values to the research project and that biases play a role along the process of doing research. Creswell (2007) explained: “All researchers bring values to a study, but qualitative researchers like to make explicit those values” (p.18). For that reason, in the research report, the researcher “openly discusses values that shape the narrative and includes his or her own interpretation in conjunction with the interpretations of participants” (Creswell, 2007, p. 17).

The rhetorical style in qualitative research is also flexible. The final report tends to be written using a personal voice in which the researcher is allowed to write in a literary, informal style. Instead of dry listings of data and conclusions, the researcher is allowed to use narrative and first-person accounts, and he or she tends to use “the language of qualitative research” (Creswell, 2007, p. 17), which includes words like “understand,” “discover” or “meaning,” or the use of models and propositions. In terms of the methodology, qualitative research “uses inductive logic, studies the topic within its context, and uses an emerging design” (Creswell, 2007, p.17), which allows the

researcher to work with particular cases or experiences, to describe in detail the context and to revise its methods along the process, both before and after data collection.

### **Paradigm or Worldview**

A paradigm or worldview is “a basic set of beliefs that guide action” (Guba, 1990, p. 17, as cited by Creswell, 2007, p. 19). A qualitative researcher can bring one or several paradigms “to the table” when he or she conducts research. Creswell (2007) identified four worldviews that typically inform qualitative research: postpositivism, constructivism, advocacy/participatory, and pragmatism (Creswell, 2007). Although they are opposite in nature, I tend to identify myself with some elements of postpositivism and with some elements of pragmatism.

Creswell (2007) described postpositivist qualitative researchers as those who engage in qualitative research using “a scientific approach to research. The approach has the elements of being reductionistic, logical, with an emphasis on empirical data collection, cause-and-effect oriented, and deterministic based on a priori theories” (p. 20). I appreciate some elements of postpositivism because I had quantitative research training—as well as qualitative—in the College of Journalism and Communications at the University of Florida, and because I have conducted other research projects using quantitative research methods such as quantitative content analysis. I also tend to identify myself as a “partial postpositivist” in the sense that I feel comfortable with following a certain structure, a certain order, in my research path. I appreciate the flexibility qualitative research allows, but I also organize myself better when I can follow a basic step-by-step process that I can adjust for my particular research goals.

Besides, I feel as a “partial postpositivist” in the sense that even though qualitative research is not generalizable and is not replicable, I expect that my findings eventually

contribute to a body of knowledge in which different national realities can be compared to value the similarities, the differences, and the reasons why those similarities and differences exist between different countries. For that reason, even though I used an emergent design, even though I agree that there are multiple realities, and I agree that research is value-driven, I am also acknowledging that I drew information obtained from my literature review to guide the development of my questionnaire, to inform the variables that were likely to arise in this study, and to place my interpretations of the results in a broader, comparative context.

For instance, if it is said by other authors that one reason why nation states are interested in establishing relations with their diasporas is because of the financial impact that remittances have in the home countries (and, indeed, this is a conclusion that several authors have pointed out after analyzing cases in other regions of the world), I did not ignore that information. On the contrary, I decided that at least one of my questions should explore the impact of the diaspora group`s remittances in the economy of the countries selected for my study. There was a chance that the issue was not going to come up in the conversation without me having to ask about it, but I was prepared to probe the question to gather information that I considered valuable to compare the countries studied by other authors with the countries in my study. I understand that this financial information could be collected from the central banks of each of the selected Central American countries, and, indeed, I did obtain the hard data from them, but the question about remittances helped me determine the subjective relevance each government official ascribed to the impact of the monies sent by their nationals living abroad.

In this regard, I adopted the premises of the emerging design, meaning that the emerging design is one that gets adjusted as the research process advances but, at the same time, I consciously chose to review the literature a priori to guide my inquiry. This combination of postpositivism elements and qualitative research is not infrequent, and even Creswell himself recognizes that he is identified as a postpositivist qualitative researcher (Creswell, 2007).

At the same time, I agree with some principles of pragmatism, especially, the freedom of choice and the focus in the results. Creswell (2007) indicated that, in a pragmatic paradigm, “individual researchers have a freedom of choice. They are free to choose the methods, techniques, and procedures of research that best meet their needs and purposes” ( p.23). I concur. In this particular case, I used qualitative research methods because this topic was being explored in Central America for the first time, and there was a need to collect information and to focus on the “how” and “why” factors. Later on, the results of this dissertation, the theoretical propositions advanced, and the model offered could eventually be used to operationally define variables to measure them quantitatively.

For these reasons, I identify myself with Creswell`s (2007) description of the pragmatic worldview: “In practice, the individual using this worldview will use multiple methods of data collection to best answer the research question, will employ both quantitative and qualitative sources of data collection, will focus on the practical implications of the research, and will emphasize the importance of conducting research that best addresses the research problem” (p. 23). In this particular occasion, I used

qualitative research because it fit my topic and my research questions, but I tend to favor a mixed-methods approach to research.

### **Case Study Methodology**

In particular, I used the collective case study approach for my dissertation because its definition and its methods fit my research objective, as I will explain in the following sections. But, before explaining the characteristics of collective case study, I want to describe the process by which I arrived to the conclusion that collective case study was my methodology to follow.

Selecting the specific methodology to use in this dissertation was one of the most challenging parts of the conceptualization process. I knew that my study had to be an in-depth exploration of my topic but, initially, I was not clear about which specific approach to use. I know, now, that this is a collective case study, but I wandered around two other methodologies before arriving to this conclusion. I went from thinking of my dissertation as a phenomenology, to thinking of it as grounded theory study to, finally, thinking of it as a collective case study.

Initially, I thought of this dissertation as being a phenomenology, because a phenomenological study “describes the meaning for several individuals of their lived experiences of a concept or a phenomenon” (Creswell, 2007, p. 57), and because most of the persons I was planning to interview had experienced the same phenomenon: working for a government in a high-level job position that requires that they serve or interact with migrants who now live in the United States. In that regard, this study seemed to fit the phenomenology approach because most of the persons I planned to interview shared the same experience of working with diaspora members. My problem with using the phenomenology approach was that this qualitative research method

seeks to “understand the essence of the experience” (Creswell, 2007, p. 78), meaning that it tries to “reduce” the experienced phenomenon to the essence: to the bottom line. I realized soon enough that I was actually trying to do the opposite: I wanted to study how different governments interacted with their particular diaspora communities, to reflect all the different situations and contextual variables that can influence the type of relation the government establishes with its citizens abroad. I did not want to reduce the phenomenon to the essence: I wanted, if possible, to describe all its angles and shapes.

For that reason, my second inclination was to designate my methodology as grounded theory. Different to phenomenology, grounded theory does not want to reduce the phenomenon to the essence: It wants to understand the phenomenon to such extent that a theory can be developed “grounded” on the data collected from the field where the phenomenon takes place (Charmaz, 2006; Strauss & Corbin, 1990, 1998). It is “grounded” theory because it is grounded “in the views of (the) participants” (Creswell, 2007, p.78). This methodology initially attracted me because of its approach of researching an issue without aiming to reduce it to the essence. Also, it attracted me because the “steps” that one should follow to conduct grounded theory have been explicitly explained by several authors (Charmaz, 2006; Strauss & Corbin, 1990, 1998), so my postpositivist inclination made me feel comfortable with a structured approach like the one grounded theory offers. Nevertheless, my problem with this approach was philosophical.

The philosophical problem, in the case of my dissertation, was that an essential grounded theory’s objective is to come up with a theory where a theory does not exist. Nevertheless, in the literature review for this dissertation I discovered that there were

authors who had studied issues of migration, issues of how political participation of migrants in the home country occur, of how nation states develop transnational policies to connect with those diasporas, and of how the different national-level responses towards the diasporas arise. Those authors had not formally developed grounded theories, but they had described intervening factors, they had developed case studies in countries such as Mexico and the Dominican Republic, among others, and they had advanced some theoretical frameworks that could be used as initial steps towards developing a theory.

These theoretical frameworks, nonetheless, had not been studied for the cases of the Central American diasporas and had not been analyzed through a global public relations perspective. I see the analysis of those theoretical frameworks in the cases of Costa Rica and El Salvador as one of my main contributions to this dissertation. Besides, the fact is that I did not want to create theory totally from scratch: I wanted to see how the factors described by the different authors in my literature review apply or not to the Central American region, and what other factors, contextual variables and specific situations influence the diaspora relations in the region.

At this point, reading the literature about the characteristics of the case study methodology (Stake, 1995, 2005; Yin, 2003; Denzin & Lincoln, 2005; VanWynsberghe & Khan, 2007; Creswell, 2007), I realized that my methodology was a multiple—or collective—case study. In fact, what I did was “an in-depth description and analysis” of several cases in Central America, “providing an in-depth understanding” of those cases, basing my study in the analysis of the kinds of relations that governments try to establish with their diaspora communities in the two countries under study, and “using

multiple sources, such as interviews, observations, documents, [and] artifacts” as the forms through which I collected my data (Creswell, 2007, p.78). If I go “by the book,” my dissertation`s methodology is a collective case study, a study of the strategies and tactics that governments in Costa Rica and El Salvador use, or not, to establish relations with their diasporas, and about the contextual factors that contribute to or hinder the strength of those diaspora relations.

### **Characteristics of the Case Study Methodology**

In the case study approach, the researcher tries to understand an issue or problem using one or several cases as specific illustrations (Yin, 2003; Stake, 1995, 2005; Lincoln & Guba, 1985, 1988). The case study approach has a long tradition in disciplines such as psychology, medicine, law, political science, anthropology, sociology, and economics, among others (Creswell, 2007), and it has a “distinguished history” (Creswell, 2007, p. 73). In particular, a collective case study (or multiple case study) is one where one issue or concern is selected, but different cases are used to illustrate that issue or the different perspectives about the issue (Stake, 1995, 2005).

Once the researcher identifies the cases, he or she can collect the data through multiple sources of information: observations, interviews, documents, and audiovisual materials (Creswell, 2007; Yin, 2003). The analysis of the data can be holistic (of the entire case) or embedded (of certain aspects of the case) (Yin, 2003; Creswell, 2007). Once the cases are described, the researcher tries to discover themes and analyzes them, “not for generalizing beyond the case, but for understanding the complexity of the case” (Creswell, 2007, p. 75).

In the case of collective case study, a typical approach is “to first provide a detailed description of each case and themes within the case, called a within-case

analysis, followed by a thematic analysis across the cases, called a cross-case analysis, as well as assertions or an interpretation of the meaning of the case” (Creswell, 2007, p. 75). Finally, the researcher interprets the results, or the “lessons learned” (Lincoln & Guba, 1985, as cited by Creswell, 2007, p. 75).

### **Countries` Selection**

In collective case study, the researcher often selects the cases purposely, using purposeful sampling, “to show different perspectives on the issue” (Creswell, 2007, p. 74), to “show different perspectives on the problem, process, or event I want to portray” (Creswell, 2007, p. 75), with the logic of using similar research procedures in each case. This is not replication, in the sense that quantitative researchers use this term, but it has the logic of replication because similar research procedures are used with the intention of comparing the results among the cases (Yin, 2003).

In the case of this dissertation, I selected the cases of Costa Rica and El Salvador following the logic of purposeful sampling. I selected Central America because, as a region, it has been under-researched, not only in the fields of public relations and political sciences, in general, but in the area of diaspora relations in particular. And I selected those two particular countries of Central America because, even though they are close to each other, in the same region of the world, they present different, opposite situations in terms of diaspora composition (ECLAC, 2005; Leitón, 2010, Bulmer-Thomas, 2003; McCoy, 2009).

For instance, while El Salvador has about 2.5 to 3 million people living in the United States (about 25% to 33% of the country`s population), Costa Rica has just a few dozen of thousands citizens living in the United States (different estimates place that number between 30,000 and 200,000 persons). Also, besides the numeric

differences, the reasons why the citizens of each country leave the home country to migrate to the United States are different for the two diaspora groups, as it will be described in Chapters 4 and 5. These two cases, then, are similar in geographical location, but different in political situation, socioeconomic characteristics, and diaspora composition, which is a situation that offers a rich opportunity to explore the different contextual variables present, the different nation states' responses, and the relation between contexts and State-led transnational policies.

### **Data Collection Procedures**

In collective case study research, the researcher tends to use multiple sources of data, follows an inductive data analysis procedure, incorporates the participants' meanings in the final report, follows an interpretive inquiry, and provides a holistic account of the cases (Creswell, 2007; Yin, 2003). For those reasons, I collected information through multiple sources: observations, documents, primary in-depth interviews with key informants, and secondary analysis of third-party interviews.

The documents I analyzed are written materials from the government in each country (for instance, reports, annual plans, strategic long-term development plans, pieces of legislation, regulations, Congress minutes, news releases, written transcription of speeches, and websites). The observations happened all along the process of data collection. Also, some information came from the primary in-depth interviews I conducted with key informants (government officials, politicians, and journalists) in each of the two countries, and also from the audios of the secondary interviews I collected when the access to a few high-level government officials, in the case of El Salvador, was not granted.

As it happens in case study methodology, the interviews were just one component in the analysis, as the documents, observations and artifacts also play a key role in the analysis and interpretation of the results. As far as it concerns the interviews with key informants, in Costa Rica I had a relatively easy access to the 12 participants (high-level government officials, politicians and journalists), who granted me interviews face to face (only one interview was done over the phone and one by e-mail) after requesting those interviews, once, by e-mail, explaining the purpose and topic of my dissertation. I did not have to send constant e-mails, or my questions in advance, nor I had to send credentials of any type (for instance, a résumé, or a letter from my university). I traveled to Costa Rica at the end of April, 2011, and conducted the interviews during the first half of the month of May, 2011.

The relatively easy access to key informants in Costa Rica can be explained by several factors: To start with, I am Costa Rican, which I think helped me to establish some initial trust and even cordiality with the sources. Second, I worked in Costa Rica for about 12 years as a journalist and editor so, in four cases, I have had contact, in the past, with those elite sources, so there was a previous working relationship between us, which facilitated the access. Third, Costa Rica is not a strong hierarchical society, and power distance levels are short: It is not uncommon to see high-level politicians walking in the streets, as any other citizen; it is not uncommon to have, in the same high school, all the range from wealthy to poor students in the same classroom, and there is a general feeling in society that “those people are not better than us,” which is a cultural trait of Costa Ricans, which are said to be “igualados” (meaning that we consider we are

“equals” to other members of society, no matter the other’s socioeconomic status and political connections).

El Salvador is a more structured and hierarchical society than Costa Rica (in fact, in the past, there was this common and much repeated myth that said that the political life in El Salvador was controlled mostly by just 14 families --“las 14 familias,” which is a myth that, true or not, shows a trend about the centralization of political and financial power in that country among elites, but it is a trend that has also changed in the last years, as it can be demonstrated by the fact that, for the first time in its history, El Salvador is being governed by a leftist party, the FMLN). The country has also faced strong civil wars (the last one in the 1980s, for about 11 years), which produced deep ideological divisions among the population, and the army has had a strong presence in El Salvador, making it a more authoritative environment than in it is in Costa Rica.

In general, in El Salvador power distance is larger between government officials and the “normal citizen” than in countries such as Costa Rica: The “common Salvadorans” are not used to interact with high-level government officials in their daily lives. Also, El Salvador is a “highly stratified society” (PNUD, 2007, p.31). On top of that, I am not Salvadoran, and I did not have previous “sources” there. Besides, high-level government officials tend to have busy schedules, and maybe the idea of spending one full hour or more talking to a graduate student was not too appealing to them, compared to other priorities they might had. So, arguably for those reasons, the process of contacting and convincing the interviewees to talk to me was not an easy task, even though I used my 12 years of experience as a journalist to follow “best practices” in approaching participants, and even though I prepared myself by reading about the topic

of interviewing elites and key informants, and about the possible challenges that could be presented in these types of interviews (Odendahl & Shaw, 2002; Kezar, 2003).

To gain access to the eight participants in El Salvador, I had to send several e-mails, through several weeks, requesting the interview before obtaining an initial response, and in all the cases I had to send my list of questions in advance (this was just a preliminary list of questions, because, during the actual interviews, many follow-up questions and different aspects were asked besides the ones in the initial list). In one case, the participant also requested to receive by *curriculum vitae* before accepting to talk to me. I sent it, and the participant agreed to talk to me once she read my CV.

In El Salvador, the eight participants agreed to talk to me, but given their busy schedules, the interviews were not scheduled in the same week or two, but they were scheduled, at their convenience, throughout almost eight weeks. For that reason, it was not possible to interview them face to face (as it was not possible for the researcher to spend two full months in El Salvador to conduct just one interview or so per week). Besides, some of the Salvadoran participants were living in El Salvador, while others were living in different states of the United States, from California to New York.

Given those circumstances, I gave the key informants the choice of talking with me over the phone, through Skype™, or by email. All of them, but one, selected the phone interview as the most convenient setting, and one preferred to answer the questions by email, after talking with me a couple of times over the phone to find out about the type of questions I was going to ask, and after requesting more time to prepare the answers in writing. The preference for phone interviews rather than Skype™ interviews could be due to the fact that Skype™ is not a commonly used technology in Central America,

especially among older populations, and the Internet connections sometimes do not facilitate an easy conversation to be maintained this way. Maybe that explains why seven out of the eight key participants chose phone interviews instead.

The seven phone interviews I conducted (as a reminder, the eighth interview was conducted by e-mail) lasted, in average, one hour or more, and I was able to ask all the initial questions in my questionnaire (plus follow up questions and extra ones), so I consider that I was able to fulfill the purpose of gathering the detailed information I was looking for and to talk, in depth, about the different issues I wanted to inquire about.

As I explained before, I had access to eight high-level key informants (government officials and journalists), but having access to other four high-level government officials I was interested in interviewing was not possible. These four participants were Hugo Martínez, Minister of Foreign Affairs; Juan José García, Vice-Minister for Salvadorans Abroad; Ada Abrego, Director of Immigration; and David Morales, Director of Human Rights. I contacted these four persons in the same way that I did for the Costa Rican participants, and in the same way that I did for the other eight Salvadoran participants who agreed to talk to me: sending several formal e-mails over several weeks, explaining my credentials and the purpose of my dissertation, and doing some follow-up phone calls requesting the interviews, explaining it was an academic endeavor as part of my Ph.D. dissertation at the University of Florida. Besides, I also tried to establish contact with three of those four participants through one of the press relations professionals at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. Even my advisor and committee chair, Dr. Juan Carlos Molleda, sent an e-mail to them, requesting support for my interview request. Yet, those four participants either did not reply to my e-mails and phone calls, or accepted to talk to

me but then rescheduled the interview appointment several times until they cancelled them for good. In those four cases, because those high-level government officials are public figures and tend to participate in news conferences often, tend to give speeches frequently, and tend to speak with powerful media such as CNN, Televisa or Radio America, I collected the audios of several speeches and several interviews that each one of them gave about the Salvadoran diaspora and the State-diaspora relations, and given that secondary analysis is a valid method in qualitative research that adds “another layer of meaning to the work in which we are engaged” (Thorne, 1994, p.276), I proceeded to conduct secondary analysis of these speeches and interviews to supplement the primary interviews I conducted myself with the other eight participants.

### **Number of Interviews**

While for phenomenology (Creswell, 2007) and for grounded theory (Charmaz, 2006; Creswell, 2007), there seems to be a higher concern with the number of interviews that should be conducted in a study, in part because the interviews in phenomenology and grounded theory will provide basically all the information for the analysis, in the case study methodology the concern about the number of interviews to conduct does not seem to matter as much, probably because the case study research uses not only the information from the in-depth interviews but also from the documents, the observations, and the audiovisual materials collected and analyzed. The analysis of the in-depth interviews, in case study methodology, is just one part of the equation.

In any case, I achieved the critical number of interviews that would help me understand the phenomenon in detail and would help me publish my research. Currently, the greater competition for publication and the higher expectations of editors and reviewers force researchers to be mindful of the demand for a critical number of

observations, despite the method used. For that reason, I interviewed a number of government officials high enough that I obtained minor variations in the responses of each new interviewee. In other words, I stopped interviewing participants when I was sure I had reached the point of saturation in the answers (Creswell, 2007; Guest, Bunce & Johnson, 2006), meaning the point where every new additional in-depth interview does not add significant new information or variables to the information or variables collected in previous interviews (Creswell, 2007; Guest, Bunce & Johnson, 2006).

For my collective case study, I supplemented the information from the primary in-depth interviews with the information obtained from the observations, from secondary interviews whose audios I collected, and from the documents' analyses (of government reports, annual plans, memories, websites, congress minutes, long-term national plans of development, speeches, news releases, etc.).

### **The Questionnaire**

The questionnaire I used in the interviews was always a work in progress, as most phases of qualitative research are. For each country, there were some questions that were more pertinent than others, and there were some questions that were unique. A few questions were used in almost all the interviews in both countries; some other questions were asked only in the cases they seemed appropriate or relevant. Also, follow-up questions came up constantly during the field work, while conducting each interview. Just as a starting point, in each interview these were the general research questions that guided my inquiry:

- How do Central American governments establish their communication goals and objectives with their diasporas? What are their motives? What are their expectations?

- What entity or entities in the government are in charge of developing and accomplishing these communication goals and objectives with the diasporas?
- How do governments integrate the diasporas in this communication strategy?
- What is the impact of contextual variables such as the availability of resources on the part of the governments to engage the diasporas, or the political relevance ascribed by each government to its diaspora community, in this process of building relations with the diaspora?

Nevertheless, following my postpositivist tendency, I also tried to incorporate, when relevant, some questions from a questionnaire that has been used before to develop case studies about international migration and sending countries in other regions of the world. In her book, Østergaard-Nielsen (2003a) asked different researchers to write their cases trying to answer some specific questions. This request was done after the researchers had collected their data, which means that some of them had the information that Østergaard-Nielsen (2003a) requested, some did not, and some were able to answer only some of the questions she posed. Nevertheless, by following the attempt to answer some or all of the questions she selected, the list of cases in her book can be read on their own, but can also be used to look for some similarities and differences between them. I valued this approach, especially because it facilitates the cross-case analysis, which is the thematic analysis across cases (Creswell, 2007).

After reviewing Østergaard-Nielsen`s (2003b) questionnaire, I found some of the questions she posed to be pertinent and relevant to study the two cases I was interested in, so I used her questionnaire as a reference, adapting it to the Central American reality, but using some of the questions to follow a similar pattern or structure as the cases she incorporated in her book. This questionnaire, though, was just a base, as explained before when describing the emerging nature of qualitative research,

especially because her questions deal with policies and activities of governments, transnational relations of governments, and perceptions of governments, but few questions are specific to the contextual variables in each country, and no questions are specific about the communication efforts or about the global public relations strategies and tactics. Østergaard-Nielsen`s (2003b) questionnaire was, still, a good reference for me. I am presenting here Østergaard-Nielsen`s (2003b) questionnaire, for illustration purposes, although, as I stated before, I mostly used different questions than hers. This is the questionnaire Østergaard-Nielsen (2003b) used in her book:

Perceptions:

How have sending country perceptions of emigrants and diasporas transformed over time?

How do these overseas nationals feature in their homelands` domestic and foreign policy considerations?

Are they perceived as a threat to the reputation or security of the current political regime or as a valuable or potentially valuable economic and political support?

Policies and activities:

How have migration policies changed or not changed?

To what extent does the sending country engage in the plight of its citizens or former citizens abroad?

Which activities and political measures have been launched to introduce new ways of belonging and political and economic engagement in homeland affairs among migrants and diasporas? These include socio-cultural activities (such as celebration of national days and sponsoring of educational programmes) aimed at fostering continued loyalties among citizens abroad; political activities (such as extending political rights to citizens abroad, transnational electoral campaigns, establishment of overseas political organizations); and economic activities (such as introducing favorable investment schemes).

Through which institutions (media, political party, traditional diplomacy, religious institutions) does the sending country try to reach its citizens abroad?

Transnational relations:

To what extent have these policies and activities managed to promote and channel economic, socio-cultural and political relations between sending countries and their nationals abroad?

Do migration and migrants' transnational practices take place independently of these efforts?

Is there a sustained dialogue between the sending country and its nationals abroad on issues of concern to both the emigrants and the sending country? (pp.22-23)

Before conducting the interviews, I developed an interview protocol "with ample space between the questions to write responses to the interviewee's comments" (Creswell, 2007, p.133), but I ended writing each interviewee's answers in notepads, the type of notepads journalists use, because I felt more comfortable taking notes, really fast, in this type of medium. I also recorded each interview using a digital recorder and transcribed it soon after it was completed while it was still fresh in my mind, using the notepads as instruments to register comments, observations, questions, reactions, and notes about the interviews. Although the length of each interview varied greatly, from 15 minutes in one case to 90 minutes in another, most interviews lasted between 45 minutes and one hour, with an average of 45 minutes for the interviews in Costa Rica and an average of one hour for the interviews in El Salvador.

Looking back and reflecting on the experience, the longer average length of the El Salvador interviews might be explained because these interviews were conducted after the Costa Rican interviews, so probably I was better trained and had better knowledge of the topic by then, which allowed me to include more questions in the initial questionnaire and more follow-up questions during the interview itself. Also, as will be detailed in Chapter 5, El Salvador has more developed State-diaspora relations, so

there were more topics and issues to talk about with the Salvadoran participants than with the Costa Rican interviewees.

### **Data Analysis**

As stated before, in a collective case study, once the researcher identifies the cases, he or she can collect the data through multiple sources of information: observations, interviews, documents, and audiovisual materials (Creswell, 2007; Yin, 2003). For this dissertation, the analysis of the data was holistic (Yin, 2003; Creswell, 2007), meaning that the cases were analyzed as a whole, not just certain aspects of them. Once the information was collected, I developed, first, a within-case analysis for each of the two countries. This means that, at first, I described each case and defined the themes for each particular case: the ones of Costa Rica (Chapter 4) and El Salvador (Chapter 5). After that, I developed the cross-case analysis (Chapter 6), in which I provided a thematic analysis across the cases: similarities, differences, trends, and contextual variables that could explain those similarities or differences. Finally, I followed Lincoln & Guba's (1985) approach of interpreting the results by describing the lessons learned (Chapter 7). At every stage, I extensively used verbatim quotes to illustrate the findings in the participants' own words.

### **Strategies for “Validating” Findings**

In quantitative research, researchers aim for their studies to show objectivity and to have internal validity, external validity, and generalizability. Those terms mean nothing in qualitative research, as reality is seen as multiple, not as unique; as the context plays a key role in any process, and as the results of a particular study can help the readers understand that particular reality, not other realities that occur in different contexts and situations. Nevertheless, the value of qualitative research is achieved

when the research project is deemed credible, trustworthy, and when some of the results are seen as “transferable,” “dependable,” and “confirmable” (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). This credibility or trustworthiness is achieved at two main moments: while designing the study and while conducting it.

Creswell (2007) identified several characteristics of a “good” qualitative study at the stage where the research design is being established: for instance, that the researcher “frames the study within the assumptions and characteristics of the qualitative approach to research” (p. 45), that the researcher “uses an approach to qualitative inquiry such as one of the five approaches addressed in this book” (p. 45; in this case, the five approaches Creswell refers to are narrative, phenomenology, grounded theory, ethnography, and case study); and that “the study includes detail methods, a rigorous approach to data collection, data analysis, and report writing” (p. 46). Rigor is not only achieved collecting extensive data, but also through the validation of the accuracy of the account, by “using one or more of the procedures for validation, such as member checking, triangulating sources of data, or using peer or external auditors of the accounts” (Creswell, 2007, p. 46).

This dissertation tried to reach credible and trustworthy levels by relying on the literature review to conceptualize and analyze the research, by explicitly pointing out the assumptions and characteristics of qualitative research (already done in the methodology, in Chapter 3), by following rigorous methods of data collection and analysis (through the use of a methodology and of methods well described and accepted in the field), and by following an approach with a “distinguished history” (Creswell, 2007, p. 73) such as case study. This study also tried to reach credible and

trustworthy levels by using triangulation (confirming the data collected and the interpretation of the data by using multiple sources, such as primary and secondary interviews, observations, document analyses, and the review of the literature).

This dissertation did not use “member check”, by sending the transcripts back to the interviewees for their revision. Nevertheless, during the interviews themselves I tried to offer several chances for the interviewee to clarify his/her points of view or to reinforce his/her opinions. For instance, several times during each interview I asked follow-up questions such as the next ones: “Are you saying that...?” “Do you mean that...?” “Do you think, based on what you just said, that...?” “But then, given what you just said, why do you think that...?” “Can one conclude that...?” In brief, I gave several opportunities for the participants to check the information they were providing and to reflect on their answers during the interviews.

## CHAPTER 4 “INVISIBLE” BUT SOON ABLE TO VOTE: THE CONTRADICTIONS OF THE STATE- DIASPORA RELATIONS IN COSTA RICA

This chapter explores how and why the Costa Rican State reaches out to its nationals living abroad (a group from now on called the Costa Rican diaspora). The primary analysis of 12 interviews with high-level government officials, academicians, and journalists, as well as the analysis of documents (government reports, strategic plans, webpages, news releases, transcription of speeches, pieces of legislation, etc.) suggest that there is a contradiction in the way Costa Rica keeps in contact, tries to build relations, communicates with, and serves its diaspora.

On one hand, this public is almost invisible in its home country, to the point that the Costa Rican State does not know how many Costa Ricans live abroad, not even roughly, and diaspora members are practically absent or invisible in the discourse, policies, and actions of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, except for the consular services provided to this public. On the other hand, there are innovative traits in the State-diaspora relations in Costa Rica: While in other Latin American countries this political right has required strong pressure from the diaspora and has not been achieved yet in some cases, even after decades of activism, in Costa Rica, absentee vote for the diaspora members in the national presidential elections will start happening in 2014. This political achievement did not happen through political pressure from the diaspora or through a strategic, affirmative recognition of the importance of this public from the State (i.e., the Executive Power or congress), but from the initiative of the Tribunal Supremo de Elecciones (Electoral Supreme Court, TSE Spanish acronym) to keep up with international norms and trends.

Also, Costa Rica is beginning to establish a network linking Costa Rican academics in the home country with the Costa Rican academics living in host countries, an effort that has advanced faster than in countries with larger diasporas and higher State activism, such as El Salvador. Scientific institutions in Costa Rica have taken the initiative to connect the scientific community at home with the Costa Rican scientific community abroad through a program called Ticotal, which will be described later in Chapter 4, and although this is not a State policy, but an initiative of a specific sector, it constitutes a clear effort of the Costa Rican scientific community to interact with the Costa Rican scientific diaspora.

The data also suggests that the State policies toward the Costa Rican diaspora—or lack thereof—are very much influenced by the Executive Power, mainly by the country's president at any given time, and that the importance ascribed to the diaspora as a public may well vary from political term to political term, depending on the president's priorities, interests, and views. Communication initiatives and relationship-building efforts towards the Costa Rican diaspora are moderated, then, by the traits described before.

### **The Characteristics of This Case**

The characteristics of this case, as well as its contradictions, are better explained mainly by two factors: the historical development of the country in the last 40 years, which led to current specific socioeconomic conditions, and the presence of political projects that ignore the diaspora's needs besides traditional consular services at the Executive Power level but give the diaspora some political rights at the electoral level.

This chapter builds upon a case study that analyzes transnational policies, and communication and relationship-building efforts on the part of the Costa Rican

government, that cross the areas of migration policymaking, economic policymaking, communication, and international public relations. Data was collected from diverse sources, such as governmental documents, pieces of legislation, national and sector development plans, migration reports, socioeconomic indicators, news releases, academic publications, working papers of international organizations, and other official documents. Besides, 20 in-depth interviews were conducted by the researcher with high-level government officials, academicians, politicians, and journalists (12 in Costa Rica, and 8 in El Salvador), and 10 more interviews, speeches, and presentations of high-level officials from El Salvador were analyzed to complement the in-depth interviews when the access to those elite sources was not granted.

This case will present the socioeconomic and political factors that explain Costa Rican political stability and relative economic progress, to then focus on the characteristics of the Costa Rican migration, on the scarce State-led transnational policies developed to engage and favor Costa Rican migrants abroad, on the communication and relationship-building efforts the nation state develops to keep contact and maintain relations with its diaspora, on the political impact this public has on local political and economic processes, and on the contextual factors that explain this unique State-diaspora relation in this Central American country.

### **Costa Rica Today: The Result of Political Stability**

Costa Rica, one of the smallest countries in Central America, has a territory of 51,100 square kilometers and an estimated population, in 2009, of 4.6 million inhabitants (World Bank, 2011). With a life expectancy at birth of 79 years, an unemployment rate in 2008 of 4.9%, a GDP in 2009 of \$29 billion, a poverty headcount ratio at national poverty line of 21.7% of the population in 2009, and a GNI per capita in

2009 of \$6,260, Costa Rica has better socioeconomic indicators than the rest of the countries in Central America (World Bank, 2011; Céspedes Torres, 2010; McCoy, 2009; Bulmer-Thomas, 2003). For comparison purposes, it is appropriate to note that the CIA World Factbook estimated the 2010 Costa Rican GDP (official exchange rate) in \$35,4 billion, the 2010 Costa Rican GDP (purchasing power parity) in \$51,5 billion, the 2010 Costa Rican GDP per capita (purchasing power parity) in \$11,400, the 2010 Costa Rican unemployment rate in 7.3%, and the July 2011 Costa Rican population in 4,6 million inhabitants (CIA, 2011).

Historical reasons can explain the relatively advantaged situation of Costa Rica in comparison to its Central American neighbors (such as the abolition of the army in 1949, or the strong State investments in social security and education in the 1940s, 1950s, and 1960s) (Bulmer-Thomas, 2003; McCoy, 2009; CIA, 2011), but a more recent situation also helps explain the Costa Rican political and economic relative good standing, in comparison to its Central American neighbors: Although all the countries in the region faced the oil crisis and a recession during the late 1970s and during the whole decade of the 1980s, Costa Rica, unlike Guatemala, El Salvador, and Nicaragua, did not face internal civil wars or armed conflicts with neighboring countries (Bulmer-Thomas, 2003, CIA, 2011; Vargas Solís et al., 2003).

This political stability that has lasted since 1948 (for more than 62 straight years, as of now), when the last civil war that Costa Rica has experienced occurred, allowed this country to avoid military expenses that were unavoidable in the rest of the region and, more than that, allowed the country to skip the massive migration movements and the internal divisions that aroused as a consequence of the military conflicts in the

region (Bulmer-Thomas, 2003). As a result, not only the economic situation is better in Costa Rica than in the rest of Central America, but the political stability has permitted the consolidation of a mature democracy, even with all its imperfections, where the majority of its citizens, at this point in time, have never experienced an armed conflict or political persecution: Only citizens 70 years or older have any recollection of the Guerra del 48, or War of the 48, and, currently, less than 6% of the population is in that age range (CIA, 2011).

One of the imperfections of this mature democracy is that the economic development is uneven, especially between urban and rural areas (Bulmer-Thomas, 2003; Céspedes Torres, 2010; Céspedes Torres, Monge González & Vargas Aguilar, 2010). As a result, migration movements have occurred in specific regions of the country, such as the agricultural-based cities and towns of Pérez Zeledón, Sarchí, Los Santos, Naranjo, Grecia, Ciudad Quesada, Pital, Venecia, and Palmares, among others, where citizens—mainly males—have fled the country to look for better opportunities in the United States, many of them as undocumented immigrants (Leitón, 2010; Céspedes Torres, 2010). At the same time, during the 1980s, the Guerra de los Contras (the war of the contra revolutionary forces against the Anastasio Somoza government in Nicaragua) provoked a massive influx of Nicaraguan migrants to Costa Rica, which altered the composition of the labor force in areas such as agriculture, construction, and domestic services, bringing in more available—and underpaid—workers to both urban and rural areas (Céspedes Torres, 2010, 2009).

### **Characteristics of Migrants from Costa Rica**

Costa Rica has a two-fold situation when it comes to migration. Mainly, the country is a migrants' receiver, especially from Nicaragua. Different estimates place the number

of Nicaraguans living in Costa Rica between 300,000 and more than half a million (Céspedes Torres, 2010; Céspedes Torres et al., 2010) This has brought all sorts of consequences: from pressure on the educational and health systems to certain animosity of some Costa Ricans against Nicaraguans. Besides receiving migrants from different countries (mainly Nicaragua, as explained before, but also from other countries such as Dominican Republic, Colombia, Jamaica, El Salvador, Panama, Ecuador, and others), Costa Rica sends migrants, mainly to the United States, especially from the urban and rural regions of Los Santos (Dota—Santa María and Copey; Tarrazú—San Marcos and San Lorenzo; and León Cortés), and of Pérez Zeledón, (Céspedes Torres, 2010; Leitón, 2010), of Palmares, Naranjo, Sarchí, Grecia, Ciudad Quesada, Pital, and Venecia (Leitón, 2010), and of Poás (A. Murillo, personal communication, May 9, 2011). In general, out of the 81 “cantones” in which the Costa Rican territory is divided (a “cantón” is similar to a metropolitan statistical area), migration occurs mainly in 13 “cantones” (Céspedes Torres et al., 2010).

How many Costa Ricans are migrants abroad? The number is highly disputed. Céspedes Torres (2010) explained: “Although small in relative terms (as it represents less than 2% of the total population), this phenomenon raises interest because of its implications in aspects related with poverty and income distribution” (p. 9). According to his estimate, Costa Ricans abroad should be less than 92,000 persons, considering a population of 4.6 million people. Estimates given by a high government official at the Costa Rican Ministry of Foreign Affairs in 2011 place the number of Costa Ricans living abroad “between 50,000 and 100,000” (High-Level Costa Rican Government Official at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs #1, personal communication, May 11, 2011).

This government official said, regarding the number of Costa Ricans abroad:

There are few (Costa Ricans abroad). We don't know what few means, because we have never done a census, and because the electoral registries are just being created for the first time, but there is an estimate that ranges between 50,000 and 100,000, in the whole world. . . . Today, we guide ourselves considering two elements: the myth or mouth-to-mouth tradition, where we repeat, time after time, that there are many Costa Ricans in Los Angeles, for instance. Or we use indirect indicators such as the volume of requests in the consulates, which should reflect, to some extent, the reality. We look at the places where we get more requests to renew passports, to register children born from Costa Rican parents, and things like that, as one could guess that there is larger community where more requests are received (High-Level Costa Rican Government Official at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs #1, personal communication, May 11, 2011).

Other estimates, nonetheless, are not in agreement with these figures, as they surpass or fall short of these numbers. For instance, in a 2007 congressional hearing on the project of granting absentee vote to Costa Ricans abroad, hearing which was held at the Costa Rican congress in the 2006-2010 presidential term, former Minister of Foreign Affairs Bruno Stagno indicated that the total number of Costa Rican migrants in the whole world could be between 150,000 and 200,000 (Asamblea Legislativa, 2007).

Stagno declared:

According to the estimates we manage, the number of Costa Rican electors that could benefit with absentee vote is between 150,000 and 200,000. This obviously depends on whether we are speaking of Costa Ricans who are residents abroad or who live abroad; these numbers correspond to all Costa Ricans abroad, independently of their migratory condition (Asamblea Legislativa, 2007, p. 8).

In a separate interview, Hugo Picado, director of the Instituto de Formación y Estudios en Democracia (Institute of Formation and Studies in Democracy, IFED Spanish acronym) at the Tribunal Supremo de Elecciones (Electoral Supreme Court, TSE Spanish acronym), also recalled Stagno's exposition at the Permanent Commission of Electoral Reforms and Political Parties, at the Costa Rican congress,

where Stagno calculated the number of Costa Rican migrant voters to be between 150,000 and 200,000 (H. Picado, personal communication, May 10, 2011).

The World Bank, on the other hand, estimated the stock of Costa Rican migrants in 2010 in 125,300 persons, or 2.7% of the country's population (World Bank, 2011b). But, in a chat session organized by nacion.com, the website of newspaper *La Nación*, on July 29, 2010, with Luis Bolaños, officer of the Programa Voto en el Exterior (Absentee Vote Program) of the TSE, Bolaños indicated that there were 30,700 Costa Ricans living abroad, 403 of them already registered for absentee vote (Fuster, 2010). This low figure was also recalled by journalist Alvaro Murillo, who has covered the political beat of *La Nación*, including the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, since October of 2005. Murillo holds a master of International Relations from the Ortega & Gasset Institute of the Universidad Complutense de Madrid, Spain. "In August 2010, after the order given to the consulates of compiling information about our population abroad, the consulates had registered 30,000 Costa Ricans living abroad in the whole world. . . . And those are calculations made just like that, homemade (A. Murillo, personal communication, May 9, 2011).

This inconsistency in the numbers regarding how many Costa Ricans have migrated comes from the fact that there is no formal census that counts how many Costa Ricans live abroad. At best, some consulates have performed informal surveys with different levels of accuracy, but not as part of an organized and permanent State initiative. This lack of accuracy in the numbers was mentioned not only by high-level officials at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, but also by Hugo Picado, director of IFED at TSE, and by Gabriel Macaya, director of the Academia de Ciencias de Costa Rica, or

Academy of Sciences of Costa Rica (High-Level Costa Rican Government Official at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs #1, personal communication, May 11, 2011; High-Level Costa Rican Government Official at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs #2, personal communication, May 11, 2011; H. Picado, personal communication, May 10, 2011; G. Macaya, personal communication, May 12, 2011).

For instance, the following are perceptions by two high-level officials at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs: One recognizes different levels of success in keeping track the number of Costa Ricans abroad; the other points out how easily the registries can get outdated.

They (the consulates) prepare a consular registry, which is not even close to the formality of what would be, in the future, the electoral registry. It is simply a basic system of localization with the coordinates of the Costa Ricans abroad. It is just to be able to find the Costa Ricans abroad. This consular registry has been developed slowly in all the consulates with different degrees of success. In the past, the registry was used mainly to invite the Costa Ricans to the independence celebration, on September 15, and a little to let them know about some urgent family news, or things like that (High-Level Costa Rican Government Official at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs #1, personal communication, May 11, 2011).

Another high-level official at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs described the situation of the relation Costa Ricans keep with their consulates abroad:

We always encourage the Costa Rican that comes (to the consulate) to leave their personal information. . . . At that time we contact the user, we give him a form, we ask him to provide his personal data, because it is super important to have a census with data as real as possible in terms of an updated address and phone number, in case of an emergency. . . . But Costa Rican migration in the United States is a floating migration, it changes with the season, for instance, with the type of work the person does. There are Costa Ricans who work in gardening, plumbing, fixing roofs, which are jobs you cannot do during winter time. Maybe some move to Miami, maybe some ask for the Costa Rican ID today, and they also fill the consular registry, but tomorrow they leave the United States, and we have no way to prove that this Costa Rican left, because obviously they don't call the consulate to say: "Hey, good bye consul, I am leaving the country," because what they do is that they contact us when they have an

emergency, for instance, if they need an ID. So, before they travel they come to the consulate. Maybe they have lived for 10 years in the United States but they only show up in the consulate just before going back, because their passport expired, that is when we realize they were living in our jurisdiction. They leave and we never see them again (High-Level Costa Rican Government Official at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs #2, personal communication, May 11, 2011).

Hugo Picado, director of IFED at TSE, pointed out the challenge faced with this uncertainty.

It is a big challenge and a big problem because not even the Ministry of Foreign Affairs has precise data that may allow us to find all the Costa Ricans who live abroad. For instance, if the consulates had the e-mail, phone numbers, and postal addresses of the Costa Ricans who live abroad, it would be very easy, or at least less complicated, to communicate with them. But the fact is that those channels do not exist. The consulates do not keep exact and precise registries of the Costa Ricans who live abroad (H. Picado, personal communication, May 10, 2011).

Given all these differences in numbers, the actual number of Costa Ricans living abroad is just an educated guess that could be anywhere between 30,000 and 200,000, with the range of 50,000 to 125,000 as the most plausible.

Where do Costa Rican migrants go? Citing studies by the Centro Centroamericano de Población (Central American Center of Population, CCP Spanish acronym) and by the Instituto Nacional de Estadística y Censos (National Institute of Statistics and Census, INEC Spanish acronym), Céspedes Torres (2010) pointed out that most Costa Rican migrants choose the United States as their destination (65% of all migrants), especially the states of California, Florida, New Jersey, and New York, in that order, and that migrations from Costa Ricans to the United States is recent, as it started during the early 1980s. There have been two “peaks” of migration, Céspedes Torres (2010) explained, one in the mid 1980s and another in the mid 1990s, with the tendency decreasing during the 2000s. According to Céspedes Torres (2010), at the

time there were about 13,200 Costa Ricans in California, about 11,200 in Florida, about 11,200 in New Jersey, and about 7,800 in New York, which is about 60% of the Costa Rican population living in the United States.

Other sources and participants disagree. They agree in that most Costa Rican migrants live in the United States but, in their perception, the main concentrations occur in the New York jurisdiction (mainly in New Jersey and Connecticut), followed by Florida jurisdiction (mainly in Miami) with another important concentration in North Carolina (which belongs to the jurisdiction whose headquarters are located in Atlanta, Georgia) (High-Level Costa Rican Government Official at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs #2, personal communication, May 11, 2011; Consular Official in New York, personal communication, June 7, 2011; Xinia Vargas, general consul of Costa Rica in Los Angeles, personal communication, June 23, 2011).

And although the following study is not generalizable to the whole Costa Rican population, it is interesting to see the characteristics of a group of Costa Rican households that have sent migrants to the United States. Céspedes Torres conducted, in 2009, a survey of 100 households in the region of Pérez Zeledón (South of Costa Rica), as this is one of the regions with high incidence of migrants. He found out that, in those 100 households, there was an average of 1.5 migrants in each household. About 75% were males, with an average of 11 years of schooling (high school completed), and an average age of 36 years. They cited, as the main reason for migrating to the United States, the need to improve their income level (75%), the lack of job opportunities in their region of origin (9%) and a “family decision” (8%) (Céspedes Torres, 2010, 2009).

Those households indicated that their economic situation improved thanks to the remittances that the person(s) who fled the country sent back to the household (61%) but that they would have preferred to have their relatives back at home instead of receiving the remittances (65%), and that they emotionally suffered by the absence of the relative (89%). In these households, after the person(s) migrated, the monthly income raised from \$447 to \$656. Remittances were mainly sent through a sending service such as Western Union, followed by friends or relatives who travel back to Costa Rica and bring the money with them. Only 8% named bank transfers as ways of receiving the money.

In a larger study by Céspedes Torres et al. (2010), this time in a survey of 3,870 households in Costa Rica, results showed that 15.6 of the Costa Rican households in the sample had a relative living in the United States (604 out of 3,870 households). Of these households, 35% received remittances from the United States. Thus, it can be said that 5.5% of the Costa Rican households sampled in this study were receiving remittances originated in the United States (Céspedes Torres et al., 2010). It is relevant to notice that these households were located only in 13 of the 81 “cantones”, because those 13 “cantones” concentrate the population of households that are receivers of remittances in Costa Rica (Céspedes Torres et al., 2010).

When it comes to remittances in cash, the main channels that the Costa Rican migrants use to send money from the United States are remittances companies such as Western Union (52%), the Banco Nacional de Costa Rica (Costa Rica National Bank, BNCR, 19.5%), other banks in Costa Rica (17%) and other non-financial informal methods (11%) (Céspedes Torres et al., 2010). The amounts of cash and kind that

Costa Rica receives in remittances every year, and the impact this income has on the national economy will be discussed later in Chapter 4, in the section “Economic impact of migrants: Remittances.”

The profile of the Costa Rican migrant community, then, seems to be two-fold: On one hand, Costa Ricans from agricultural-based communities leave the country to look for better job opportunities in the United States. These Costa Ricans—who frequently arrive by plane in the United States, not usually as “wet backs,” and enter the U.S. territory using a tourist visa—end up overstaying after their tourist visas expire and become undocumented workers. They have a low economic status in the United States, and they survive in temporary, low skilled jobs, sending remittances to support their relatives at home. On the other hand, there is a group of Costa Ricans (accurate statistics about their number, their destinations and their occupations are not available) who live in the United States because they are graduate students or because they are high-skilled professionals who get good paying jobs in the United States. The scientific diaspora is part of this second type of Costa Rican migrant.

### **State-Diaspora Relations in Costa Rica**

As explained in the literature review (Chapter 2), the relationship established between a nation state and its diaspora is a field of study recently developed, mainly in the last 15 years, which has grown exponentially given the current importance of remittances for many national economies and given the political impact that some diasporas have achieved in their countries of origin in recent years. In different countries, diverse factors play a role in the way these State-diaspora relations are established—or not—and in the characteristics this relationship presents.

In political sciences, anthropology, and sociology, this area of study has been called State-led transnationalism, because it describes the transnational policies that nation states establish with their diasporas, but this field has been studied scarcely in Central America, and has not included, until now, the perspective of global public relations, where one of the main goals is to establish quality, long-term relations with key publics located abroad.

There is always a risk, when one refers to communication processes and to public relations, to think of just communication products: brochures, websites, news releases, newsletters. In reality, global public relations include any “strategic communications and actions carried out by private, government, or nonprofit organizations to build and maintain relations with publics in socioeconomic and political environments outside their home location” (Molleda, 2009, ¶ 10). Molleda (2009) added: “Global public relations is also simultaneous strategic communications and actions with home, host, and transnational publics” (Molleda, 2009, ¶ 12).

For that reason, this dissertation explores, using a broad framework, the way two nation states (Costa Rica and El Salvador) establish relations, maintain contact, and communicate with their diasporas in the United States. In this regard, there is a logical overlap with what political scientists, anthropologists, and sociologists do and study, as this relationship building efforts include not only communication products, but, more than that, a broad spectrum of relationship building strategies and tactics, from customer service behaviors to the official discourse with which the State refers to the diaspora, to the organization of cultural activities, to the promulgation of laws, to political processes such as lobbying in favor of a migratory reform, and everything in between.

This dissertation, then, advocates for an interdisciplinary study of State-diaspora relations, where global public relations are understood as the establishment of relationships with key international publics, not just as the development of communication products, and where the range of action intersects with political sciences and other disciplines.

In the particular case of Costa Rica, contextual variables in the economy, in the country's social structure, in the culture, and in the political processes, interests, views, and projects of the president and some other political actors have impacted the way the State-diaspora relations have developed. In summary, it can be said that the State-diaspora relations in Costa Rica are still incipient and have been timid at best. The State-diaspora relations have shyly happened, mainly, through the traditional consular services offered by the network of Costa Rican consulates and embassies around the world (including eight consulates and one embassy in the United States), as part of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (Ministerio de Relaciones Exteriores, 2011), and, in some instances, by specific initiatives of institutions, such as the Electoral Supreme Court, which try to keep up with international norms and trends, but not by a recognition of this population as a priority public for the nation state. To comprehend these weak State-diaspora relations in Costa Rica, in the following sections this study presents the main factors that need to be considered and analyzed to understand the unique characteristics of this particular State-diaspora relation.

### **Economic impact of migrants: Remittances**

Although the final amount varies from year to year, the monies that come to Costa Rica as remittances sent by migrants from the United States and from other countries account for about 2% of the Costa Rican Gross Domestic Product (GDP). According to

the Banco Central de Costa Rica (Central Bank of Costa Rica, BCCR Spanish acronym), the country received, in cash remittances, about \$544,5 millions in 2008 (plus \$39,4 millions in kind remittances), and about \$488,6 millions in 2009 (the amount dropped due to the world recession). About 86% of the remittances came from the United States (Céspedes Torres et al., 2010). In 2010, the amount increased to \$505.5 millions, higher than in 2009 but lower than in 2008 (Banco Central, 2011).

Costa Rica receives, in remittances, twice as much what Nicaraguan immigrants send from Costa Rica to Nicaragua. Yet, the impact of remittances in Costa Rica is considered low because it only represents about 2% of the GDP. Patricia Leitón, financial journalist at *La Nación* since 1994 and bachelor both in mass communications and economics, explained: “The incoming remittances represents slightly more than twice the amount of the outgoing remittances, but they are still very small amounts compared to the rest of the incoming and exiting currencies of the country, such as exports, tourism, or foreign direct investment” (P.Leitón, personal communication, May 23, 2011).

At a national level, incoming remittances do not have a strong impact in the economy, although they are essential for the income of many families in certain specific areas of the country, as the ones listed in previous sections. For example, in a study of 213 Costa Rican households that receive remittances from the United States, Céspedes Torres et al. (2010) determined that the money received in each household had a strong impact in maintaining those households above the line of poverty and extreme poverty, and they strongly impacted the well being of the members of the household. From that survey of 213 households, it was determined that each Costa Rican household in the

sample received, in average, \$339 a month from the United States, with a lot of dispersion in the real amount for each household (the standard deviation was 1,87). The median was \$100 a month, while a few households received up to \$2,000 or more a month. Most households (85%) received remittances sent by only one relative living in the United States (Céspedes Torres et al., 2010). This money was spent, mainly, in food, groceries, clothes, education, health services, repairs to the home, debt repayment and, in a few cases, savings.

The authors of this survey also asked if these households received “community remittances,” but only 3% of the households (six households out of 213) said they knew about the existence of this type of remittance. These six households indicated that those community remittances have been used in activities such as fixing the local church, humanitarian help, seats for the public soccer field, projects to help people recover their sight, fixing the community, and fixing the local streets (Céspedes Torres et al., 2010). This result seems to be consistent with the perception of financial journalist Patricia Leitón, who, when asked about if she knew about community remittances as a practice in Costa Rica, she replied: “None that I know of” (P. Leitón, personal communication, 2011). The same goes for Ottón Solís, leader of the opposition political party Acción Ciudadana (PAC Spanish acronym) and former presidential candidate in Costa Rica, who was born in one of the migrant-sender areas of the country. Solís said, “There could be some (community remittances), but I highly doubt it, because I have been following this topic, and I have heard nothing about it” (O. Solís, personal communication, April 12, 2011).

With a similar perspective, general consul of Costa Rica in Los Ángeles, Xinia Vargas, said that in her jurisdiction there are small Costa Rican groups that sometimes contribute to their local communities during specific times of emergency, such as the strong earthquake felt in 2010 in the area known as Cinchona, but these are sporadic, non-permanent, focused efforts to achieve a specific objective such as to help a community in times of crisis, not a permanent program in coordination with home communities (Xinia Vargas, personal communication, June 23, 2011). Also, the websites of migrant-sending municipalities such as the one of Pérez Zeledón and the one of Dota did not list, in their website, any information about community remittances or projects where the diaspora was involved; at least, there was no information on this matter by June 25, 2011.

**Remittances in the financial system and the banking system.** Although remittances sent by Costa Ricans living abroad amount to between \$400 million to \$550 million a year (depending on the state of the world economy), the banking system in Costa Rica has not been aggressive establishing relations with the Costa Rican diaspora, neither in trying to attract those funds nor in providing advantageous conditions to the receivers of the remittances (Céspedes Torres et al., 2010). Given that the Costa Rican government controls some of the strongest banks in Costa Rica, such as the Banco Nacional, the Banco de Costa Rica, the Banco Crédito Agrícola de Cartago, and the Banco Popular, among others, there seems to be a “niche” to connect with diasporas that is not being taken advantage of to its fullest extent. In their survey of 206 Costa Rican households that receive remittances from the United States, Céspedes Torres et al. (2010) found out that those receiving-households show a good level of

knowledge about the possibility of using a bank to receive remittances from the United States (59% knows that this service is provided by the Banco Nacional and 54% knows about other banks). Nonetheless, only 37% use banks to receive remittances, a situation that suggests that there is a business opportunity for banks (public and private) in Costa Rica to improve their presence in terms of attracting those funds (Céspedes Torres et al., 2010).

Céspedes Torres et al. (2010) also found that there is an important number of households that do not know the cost of other channels that can be used to receive remittances. Of the 206 households that receive remittances through companies such as Western Union (a total of 109 households), only 79 said that they knew about the other remittance-sending channels. From the households that use banks to receive this income (77 households), only 55 know about the cost of sending remittances through other channels. These results, Céspedes Torres et al. (2010) said, indicate the need to promote more aggressively the information, among receiving-households in Costa Rica, about the cost of sending remittances from the United States through the different channels available.

Once the remittances arrive in Costa Rica, the situation for the banks is no better. About four in each 10 receiving-households have no savings or checking accounts in any bank, financial institution, or cooperative association of loans and credit. Of those households that are not using banking services, 90% said they were interested or very interested in having access to those services. This means, Céspedes Torres et al. (2010) said, that there are opportunities for the banking system in Costa Rica to

increase its reach in this market segment. In terms of debit and credit cards, respectively, 44% and 86% said they do not possess one.

These results are consistent with the perception of Patricia Leitón, financial journalist at La Nación, who said that it was just in recent years that the Costa Rican banks started to penetrate the business of remittances transfer (for instance, receiving remittances from the United States and sending remittances to Nicaragua) because, “at first, only the remittances companies were the ones dedicated to this business.” Also, after checking the websites of Banco Nacional, of Banco de Costa Rica, and of Banco Crédito Agrícola de Cartago (all of them State-owned), on June 20 of 2011, the author of this study did not find any financial information targeted to the diaspora.

**Migrants as tourists.** Another area where migrants have not been served by the country is in the area of tourism. Tourism is one of the main economic activities in the country, but there are no specific efforts to attract Costa Ricans living abroad to spend their vacations coming back to visit their home country. Evelyn Obando, international marketing and public relations representative at the Instituto Costarricense de Turismo (Costa Rican Tourism Institute, ICT Spanish acronym), explained that there are two reasons why ICT has no program or permanent initiative to engage this public. Obando said,

Our priority is to engage foreign tourists, so attracting Costa Rican tourists is out of our area of scope. Besides, due to the limited number of Costa Ricans living abroad, we cannot justify investing resources in something like that. If they were many more, maybe millions of Costa Ricans living abroad, maybe we could establish collaborative campaigns with airlines or other types of agreements of this nature, but right now we have nothing like this (E.Obando, personal communication, May 9, 2011).

Instead, ICT focuses on attracting non-Costa Rican tourists. This government agency has also developed initiatives dealing with social responsibility, waste

management, tourists' safety, and similar topics, but nothing related to attracting Costa Rican tourists back to the country (E. Obando, personal communication, May 9, 2011).

### **Political impact: Invisibility and lack of political muscle**

There are several informal associations of Costa Ricans living abroad, which have formed as part of religious congregations or as organized groups in specific communities in the United States (Consular Official in New York, personal communication, June 7, 2011; Xinia Vargas, general consul of Costa Rica in Los Angeles, personal communication, June 23, 2011). Some of these associations keep in touch with Costa Rican congress representatives (Asamblea Legislativa, 2007) or with politicians looking to get elected in political office in Costa Rica, who visit the migrants when national elections in Costa Rica are approaching (O.Solís, personal communication, April 12, 2011). Nonetheless, until now, these association or Costa Rican "colonias" (colonies) have not been able to exert a strong political pressure to obtain political gains in their home country, such as the right to absentee vote, or getting direct representation in the Costa Rican congress. In fact, in the Costa Rican government's Plan Nacional de Desarrollo (National Plan of Development for 2010-2014), there is no single mention of the word diaspora, of the word migrant or of the word migration, except to indicate that migration influxes should be controlled as part of improving safety in the streets (Ministerio de Planificación Nacional y Política Económica, 2010). At the discourse level, Costa Rican migrants are invisible.

Even though since at least the early 1990s some individuals and associations of Costa Ricans in the United States have informed local politicians about their interest of being able to vote in national elections through the absentee vote (Asamblea Legislativa, 2007), it was not until recent years that the topic was discussed in Costa

Rica, and the discussions were led not by the migrants, but by the TSE (H.Picado, personal communication, May 10, 2011). So, up to the time of writing this dissertation, Costa Rican migrants have been basically ignored and have lacked political muscle in Costa Rica. This situation, nonetheless, could change starting in 2014, when absentee vote for the presidential elections is scheduled to happen in Costa Rica. The level or strength of the political gains that migrants could obtain after becoming active voters in the national elections is a disputed matter.

**A turning point? Absentee vote.** In the national elections of 2014, Costa Ricans living abroad will be able to vote, for the first time, through absentee vote (voting while physically being outside of the Costa Rican territory, in electoral stations supervised by the Costa Rican consulates in the United States) (H. Picado, personal communication, May 10, 2011). This possibility was granted through legal reforms of the Código Electoral (Electoral Code) supported by several political actors after several years of work and collaboration (for instance, support from congressional members of different political parties and from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs), but the process was led and advocated initially not by congressional members, not by the Executive Power, and not by the diaspora members, but by the Electoral Supreme Court, in an attempt to follow international trends.

According to Hugo Picado, director of the TSE's Institute of Formation and Studies in Democracy (IFED Spanish acronym), the initiative to reform the Electoral Code came from the TSE after the national elections of 1998, when non-participation levels in the electoral process grew from previous elections, "and it became to be noticeable the obsolescence of several of the norms of the Electoral Code, which was reformed by

about 50% of its content in 1996, but the 1996 reform finally happened to be a very cosmetic reform, because congressmen, in that legislative term, set aside all the controversial topics involved in the electoral law and, because of time issues and because they were trying to achieve political consensus, they reformed only those topics where the changes were non-controversial or pacific. Without taking away merit from this reform, it was really, fundamentally, a cosmetic reform” (H.Picado, personal communication, May 10, 2011).

For that reason, in 1998, when the TSE noted that the Electoral Code had several flaws, the TSE promoted a process of national reflection about the electoral law. There were meetings with different sectors of the civic society, there were meetings with political parties and electoral officers, and even a Comité de Notables (Notables Committee) was formed, with experts in electoral matters and citizens who worked, voluntarily, during many months to formulate some suggestions for the electoral reform. With all this input, the TSE worked during year 2000 and, in January of 2001, it presented a proposal not to reform the Electoral Code partially, but totally, a proposal for a new Electoral Code, to the president of Costa Rica (then, the president was Miguel Ángel Rodríguez). President Rodríguez sent the proposal for discussion to congress. This reform contained the recommendation of authorizing absentee vote in the form of consular vote, which happens when the citizen votes at a consulate of his or her home country (H.Picado, personal communication, May 10, 2011).

Even though it was sent to Congress in 2001, the reform of the Electoral Code, which contained the provision of the consular vote, was not approved until 2009, but it was too late to implement the consular vote for the 2010 national elections, so, through

a transitory article, the absentee vote was established to occur not in the 2010 elections, but in the following ones (in 2014), to have enough time to create the consular registry and to organize for this new mode of voting. The absentee vote is expected to happen for the first time in 2014, but it could happen even faster if there is a referendum before that year, because the absentee vote applies not only for presidential elections but also for popular consultations such as referendums and plebiscites (H.Picado, personal communication, May 10, 2011).

Even though the new Electoral Code was finally approved in 2009, the specific topic of the absentee vote did not generate much interest among politicians at the time. Hugo Picado, director of IFED at the Electoral Supreme Court, explained,

Some congressmen argued that the number of Costa Ricans living abroad was too small to justify granting absentee vote. . . . In my totally subjective opinion, it seems to me that the political parties have not shown much interest. There was not much deliberation among congressmen about the political profile of the Costa Ricans who live abroad. That discussion was absent. . . . My personal impression is that, compared to other topics that were controversial and hot—such as the political financing of the parties, gender issues, the internal structure of the parties, the electoral campaign—the topic of the absentee vote did not raise neither much controversy nor much enthusiasm. In reality, the advocate and promoter of the topic always was the TSE (H.Picado, personal communication, May 10, 2011).

Political opposition leader Otton Solís and political journalist Alvaro Murillo speculated about the reasons why political parties have not shown much interest in the topic. Solís said that some political parties have a big budget, so they prefer to pay charter flights to bring migrants to Costa Rica to vote.

To offer absentee vote is, from an economic standpoint, to place political parties at the same level. That is the reason why Liberación Nacional (the National Liberation Party) has not shown much interest: With the huge monies they have, they send planes to bring people from Los Ángeles, from New York. I suspect they say they support absentee vote, but that's a disguise, and then they don't support it (O. Solís, personal communication, April 12, 2011). Alvaro Murillo agreed that political parties do not see the

diaspora as a priority. “The Costa Rican population living in the United States has very low political influence here” (A. Murillo, personal communication, May 9, 2011).

Does this change in the Electoral Code, the inclusion of the absentee vote, imply that Costa Rica, as a nation state, is starting to give more importance to the diaspora? Does it imply that there is intent to engage this public in the national dialogue? Does it imply an increase of interest of political parties towards this population? Hugo Picado, director of the IFED at the TSE, had a straight answer to those questions:

No, no. This does not obey a national intelligence; it does not follow a national policy of deepening the defense of the rights of the Costa Ricans who live abroad. This is an initiative of the electoral organism (the TSE), based on technical valuations and in valuations of experiences of comparative law. It is a response to a global tendency, more and more important, of extending the right to vote, of facilitating the suffrage, and, in this sense, of including populations who have been traditionally excluded. . . . Then, the basic motivation for this reform was a technical assessment by the TSE more than a state policy of favoring the Costa Ricans who live abroad (H.Picado, personal communication, May 10, 2011).

To confirm Picado’s point of view, one can refer to the words of judge Luis Antonio Sobrado, president of the Electoral Supreme Court, who spoke in the Permanent Commission of Electoral Reforms and Political Parties in 2007, at the Costa Rican congress, when the absentee vote was being discussed (the absentee vote was approved, as part of the new Electoral Code, in 2009). Judge Luis Antonio Sobrado said at that meeting,

Although Costa Rica has traditionally been, in Latin America, at the vanguard in its defense of human rights, its democratic longevity and its great development of electoral institutions, we are showing a regretful delay regarding granting Costa Ricans abroad the right to vote. Today, according to the most updated studies, it is estimated that 80 countries around the world accept the absentee vote of their diasporas. Of those 80 countries, 10 are in Latin America, including Argentina, Brasil, Colombia, Honduras, Perú, Puerto Rico, Dominican (Republic), Venezuela and, more recently, Ecuador and México. The first experience or the first agreement for this to be possible happened in 1961, in Colombia, and the most recent is the

case of Mexico in 2005, which applied for the national elections of 2006. Even when other countries—now a minority in Latin America—don't offer at this point absentee vote, it is a topic firmly positioned in the electoral reform agenda in Bolivia, Chile, El Salvador, Guatemala, Nicaragua, Panamá, Paraguay and Uruguay. Costa Rica is the only case in Latin America where the topic had not been discussed until now. This could have happened, in part, because there is low pressure from the interested population (the diaspora), given the lower comparative weight that Costa Rican migration has, compared to other Latin American realities. Even so, I think this situation of delay is unforgivable for us as a country, and we need to take advantage of this process of reform to introduce this formula of democratic inclusion, and of extension of the concept of citizenship, and we need to apply it as soon as possible. (Asamblea Legislativa, 2007, p. 28)

**Political impact of the absentee vote.** What is the expected political impact of the absentee vote? Some participants are more optimistic than others. For instance, journalist and international relations expert Alvaro Murillo said,

The importance that the Ministry of Foreign Affairs gives to the Costa Ricans living abroad is almost none, due to several reasons. One is that the migrant community from Costa Rica is very small, compared to other countries in the region. But more than that, the issue is that migrants abroad do not vote. And if they don't vote, then the attitude is, 'Each person needs to mind his own business, no matter how good or bad his business is.' But I am sure that if Costa Ricans abroad start to vote, there will be more attention to the conditions that those Costa Ricans abroad live in. No doubt about it. (A. Murillo, personal communication, May 9, 2011)

With a different opinion, a high level official in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs had mixed feelings about the consequences of absentee vote. He said,

In some countries such as México, the Costa Rican colony has a long tradition of getting organized and of coming to vote in charter flights. Our general consul was informing me that, in the first attempts they did to register people for the absentee vote, there was resistance because people don't want to change their electoral domicile, partially because they take national elections as an excuse to visit their relatives in Costa Rica, and partially because if they vote abroad, that vote will be valid only to elect president and vice-president, not to elect other political representatives, and some of these migrants keep their relationship with their hometowns through their congressmen or their municipalities, and the election of congressmen or majors was not included in the new Electoral Code because of the obvious difficulties this represented. I have mixed messages of what the results are going to be in terms of the number of people

registering for the absentee vote of 2014 (High-Level Costa Rican Government Official at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs #1, personal communication, May 11, 2011).

And both a consular official in New York, the largest Costa Rican consulate in the United States in terms of the Costa Rican population it serves, and a high-level official in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, who has served as a consul of Costa Rica in the United States in previous years, seemed to agree, recalling the example of the 2010 referendum. In 2010, there was an opportunity to test the interest of the diaspora in the absentee vote, when a referendum to ask for people's opinions about approving same-sex marriages in Costa Rica was going to be developed among Costa Ricans inside and outside the territory (in this case, through absentee vote). Finally, the referendum did not occur, because it was deemed unconstitutional, but the signs at the time were not promising for the popularity of absentee vote. This official recalled:

In some consulates we had up to 300 persons in the consular registry, but when the time came, none changed his or her electoral domicile to vote abroad. And it was not for lack of political will of the consuls: We did campaigns through our mobile consulates, we called the Costa Ricans on the phone, we sent them e-mails, and even so, those 300 persons did not change their domicile (High-Level Costa Rican Government Official at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs #2, personal communication, May 11, 2011).

The consular official in New York agreed. She said,

We had a pilot project in 2010, with the referendum, to try to create an electoral registry. But it was not very popular. We thought it was going to be. There were many persons who had asked us about the electoral registry, but they were not as many as we thought when the time came. We could only register 40 persons. Only 40 persons decided they wanted to vote in New York (Consular Official in New York, personal communication, June 7, 2011).

And Xinia Vargas, general consul of Costa Rica in Los Angeles, said,

Most of the movement in the elections of 2014 will come from those Costa Ricans who live close to the consulates. For the people who live far, to come all the way to the consulate represents too much of an investment:

transportation expenses, lodging expenses, lost time, and fallen wages (Xinia Vargas, personal communication, June 23, 2011).

The issue of the apparent lack of interest from the diaspora in the absentee vote is the result of a complex mix of the difficult requisites to register (up to this point, the only possibility is to go, in person, to the consulate to register), and of personal preferences. Different officials at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and at the TSE acknowledged that registering to vote abroad is not an easy process, as many Costa Ricans have to travel long distances to reach their consulates to register in the electoral registry, and then they have to travel again to actually vote in the consulates. These requisites make the process expensive and uncomfortable, because they need to ask for one or two days off at work or at their universities, they have to drive long hours to get to the consulates and, in many cases, they have to pay for hotel rooms to stay for at least one night. Many of these Costa Ricans have to travel, in some cases, many hours within a state, or even worse, they even have to travel between states or even between countries, as not every state in the United States and not every country has a Costa Rican consulate (Consular Official in New York, personal communication, June 7, 2011; High-Level Costa Rican Government Officials at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs #1 and #2, personal communication, May 11, 2011; H. Picado, personal communication, May 10, 2011; X. Vargas, personal communication, June 23, 2011).

As a result, the number of Costa Ricans registering to vote abroad has been low up to now. This might change if the TSE puts in place, as planned, a way of registering to vote using the Internet instead of having to go in person to the consulate, but this Internet system is still a work in progress, expected to be ready in December 2011 or January 2012 (H.Picado, personal communication, May 10, 2011). Besides, there are

some Costa Rican migrants who prefer to travel to Costa Rica during elections time or who are not interested in the electoral process (Consular Official in New York, personal communication, June 7, 2011; High-Level Costa Rican Government Officials at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs #1 and #2, personal communication, May 11, 2011; X. Vargas, personal communication, May 23, 2011).

The consular official in New York said,

There are persons here who are not linked to politics, who do not have much weight in national issues, who will not be interested in having their vote count. . . . And some other Costa Ricans told us that if they wanted to vote, they would travel to Costa Rica, take vacations and visit family members at the same time (Consular Official in New York, personal communication, June 7, 2011).

### **Impact of the president's political projects and interests in the perceived importance of the diaspora**

Costa Rica, as a democratic republic, follows its constitution, and a stable body of laws and codes, to regulate itself. Each government also develops a National Plan of Development for the four-year term that a specific president will rule the country, and each sector and institution develop specific sector and institutional strategic plans of action for the years to come (usually, in four-year tracts). Even so, as in many other political regimes in Latin America, the figure of the president in Costa Rica has a strong influence in the priorities the government adopts for the four-year term. This is consistent with what Margheritis described in Ecuador as “the central role of the executive power as agenda setter” (2010, p. 20) and in Argentina as the president being “the main spokesman” for migration policy in general (2007, p. 100).

In Costa Rica, as described in the following paragraphs, the view of the president plays a strong role in the priorities adopted by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. Even presidents from the same political party can have a different view of what migration

policy should look like. For instance, a high-level government official at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs explained,

There are priority areas that remain a priority through time, areas that are adopted as state policies and are fundamental parts of the Costa Rican diplomacy, which do not change with electoral changes. . . . The issues of human rights´ defense, of peace and disarmament, and of sustainability and environment, those are topics that remain through time. . . . Those three issues belong to the diplomatic strategy of the country, those belong to the state, and those do not change with the change of governments. . . . But there are also elements that each government emphasizes. . . . This other topic of the relationship with the diaspora is more dependent on the circumstances. (High-Level Costa Rican Government Official at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs #1, personal communication, May 11, 2011)

The contrast between different presidents´ points of view regarding migration policy can be quite strong, even if they belong to the same political party. Journalist Alvaro Murillo, who has been covering the political beat at *La Nación* since 2005, including the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, described the difference between one presidential term and the following, in regards to migration policy, in the following way:

Costa Rica is the perfect example of the rupture of policies, of the rupture of foreign affairs policy, with each government change. This happens even though it is supposed that foreign affairs policy requires, more than any other, continuity across governments. But it is absolutely evident that in Costa Rica that continuity does not happen. There are some lines in terms of political position, in terms of discourse, that are part of the image of Costa Rica: environmental issues, democracy, human rights´ defense, but above all, as discourse. When the time comes to develop projects of foreign affairs policy, things change from government to government. The best example was the last government (Oscar Arias, 2006-2010), which had a very active foreign affairs policy, but this was in reality because it was the foreign affairs policy of president Arias and of minister Bruno Stagno. From the beginning, Arias emphasized projects such as the Costa Rican Consensus and Peace with Nature. Those are projects Arias had, which are now promoted by the Arias Foundation. This proves it was the foreign affairs policy of president Arias, good or bad, in my opinion very active, good in general, but what is clear is that it was Arias´ personal seal, with a minister chosen by him, with expertise in the topics that Arias deemed important. . . . Once Oscar Arias´ government was over, nobody spoke again about the Costa Rican Consensus or about Peace with Nature. We got a new minister of Foreign Affairs, one with an environmental flair, who

came with the promise of keeping good relations with the rest of Central America, a topic that Oscar Arias relegated. . . . Once the Oscar Arias government finished, the topics changed and the internal structure of the Ministry changed, and the changes impacted the selection of priority topics (A. Murillo, personal communication, May 9, 2011).

Murillo's view is consistent with the following consular official perception in terms of the difference between one head of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the next.

The topic of the Costa Ricans who live abroad has increased in importance lately, it seems to me. Mr. René Castro (minister of Foreign Affairs 2010-2011) has paid more attention to the type of customer service we provide to the Costa Ricans in the consulates, he is very aware of the complaints that are received in Costa Rica about this topic, so he has gotten behind this topic (Consular Official in New York, personal communication, June 7, 2011).

Another high-level government official shares a similar point of view: "Now, with the current minister of Foreign Affairs (René Castro), we are more focused on providing good customer service, less bureaucratic, more accessible" (High-Level Costa Rican Government Official at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs #2, personal communication, May 11, 2011). The difference in how migration policy could be regarded from one president to the following one can also be understood by the comment offered by political opposition leader Ottón Solís, who ran for the Costa Rican presidency in 2006 and 2010, and who in 2006 lost for less than 20,000 votes (about 1% of the total votes). Solís comments show that there are different political parties' views, but also different personal views from one candidate to the next. Solís said about migration, in terms of his political party,

The defense of the illegal migrants' human rights is a very important topic in the political agenda of the Acción Ciudadana (PAC) party. In contrast, I have traveled in the past with different governments led by other parties, as minister and as congressman, and in no meeting with the United States government or with the U.S. embassy this was a topic in the Costa Rican agenda. . . . I care. Every time that I talk to somebody in the U.S. embassy

or in the U.S. executive government, I talk about this (O. Solís, personal communication, April 12, 2011).

Besides political party affiliations, Solís also said that he sees migration policy in a very particular way due to personal reasons:

I am sensitive to the migration topic and the defense of migrants' human rights because I come from a region that, along with Pérez Zeledón, Coto Brus, Dota, and Sarchí, are part of the regions that send the most Costa Rican migrants to the United States. In Pérez Zeledón is very rare to find a family that does not have some cousin, uncle, or nephew working in the United States, especially in New Jersey. I, as a person and as representative of my political party, when I travel to New York, which I do frequently, I always visit New Jersey to meet with Costa Ricans there. I have to admit that I also ask for their support to our political party, but I am also there to know about their situation. That is why I know very well what they go through, because I have talked to many of them about the strong difficulties they face. This situation (migration) has divided the family structure in Costa Rica. (O. Solís, personal communication, April 12, 2011)

And while a current high-level government official described Costa Ricans living abroad as a population "not particularly unprotected in their human rights" (High-Level Costa Rican Government Official at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs #1, personal communication, May 11, 2011), Solís described them in the following way, which shows a very different personal perception:

Costa Rican migrants are among the citizens with less human rights in the world. Illegal migrants in general, anyways, belong to the least protected populations in the world, in terms of human rights. But at least other migrants are helped and defended by their country of origin's government. They are in better standing than Costa Rican migrants. Among the human beings in this planet with less human rights we can find the Costa Rican illegal migrants (O. Solís, personal communication, April 12, 2011).

In brief, at least in the last eight years, the Executive Power of Costa Rica has delineated the country's foreign policy in a way that the emphasis has been placed on gaining visibility in international organisms, in obtaining voice (and vote, if possible) in prestigious international forums, rather than in defending the human rights of the Costa

Rican diaspora, in a position that stems from the vision of the State authorities that Costa Rican migrants are few, are not a specially unprotected group in the United States, and require no special support abroad. This is a position that could easily change if another political party won the national elections of 2014.

**Cultural perceptions: From the invisibility and dismissal of the working migrant to the prestige of the academic diaspora**

At political levels, the perception of some government officials that Costa Ricans abroad are “very few” or “don’t need much help” contribute to the lack of inclusion of this population in the national life. Even though the Costa Rican migrant population (estimated to be, as discussed in a previous section, somewhere between 50,000 and 200,000 persons) cannot be compared to the volume of the migrant populations of other countries (for instance, about 12 million Mexicans and about 2.5 million to 3 million Salvadorans), the perception of some government officials that Costa Ricans living abroad are “very few” do not help to make this public a priority in State policies.

Nevertheless, size in this case is relative: If these migrants had absentee vote rights in national elections, they could have changed, for example, the outcome of the 2006 national presidential elections, even if there were only 50,000 persons, let alone if they were close to 200,000. For instance, in the 2006 presidential elections, the PLN (National Liberation Party)’s candidate, Oscar Arias Sánchez, became president after defeating PAC (Citizenship Action Party)’s candidate, Ottón Solís, with less than a 20,000-votes difference (Rojas Bolaños, n.d.).

One high-level official at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in Costa Rica described Costa Rican migrants and their relation with the Costa Rican government in the following way:

Due to the fact that Costa Ricans living abroad are few and, besides, up to now they have not had the right to vote, and up to now they have not presented many problems of illegality or of delinquent actions, and they have not been the target of high discrimination in the host countries where they live now, I have the hypothesis that the State-diaspora relation is a very distant and almost formal relationship: It happens when someone has to renew a passport or run some errand. This is going to change because in 2014 a new law will allow them to vote being abroad, and also because of the impact of social networks. But, in the past, the importance given to this population has been pretty much zero (High-Level Costa Rican Government Official at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs #1, personal communication, May 11, 2011).

Ottón Solís, political leader of opposition and former presidential candidate by the PAC party, agreed that this public has not been a priority for the nation state and blames traditional politics and traditional parties for that situation. Solís said,

Costa Rica is a unique case in the world in terms of the treatment it gives to the Costa Ricans who, because of economic need, migrate to developed countries such as the United States. It is the only country that does not have migration in its agenda of discussion with the United States. Costa Rica denies that reality, it denies it deeply. There is some sort of petulance that we are a developed country that does not push people out, and then we do not have it in the agenda, and this is a unique situation. Costa Rica is a country of petulance and the government feels embarrassed to accept that we have people who migrate because of poverty. They (the government) want to have another agenda with the United States, not this one (O.Solís, personal communication, April 12, 2011).

Not with the same words, but with the same underlying idea, a high-government official said the following about migrants:

The group (of Costa Ricans) living abroad is very small. It is not, necessarily, a group of unprotected rights. Many of them are people of solid academic formation, who work in corporations, who know how to defend themselves at the individual level. Then, there has been no need of developing relevant collective defenses of migrant workers or other elements that occur in other countries (High-Level Costa Rican Government Official at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs #1, personal communication, May 11, 2011).

Ottón Solís concluded:

It is an image issue. Accepting this (that Costa Rica forces citizens to migrate because of poverty) is to accept that we are an underdeveloped country. Part of the psychology of traditional politics is to believe that we are not (underdeveloped), that we are something special. The moment when we accept that we are in bad shape, the second they cannot keep defending the idea that they have done everything right, and that a fundamental political change is needed, as the change some of us have suggested. To accept this type of situation is hard for traditional politics, because they are the ones who have caused this migration (O. Solís, personal communication, April 12, 2011).

Moving from the political elite's views to the Costa Rican general population's perception, there seem to be some persons who, to a certain point, dismiss or even look down at Costa Ricans who leave the country to move to the United States. Journalist Alvaro Murillo said that there is a cultural issue of some Costa Ricans ignoring or looking down at the migrant. Murillo also said,

There is a cultural issue as well. The *tico* lives very aware of what happens inside Costa Rica. Most Costa Ricans think that the world starts in Paso Canoas and finishes in Peñas Blancas (respectively, the Costa Rican southern and northern borders). Thus, the *tico* who migrates to the United States is seen almost as a traitor. A comment that would be very common in a grocery store here, I believe, would be something like: "Is it true that he died, frozen, in the winter in Wisconsin? He should have not gone there. It is his fault." Thus, if people don't care about migrants, why should the government care, right? I mean, I am talking with all political crudity. (A. Murillo, personal communication, May 9, 2011)

A high-level government official at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs agreed with Murillo's point of view.

Until recently, the *ticos* used to look inward, they were inward-oriented. This has changed as the country exports more through time. The people are now more connected to others, more of them study abroad, but for the country to go from inward-oriented to outward oriented, it will take some time. I think we are in a transitional time, and I think that the relations with the population abroad will strengthen as part of this transition, and it is going to function as an indicator of the attitude change. (High-Level Costa Rican Government Official at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs #1, personal communication, May 11, 2011)

**A special group: The academic diaspora.** Among the Costa Rican diaspora, the academic diaspora is an exception in terms of its visibility and its presence in home policies and communication efforts, because the academic diaspora is a well respected group and is seen, in the discourse of the National Academy of Sciences (the Academia de las Ciencias de Costa Rica), as a key public of the Costa Rican academic community. Nevertheless, in the strategic plans of the Executive Power and of the Ministry of Foreign Relations there is no mention at all about this community.

In practice, it is just in the last two years that a formal effort to engage the academic diaspora started developing: the Ticotal network, a network that links Costa Rican scientists working in Costa Rica with Costa Rican scientists studying and working abroad. The way the Ticotal network was conceived and developed will be described, later on, in a separate section. In the meantime, it is worth pointing out that evidence suggests that the perception toward this specific public, at least at the discourse level, is positive among Costa Rican academics, some politicians, and some public officials.

For instance, Gabriel Macaya, director of the Academia de las Ciencias de Costa Rica (the Costa Rican Academy of Sciences), referred to this public as “the Costa Rican talent” and said, “There is a very close relationship of the Costa Rican academic community with the Costa Rican academics abroad. But really close.” He added that the positive view of the academic community abroad is strongly influenced by the figure of astronaut Franklin Chang Díaz, a successful scientist and former NASA member, who is “an icon of the Costa Rican, of the *tico*, who goes abroad, triumphs, and returns to the country (...) this has favored, a lot, this construction of the image of the successful *tico*” (G. Macaya, personal communication, May 12, 2011).

María Santos, external consultant for the Costa Rican Academy of Sciences, also mentioned that the Costa Rican academic who lives abroad is considered an “agent of change, somebody who can contribute to the country” (M. Santos, personal communication, May 12, 2011). In that regard, the Costa Rican scholar living in the home country values the network opportunities to connect with Costa Rican scholars working and doing research abroad.

Government officials also acknowledged the contributions of the academic diaspora as a “valuable resource,” as people who “already have contacts that become relevant,” as a group of “strong academic formation,” as “a network of professional Costa Ricans that we want to support with the formalization of the Ticotal network,” and as “a bridge, people that can help us better understand the political momentum of a country” (High-Level Costa Rican Government Official at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs #1, personal communication, May 11, 2011)

Even politicians who do not necessarily agree on the view of the current ruling party (and of the current government) in regards to migration policies in Costa Rica agree on the view of the academic diaspora. Political leader Ottón Solís said,

Costa Rica has a great number of professionals of first order who are working here in the United States, people who are on top of technology, publishing articles in top-notch publications, in peer-reviewed journals, people who don't go back to Costa Rica because there are no job opportunities, because there are not enough incentives to science and technology. . . . It is necessary to take advantage of the talent and the knowledge (of this group) (O. Solís, personal communication, April 12, 2011).

In brief, the academic community in Costa Rica has understood that the country has no conditions to stop the “brain drain,” as the country cannot give the research, professional and financial conditions and opportunities that these scientists obtain

abroad, but the State recognizes the payback of collaborating with the scientific community abroad to benefit from the knowledge transfer and the technology transfer. The goal is not to stop the “brain drain,” but to establish a transnational bridge between the home knowledge and the Costa Rican knowledge hosted abroad (G. Macaya, personal communication, May 12, 2011; M. Santos, personal communication, May 12, 2011; High-Level Costa Rican Government Official at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs #1, personal communication, May 11, 2011; O. Solís, personal communication, April 12, 2011).

### **Communication and relationship-building efforts**

Following Molleda’s (2009) inclusive definition of global public relations as any “strategic communications and actions carried out by private, government, or nonprofit organizations to build and maintain relationships with publics in socioeconomic and political environments outside their home location” (§ 10), this section describes the strategic communications and actions carried out by the Costa Rican government to build and maintain relations with its diaspora members in the United States. This description, then, includes not only communication products and tactics, but also relationship-building efforts to generate a sustained contact with the diaspora members. In some cases, these communications are interpersonal and, in some cases, they are mediated; in some cases, these actions overlap with the domains of political science and public diplomacy, among others, but this is a logical outcome in a context where global public relations are understood not just as communication efforts but as relationship-building efforts.

The following are some of the most relevant and noticeable relationship-building efforts developed mainly by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, but also by other institutions such as the Electoral Supreme Court (TSE) and the Costa Rican Academy of Sciences.

**Through the consulates and embassies.** The eight consulates that Costa Rica has in the United States—located in Atlanta, Houston, Los Angeles, Miami, New York, St. Paul (Minnesota), Tucson, and Washington, D.C.—serve all the Costa Rican population spread throughout the U.S. 50 states and Puerto Rico. These consulates provide the traditional consular services: emission of passports and of identification documents, legal powers, registration of births, marriages, deaths, and many other traditional consular services (Ministerio de Relaciones Exteriores, 2011). This is the basic, essential form in which these consulates establish contact and build relations with the Costa Ricans living in the United States: through customer service at the consular offices in the U.S. territory.

This customer service can be labor intensive, especially on Mondays and Fridays. For instance, in one of the busiest Costa Rican consulates in the United States, the one located in New York, five employees (the largest staff of a Costa Rican consulate in the United States) serve about 100 to 150 Costa Ricans a day, plus all the requests they receive over the phone and by e-mail (Consular Official in New York, personal communication, June 7, 2011; High-Level Costa Rican Government Official at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs #2, personal communication, May 11, 2011). In the consulate in Los Angeles, the two consular officials and the administrative assistant receive, in a busy day, between 20 to 25 visitors (X. Vargas, personal communication, June 23, 2011).

**Interpersonal communication.** Besides the consular services, there are other actions that some consulates undertake—depending on the availability of financial and human resources—to establish contact and to build relations with the Costa Rican community in the jurisdiction they serve. One of those efforts is the program of “mobile consulates,” in which the employees of the consulate dedicate one Saturday or one weekend, approximately once every couple of months in different cities, to travel to communities where there is a high concentration of Costa Ricans but no consulate nearby, such as New Jersey, Connecticut, or Pennsylvania.

These mobile consulates, which have been working for about five years now in some jurisdictions, work in the following way: “Several employees of the consulate go to cities where there are high numbers of Costa Ricans living there, and these consular employees offer the consular services directly in those communities” (High-Level Costa Rican Government Official at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs #2, personal communication, May 11, 2011). In this way, the consular employees not only reach more Costa Ricans than what they can reach through the formal consulates (because, for example, in the New York jurisdiction these mobile consulates serve more between 200 to 300 persons each time they travel to different cities in that jurisdiction), but the consular employees also develop community relations in this endeavor. A consular official in New York explained,

The Costa Rican communities in those cities where we take the mobile consulates help us with the logistics. . . . We need to go to places where the Costa Rican community helps us so that we don't have to pay rent to occupy a space for the day. We need a place like a community hall or a church, not a commercial place, and we need a space with a minimum size to be able to serve all the people who come to us that day. . . . Typically, these people who help us are Costa Ricans who belong to certain churches, and we also have relationships with (ethnic) restaurant owners

who help us inform about the mobile consulates among their customers. . . . For instance, in New Jersey there is a church that helps us a lot. This church has a big community of Costa Ricans as members, and they, on Sunday mass, during the announcements, help us communicate with the diaspora. They also publish our information in a local newspaper, called *Pura Vida*. (Consular Official in New York, personal communication, June 7, 2011)

Not all the mobile-consulate programs actually run smoothly. In the consulate in Los Angeles, in 2010 they had only four mobile consulates: one in San Francisco, one in Washington State, one in Utah, and one in Las Vegas. This year, they have had none. (X. Vargas, personal communication, June 23, 2011). Xinia Vargas, general consul of Costa Rica in Los Angeles, explained, "We have the program of mobile consulates, but in reality it is fair to say that we do not have the resources to develop them systematically, as it should be done. Not having the resources limits the possibility of having a program, a real program" (X. Vargas, personal communication, June 23, 2011).

As there are only eight Costa Rican consulates in the U.S. territory, each one has a broad jurisdiction to serve. For instance, the consulate in New York serves the Costa Ricans living in New York, New Jersey, Maine, New Hampshire, Vermont, Massachusetts, Rhode Island, Connecticut, and Pennsylvania, and the Atlanta consulate, just to give another example, serves the Costa Ricans living in Georgia, Alabama, Kentucky, Tennessee, South Carolina, and North Carolina (Ministerio de Relaciones Exteriores, 2011). For that reason, and because the Costa Rican consulates only have between one and five employees (two or three employees being the norm), the members of the consulate face human, financial, and geographic limitations to keep in touch with the Costa Ricans in their jurisdiction (High-Level Costa Rican Government Official at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs #2, personal communication, May 11, 2011; X.

Vargas, personal communication, June 23, 2011). As a result, the members of the consulate try to keep in touch with the community in their jurisdiction, as much as possible, by attending events they are invited to, such as parades or festivals organized by the Costa Rican community in the area. A consular official in New York explained,

If somebody invites us to a social activity, we try to attend, as far as we are able to move to the place and as far as it is a type of activity that we can support as a consulate. Recently, for instance, there was a festival of Latin American cinema, sponsored by Cuba, but there were two Costa Rican movies being shown. So, we attended those two movie presentations. O sometimes we attend parades, pageants, those kinds of things (Consular Official in New York, personal communication, June 7, 2011).

Nonetheless, the consulates are not able to have a proactive role in organizing cultural or social events (Consular Official in New York, personal communication, June 7, 2011; High-Level Costa Rican Government Official at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs #2, personal communication, May 11, 2011; X. Vargas, personal communication, June 23, 2011). The consular official in New York explained,

Regretfully, we don't have the possibility of organizing cultural activities because for that we need an appropriate place, human resources, and a budget, and we don't have any of those three things. In reality, we don't have a budget to cover these things. Our budget is limited to our daily consular activities. We have the disposition, we try to help finding out information, processing permits or visas, if required, or providing letters of support. We try to facilitate the organization of events, but we cannot do more. We just have a small office where we cannot have any type of cultural activity. But, then, what to do, we try to participate in as much as we can, to try to make it up to them. (Consular Official in New York, personal communication, June 7, 2011)

There other few activities that the consulate encourages or even organizes, but these activities are neither permanent, nor constant, and they are done because they require a low budget or now budget at all. For example, a high-level official at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs recalled that when she was general consul in one of the consulates in the United States, her consulate used to organize a social gathering with

the Costa Rican community to celebrate the country's independence each September 15. Also, they organized a "Romería" (peregrination) to the St. Patrick's cathedral, to honor the "Romería" of the Virgin of Los Angeles, in Cartago, Costa Rica, which happens every year on August 2. On the other hand, the Costa Rican embassies have a bigger budget to organize cultural activities, for instance, concerts inviting Costa Rican pianists to perform, but there is only one embassy in each country. Consulates are much more restricted in terms of their budget (High-Level Costa Rican Government Official at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs #2, personal communication, May 11, 2011).

Another effort undertaken by the consulates to keep in touch with the Costa Ricans in the United States are the informal censuses that each consulate tries to maintain with the contact information of the Costa Ricans who approach them to obtain consular services. This is called the consular registry. But these informal censuses are neither complete nor updated, as the migrant population changes constantly, and not all the Costa Ricans living in the United States approach their consulates (Consular Official in New York, personal communication, June 7, 2011; High-Level Costa Rican Government Official at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs #2, personal communication, May 11, 2011).

**Mediated communication.** One form of communication with the Costa Rican diaspora in the United States is the Embassy of Costa Rica's website, at [www.costarica-embassy.org](http://www.costarica-embassy.org). There is a description of the services offered by both the consulates and by the embassy (located in Washington, D.C.) In that website, the user can find general information about consular services and legal services, but the only distinctive section for Costa Ricans living in the United States (besides the web page

describing the different consular services) is a link to a form that allows the Costa Rican to register his or her personal information. The form is available at <http://www.costarica-embassy.org/index.php?q=home> (Embajada de Costa Rica en Washington DC). What this means is that there is no special section devoted to the diaspora, just general information about consular services. Even more, although through a search on Facebook™ one can find Facebook™ pages for some Costa Rican consulates located in places such as Mexico, Argentina, the Netherlands, and Sao Paulo (Brazil), at the time of writing no Costa Rican consulate in the United States had a Facebook™ page or a Twitter™ account.

The Ministry of Foreign Affairs also has a website, at [www.rree.go.cr](http://www.rree.go.cr). There, the user can find ample information about the ministry's services, the list of embassies and consulates around the world, news releases, institutional memories, the institutional magazine, relevant links to government institutions, photo galleries, information about bilateral relations and multilateral relations of the nation state, main dispositions of the Plan Nacional de Desarrollo (the National Plan of Development) regarding foreign affairs (outdated, as it is the plan of the 2006-2010 term), and even links to the Ministry's Facebook™ page and Twitter™ account. Nonetheless, all this is general information about the ministry, its functions and its leaders. There is no section or web page dedicated to the diaspora (besides the list of consular services), nor a Facebook™ page or Twitter™ account targeting specifically the diaspora. In that regard, the website, the Facebook™ page and the Twitter™ account are useful informational tools, but they have shown, until now, low potential for relationship building, for two-way, symmetrical communication, with the diaspora. One exception was the way in which the Ministry's

Facebook™ page functioned after the Japan earthquake of March 11, 2011. A high-level official at the Ministry described the following:

When the earthquake in Japan happened, in about 72 hours we were able to contact, directly, the 300 Costa Ricans who were living in Japan. We contacted 300 out of 300. We were able to know that everyone was alright, thanks to the social networks, the phone and the e-mail. I think social networks will be increasingly important in our communication tactics (High-Level Government Official at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs #1, personal communication, May 11, 2011).

Besides the information distributed through the Ministry's and the Embassy's websites, some Costa Rican consulates in the United States distribute information to the mass media through news releases and also take advantage of the free broadcast services offered by Univision, the latino network of TV stations, radio stations, and websites (Consular Official in New York, personal communication, June 7, 2011; X. Vargas, personal communication, June 23, 2011). A consular official in New York explained,

To inform about our mobile consulates, we use a Univision's free service called Univision 41 A Tu Lado (By Your Side). Also, along with other Latin American consulates, we try to have informative capsules about different consular issues. We try to work with other countries' consulates to be heard a little stronger. We Costa Ricans in the United States are really a small population, compared to the rest of Latin America, so we join other countries to have more strength. We have an informal alliance to inform about mobile consulates, labor rights, human rights, any information that can be useful for migrants. We use Univision and we also send information to other TV channels and mass media for them to broadcast this information or post it online. These mass media services are completely free. They (the media) have a state requirement, and a federal requirement, too, to use some minutes a day to inform about community issues, and those are the spaces we take advantage of. Univision, in particular, has been very useful, because it has radio stations, TV stations and Internet sites, so they distribute our information, and the information from the other Latin American consulates, in those three types of media (Consular Official in New York, personal communication, June 7, 2011)

And, of course, although typically overlooked, communication by phone and by e-mail is important for the Costa Rican consulates. In a consulate like the one in New York, consular officials receive between 200 and 300 phone calls a day, and they receive dozens of e-mails that get answered even during weekends (High-Level Costa Rican Government Official at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs #2, personal communication, May 11, 2011). The consulates also use informative boards in their offices, and messages recorded in the phone system, to provide information about different topics (Consular Official in New York, personal communication, June 7, 2011).

### **Absentee vote**

One effort that will likely increase the relation between Costa Rican citizens and their consulates is the absentee vote, which will start happening on the national elections of 2014, if not earlier through a national referendum (H. Picado, personal communication, May 10, 2011). Given that the Costa Ricans interested in voting while being in the United States will have to register in the consulate of their jurisdiction and then will have to vote in the consulate in person, this might impact the number of persons the consulates will serve and the frequency at which they will communicate in the years to come.

As discussed in previous sections, the absentee vote was a political project led by the TSE (the Electoral Supreme Court), not by the Executive Power, congress or the diaspora members, but it is a project that sends a message to the Costa Ricans living abroad that they are becoming more important for the political life of its country of origin. Not only the absentee vote establishes a tighter link between the migrant and his or her country of origin, but it also will require that a strong communication campaign will be put in place to disseminate information about the absentee vote among the Costa Rican

migrants in the United States. At this point in time, the TSE is still scanning the environment to plan the actual strategies and tactics that will be necessary for this purpose. Hugo Picado, director of IFED at the Electoral Supreme Court (TSE), said,

We manage almost 30 different electoral programs. One of them, the novel one, is the absentee vote. The electoral programs start working two years before the national elections. So, it will be in 2012 that the electoral program of the absentee vote will take concrete actions. Right now we are planning and establishing the budget needed to promote these electoral programs. We still have to define the communication strategies and tactics, but this is not going to be an easy task. (H. Picado, personal communication, May 10, 2011)

Picado said that the main challenges are going to be to try to communicate with a population that is scattered throughout the U.S. territory, a population that has not been accurately quantified and located, a population that will need to come in person to the consulate to register for the electoral registry, and that will have to come back on Elections Day to actually vote in the consulate, which in many cases will demand traveling long distances, investing time, spending money and placing a special effort on the part of the Costa Rican migrants, conditions which many times they don't have.

Picado explained,

All these things imply a challenge, in terms of the communication strategy. The Internet will be very useful, especially the social networks, as well as the Costa Rican mass media that have websites, as well as the TSE's website. All those mechanisms, all those media are going to be used, of course, but we will encounter many difficulties to contact the Costa Ricans living abroad, because the Ministry of Foreign Affairs does not have a detailed registry of them. Starting in 2012, I will say that there will be concrete actions with the consulates in terms of training them, in terms of collecting and distributing information among the Costa Rican population living abroad, to motivate them to register and to vote. It is not going to be easy. Or cheap (H. Picado, personal communication, May 10, 2011).

These communication efforts will be led by the TSE but will also involve the collaboration of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and its network of consulates. A high-level official in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs said that they will be aides to the TSE.

We will be simply aides of the TSE, which has the big burden of proof. We will distribute the brochures, materials or videos that the TSE will send us, as the TSE will coordinate (High-Level Costa Rican Government Official at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs #2, personal communication, May 11, 2011).

A consular official in New York agreed but thinks the consulates will have to have a proactive attitude toward the communication efforts. The consular official explained,

The communication will rest on us. I think we are going to work in the same way we have with the mobile consulates: trying to communicate the information through the organizations that we work with, through Univision, through the website, the phone system... I think we can reach practically to all the persons we need. And, of course, we will also follow the instructions that the TSE and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs will give us, as they are normally the ones who direct us in these topics (Consular Official in New York, personal communication, June 7, 2011).

### **Ticotal network**

In the academic realm, there is one relationship-building effort being made to engage the Costa Rican scientists who live abroad: the Ticotal network, a linkage network between Costa Rican scientists in the home country and in host countries. The idea to create this network started in 2008 and has been developed since then by the Costa Rican Academy of Sciences (G.Macaya, personal communication, May 12, 2011; M. Santos, personal communication, May 12, 2011). Although it has faced obstacles and challenges, such as a very limited budget to grow, the network officially started in October of 2010.

Since then, and until June of 2011, it had identified, contacted and successfully registered 87 Costa Rican scientists all around the world in the network, and it had developed a website ([www.ticotal.cr](http://www.ticotal.cr)) where these persons are listed, so that other

Costa Rican scientists can network with them (Ticotal, n.d.). Contrary to networks in other countries that try to attract scientists back to the home country, Ticotal network's purpose is slightly different, as Gabriel Macaya, director of the Costa Rican Academy of Sciences, explained:

The goal is to utilize the Costa Rican talent abroad, out of Costa Rica, or eventually attracting it back, but the purpose is not repatriation itself but to put that talent abroad to work for the development of our country. That is the main idea. In this first stage, the highest-level purpose is to make those Costa Ricans conscious that they can become an asset to the national development (G. Macaya, personal communication, May 12, 2011).

In that regard, the academic community in Costa Rica is not trying to stop the "brain drain," but trying to establish a transnational collaboration between the Costa Rican brains at home and abroad. This objective is clearly present in the strategic plan of the Costa Rican Academy of Sciences, but it is not mentioned, at all, in the strategic plan of the Executive Power or in the strategic plan of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. This indicates that, so far, reaching the academic diaspora is a priority for the academic sector in Costa Rica, but not a State policy clearly established.

María Santos, external consultant of the Costa Rican Academy of Sciences, described the process by which Ticotal network is being developed. "First, we are identifying those scientists, we are contacting them and asking them to join this collaborative network for it to be a permanent instrument that helps to engage them so that they help in our scientific-technologic development" (M. Santos, personal communication, May 12, 2011). Ticotal network, which encourages membership from scientists in the areas of medicine, natural sciences, agricultural sciences, exact sciences, math and engineering, promotes collaboration efforts but will also try to offer, in the future, academic exchanges (through research projects, teaching opportunities,

post-doc programs, and sabbaticals, for instance) and will try to organize, later on, visits of Costa Rican academic migrants to Costa Rican universities and research centers, as well as international meetings in the United States and Europe where the Costa Rican scientists can get together and meet each other in person (G. Macaya, personal communication, May 12, 2011; M. Santos, personal communication, May 12, 2011). Santos said, “These meetings are going to be very important. We need to give that step from virtual communication to face-to-face communications that will help generate trust and cohesion” (M. Santos, personal communication, May 12, 2011).

The main obstacles the network faces are its limited budget and few human resources. Another concern is to keep the political support the network has received until now, given that electoral processes, like the one coming in 2014, can eventually affect the amount of support an initiative like this receives (G. Macaya, personal communication, May 12, 2011; M. Santos, personal communication, May 12, 2011).

### **State-diaspora relations in Costa Rica: A basic relation at best**

As indicated at the beginning of Chapter 4, the State-diaspora relations in Costa Rica have been weak up to now, consisting mainly of traditional consular services offered to the Costa Rican migrants by consulates around the world that are scarce (for instance, only eight in all the United States) and under staffed (the biggest Costa Rican consulate in the United States, located in New York, has only five employees when the personnel is complete. Sometimes, because of personnel rotation or vacations, it has only two or three persons working at the same time). Besides the traditional consular services, consulates organize mobile consulates to approach different populations in their jurisdiction, but these mobile consulates happen only every two months or so, in

the best cases, and they go to different cities each time, so the impact they have is limited, although useful for the communities they visit.

The only real advancement the Costa Rican migrant population is obtaining in Costa Rica is the right to the absentee vote, which will start happening in the national elections of 2014, but this right was granted not through a process of awareness by the Executive Power about the need to extend political rights to a population that had been unfairly left out, or by the initiative of political parties in Congress, or by the activism of the diaspora itself, but by technical valuations of the Electoral Supreme Court (TSE) in Costa Rica, which led this effort to comply with international norms and trends, and to “catch up” with what dozens of countries around the globe had been doing for many years, including at least 10 Latin American countries. This process has not been a result of a strategic political decision led by the State or by the political parties.

The perception—real or not—that the Costa Rican population abroad is “too small” has not helped to strengthen the State-diaspora relations. The lack of accurate numbers about the migrant population has not helped them, either, in gaining influence at home. And the absence of strong activism and organization on the part of the diaspora itself has not encouraged a closer relationship between the State and the migrants, or between the political parties and the migrants. The impact of the diaspora through the absentee vote could change this situation, increasing the diaspora’s visibility and political muscle, but at this point is early to predict what the outcome of the 2014 absentee vote is going to be, given the difficulties migrants face to visit their consulates on a regular basis. Early signs are discouraging.

At the economic level, remittances—which fluctuate between \$400 million and \$500 plus million a year—are seen as a positive source of income for the country, but remittance senders (the Costa Rican migrants) have not been adopted as a key public by the financial institutions at home, in contrast to other publics such as foreign direct investors, who receive tax breaks and other incentives to invest their money in Costa Rica. Even though the State controls some of the most important banks in Costa Rica, State banks have not been aggressive attracting remittances to their institutions. For example, State banks in Costa Rica are not offering advantages to remittance senders such as lower fees to transfer the money (in comparison to companies such as Western Union), or higher interest rates in saving accounts for money coming from remittances (Céspedes Torres et al., 2010). State banks are not being aggressive, either, in terms of providing information about the existence of remittance transfer services and their rates.

In their study, Céspedes Torres et al. (2010) concluded that State policies are needed to facilitate the sending and receiving of remittances from the United States, as well as the lowering of the transaction fees, to increase the economic wellbeing of the Costa Rican households that receive these monies, especially among households living under the poverty level. These authors suggested that State financial institutions need to form strategic alliances with financial intermediaries in the United States to lower the cost of transferring remittances, and State financial institutions need to create new financial products especially designed for migrants living in the United States, for instance, using technologies such as mobile banking (M-Banking), “which allow, using cell phones, to make transfers of remittances and to monitor accounts around the world” (Céspedes Torres et al., 2010, p. 67). Also, State financial institutions need to inform, in

a stronger way, about the benefits for the user of receiving remittances using banks instead of informal channels or private companies, “producing an expansion of the banking of these monetary incomes” (Céspedes Torres et al., 2010, p. 68).

Specific political projects and specific political actors weigh strongly and determine the route of the relationship between the Costa Rican State and its diaspora. For instance, an organization such as the Electoral Supreme Court (TSE) brought advancements in a topic such as the absentee vote, but these advancements were not originated in the activist pressure of migrants living abroad, in the strategic interests of the different political parties, or in the interest of the Executive Power, but in the need of keeping up with international norms and trends. It was a specific political project of a specific institution, although it required support and collaboration of different sectors to advance it to term.

The connection with the academic diaspora has also been relevant, although incipient so far, but it is an effort that comes specifically from the Costa Rican Academy of Sciences, and although it has the moral support of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and of the Executive Power, establishing connections with the academic diaspora is a key objective for the Academy, but it is not mentioned at all in the strategic plan of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, let alone in the strategic plan of the central government. Thus, it is a sectorial effort, not a State policy.

Up to now, there have been inconsistencies in the establishment of priorities in the Costa Rican foreign affairs policy among political leaders, not only between political parties, but also within the same political party. The views of the president at any given time, and the view of the Minister of Foreign Affairs, strongly influence the establishment

of goals, objectives, strategies and tactics in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. Because of this strong presidential influence in the priorities of the country's foreign policy, without the president's recognition of the diaspora as a key public, or at least as a relevant public for the State, any department of public relations and/or communications in the different government institutions will have a limited range of action, as these departments tend to respond to the needs and to the strategic objectives of the institutions they serve.

For that reason, in the Costa Rican context, the recognition of the diaspora as a relevant public for the State needs to come from high-level officials, namely the president and the minister of Foreign Affairs, for the diaspora to gain relevance in the strategic plans of the government. Otherwise, stronger efforts from departments of public relations/public information, or stronger activism on the part of the diaspora community, will be required for the diaspora to gain a stronger presence in the government discourse and policies.

Table 4-1. Strategies developed by the State in Costa Rica to establish and maintain relations with its diaspora members living in the United States

Goal of the strategy	Description of the strategy	Observations and examples
To attract remittances	None in particular	No campaigns, communication strategies or financial tools, at the time of writing, to achieve this goal
To lure migrants investment into the home economy	None in particular	None
To keep the national identity and the connection to the home country alive	Personnel from the different consulates and embassies try to attend events organized by the Costa Rican diaspora, such as festivals and parades	There is no budget to guarantee attendance to these events; this personnel attends voluntarily
	Some consulates keep informal consular registries with data of Costa Ricans who approach the consulates to request services	The user is given a form to fill, but there are no mechanisms to force the user to fill the form or to tell the truth in the information he/she provides
	The consulates and embassies organize a few, sporadic cultural events, but this is very limited because there is no budget to organize this type of activities	These activities are neither permanent nor constant, and they are low-budget events
To facilitate the interaction between Costa Ricans abroad and the home government	Traditional consular services such as renovation of passports and emission of identification cards	In each consulate there are from 2 to 5 employees

Table 4-1. Continued

	Mobile consulates program to reach areas where consulates are far away	Since 2006, approximately, with some support of the Costa Rican diaspora in the logistics
To defend Costa Ricans' human rights abroad	Consuls will keep in touch with Costa Ricans who are detained abroad	The consul will visit the detained conational in the detention centers
To "give back" by offering political concessions or rights to Costa Ricans abroad	Absentee vote for migrants will be granted starting in the national elections of year 2014.	This was an initiative of the Electoral Supreme Court to keep up with international trends, not a conscious effort or decision from the Executive Power, Congress or the diaspora itself
To actively acknowledge a change of vision or paradigm of migrants as "active subjects" in the development of Costa Rica's life (economy, politics and social life)	This is partially happening, but only with the academic diaspora, through linkages with the academic community in Costa Rica	Ticotal network was created in 2010 at <a href="http://ticotal.net">http://ticotal.net</a>

## CHAPTER 5

### INCLUSION OF THE DIASPORA IN THE HOME COUNTRY'S AFFAIRS AND HUMAN RIGHTS' PROTECTION: A CHANGE OF DIRECTION IN THE STATE-DIASPORA RELATIONS IN EL SALVADOR

This chapter explores how El Salvador has steadily changed, in the last 20 years, the manner in which it establishes relations and communicates with its diaspora, especially the migrants living in the United States. The paradigm in El Salvador has shifted from offering just traditional consular services to an all-inclusive approach that emphasizes in the defense of the diaspora's human rights, in the inclusion of migrants in the home country development, and in the promotion of diaspora investment in the local economy.

The analysis of documents (such as strategic plans, news releases, transcriptions of speeches, government reports, pieces of legislation, etc.) plus the primary analysis of eight interviews with high-level government officials, academicians, and journalists, as well as the secondary analysis of four interviews with high-level government officials indicate that the volume of migrants outside El Salvador (mainly in the United States) and the impact of remittances on El Salvador's economy has forced the State to acknowledge this "far-away brothers" in several aspects: from developing mechanisms to keep attracting remittances and to lure migrants' investment into the home-country economy, to "giving back" to migrants through the protection of their human rights and the concession of some political rights at home.

Seen from an international public relations perspective, the diaspora is a public that has become a key stakeholder for El Salvador's government and is definitely visible not only in the Salvadoran society and economy, but also in the official discourse and policies. This visibility has been accompanied by the expansion of some consular

services —traditional and non-traditional—, by the development of innovative financial mechanisms to attract traditional remittances and community remittances, by the surge of a greater flexibility in State-diaspora alliances, and, most of all, by a change of vision in how to serve the migrants, considering them not only receivers of consular services abroad, but also “active subjects” in the development of El Salvador’s economy, political destiny, and social life. In brief, El Salvador has shifted its vision to consider migrants abroad as transnational citizens and, even with imperfections and with many processes to be improved, El Salvador has become a transnational society.

As stated by the PNUD (Programa de las Naciones Unidas para el Desarrollo, or United Nations Program for Development), El Salvador shows a true economic dependency on remittances, and this has translated into changes in the discourse and in the State policies, with different levels of success in the implementation of those policies, both to promote and facilitate remittances, and to “compensate” migrants with some political and economic gains (PNUD, 2007). The focus has shifted towards the protection of human rights and the construction of the diaspora as active subjects of the home development.

To analyze how this change in paradigm is impacting the wellbeing of migrants outside El Salvador and to describe how these changes are really functioning in “the real world” among migrants is beyond the scope of this study, but there is an evident change in the State’s vision, discourse, axis of action, and conceptualization of migration policies, and in the process of “constructing the diaspora” (Ragazzi, 2009; Kunz, 2008). At the same time, there are unfulfilled promises. For instance, even though migrants have been pleading for this right for decades, it is not until recently that there

seems to be a serious attempt to grant absentee vote in national elections starting in 2014, but the process is still at the initial stages. Likewise, Salvadorans abroad do not have political representation in Congress, which is another political gain that migrants have been advocating for during many years, but it does not seem this political gain will become a reality any time soon. The data also suggest that the State policies toward the Salvadoran diaspora are somewhat influenced by the Executive Power, mainly by the country's president at any given time, and that the vision towards the diaspora can very well change from one political term to the next, which is why the current government is trying to institutionalize processes and policies as much as possible, so that they do not suffer extreme, sudden changes with each political election, or do not change too drastically with each president's priorities, interests, and views.

### **The Characteristics of This Case**

Different contextual variables in El Salvador, including, especially, its historical development in the last 40 years, help to explain the characteristics of this unique State-diaspora relation and the shift in paradigm that started in the 1990s but consolidated after 2004. Also it is relevant the presence of political projects at the Executive Power level that acknowledge the diaspora's impact on the home economy, the need of restitution towards this transnational public, and the duty of the State to "give back" to the Salvadoran diaspora to compensate their members for their struggles since the Civil War of the 1980s.

This chapter builds upon a case study that analyzes transnational policies, as well as communication and relationship-building efforts, in the areas of migration policymaking, economic policymaking, communication initiatives, and international public relations efforts. Data was collected from diverse sources: governmental

documents, legislation, national and sector development plans, migration reports, socioeconomic indicators, news releases, speeches, academic publications, working papers of international organizations, and the analysis of interviews granted by three high-level Salvadoran government officials to news media such as CCN and Radio América. Besides, 20 in-depth interviews were conducted by the author of this study with high-level government officials, academics, politicians, and journalists (eight from El Salvador, 12 from Costa Rica) to build this analysis.

This case will present the socioeconomic and political factors that explain El Salvador's convoluted political development in the last four decades and its conflicted economic progress, to then focus on the characteristics of El Salvador's migration, on the State-led transnational policies developed to engage and favor Salvadoran migrants abroad, on the communication and relationship-building efforts that this State engages in to keep contact and maintain relations with its diaspora, on the political impact this key public has on the local political and economic processes, and on the contextual factors that explain the characteristics of these particular State-diaspora relations in this Central American country.

### **El Salvador Today: The Product of Strong Inequalities and Armed Conflicts**

El Salvador, the smallest country in Central America, has a territory of 21,041 square miles. With a life expectancy at birth of 71 years, an unemployment rate in 2008 of 5.9%, a GDP in 2009 of \$21,1 billion, a poverty headcount ratio at national poverty line of 37.8% of the population in 2009, and a GNI per capita in 2009 of \$3,370, El Salvador is the second strongest economy in Central America (after Costa Rica –and Panamá, if you count Panamá as part of Central America), but El Salvador has a much higher level of poverty and a much lower GNI per capita than Costa Rica and Panamá

(World Bank, 2011c; McCoy, 2009; Bulmer-Thomas, 2003). For comparison purposes, it is relevant to indicate that the CIA World Factbook estimates the 2010 Salvadoran GDP (official exchange rate) in \$21,7 billion, the 2010 Salvadoran GDP (purchasing power parity) in \$43,6 billion, the 2010 Salvadoran GDP per capita (purchasing power parity) in \$7,200, the 2010 Salvadoran unemployment rate in 7%, and the 2011 Salvadoran population in 6 million inhabitants (CIA, 2011b).

The turbulent history that El Salvador has faced for decades can explain the disadvantaged financial and social situation of El Salvador in comparison to other economies in the region (for instance, Costa Rica and Panamá), although El Salvador economy has not taken its worst possible toll thanks to the impressive volume of remittances Salvadoran migrants send from abroad, as will be explained in later sections in this chapter, which amount to about 16 to 18% of the country's GDP, depending on the year and also depending on the impact of the economic situation and the job market in the world economy, mainly in the United States.

In El Salvador, armed conflicts, assassinations of high-level political figures, coupes d'états, civil wars, peasant uprisings, and many other conflicts can be traced back for centuries, even before the country's independence from Spain in 1838 (White, 2009). The country has faced strong inequalities in the distribution of income and of political power, with a few strong elites controlling the territory, to the point that there is a saying (or national myth) that states that the country is controlled by mainly 14 families (one family for each of the 14 departments in which El Salvador's territory is divided). In reality, there are not 14 ruling families, but many more, but the landowning oligarchy

has controlled the socioeconomic and political destiny of the country for many decades (White, 2009).

Nevertheless, to focus on modern history, is important to understand the country's situation since 1979, when a coup d'état brought the government of the Junta Revolucionaria (the Revolutionary Junta, or committee) to power. The ideological differences between distinct social sectors of the country were so strong that, one year later, in 1980, the last civil war in El Salvador —at the moment of writing—exploded. At that time, the right-wing government and the left-wing revolutionary forces, organized in several guerrillas joined as the Frente Farabundo Martí de Liberación Nacional (Farabundo Martí National Liberation Front, FMLN Spanish acronym) engaged in a bloody civil war that resulted in thousands of people dead or disappeared. The Fuerzas Armadas (Armed Forces, or the Salvadoran army) were accused of brutally killing thousands of Salvadorans (about 80,000) and of torturing many more (White, 2009). After 12 years of massacre, the Chapultepec Peace Accords ended the civil war in 1992, and the FMLN evolved into a legitimate political party.

The civil war, along with the precarious economic situation of the country, forced thousands of Salvadorans to flee their country during the 1980s, one of the highest peaks of migration in the country (Menjívar, 2000; PNUD; 2007). Most of those migrants traveled to the United States as undocumented workers, but many more relocated in many other countries around the world. Since the decade of the 1980s, migration trends have continued in El Salvador, nonstop, and different estimates calculate the number of Salvadorans living outside their country somewhere between two million and three

million (White, 2009; PNUD, 2007). The money these migrants send is the main source of foreign income for El Salvador.

In the 1990s and early 2000s, the FMLN —now a political party—lost the national elections against conservative, right-wing party Alianza Republicana Nacional (National Republican Alliance, ARENA Spanish acronym) in 1994, 1999, and 2004, terms in which El Salvador kept on moving towards privatization of State enterprises and adoption of neoliberal policies, as it had started doing since the 1970s (White, 2009). In the 2009 elections, by a tight margin of about 2%, FMLN candidate Mauricio Funes, a former television news anchor and journalist, won the presidential elections, becoming the first president from a leftist party in El Salvador. Funes started his term on June 1, 2009, adopting a centrist style of governing (McCoy, 2009).

### **Characteristics of Migrants From El Salvador**

El Salvador is one of the countries with the highest percentage of migrants in Latin America. While the percentage of Mexicans, Dominicans and Cubans living in the United States is estimated to be about 10% of their country of origin's population, for El Salvador, those estimates go from 20 to 33% of the population, depending on which organization presents the statistics. In any case, while 35 years ago the Salvadoran migration to the United States was estimated in 0.2% of El Salvador's population, currently, according to the PNUD, the percentage of Salvadoran migrants in the United States is somewhere between 20 and 33% of El Salvador's population. The increase has been exponential, especially since the civil war of the 1980s (PNUD, 2007; Menjívar, 2000).

Most of the Salvadoran participants interviewed for this dissertation estimated the number of migrants living outside of El Salvador between two and three million people,

with an overwhelming majority located, in some cases legally, but mainly undocumented, in the United States (Ministerio, 2011; Tirso Sermeño, general consul of El Salvador in Las Vegas, personal communication, June 13; Ricardo Valencia, political counselor at El Salvador Embassy in Washington D.C., personal communication, June 28, 2011; Radio America & García, 2009).

Still, those numbers are educated guesses because, as it happens with any migrant population, it is difficult to be accurate with the numbers, as many of the migrants never visit their consulates, so they do not fill the consular registry, many fill the consular registry with false information, many move between countries or states, some follow a circular pattern of migration (going back to their home country and migrating again later), and some become citizens in the host country or have children born in the host country, “disappearing” then from the statistics of migrants (Tirso Sermeño, general consul of El Salvador in Las Vegas, personal communication, June 13; José Joaquín Chacón, general consul of El Salvador in Tucson, personal communication, June 14, 2011; Portes & Rumbaut, 2006).

Offering a much more conservative number, the World Bank estimated the stock of Salvadoran migrants in 2010 in 1,269,100 persons, or 20.5% of the country's population (World Bank, 2011d), but the consensus among the participants interviewed is that the most probable number is close to 2.5 or 3 million people (Tirso Sermeño, general consul of El Salvador in Las Vegas, personal communication, June 13; Ricardo Valencia, political counselor at El Salvador Embassy in Washington D.C., personal communication, June 28, 2011; Radio America & García, 2009; PNUD, 2007; Ministerio, 2011). In any case, all of the participants interviewed and the documents

about migration reviewed for this study recognize the huge impact that those migrants—and their remittances—have in the home country, as will be discussed later, in the section “Economic impact of Salvadoran migrants: Remittances.”

As stated before by the participants interviewed and the documents cited, most of the Salvadorans who migrate choose the United States as their destination, although some migrate to other countries around the world, such as Canada, Italy, Sweden, and Australia. In the United States, the majority of Salvadorans are undocumented workers, although there is a minority formed by either U.S. citizens (dual citizenship), permanent residents (Green Card holders) or beneficiaries of the TPS (temporary protection status), which allows some 250,000 Salvadorans to legally work in the United States. This is a special temporary benefit developed by the U.S. government to compensate some victims of the 1980s civil war and of the 2001 devastating earthquakes in the country (PNUD, 2007). It is a benefit that has to be renegotiated periodically.

There is a consensus from the interviewees and the documents reviewed for this study that, among the ones who settled in the United States, the majority of Salvadoran migrants live in California (mainly in Los Angeles and San Francisco), followed by Washington, D.C. and Virginia, and, in third place, New York and Texas are both mentioned, with similar numbers of Salvadorans in each state (Tirso Sermeño, general consul of El Salvador in Las Vegas, personal communication, June 13, 2011; José Joaquín Chacón, general consul of El Salvador in Tucson, personal communication, June 14, 2011; Ana del Carmen Valenzuela, general consul of El Salvador in San Francisco, personal communication, June 22, 2011; PNUD, 2007). The Salvadoran population in the United States is heterogeneous, although is formed mainly by migrant

workers, most of them males, but with the female population increasing steadily. The amount of money that they send to their families also varies widely, from a few dollars to more than \$500 a month, with an average of \$200 a month (Pastrán, 2011)

### **State-Diaspora Relations in El Salvador**

In this chapter, this dissertation explores the way El Salvador's government establishes relations with its diaspora in the United States. It does so adopting an interdisciplinary approach and a view of global public relations as the establishment of relations with key publics located abroad through strategic actions and strategic communications in general (Molleda, 2009), not just as the development of communication products. In the particular case of El Salvador, contextual variables in the country's economy, social structure, culture, political processes, and historical developments have impacted the way State-diaspora relations have developed in the country (Landolt, P., Autler, L. & Baires, S., 2003; Ministerio, 2011; Menjívar, 2000).

Menjívar (2000) explained:

Migration is an enduring feature of Salvadoran history. At different times economic policies and political decisions generated particular population movements; these in turn have greatly affected the dynamics of social institutions, such as the family. . . . In addition, the militarization of life and the institutionalization of terror in El Salvador have left profound scars on a wide range of social ties. In contrast to earlier movements, the massive emigration of the 1980s has been significantly more numerous and more inclusive, as it has represented all sectors of Salvadoran society. The upheaval within which this massive emigration unfolded was not the result of a sudden crisis. Rather, it was the outcome of a lengthy history of reluctance (on the part of the elite) to fundamental economic reform, of abuses by a military entrenched in power, and of external intervention that supported this structure. (pp. 56-57)

In summary, it can be said that the State-diaspora relations in El Salvador were in their worst shape during the Civil War of the 1980s, when the clashes between the right-wing government and the left-wing guerillas during more than a decade produced

thousands of deaths (different authors provide different estimates that range from 60,000 to 80,000 fatalities) and millions of displacements (people fled the country to establish themselves all over the world, but mainly in the United States). At that time, the government was the enemy (White, 2009; Menjívar, 2000) and trying to establish positive State-diaspora relations was an unattainable goal.

Nevertheless, since the 1990s, El Salvador has tried to keep better contact and establish stronger relations with its diaspora, giving forward steps at different speeds and with different levels of success, and it has become one of the exemplary cases in Latin America, after Mexico. (PNUD, 2007; Organización Internacional para las Migraciones, 2007) There are still many improvements to be made and many goals to accomplish, as their own government officials recognize, but El Salvador has strengthened its State-diaspora relations since the 1990s, and especially after 2004, as a result of the growing importance of remittances in the Salvadoran economy, as it will be explained in the section “Economic impact of Salvadoran migrants: Remittances.” In the following paragraphs, a description of the main advancements in the state-diaspora relations is provided.

According to the PNUD, the evolution of State policy towards its diaspora (State-led transnational policies) in El Salvador has a much more recent history than the efforts conducted by the diaspora community to obtain rights (PNUD, 2007). Nevertheless, it was until the State started paying attention to the diaspora that certain rights were actually granted. With the government of President Armando Calderón Sol (1994-1999, ARENA party), for instance, the system of consulates and embassies was strengthened to offer, besides traditional consular services, some other services such as legal

counseling, official celebration of religious and national festivities abroad, business meetings with Salvadoran investors, visits of government officials to diaspora communities, and the development of a campaign to inform Salvadorans abroad about their rights in the home country as Salvadoran citizens. This marked a radical change in the position of the government towards its diaspora because the government started adopting a role as keeper and protector of the umbilical cord between Salvadorans abroad and their home country (Landolt et al., 2003).

The reforms initiated with Calderón Sol were strengthened by President Francisco Flores (1999-2004, ARENA party), and the impact of home-country policies in host-country locations became noticeable when the Salvadoran Congress decided to replace the former national identification card for the DUI (Single Identity Document, or Documento Único de Identidad, DUI Spanish acronym), creating a mini crisis for Salvadorans in the United States, as millions of Salvadorans became suddenly undocumented (their former ID card was no longer valid). This forced the Salvadoran government to open DUI offices in the United States after May 2005 to solve the problem, although, currently, there are only three DUI offices in the U.S. territory: in Los Angeles, in Washington D.C., and in New York City (PNUD, 2007; Tirso Sermeño, personal communication, June 13, 2011).

President Flores' (1999-2004) efforts emphasized in improving the quality of consular services, advocating for migratory reform in the United States, and developing a State policy toward the attention of Salvadorans abroad, a starting point for institutionalizing these and the changes to come. The program of mobile consulates also started during his term, in 2003. Besides, the government lobbied for and assisted

the Salvadorans who were granted TPS status (temporary protection status) by the U.S. government, due to the devastating consequences of the 2001 earthquakes in El Salvador (PNUD, 2007).

Until President Flores' term, the attention of and linkage with the Salvadoran community abroad was coordinated by the Vice-Presidency office. At the time, some actions were undertaken in coordination with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs: For instance, using monies from an international loan named the Fondo de Inversión Social para el Desarrollo Local (Fund for Social Investment and Local Development, FISDL Spanish acronym), the Unidos por la Solidaridad (Joined by Solidarity) program was developed by the State to co-finance social projects of basic infrastructure in the communities of origin of Salvadoran migrants. With this program, 45 projects were financed: 15 in 2002 and 30 in 2003. The Salvadoran government invested about \$7 million, and municipalities and migrants together brought another \$4.5 million to the table (PNUD, 2007; Tirso Sermeño, general consul of El Salvador in Las Vegas, personal communication, June 13, 2011).

In the government of Elías Antonio Saca (2005-2009, ARENA party), the trend of approaching migrants continued—as well as the program Unidos por la Solidaridad and the functioning of the mobile consulates—but a relevant institutional change took place: Instead of being a direction in the Vice-President office, the institution in charge of coordinating the relationship-building efforts with the diaspora was moved to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and was given a much higher level in the political hierarchy. It became the Vice-Ministry for Salvadorans Abroad (Viceministerio para Salvadoreños en el Exterior) (PNUD, 2007; Ministerio, 2011; Nosthas, 2006; Tirso Sermeño, personal

communication, June 13, 2011; José Manuel Castillo, head of the Direction for the Strengthening of Salvadoran Organizations Abroad-Ministry of Foreign Affairs, personal communication, June 22, 2011).

During Saca's term, two events with Salvadorans abroad took place in November of 2004 and October of 2006: The Presidential Forum with Salvadorans Abroad. In both, hundreds of Salvadorans considered leaders in their Salvadoran communities located in their host countries were invited to travel to El Salvador to discuss their needs, their wants, and, most of all, to discuss the possibilities of keeping in touch and of investing in the home country and in their communities of origin. In the first forum there were 600 participants. In the second, there were more than 700 participants (Nosthas, 2006; PNUD, 2007).

Although these forums were praised in many aspects, they also showed that the main focus of the government was to promote investment and to channel remittances from migrants for productive enterprises or social initiatives (PNUD, 2007). At the same time, they also showed an empowerment on the part of the diaspora and a claim of this community against the government. For instance, the PNUD (2007) concluded: "Many migrants think that their contribution is valued only in financial terms, but the recognition of their rights and of their participation in the definition of a common project for the nation is insufficient" (p. 70).

Parallel to the Presidential forums, but organized by the civil society, several organizations of Salvadorans abroad met in different conventions to discuss their needs and the interaction they wanted to have with the government. In the IV Convention of Salvadorans Abroad, in 2006, migrants' representatives expressed frustration and

distrust in the political will to integrate the diaspora in local affairs. “In El Salvador, there is no real political will to open spaces for the participation of the Salvadorans abroad in the life of the country; they see us simply as senders of family remittances and economic support,” stated the official declaration of the participants in this event (Convención Internacional de Salvadoreños en el Mundo, 2006, as cited by PNUD, 2007, p. 70).

During the last years of Saca’s government, new “consulates of protection” were created in the “in-transit” area for Salvadoran migrants (Central America and, mainly, Mexico, which is the “in-transit” area in the path to the United States) in an attempt to better protect migrants’ human rights. Besides, nine more “traditional consulates” were also added to the Foreign Service network, and the fifth renegotiation of the TPS status was successfully conducted with the U.S. government. About 250,000 Salvadorans have TPS status in the United States (Nosthas, 2006).

As part of the new Vice-Ministry for Salvadorans Abroad, the Direction for Humanitarian Management and Migrant Attention was created, in charge of providing services to migrants in vulnerable conditions. Also, some initiatives to try to incorporate migrants’ points of view in local affairs were developed. For instance, migrants were asked their opinion in regards to the National Strategic Education Plan of 2021 and to the projects that El Salvador should had included in the Cuenta del Milenio (Millennium Account), a fund given to El Salvador by the U.S. government. Finally, new personnel were added to the network of consulates and embassies around the world to specifically facilitate Salvadoran investments in their home country (Nosthas, 2006).

Finally, in 2009, President Mauricio Funes (2009-2014, FMLN party) was elected and, with him, came a strong change in the vision of the State-diaspora relations. The change of paradigm can be explained or summarized by the idea that, with Funes, the focus of the discourse moved from the need of attracting remittances and funneling investments (which Funes' government also does) to the protection of the migrants' rights and the rights of their families. Thus, the focus moved from "What can we obtain from migrants?" to "What can El Salvador offer migrants in return for their support?" As a result, the focus is placed not only in facilitating the means for migrants to give back to their country of origin, but for El Salvador to give protection and restitutions in return to those migrants. This change seems to originate, on one hand, from the personal interest of Funes in the topic, and, on the other hand, from the leftist orientation of the FMLN party (which won the national elections in 2009 for the first time in history), a party historically more interested in social justice than other conservative, elite-ruled parties such as ARENA.

The specific efforts of the Funes' government will be detailed in the following sections, but at this point it is important to note that, right since his term started, in 2009, the Vice-Ministry for Salvadorans Abroad was restructured to reflect this new vision. For instance, three General Directions were established as part of the Vice-Ministry: the General Direction of Foreign Service (which coordinates the networks of consulates and embassies), the General Direction of Migration and Development (in which one of its specific units is the Direction for the Strengthening of Salvadoran Organizations Abroad); and the General Direction of Human Rights (Ministerio, 2011; Ana del Carmen Valenzuela, general consul of El Salvador in San Francisco, personal communication,

June 22, 2011; José Manuel Castillo, head of the Direction for the Strengthening of Salvadoran Organizations Abroad, personal communication, June 22, 2011; Ricardo Valencia, political counselor at the El Salvador Embassy in Washington D.C., personal communication, June 28, 2011).

The General Direction of Migration and Development was originally created in 1999 as the Direction of Attention to the Salvadoran Communities Abroad, but in 2009 it was renamed and assigned broader responsibilities. The General Direction of Human Rights was created in 2009, in a strong sign that the protection of human rights is “a priority for President Mauricio Funes government” (Ministerio, 2011, ¶ 20). The new orientation of the Vice-Ministry is clearly stated in the Ministry’s website, specifically in the section or webpage of the Vice-Ministry:

Given the importance of the compatriots who live out of our borders, the Vice-Ministry for Salvadorans Abroad considers that: El Salvador is only thinkable, is only viable, and is only possible if Salvadorans abroad are included in the national development plans. In this framework, the Vice-Ministry has as its fundamental objective the promotion of Salvadorans-abroad’s rights and their access to opportunities for their inclusion in the national development. This is now the main function of the Salvadoran consulates in the administration of President Mauricio Funes. This new vision stems from a concept of sovereignty that transcends the exclusive protection of Salvadorans in some determined territory. Defending the sovereignty also means to defend the human rights of Salvadorans, no matter where they are” (Ministerio, 2011, ¶ 3, 4, and 5, italics in the original).

The change in conceptualization can also be noticed by reading the vision and mission of the General Direction of Migration and Development (DGMD Spanish acronym):

The DGMD is the General Direction in charge of strengthening the links with and the identity of Salvadorans abroad, making them active and included participants in the development processes of their communities of origin and of their country. The DGMD will try to tighten up connections of mutual support with Salvadorans abroad, developing spaces for dialogue

and coexistence with the Salvadoran community all around the world, in conditions of symmetry and gender equality (Vice-Ministerio, 2010, p. 3)

In this written presentation of what the DGMD is and does, the constant use of terms such as “internal reorganization,” “active participants,” “inclusion,” “mutual support,” “integration,” “alliances,” “inter-institutional networks,” “motors in the construction of a new Nation,” “dialogue,” “conversation,” “shared building of linkages,” “defense and protection of human rights,” “co-responsibility,” and “joint design and execution” of State-supported programs are indicative of a change of vision and of a discursive shift (Vice-Ministerio, 2010).

### **Economic impact of Salvadoran migrants: Remittances**

The economic impact of remittances in El Salvador’s economy is one of the highest in Latin America. Before the U.S. recession of 2008, remittances accounted for about 18% of El Salvador’s GDP (PNUD, 2007). Since 2008, the impact has fluctuated between 16 and 17% of the country’s GDP. It is, still, the greatest source of foreign currency in the country, well above foreign direct investment and foreign aid (Banco Central de Reserva de El Salvador, BCR, 2011; Journalist María José Saavedra, personal communication, June 14, 2011).

Between 2000 and 2006, in average, Salvadorans sent more than \$2 billion. In the last years, that number has grown to about \$3.5 billion, although the amount has fluctuated with the ups and downs of the U.S. economy (PNUD, 2007; María José Saavedra, personal communication, June 14, 2011). For example, remittances in 2008 were \$3.74 billion; in 2009, \$3.39 billion; and in 2010, \$3.43 billion (Banco Central de Reserva de El Salvador, BCR, 2010). This money represents not only the salvation board for thousands of families in the home country, but also it keeps El Salvador’s

economy afloat (PNUD, 2007; María José Saavedra, personal communication, June 14, 2011; Ricardo Valencia, personal communication, June 28, 2011). Remittances account for \$1 of every \$3 that El Salvador receives from abroad (Pastrán, 2011).

**Remittances in the financial system and the banking system.** The banking system in El Salvador realized, long ago, that capturing remittances was a profitable business, and there is good competition, in terms of the commissions charged for the service, among remittance-sending companies, banks, cooperative associations, and informal “carriers” of remittances. In fact, El Salvador is the country in Central America with the lowest fees for money transfers (about 4% of the amount sent), while Costa Rica and Panamá have the most expensive fees (about 5.5% of the money sent) (Pastrán, 2011).

In the United States, the percentage of Salvadorans with access to banking services went from 30% to 70% in the last 10 years (Pastrán, 2011). The cheapest way to send money from the United States to El Salvador is from bank account to bank account (for instance, using the Internet or the phone), in which case the transfer fee is about 2%, while the most expensive is using a credit card, because of the additional fees involved in the service. Many Salvadorans use the bank-to-bank system, although many others use money-sending companies (Pastrán, 2011), and even hire persons who travel between the United States and El Salvador carrying the money and charge a fee for the service. Also, some Salvadorans abroad use FEDECACES (Spanish acronym for the Federation of Cooperative Associations of Savings and Credit of El Salvador) to send their remittances, because FEDECACES, which groups more than 40 cooperative associations in El Salvador, gives “remittances-receiver loans” to

Salvadorans in the home country based on the remittances that their relatives abroad send them through this Federation (María José Saavedra, personal communication, June 14, 2011).

Remittances play such an important role in El Salvador's economy that the United States agreed to start in the near future, probably by 2012, the BRIDGE program (Iniciativa Remesas Constructoras para la Inversión, Crecimiento y Emprendedurismo, or Building Remittances for Investment, Development, Growth and Entrepreneurship, BRIDGE, English acronym), which is a millionaire emission of U.S. bonds that will have the future influx of remittances from El Salvador as a guarantee of payment. This initiative will allow the Salvadoran government to invest millions of dollars—a first estimate indicates it is going to be about \$1 billion—in major infrastructure projects and social initiatives in El Salvador, such as the revamping of the roads and highways all around the country, the renovation of the national airport, the construction of the new maritime terminal of La Unión port, and a new public transportation system for the metropolitan areas of San Salvador.

These investments will have a mixed composition, in the sense that both the government and private companies will be in charge of managing the projects, although the government would keep the majority of the stocks, becoming the biggest stockholder in each of these mixed companies. The U.S.-El Salvador agreement for the BRIDGE initiative is still pending, but it has been in negotiations since 2010 (María José Saavedra, personal communication, June 14, 2011; Laínez, Belloso & Ramírez, 2010; Ricardo Valencia, political counselor of El Salvador Embassy in Washington D.C., personal communication, June 28, 2011; Funes, 2011; Funes & García, 2011).

## **Migrants as tourists**

Salvadoran migrants have a strong impact in the tourism sector in El Salvador, even though the State has not developed specific tourism programs for migrants. Journalist María José Saavedra explained that the Ministry of Tourism does not have the need of promoting migrant-tourism because migrants come no matter what, without requiring any campaign.

They are a captive market: Each March, Holy Week and August, when the patron saint festivities happen in San Salvador, the far-away brother comes back faithfully. . . .The undocumented migrants don't come, because the only way they can go back to the United States is as 'mojados' [wet backs]. So, the 'mojados' don't come (M. José Saavedra, personal communication, June 14, 2011).

## **Migrants as investors and/or promoters of investments**

Since the early 2000s, but mainly since 2009, the Salvadoran government has implemented a series of measures to facilitate migrants' investments in El Salvador, both for personal projects, such as buying a house in El Salvador, and for productive enterprises. After analyzing the in-depth interviews conducted for this research project, and after reading the different government materials collected for this case study (national plans of development, sector plans of development, reports, speeches, and such), it is easy to notice one topic that is prevalent across all the informational materials: the focus on attracting diaspora investments to maintain the linkage of the diaspora with the home country and to create new opportunities of economic advancement in the home country. The following are some of those initiatives.

As a way of attracting remittances but also as a mechanism of establishing a stronger connection between the diaspora member and the home country, the Salvadoran government established the Fondo Social para la Vivienda (Social Fund for

Housing, FSV Spanish acronym), a loan system with favorable interest rates to build houses in El Salvador. Each year, the government sends a team to Los Ángeles, California, with the campaign Vivienda Cercana (Close Home), which offers migrants the possibility of taking a loan from the government to buy a house in El Salvador, either for themselves or for their relatives at home. This fund is not only for migrants, but it is aggressively promoted among the migrant population in the United States. The interest rates of these loans are lower than the ones commercial banks will charge (María José Saavedra, personal communication, June 14, 2011).

At the national level, personnel from the network of consulates and embassies of El Salvador around the world, especially the ones in the United States, periodically meet with Salvadoran migrant associations, with Salvadoran Chambers of Commerce, and with Salvadoran entrepreneurs to facilitate access to opportunities to invest in their home country. With resources obtained from a millionaire fund given by the U.S. government to El Salvador, called Cuenta Reto del Milenio (Millenium Challenge Account), El Salvador has developed investment opportunities and has identified Salvadoran communities that could be interested in investing in agro-industrial businesses (Ricardo Valencia, personal communication, June 28, 2011; José Manuel Castillo, personal communication, June 22, 2011).

Ricardo Valencia, political counselor at the El Salvador Embassy in Washington, D.C., explained the process:

For example, in June of 2011 we introduced investment projects available in the North of El Salvador to Salvadoran communities in Long Island, New York; Elizabeth, New Jersey; Maryland, Virginia, and Washington D.C. . . . We have offered Salvadoran investors in the U.S. East Coast up to 70% of the financing for the total project, as well as the adequate technical support” (Ricardo Valencia, personal communication, June 28, 2011).

Besides the entrepreneurial efforts supported by the Cuenta del Milenio, El Salvador government, through its network of embassies and consulates, promotes projects for local development among Salvadorans living in the United States to invest in their communities of origin in El Salvador, sometimes in association with the local municipalities of those communities of origin. Ana del Carmen Valenzuela, general consul of El Salvador in San Francisco, California (one of the busiest Salvadoran consulates in the United States), explained: "These projects for local development are coordinated by the General Direction of Migration and Development," which is part of the Vice-Ministry for Salvadorans Abroad (Ana del Carmen Valenzuela, personal communication, June 22, 2011). One of the units of the General Direction of Migration and Development (DGMD Spanish acronym) is its Dirección de Fortalecimiento de Organizaciones de Salvadoreños en el Exterior (a rough translation of this name could be Direction for Strengthening the Linkages with Salvadoran Organizations Abroad), of which José Manuel Castillo is its director.

Director Castillo explained the way his Direction coordinates these investments efforts in the migrants' communities of origin:

We have started to create local structures, called Migration and Development Committees, which analyze the communitarian weave that exists in the municipalities, to identify potential opportunities that each community has for development. For instance, we are working right now in two municipalities that have a strong touristic potential. The local people know, and the local majors know, that these municipalities can be developed through promoting tourism. Then, after identifying this opportunity, we are trying to involve Salvadorans in the United States who come from these municipalities in an entrepreneurial initiative, in a productive dynamic. This requires a big effort in the sense that, on one hand, the municipality has to have a strategic definition of where does it want to position itself. On the other hand, it requires identifying the Salvadorans abroad who are natives of these municipalities. The end result we want to achieve is to reduce the strong migration influxes we have by

opening job opportunities at home, by opening opportunities for personal development, not only in terms of generating wealth, but in terms of achieving personal goals. Obviously, this is a task that cannot be completed in five years, this is a task that has to be part of the State vision, it is a process that gets built in decades, I guess (José Manuel Castillo, personal communication, June 22, 2011).

These long-term “investment initiatives” are an alternative to the short-term donations of food or clothes some associations used to provide in the past for punctual purposes, after which the donations ceased. In this new view, the goal is to develop long-term projects that generate employment in the local communities and that involve inter-sector alliances including the government (in different departments, coordinating efforts), non-government organizations (ONGs), migrant associations, funding agencies, international organizations, and such (José Manuel Castillo, personal communication, June 22, 2011; José Joaquín Chacón, general consul of El Salvador in Tucson, Arizona, personal communication, June 14, 2011).

Another Direction that forms part of the General Direction of Migration and Development (DGMD) is the Direction of Investment and Business (Dirección de Inversión y Negocio), which also coordinates projects between migrants and local organizations, but in these case are productive investments that general consul in San Francisco Ana del Carmen Valenzuela defined as “mega-projects.” She mentioned, for instance, a dairy corporation and a technology industrial park being developed with migrants’ financial investments. In this case, not only the central government of El Salvador is involved, but there is also coordination with the different institutions needed to support the “mega-project,” such as the Ministry of Economy, the Ministry of Tourism, the Ministry of Health, the Ministry of Labor, etc. Since 2009, this vision of mixed enterprises started under President Mauricio Funes administration, so the projects are

still in the making at this point, as general consul in San Francisco Ana del Carmen Valenzuela explained. “Each ministry designates one or several persons and, along with this new administrative structure in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, they meet periodically, in a very organized way, in a technical table that analyzes and selects these projects” (Ana del Carmen Valenzuela, personal communication, June 22, 2011).

These administrative changes undertaken to better channel and attract migrants’ remittances for investment projects is part of well-thought process that combines a different vision of governing and a different way of acting, said Director José Manuel Castillo. He went on by saying:

This is a State vision. The fact that Salvadorans abroad become key actors and active participants in the country’s development is a vision that crosses all the government institutions, which ends in the institutionalization of those processes. It is a vision that is being accompanied by the creation of mechanisms, of attention structures, of formal procedures, where each government institution adopts a role of attention to the Salvadoran abroad. . . . We are coordinating and institutionalizing processes to facilitate investments or the participation —because it is not just the economic participation—of actors we might have abroad. (José Manuel Castillo, personal communication, June 22, 2011)

Ana del Carmen Valenzuela, general consul of El Salvador in San Francisco, also mentioned the change of vision, the change of governing style.

The presidential lineament is one of inclusion. This word, inclusion, is very important because even though there are proceedings that existed before in the different government institutions, now there is disposition and openness. That intercommunication and that interrelation among the different structures is what helps to really make projects happen. Our vision as public servants has also changed drastically. . . . The priority is the Salvadoran community. (Ana del Carmen Valenzuela, personal communication, June 22, 2011)

Finally, PROESA is developing a program that will “use” certain types of migrants as networking agents to attract investments to El Salvador, but this program is still in the making. PROESA (Spanish acronym), the Agency for the Promotion of Exports and

Investments of El Salvador, will be in charge. PROESA is developing the program Diáspora Promotora de Inversión (Diaspora Promoting Investments), which is a program in which the Salvadoran government will identify Salvadoran leaders, businesspeople and entrepreneurs who are working in the private sector in the United States and will ask them to serve as links to U.S. businesspeople, U.S. entrepreneurs, and U.S. companies that could be interested in investing their money in productive projects in El Salvador (Sulma Rivas, member at PROESA's Investors Support and Institutional Relations Department, personal communication, June 13, 2011).

“This program is not being executed yet, because it is going to be financed with resources from a loan that has not been approved yet,” Sulma Rivas explained (personal communication, June 13, 2011). The loan will come from the Inter-American Development Bank (BID Spanish acronym). Once the loan is approved and the program is started, the Salvadoran government will approach Salvadoran business people to ask them to facilitate their business contacts in the United States for the purposes described above (Sulma Rivas, personal communication, June 13, 2011).

Also working already or about to start working are four more State initiatives to support productive projects in El Salvador: the Fund for Productive Development (Fondo de Desarrollo Productivo, FONDEPRO Spanish acronym, working already), which functions under the system of matching grants to support micro, small, and medium enterprises; the Banco de Desarrollo (Development Bank), which will be a bank to fund productive projects (of private companies and of mixed capital) in the priority areas that El Salvador government has defined, such as telecommunications, tourism, and agro-industry, among others; the Fund of Economic Development (Fondo de

Desarrollo Económico, FDE Spanish acronym), to fund small and medium enterprises, as well as NGOs and municipalities, and the Salvadoran Fund of Guarantees (Fondo Salvadoreño de Garantías, FSG Spanish acronym), to develop good business ideas proposed by companies that do not have guarantees of paying back big enough to be supported by commercial banks. These instruments include support for Salvadorans abroad who want to invest in productive projects (Sulma Rivas, personal communication, June 13, 2011; Presidencia de la República, 2011).

The private sector has also developed some specific initiatives to attract remittances for social development projects. For instance, Banco Agrícola, which used to be a State bank but now has Colombian capital, has a corporate social responsibility program called Manos Unidas (Joint Hands), in which the bank donates about 80% of the funds to build schools, computer centers, laboratories, and other infrastructure in low-income areas, and the other 20% of the money is donated by migrants, not from traditional remittances, but from community remittances (María José Saavedra, personal communication, June 14, 2011).

**Political impact: Real, but not institutionalized yet, in the absence of absentee vote**

Most of the participants and sources in this study agree that Salvadoran migrants in the United States have implicit political influence in the home political processes because of their numeric strength, of the impact of the remittances they send home, and of the close involvement many migrants have with their communities of origin. For instance, journalist María José Saavedra said that many Salvadoran migrants are the head of their households in El Salvador, and they continue to be the head of the household, even when they are in the United States or in some other country.

Thus, the opinions of the far-away brothers are pretty important in the decisions made in the household, and their opinions about the political situation in El Salvador are far more drastic than the opinions of the Salvadorans living in the country (María José Saavedra, personal communication, June 14, 2011).

Nevertheless, this political impact migrants have has not been institutionalized yet, as Salvadorans abroad have not been granted, until the time of writing this study, the right to absentee vote. In order to cast their vote in national elections, migrants have to travel to El Salvador, which impedes this political right for many of them, given that many do not have the financial means, the time, or the adequate legal status to visit El Salvador to cast their vote and then return to the United States. Migrants have asked for absentee vote for decades, especially since the 1990s (PNUD, 2007), and the topic has been discussed several times in El Salvador, with the government including this issue as part of its political agenda in 2004 (PNUD, 2007).

Nevertheless, it is not until now that President Mauricio Funes has made absentee vote one of his administration's priorities. In fact, in his second State of the Nation speech, on June 1, 2011, Funes closed his presentation by saying that the Salvadoran nation should work its way to grant absentee vote by 2014 as an act of justice for "our sisters and brothers who live abroad" (Funes, 2011). Granting absentee vote, nonetheless, cannot be decided only by the president: It is a process that involves modifying laws, so it needs support from the majority of Congress members, which requires agreements from of different several parties at the same time, but President Funes has made a commitment to try to have absentee vote in place by the national elections of 2014 (Funes, 2011; Ricardo Valencia, personal communication, June 28, 2011; José Manuel Castillo, personal communication, June 22, 2011; Tirso Sermeño,

personal communication, June 13, 2011; José Joaquín Chacón, personal communication, June 14, 2011).

At this point, the government formed a multi-sector committee that is analyzing the best way to proceed with the absentee vote, in terms of the logistics involved and the resources needed, but whatever proposal will come out from that committee, it will still need to be approved, modifying the laws, at El Salvador's congress. This initiative, on paper, seems to have support from different political sectors, but it is still early to tell what the outcome will be and if the modifications needed will happen on time, before the 2014 national elections (Ricardo Valencia, personal communication, June 28, 2011; José Manuel Castillo, personal communication, June 22, 2011; Tirso Sermeño, personal communication, June 13, 2011; José Joaquín Chacón, personal communication, June 14, 2011). If absentee vote is granted for the 2014 elections, the impact of political processes at home could be strong, or not, at least not at the beginning, as will be discussed in the next section.

**A turning point? Absentee vote.** The views of the interviewees for this study are divided on whether or not the absentee vote will have a strong acceptance among Salvadoran migrants in the United States and a strong political effect on the home political life. The majority of the participants and sources agree that Salvadorans have requested the absentee vote for decades, and that Salvadoran migrants are very much interested in the political processes happening at home. In fact, since the first forum "The Right to Vote for Salvadorans Abroad," which took place in San Salvador on March 7, 2000, the absentee vote topic, along with different analyses about its legal and political viability, has formally occupied subsequent discussion sessions in different

conventions of Salvadorans abroad (for instance, in Los Angeles in 2003; in Washington, D.C., in 2004; and in Boston, in 2005). Also, the absentee vote was a strong topic in both the First and Second Presidential Forum with Salvadorans Abroad, in November of 2004 and October of 2006, respectively (PNUD, 2007).

Up to now, political parties in El Salvador have expressed different levels of support to the idea of granting absentee vote. A PNUD (2007) analysis indicated that, in the political discourse, all political parties express their interest for supporting this initiative and for guaranteeing spaces of political participation for Salvadorans abroad, not only in municipalities, but also in the Central American Parliament (PARLACEN, Spanish acronym), and even in the Salvadoran Congress. Nonetheless, in the practice, political parties have not been able to agree and, up to now, Salvadorans abroad have not obtained political gains whatsoever (PNUD, 2007). For example, several members of conservative party ARENA have expressed their support for granting absentee vote, but they object to provide absentee vote in the United States for Salvadoran migrants but not for Salvadoran migrants in the rest of the world. Is this a real concern or just a way of delaying the process of granting absentee vote? Different persons have different opinions, but there is a consensus that lack of political will has been the problem. José Joaquín Chacón, general consul of El Salvador in Tucson, said, “Simply, there has not been political will until now. At a certain moment, certain parties considered that the vote from Salvadorans abroad could damage them” (José Joaquín Chacón, personal communication, June 14, 2011).

Even if all the political forces finally work together to grant the absentee vote for the 2014 national elections, the process will not be completely smooth, as there are

several practical limitations that could influence the impact of the absentee vote. The main problem seems to be that there are only 16 Salvadoran consulates in all the United States territory. Thus, to start with, not every Salvadoran migrant has the possibility of traveling long distances to vote. Second, not every Salvadoran migrant possesses an updated Salvadoran Identity Document (Documento Único de Identidad, DUI Spanish acronym), which is required in order to vote in Salvadoran elections and which, in the United States, is only given in three locations: Washington D.C., New York and Los Angeles.

For those reasons, the long distances between voters and consulates, and the lack of a proper ID could impede that thousands of Salvadorans vote while being in the United States. Still, some participants and sources are optimistic about the process. Tirso Sermeño, general consul of El Salvador in Las Vegas, explained that when his consulate was collecting information from migrants to renovate their TPS status in the United States, between September of 2010 and March of 2011, one of the questions in the form was “Would you be interested in voting in Salvadoran elections being abroad?” and 95% of the answers were “Yes.” Given that response, Sermeño said, “I can assure you, even now, that the impact that the absentee vote will have and that the importance Salvadorans give to absentee vote are both very big, and we hope to have a massive response of Salvadoran migrants, who will gladly participate in the next elections” (Tirso Sermeño, personal communication, June 13, 2011).

Other interviewees recognize that, even though it is not known what the outcome of the absentee vote is going to be, and that maybe a massive turnout will not happen, it

is still the right time for El Salvador to implement the absentee vote. José Joaquín Chacón, general consul of El Salvador in Tucson, said,

El Salvador went through such a bloody process in the past that it is now that the political forces are starting to agree, although there are moments in which they seem to disagree, but this is part of a process that is consolidating democracy in our country. This is a historical moment in which we can talk about absentee vote in El Salvador. We already had political alternability in our country, which is very positive, because it is healthy that there is more than one political view in power, it is positive to give the opportunity to the opposite political view, and such. To alternate in power is good and is the healthiest situation for a democracy. (José Joaquín Chacón, personal communication, June 14, 2011)

**Salvadoran political parties abroad.** Apart from the possibility of obtaining the right to absentee vote, the influence of Salvadoran migrants in home politics can also be recognized by the presence of Salvadoran political parties in different countries around the world. Salvadoran political parties have had an active presence in the United States, Canadá, and Australia, to secure migrants support during electoral processes. In 2005, for example, the leftist FMLN had seven party committees in the United States, another seven in Canada, and four in Australia. The conservative ARENA party, on the other hand, had 10 party committees in the United States in 2005 (PNUD, 2007).

### **Impact of the president's political projects and interests in the perceived importance of the diaspora**

As in other countries in Latin America, the figure of the president in El Salvador is central in the decision-making processes. And, as in other countries in Latin America, the importance that the president in El Salvador gives to migration issues has an impact on the perceived importance of the diaspora in the home country.

During the in-depth interviews conducted for this study, there were constant instances in which the majority of the participants indicated the strong influence the president, at any given time, has in the decisions taken about the diaspora, although in

El Salvador, contrary to Costa Rica, some of those processes have become institutionalized beyond the personal interests of the president in power at any given time. Still, the president's priorities, opinions and perceptions play a strong role in the decision-making processes, as the following quotes show.

For instance, Ricardo Valencia, political counselor at El Salvador Embassy in Washington D.C., said, "Since President Mauricio Funes started his term in 2009, the commitment of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs has been reinforcing the protection of the human rights of our migrants in any place they are located," and Valencia added later, "The administration of President Funes developed a new foreign policy" (Ricardo Valencia, personal communication, June 28, 2011). Also, José Manuel Castillo, head of the Direction for the Strengthening of Salvadoran Organizations Abroad, said about granting absentee vote in the 2014 national elections, "The Executive power is hoping to make this a reality. Because that is the commitment the Executive power has taken" (José Manuel Castillo, personal communication, June 22, 2011). And Ana del Carmen Valenzuela, general consul of El Salvador in San Francisco, California, said that the current emphasis of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs on defending human rights and promoting the diaspora participation in home communities "come from the priorities of our leaders. . . . Those are the presidential lineaments that were developed in the foreign policy of El Salvador with the new government. . . . With the new government there were changes in the strategy and in the direction of each institution" (Ana del Carmen Valenzuela, personal communication, June 22, 2011).

Sharing her outsider perspective about Mauricio Funes' influence, journalist María José Saavedra said, "This (Mauricio Funes') is the government that has given the most

importance to remittances, to use remittances for social purposes” (María José Saavedra, personal communication, June 14, 2011). And, from “inside” the government, general consul José Joaquín Chacón (in Tucson, Arizona) said that “the hand” of Mauricio Funes is felt in the decisions taken about migrants. Chacón said about the emphasis on human rights: “This is a policy that is well defined in this administration” (José Joaquín Chacón, personal communication, June 14, 2011).

What are the motivations of the Funes government to strengthen the relation with the diaspora, and to defend migrants’ human rights, and why did the interest in building relations with the diaspora increased since 1994, in both political parties? One interpretation could be that, being a leftist party, with a stronger preoccupation for and orientation toward social issues, the FMLN and its leaders (Funes among them) are trying to offer social and financial retributions to a population that has suffered violence and economic struggles, and that has to be compensated for that. Other interpretation, less humanitarian and more strategic, is that the effort to approach the diaspora started at the same time that the guerilla groups abandoned their illegal status to become a legitimate political party (FMLN). This political competition has built pressure on conservative party ARENA, and both parties (and their leaders) have had the need to build or strenghten their legitimacy by courting populations that were neglected in the past, but that constitute important publics because of the financial and political impact they have in the home economy.

Thus, this process of approaching and courting the diaspora community could be interpreted as a result of party leaders trying to compete in a political environment where no parties have a defined political leadership or a strong political majority. FMLN

won the national elections for the first time in history in 2009, but for a slim margin of 2%. ARENA lost the 2009 national elections after 16 years in a row (four consecutive elections) of dominating the political spectrum. The reconfiguration of political forces in El Salvador seem to have forced the different political leaders to try to attract different stakeholders, even the ones who were ignored, and even neglected, by previous political figures, such as the millions of diaspora members that contribute strongly to the home economy in El Salvador and that influence strongly the political choices of their relatives at home. This stronger connection with the diaspora, then, could have its roots in the political transformations that traditional and novel political parties have faced in the last 20 years.

At the same time, as explained before, in El Salvador some processes related to the attention of the diaspora have become institutionalized, all the way from policies defined in the National Plan of Development of the central Government and the Strategic Institutional Plan of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs to the specific procedures defined and followed at the individual offices of attention to migrants. For instance, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs has been restructured during Mauricio Funes' term to include new Vice-Ministries, new General Directions (such as the General Direction of Migration and Development or the General Direction of Human Rights), and new Directions (such as the Direction for the Strengthening of Salvadoran Organizations Abroad). Also, the Committees of Migration and Development and the Technical Board with members of different government institutions in the Division of Investment and Business were created and they meet regularly to coordinate and define which migrants' investments the government will support in different ways. Besides, there are specific changes

taking place in the different units and offices to facilitate achieving the institutional strategic goals. For instance, in order to promote diaspora investments in the local economy, bureaucratic processes have been simplified and special procedures to speed up diaspora investments have been developed to attract those investments (José Manuel Castillo, personal communication, June 22, 2011; Ana del Carmen Valenzuela, personal communication, June 22, 2011). All these institutional changes are reflected both in the National Strategic Plan for the five-year political term, in the yearly operative plans, and, in some cases, in the legislation (for instance, the electoral law in El Salvador will be reformed if the absentee vote is granted for the 2014 elections) (Ricardo Valencia, personal communication, June 28, 2011).

**Human rights' protection at the center.** Although this aspect has been mentioned several times before in Chapter 5, it is relevant to note that the participants interviewed for this study assure that Mauricio Funes' government has placed a stronger emphasis in the defense of migrants' human rights than previous governments in El Salvador. While in previous administrations the priority was to keep the connection with the diaspora to keep remittances coming in, the interviewees in this study said that Funes' government has also emphasized in giving moral reparations to the diaspora, among them, through fighting for their human rights. This is a trend that started in 2002, during Francisco Flores government, when El Salvador signed the International Convention for the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Their Families (PNUD, 2007). This Convention was ratified in 2004, along with other related treaties, during Elías Antonio Saca's term, but this concern of protecting migrants' human rights

“jumped” from paper and ink to action, the majority of participants said, with the creation of the General Direction of Human Rights, in 2009, during Funes’ administration.

Most of the participants agreed that the concern on human rights protection is an emphasis that belongs to the Funes’ administration (although, of course, this affirmation has to be taken with a grain of salt, as most of the participants of this study are part of the Funes administration, all in high-level political positions) . But, as José Joaquín Chacón, general consul of El Salvador in Tucson, explained, “We [the consulates] are emphasizing on the protection of the migrants’ human rights, with the support of the Vice-Ministry for Salvadorans Abroad, in coordination with the General Direction of Human Rights” (José Joaquín Chacón, personal communication, June 14, 2011).

In any case, no matter if the opinions expressed by the participants of this study are biased or not, there are specific advancements that seem to show a real interest in the protection of human rights in the Funes administration. In practical terms, the defense of human rights has been promoted by opening new “consulates of protection” both in the United States and in the route that migrants go through between El Salvador and Mexico (Tirso Sermeño, personal communication, June 13, 2011). Ricardo Valencia, political counselor at El Salvador Embassy in Washington, D.C., explained, “We have reinforced our presence in ‘in-transit’ countries such as México, and, in the United States, our consulates have strengthened their contact with the community to protect the human rights of our migrants” (Ricardo Valencia, personal communication, June 28, 2011) . For example, two consulates of protection were opened in México in 2010 and, soon, a new consulate of protection will be opened in McLaren, Texas, close to the border with Reynosa, México, to provide consular protection in the border area.

Some more consulates of protection will be opened in the following months in other areas where the Salvadoran population is growing (Tirso Sermeño, personal communication, June 13, 2011; José Joaquín Chacón, personal communication, June 14, 2011; Ana del Carmen Valenzuela, personal communication, June 22, 2011).

What does a “consulate of protection” do? For instance, in a typical day in the consulate in Tucson, Arizona, which is an in-transit zone for undocumented Salvadoran migrants who just crossed the Mexico-U.S. border, the tasks involve providing traditional consular services to a few visitors, but the consuls’ tasks mainly involve keeping constant communication with local authorities such as the U.S. Border Patrol, to know about Salvadorans who were detained and who require consular support. In those cases, the general consul visits detention centers, jails, orphanages, hospitals, even hospital morgues, and he is in charge of informing El Salvador government about the developments in these cases, and, in some sad situations, of informing relatives of the migrants if the person suffered injuries or even death. It also involves taking care of minors who are found abandoned in the area and finding their relatives in the United States or in El Salvador; identifying corpses; repatriating bodies back to El Salvador, and more (José Joaquín Chacón, general consul of El Salvador in Tucson, Arizona, personal communication, June 14, 2011).

The tasks of the “consulates of protection” also involve prevention, monitoring, investigation, and denunciation. For instance, when the U.S. Border Patrol calls the Tucson consulate to report about undocumented migrants, the consul interviews the migrant to get to know if he/she suffered any kind of abuse either in Central America, México, or the United States during the journey and, if that is the case (because, for

instance, it is common to find that the migrant was illegally detained in México for weeks, sometimes with the complicity of local authorities), the consul informs the Vice-Ministry for Salvadorans Abroad to start an investigation to try to bring the responsible persons to Justice (José Joaquín Chacón, personal communication, June 14, 2011).

The protection of human rights has also happened through the creation and redefinition of the free hotlines La Línea Que Te Ayuda, both in Mexico and the United States, developed, in part, for the protection of migrants who travel undocumented in their trip between El Salvador and the México-U.S. border. These hotlines provide information about consular services, as they did in the past, but now they also inform about human rights and connect the callers to consulates of protection where these migrants can obtain help (Martínez & García, 2011; Martínez, 2011; Tirso Sermeño, personal communication, June 13, 2011). And, of course, the importance of the protection of human rights can be seen in the fact that, in 2009, the office in charge of protecting migrants' human rights was "promoted to" or given the status of General Direction of Human Rights in the Vice-Ministry for Salvadorans Abroad at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (Ricardo Valencia, personal communication, June 28, 2011). This shows that the topic has received a higher status in the government priorities, as President Mauricio Funes and General Director of Human Rights David Morales have expressed in several occasions (Funes, 2010; TelesurTV & Morales, 2011).

### **Cultural perceptions: The "far-away brother" as a savior**

Contrary to countries such as Costa Rica, where the diaspora members are pretty much ignored in the home country, in El Salvador, "the far-away brothers and sisters" are present in every aspect of the home country's life. This term of "far-away brother" was used frequently by some of the participants interviewed for this study, and this term

is also present all the way from presidential speeches (Funes, 2011) to the conversations in the streets of El Salvador. Other frequent term to refer to Salvadorans abroad is “the community.” These respectful and warm references to the diaspora members come from the fact that, through their remittances, diaspora members keep the country’s economy afloat, and they also keep thousands of families living a better quality of life, sometimes meaning the difference between being below or above the poverty lines. Journalist María José Saavedra explained,

In El Salvador, when the far-away brother comes back after some years, there is a party all over because the far-away brother comes with three, four pieces of luggage, full of things, because this is our culture. The far-away brother does not forget the family he leaves behind. He is always aware of sending things, things, and more things. If you could see when we [journalists] go to the airport to write one of those typical features about the far-away brothers coming back for Holy Week, you could see how many persons come. I’m telling you, they come with trucks, with trucks! They come in charter buses to receive a relative that they have not seen in maybe 20 years. All the family comes, from the youngest to the oldest. And he is very much beloved, and there is party, and they don’t know where to place him, and there is food, it is a party! Far-away brothers have never been rejected in El Salvador, because they, when they leave, they start making the family afloat, all the family, sending money for relatives to be able to study, to buy a house. They are the support of entire households (María José Saavedra, personal communication, June 14, 2011).

The only negative aspect related to the perception of the contributions sent by the “far-away brothers and sisters” is that, in some cases, it is perceived that remittance-receivers rely too much in this external money, abandoning intensive labors such as agriculture. Journalist María José Saavedra said:

People in certain remittance-receiver departments of the country have acquired a different lifestyle than in other areas of the country. But agriculture has disappeared in those remittance-receiver areas. And other social problems have arisen. People have become more comfortable: Working is not so necessary anymore, compared to other departments where they do not receive so many remittances, and people get used to this outside money. (María José Saavedra, personal communication, June 14, 2011)

In terms of “far-away academic brothers,” or the academic diaspora, this group seems to be invisible in the discourse and in the State policies in El Salvador. As Doris Salinas, coordinator of the Centro de Información Tecnológica (Center of Technology Information, CIT Spanish acronym) at the Consejo Nacional de Ciencia y Tecnología in El Salvador (National Council of Science and Technology, CONACYT Spanish acronym), explained, the Salvadoran government recognizes that academics, scientists, and doctors who study abroad have an excellent formation, but sometimes, if they come back to their home country, there is no easy way to insert them back into the local job market (Doris Salinas, personal communication, May 31, 2011). At the time of writing, there were no special efforts to approach the academic diaspora in a more intense or systematic way (Doris Salinas, personal communication, May 31, 2011).

### **Communication and relationship-building efforts**

This section describes the communication and relationship-building efforts followed by El Salvador government to keep contact with and engage its diaspora. “Communication efforts” should not be mistaken by just communication products, as this dissertation adopts Molleda’s (2009) inclusive definition of international public relations as all strategic communications and actions undertaken by an organization to build and maintain relationships with publics located abroad. The following, then, are some of the many efforts the Salvadoran government has carried out, especially in the last seven years, to build long-term, mutually beneficial relationships with its diaspora, a goal that stems from two main developments: one is a change in the government’s vision, to now see diaspora members as partners, active participants, or agents of change in the development of the country, instead of just citizens abroad; the second is also a change

in the government's vision, to now define the defense of its diaspora members' human rights as one of its central responsibilities.

In fact, the executive summary of the Institutional Strategic Plan (2009-2014) of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs emphasized in these three aspects related to migrants (active participation, human rights, and communication) by putting forward the following three objectives as part of the Ministry's eight strategic objectives for this five-year term.

About active participation, the Strategic Plan said:

Sixth objective. Salvadorans abroad: The New Foreign Policy in El Salvador will not remain indifferent to migration and the demands of the citizens abroad. Because of that, it will promote a new conceptualization in the diplomatic and consular service oriented to provide integral protection to the Salvadoran people abroad and their families, as well as to reestablish and strengthen their links with the country, so that they can actively participate in the country's development (Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 2009, p.8).

About human rights' protection, the Strategic Plan's executive summary indicated the following in its seventh objective: "The protection of human rights of the migrant Salvadoran people and of Salvadoran residents abroad, the moral and material reparation of the armed conflict in the 1980s and the fulfillment of the obligations acquired by the State in human rights matters are priorities of this Ministry" (p. 9). And about "institutional image and internal communication," objective nine of the Strategic Plan's executive summary indicated that "through a new strategy of direct and clear communication with society and the media, and according with the priorities of the new foreign policy, the goal is to establish an institutional image that is modern, positive, responsible, transparent and inclusive" (p. 11).

**Structural changes.** Probably, the strongest and most obvious relationship-building effort has been "upgrading" the Direction for Salvadorans Abroad to the rank of Vice-Ministry for Salvadorans Abroad, with one General Direction of Migration and

Development, and one Direction for the Strengthening of Salvadoran Organizations Abroad as part of its units (Ana del Carmen Valenzuela, personal communication, June 22, 2011). This way, the efforts of approaching the diaspora have been given more personnel, more budget, more power, more attention, and more institutionalization. Also, as part of seeing the diaspora member as an agent of change and as an active participant in the local development, the Salvadoran government has strengthened its links with its diaspora by keeping constant contact with its diaspora members at all levels: from having meetings with diaspora leaders and investors to facilitate investments in El Salvador (as discussed in detail in a previous section, for instance, with the business meetings sustained in the U.S. East Coast between the Salvadoran government and diaspora members and associations to promote the fund of the Millennium Challenge), to improving the customer-service levels at the embassies and consulates (Ricardo Valencia, personal communication, June 28, 2011).

**Community relations.** The network of consulates and embassies is trying to offer more efficiency in their “traditional” consular services (for instance, by increasing the number of consulates in the United States and in some countries of Latin America). They are also trying to provide more non-traditional services, such as legal counseling for undocumented migrants or visitation for migrants who are facing deportation or who are in jail, and consulates are also trying to involve the diaspora more frequently in different decision-making processes. About this last point, political counselor at the Salvadoran Embassy in Washington D.C. Ricardo Valencia said,

The Salvadoran Ministry of Foreign Affairs has given us clear instructions to integrate our community in the diplomatic duties. At the Embassy, we have taken measures to reinforce our contact with the Salvadoran community through meetings in which we explain both the achievements and the

challenges that we face in El Salvador, such as improving safety in the streets. We have a director of community issues at the Embassy who is in charge of bringing community issues to the front of our agenda. Besides, our consulates have also incorporated our diaspora, through different consultation mechanisms. The consulates have formed 'consulting groups' or 'theme tables' in which diaspora members also participate in the discussion of the problems that affect them (Ricardo Valencia, personal communication, June 28, 2011).

In terms of other community relations, specially at the local level (for instance, as part of the interaction of a consulate with the migrant community of the city and/or state where that consulate is located), the consulates have gotten more involved in initiatives carried out or led by Salvadoran migrant associations abroad, from poetry festivals to music presentations to sports competitions to holiday celebrations other entertainment events. For example, just to mention a few cases, the Salvadoran consulate in San Francisco, California, gave institutional support to a soccer tournament initiated by a local migrant association that wanted to travel to El Salvador to organize a soccer tournament with home children. The migrants paid for their travel expenses to go to El Salvador, but the Ministry of Tourism provided a space for the soccer tournament to take place. This same consulate also helped organize a Youth Poetry Festival in which several Salvadoran poets from San Francisco traveled to El Salvador to share their creative talent in their country of origin, and it also helped organize a Festival of Salvadoran Cinema in San Francisco. All these activities, again, were a mixed effort between migrant associations and the consulate, but they also received support of local institutions in El Salvador, such as the Ministry of Education, the National Library, the Secretariat of Culture (in the Presidency), the General Direction of Culture and the Direction for the Strengthening of Salvadoran Organizations Abroad (both in the Ministry

of Foreign Affairs), and the Ministry of Tourism, among others (Ana del Carmen Valenzuela, personal communication, June 22, 2011).

This stronger involvement of the consulates and of the home government with the migrant communities is part of a conscious change of vision of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs “to link Salvadorans abroad with their communities of origin, to support their activities and events, and to strengthen the cultural linkages, which is a very forward-looking, innovative vision” (Ana del Carmen Valenzuela, personal communication, June 22, 2011). About this paradigmatic change, José Manuel Castillo, head of the Direction for the Strengthening of Salvadoran Organizations Abroad, said that the Salvadoran government realized that giving attention to migrants required not only providing administrative services, but seeing migrants as human beings who needed support not only for them but for the families they left behind in El Salvador, and for their communities of origin (José Manuel Castillo, personal communication, June 28, 2011).

Besides supporting activities led by the migrant associations, consulates also lead some activities themselves, such as sex education and health education campaigns among Salvadoran migrants (José Manuel Castillo, personal communication, June 22, 2011), as well as the development of small productive projects in Salvadoran communities with partial funding provided by migrants, for example, a chicken farm where 25 local women raise and sell chickens and eggs thanks to an initial seed capital of \$10,000 provided by a migrant association in Los Angeles, complemented by another \$10,000 donated by an ONG, plus technical assistance and materials from different government institutions. Similar initiatives include several sewing shops and ecotourism enterprises (José Manuel Castillo, personal communication, June 22, 2011).

Another effort that can be categorized as being part of the area of community relations is the program of mobile consulates. In this program, the consulate personnel travel to cities that belong to its jurisdiction but that are far away from the city where the consulate is located. The idea is to bring the services to the migrants, during weekends, even if the migrants cannot come to the places where the services are offered (Ana del Carmen Valenzuela, personal communication, June 22, 2011; Tirso Sermeño, personal communication, June 13, 2011; José Joaquín Chacón, personal communication, June 14, 2011). This program of mobile consulates has been available for about 10 years now, and it has had different levels of success because, depending on the resources available in each consulate, these mobile versions are done more frequently or less recurrently. In average, according to the participants consulted for this study, it seems that consulates organize one mobile consulate every two or three months, to different cities, visiting the same cities of high-concentration levels of migrants every four to six months (Tirso Sermeño, personal communication, June 13, 2011; José Joaquín Chacón, personal communication, June 14, 2011).

These weekend visits to these migrant communities by the consulate personnel not only build relationships because the services are offered within the communities and because the consuls interact with the migrants in a different setting, but also because, in some cases, the migrant organizations in the community become co-organizers of these mobile consulates, by suggesting and facilitating locations where the services can be offered, by informing the community about the upcoming mobile consulate, by organizing the “clients” in different lines and seats the day the mobile consulate happens, by setting up and dismantling equipment, and more (Ana del Carmen

Valenzuela, personal communication, June 22, 2011). Describing one example, Tirso Sermeño, general consul of El Salvador in Las Vegas, explained,

The Salvadoran associations help us with the logistics: the place where we are going to work, the equipment we will need, photocopy machines, access to the Internet if possible, things like that. We just bring our laptop and some other equipment, and they help us tremendously. It is such a harmonic, coordinated, shared effort with the Salvadoran associations that we can rest on them, meaning that we just coordinate the dates, keep in touch by email and phone calls, and by the time we reach the community, half of the work is done. The Salvadoran associations work very strongly, hand in hand with the consulate, and that is the case not only in Las Vegas but in every consulate. (Tirso Sermeño, personal communication, June 13, 2011)

One more example of this “acercamiento” (approaching) of El Salvador’s government to the migrant community is the forums developed with migrants in El Salvador. Although the current government in El Salvador has not organized any more of these events, during Elías Antonio Saca’s (2004-2009) government, there were two conferences organized by the government with diaspora members who were invited to El Salvador to get informed about investment opportunities but also to discuss their needs and wants as a relevant group in Salvadoran society. In those conferences, hundreds of migrants returned to El Salvador to share their points of view with local authorities (PNUD, 2007).

In a less massive level, but still in the area of community relations, the current government has tried to develop “community spaces” or “dialogue spaces with migrants,” in the form of community sessions and participative planning (José Manuel Castillo, personal communication, June 22, 2011). Besides, certain initiatives require this dialogue to happen not only between migrants and the consulates at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, but between migrants and many other government offices involved in some of the investment opportunities opened for migrants. These mixed initiatives have

forced the government to alter, somewhat, its governing style. Director José Manuel Castillo explained,

Many sectors become involved, not just public institutions or the central Government. This approach requires bringing down the Ministry of Foreign Affairs to the communities of origin of our migrants. Traditionally, ministries of Foreign Affairs don't work with this focus of looking toward the territory. Traditionally, these ministries are all about projecting the country's economic policy and foreign policy abroad. We are doing something different, linking different actors in our territory, such as municipalities, civil society, ONGs, private companies, church groups and other institutions, with actors abroad. (José Manuel Castillo, personal communication, June 22, 2011)

**Media relations.** In terms of media relations, all the consulates have at least one person in charge of establishing relations with the different mass media, although not all of these persons are public relations or communication practitioners. Ana del Carmen Valenzuela explained,

In the Ministry of Foreign Affairs we have a Secretariat of Communications, which centralizes the communication efforts, but in each consulate there is a media relations person. It is what we call a *communication linkage*. In our consulate, this person is the Press and Communications Coordinator. The ideal situation would be to have a Communications expert in each of these positions and, in our case [the San Francisco consulate], it is, indeed, a person who studied Mass Communications. But this person sometimes has some other expertise and, obviously, also has other duties, because she cannot be in charge only of the communication part. (Ana del Carmen Valenzuela, personal communication, June 22, 2011)

These persons who serve as linkages with the media at the consulates not only produce and distribute news releases, or organize news conferences, but also take advantage of the opportunities for informing the community about different issues at the free community-news spaces provided by the local Univisión TV channels and radio stations in many areas in the United States. Consuls participate in these local broadcasts as frequently as once a month. For instance, the consulates from Latin America located in or around Phoenix, Arizona, have a monthly TV show called

Consulado a Tu Lado (The Consulate by Your Side), in which different consuls provide information through Channel 33 Univision. El Salvador's consulate in Tucson is one of the guests in this space, from time to time (José Joaquín Chacón, personal communication, June 14, 2011).

Media relations are carried out at each consulate, but the general lineaments come from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, through its Secretariat of Communications.

Consul Ana del Carmen Valenzuela explained:

We receive instructions from the Secretariat to organize a news conference when there is some interesting story for migrants in general, no matter the country where they are located. One example was when we re-launched the hotlines La Línea Que Te Ayuda [The Line that Helps You] in México and the United States. In other cases, the Secretariat gets in touch with the consulates in a specific country or region to diffuse some specific news of interest in those areas (Ana del Carmen Valenzuela, personal communication, June 22, 2011).

Both for media relations and for community relations, besides the Ministry of Foreign Affairs website, the Salvadoran embassies and consulates have either a Facebook™ page, a separate website, or both (Tirso Sermeño, personal communication, June 13, 2011; José Joaquín Chacón, personal communication, June 14, 2011).

**Environmental scanning.** All these community-building efforts described above are supported by environmental scanning processes where the Salvadoran embassies and consulates had created a database of different Salvadoran migrant associations, Salvadoran migrant community leaders and local authorities, as well as Salvadoran organizations —government and non-government organizations—linked to the topic of migration and development (Ana del Carmen Valenzuela, personal communication, June 22, 2011). As José Manuel Castillo explained, “Besides reaching the media, we

focus on creating and nurturing relationships with different associations, not only Salvadoran but also Latin American, that support migrants, and other local actors such as churches and universities, which also help us spread any information that is important to provide to Salvadoran migrants” (José Manuel Castillo, personal communication, June 22, 2011).

Of course, not everything in the communication efforts is positive, and sometimes certain failures start at the most basic levels: For instance, Salvadorans in the United States sometimes complain that it is hard to make a phone call to the consulates because the lines are either busy or the phone is not picked up. On the positive side, the government is trying to have more symmetrical communications with migrants. José Manuel Castillo said,

The Secretariat of Communications is trying to create communication strategies that resonate stronger with the receiver. Traditionally, our Ministry of Foreign Affairs had used messages very much focused on foreign policy, with a diplomatic language and all that it implies. But now, if you see our last campaign about the promotion of the TPS status, or about the Day of the Salvadoran, or if you check the Ministry’s website, you will see that there is more freshness in the use of colors and more friendliness in the language chosen, mimicking the way we Salvadorans speak. (José Manuel Castillo, personal communication, June 22, 2011)

In terms of the relationship-building efforts created around the goal of defending migrants’ human rights abroad, the government has developed two hotlines called La Línea Que Te Ayuda [The Line That Helps You], one in the United States, and one in Mexico, for this purpose (the details about these hotlines were offered in a previous section). Besides, as explained before, the Salvadoran government has increased its number of “consulates of protection,” located along the route undocumented migrants undertake when traveling from El Salvador through Guatemala and then Mexico to cross the U.S.-Mexican border. In some consulates, they also have “migration

workshops.” For example, in Tucson, the consulate partnered with the University of Arizona, specifically with the Sandra Day O’Connor Law School, and groups of law students from that university have visited the mobile consulates to counsel migrants about their rights in the United States (José Joaquín Chacón, personal communication, June 14, 2011).

**Relationship-building as part of the “new foreign policy.”** All these efforts described above, then, make sense within the priorities of what the government calls its “new foreign policy” and become a top priority not only because of the financial impact that remittances have in El Salvador, but also as part of the importance remittances have acquired as a payment guarantee of the U.S. bonds emitted for El Salvador in the BRIDGE program (as detailed in a previous section). Journalist María José Saavedra said about BRIDGE and its linkage to remittances:

With BRIDGE, the government is giving a different use to remittances. An initiative like this had never happened in a previous government. Yes, there is a different attitude in the government. . . . It started with President Saca, but it has become stronger with this government (María José Saavedra, personal communication, June 14, 2011).

Yet, besides the stronger financial ties that link the government to the diaspora, there is a new conception of giving moral and financial restitution to Salvadorans who had to flee the country due to the challenging political conditions in the past and to the poor economic situation of El Salvador in the present. This vision of “giving back” and of protecting migrants’ human rights did not exclusively start with President Mauricio Funes’ term, but it has definitely strengthened under his political administration. Ricardo Valencia, political counselor at the El Salvador Embassy in Washington D.C., said:

Since President Mauricio Funes started his term in 2009, the commitment of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs has been to reinforce the protection of the human rights of our migrants, no matter where they are located. This was a

fundamental change in this government, which has a strategic vision about human rights (Ricardo Valencia, personal communication, June 28, 2011).

### **Absentee vote**

As the possibility of granting absentee vote starting in the national elections of 2014 is still being discussed within an inter-sector committee, the communication processes related to informing about this right have not started. Government officials in El Salvador are waiting to see the outcomes of the work developed by this committee, and they are also waiting to see the support that this initiative will have in El Salvador Congress before starting any campaign to inform about absentee vote rights to migrants (José Joaquín Chacón, personal communication, June 14, 2011). Nevertheless, in the political discourse and in the news media, this topic is being covered constantly. In fact, President Mauricio Funes closed his second State of the Nation speech last June 1, 2011, by acknowledging the importance of this initiative. About the absentee vote for migrants, Funes said,

Dear Congresswoman, Dear Congressmen: I decided to close this message with an initiative that will have a strong political and social impact, at the same time than an emotional one for all Salvadorans. In the following days, a process that should conclude in 2014 so that our Salvadoran far-away brothers and sisters can vote and elect the next president of the Nation will start. . . . It will be an act of justice. It will be an act that will imply a real deepening of the Salvadoran democracy. It will be an act that will have a strong impact in the political, economic, and social future of our country. (Funes, 2011)

### **Academic diaspora**

Different than in Costa Rica, the ties of El Salvador with its academic diaspora are weak. The National Council of Science and Technology (CONACYT Spanish acronym) keeps a record of the professionals who reside abroad, through the information obtained from the Salvadoran embassies around the world, but that information is not

utilized to its fullest extent (Doris Salinas, personal communication, May 31, 2011). For instance, Salinas explained that there is no network to keep contact with professionals abroad because there are no funds to bring academicians to their home country or to offer them consultancies. The communication with the academic diaspora happens, if at all, through sporadic electronic mails. To be able to strengthen the State's contact with the professional Salvadorans living abroad, "we need to identify more Salvadoran academics abroad, organize them in a network and establish a fund to pay consultancies" (D. Salinas, personal communication, May 31, 2011).

The situation with the academic diaspora shows that, while there is a conscious, planned effort of the Salvadoran government to connect with the migrants who left the country escaping the war, the general violence, and poverty, and while the government has developed multiple initiatives to communicate with them and compensate them, there is no State policy to interact, in particular, with the academic diaspora. The low political impact the academic diaspora has at home, compared to the political influence and the financial impact that millions of low-skilled migrants have in the political decisions at home and in the local economy, could explain this lack of recognition of the Salvadoran academic diaspora.

Table 5-1. Strategies developed by El Salvador to establish and maintain relationships with its diaspora members living in the United States

Goal of the strategy	Description of the strategy	Observations and examples
To attract family remittances	The banking system has lowered the fees for migrants to send money to El Salvador	El Salvador is the Central American country with the lowest fees for money transfers (about 4%)
	FEDECACES, a group of cooperatives (similar to credit unions) give "remittance-receiver loans" using remittances as collateral	FEDECACES has more than 40 associations in El Salvador
	The government promotes the Social Fund for Housing, FSV Spanish acronym, among migrants	These are State loans to build houses in El Salvador with favorable interest rates, compared to the commercial banks
To lure migrants investment into the home economy through productive projects or community remittances	Creation of programs and financial tools to co-finance social projects in the migrants communities of origin	Starting in 2002, the FISDL fund was used to create the Unidos por la Solidaridad program, to co-finance projects of basic infrastructure in the communities of origin of Salvadoran migrants
	Creation of programs to attract productive investments in El Salvador	In 2005, new personnel is added to each consulate and embassy to facilitate Salvadoran investments in their home country

Table 5-1. Continued.

Regular business meetings with Salvadoran investors, migrant associations, Chambers of Commerce, etc., led by the consulates and embassies since 2009. El Salvador offers access to opportunities to invest in nationwide productive projects in the home country, supported with the fund Reto del Milenio, for the majority of the financing and technical support

Promotion of productive investments in local development projects, in association with the municipalities of the migrants communities of origin. They are coordinated by the General Direction of Migration and Development, with the support of Migration and Development Committees as the local structures.

In progress: A project, coordinated by the Agency for the Promotion of Exports, to “use” Salvadoran leaders and entrepreneurs as links to U.S. investors interested in

Table 5-1. Continued.

		entrepreneurship in El Salvador.
		In progress: Four State funds to support micro, small, and medium enterprises, both private and mixed, in El Salvador. These funds are both for Salvadorans businesspeople and for Salvadoran migrants
To keep the national identity and the connection to the home country alive	Organization of social, sports, and religious events; support of events organized by the migrant community. This includes events both abroad and in El Salvador	Celebration of religious and national festivities in the consulates and embassies
		Sex education and health campaigns developed in the United States
		Institutional support of activities such as soccer tournaments, poetry festivals, cinema exhibitions
		Involvement of the community in the organization of the mobile consulates
	Forums with Salvadorans abroad, held in San Salvador	Two forums, one in 2004, one in 2006, with hundreds of participants
	Creation of the General Direction of Migration and Development to strengthen the links with, and the identity of, Salvadorans abroad	In 2009

Table 5-1. Continued.

	<p>Community relations at the Embassies level through the Directors of Community Issues and through consulting groups and thematic tables with diaspora members</p>	<p>The goal is to increase two-way communications</p>
	<p>Media relations to inform the migrant community about initiatives and events relevant to them</p>	<p>The Ministry of Foreign Affairs has a Secretariat of Communications that centralizes the development of communications goals, objectives, strategies and tactics. Also, in each consulate there is a media relations person who coordinates with local media, prepares news releases and press conferences, and oversees the consulate's website or Facebook™ page</p>
	<p>Environmental scanning</p>	<p>Database of Salvadoran migrant associations, Latin American migrant associations, community leaders, local authorities, churches and universities</p>
<p>To facilitate the interaction between Salvadorans abroad and the home government</p>	<p>Expansion of non-traditional consular services</p>	<p>For instance, legal counseling, visits of government officials to diaspora communities, political rights campaigns, etc.</p>
	<p>Opening of three Salvadoran DUI (national ID) offices in Los Angeles, Washington D.C., and New York</p>	<p>Many more will be needed if absentee vote is granted in 2014</p>

Table 5-1. Continued.

<p>Program of mobile consulates started in 2003</p>	<p>It involves the migrant community in the logistics' support</p>
<p>The Direction for Salvadorans Abroad became the Vice-Ministry for Salvadorans Abroad</p>	<p>Since 2005, with the government of Elías Antonio Saca</p>
<p>Nine more "traditional consulates" were added to the Foreign Service network</p>	<p>Since 2009</p>
<p>The Vice-Ministry for Salvadorans Abroad is restructured to include three General Directions: Foreign Service, Migration and Development, and Human Rights</p>	<p>Since 2009, with the government of FMLN's Mauricio Funes, a greater emphasis on the defense of human rights is announced, which is reflected in the new structure of the Vice-Ministry</p>
<p>Greater flexibility in the establishment of State-diaspora alliances</p>	<p>In 2005, migrants were asked their opinion about the National Strategic Education Plan of 2021, and about the projects to be included in the Cuenta del Milenio</p>
	<p>In 2009, the website of the General Direction of Migration and Development incorporated terms such as "integration," "alliances," "inter-institutional networks," "co-responsibility," "joint design and execution," etc., to describe State-supported programs with</p>

Table 5-1. Continued.

the diaspora

At a national level, the State partners with private investors to develop productive projects through the fund Reto del Milenio. This started in 2009

Also at a national level, through the Direction of Investment and Business (General Direction of Migration and Development), the State partners with migrants to develop “mega-projects” such as technology industrial parks or dairy farms. This started in 2009.

At a local level, municipalities and other government offices establish inter-sector projects and partner with NGOs, migrant associations, funding agencies, and individual migrants to develop productive projects in the migrants communities of origin

To defend Salvadorans’ human rights abroad

State advocacy for a migratory reform in the United States

Since the 1990s

Table 5-1. Continued.

Lobbying for extensions of the TPS status in the United States	Since 1999 until now
Creation of the Direction for Humanitarian Management and Migrant Attention, as part of the new Vice-Ministry for Salvadorans Abroad	Since 2005
Rising trend of emphasizing on the topic of the human rights' defense of Salvadoran migrants	Since 2002, with the Convention for the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Their Families
Creation of "consulates of protection" in "in-transit" areas for Salvadoran migrants (in Central America, Mexico, and the U.S. border zones)	Since 2009
Creation of the General Direction of Human Rights	Since 2009. Before, it was an office, not a General Direction
Creation and redefinition of the hotlines La Línea Que Te Ayuda, both in Mexico and the United States	In 2009 and 2011, respectively
New mission statement of the Vice-Ministry for Salvadorans Abroad lists the protection of Salvadoran human rights as its fundamental objective	Since 2009

Table 5-1. Continued.

<p>To “give back” by offering political concessions or rights to Salvadorans abroad</p>	<p>Promise of president Mauricio Funes, in June of 2011, to lead the efforts to grant absentee vote for migrants starting in the national elections of year 2014</p>	<p>This requires support from different political sectors so, at the time of writing, there is a committee analyzing how to provide absentee vote, but the “project” has not reached Congress yet for approval</p>
<p>To actively acknowledge a change of vision or paradigm of migrants as “active subjects” in the development of El Salvador’s life (economy, politics and social life)</p>	<p>Creation of the General Direction of Migration and Development</p>	<p>In 2009, to make Salvadorans “active and included participants” in the home country development processes</p>
	<p>Restructuration of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs</p>	<p>New Vice-Ministries (i.e., the Vice-Ministry for Salvadorans Abroad), new General Directions (i.e., the General Direction of Human Rights) and new Directions (i.e., the Direction for the Strengthening of Salvadoran Organizations Abroad) were created in 2009</p>
	<p>Strong acknowledgement of the importance of migrants’ contributions in El Salvador’s National Strategic Plan, and in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs’ Institutional Strategic Plan</p>	<p>2009 to 2014 term</p>

CHAPTER 6  
EL SALVADOR AND COSTA RICA: TWO CENTRAL AMERICAN OPPOSITE CASES  
IN THEIR STATE-DIASPORA RELATIONS MANAGEMENT

**From Invisibility in Costa Rica to Priority in El Salvador**

As explained in Chapter 4 and Chapter 5, both Costa Rica and El Salvador are small-size countries located in Central America, with populations below six million inhabitants each. Nevertheless, Costa Rica and El Salvador are opposite cases when it comes to State-diaspora relations. There are factors that, undoubtedly, contribute to these differences, especially when it comes to the size of the migrant community in each country and to the impact that migrants' remittances play in the local economy. For El Salvador, it is estimated that —besides the six million Salvadorans living in the country's territory—there are about three million Salvadorans living outside the home country, mainly in the United States. This is about one in every three Salvadorans. For Costa Rica, educated guesses place the number of Costa Ricans living abroad between 30,000 and 200,000. Even if we accept the number of Costa Rican migrants as being 200,000, this is about 4% of the population, although the most accepted version among experts in the topic seems to be that the real percentage is close to 2% (about 100,000 migrants).

Besides the size of the migrant population in each country, which is loosely calculated at best, there is the factor of the contribution of remittances to the home country's Gross Domestic Product (GDP), which is measured more precisely than the number of migrants each country has (although the impact of remittances in the country's GDP is also an educated estimate, as there are monies and in-kind remittances that migrants send to the home country through informal channels and are not registered in the official financial transactions of the country, so, the actual

percentage of the GDP is greater than the official estimate). Even with those imperfections, El Salvador has estimated the contribution of remittances to the local economy to be between 16% and 18% of the country's GDP (depending on the year, given that situations such as the United States recession that started in 2008 affected the amount of remittances sent to El Salvador in the last few years). For Costa Rica, it is estimated that remittances constitute about 2% of the country's GDP.

### **Size and Financial Impact as Moderators in the State-Diaspora Relations**

There are great differences between Costa Rica and El Salvador both in the size of the migrant community and in the impact that remittances have in the local economy. These two factors cannot be ignored when trying to explain the differences in the State-diaspora relations in each country. They are fundamental moderator variables that affect the characteristics and strength of the relation between the State and the diaspora community in each of the countries, and they are also factors that influence the level of attention the State gives to its relation with the diaspora. Nonetheless, the State-diaspora relations cannot be explained solely on the basis of the migrant community size and the remittances impact, as there are other factors that also play a relevant role and that influence the differences found in each country.

For instance, it would be easy to fall into the temptation of saying that the State in El Salvador shows a high involvement with its diaspora because of the size of the migrant community and because of the relevance remittances have in the local economy. These factors, again, do exist and moderate the relation between the State and the diaspora, but they are not the only factors involved, as the situation in the 1980s and early 1990s in El Salvador shows. At that time, there was also a big diaspora community living outside El Salvador, mainly in the United States, and remittances were

also having a strong impact in the local economy. Nevertheless, at that point in time, the Salvadoran diaspora was pretty much ignored by the State in its discourse and in its policies, as explained in Chapter 5.

The “far-away brother” was not considered a priority, there were few formal mechanisms to attract remittances, the topic of the defense of migrants’ human rights was barely discussed, and granting absentee vote to migrants was not part of the political discussion. Yet, the size of the migrant community and the impact of remittances were factors that were relevant then as they are relevant now. The vision of the State toward the diaspora started to change in the mid-1990s (when political forces reconfigured themselves in El Salvador, after FMLN became a legitimate political party rather than a guerilla movement, and after conservative party ARENA started losing its total domination of the political scene in El Salvador, in the path toward a transitional democracy, after a bloody civil war, that is still in the making), and this tendency intensified especially after 1999, with the government of Francisco Flores (ARENA party), but this public (the diaspora) did not become a priority until 2004, with the government of Elías Antonio Saca (ARENA party). This trend has become stronger with Mauricio Funes’ government (FMLN party), which started in 2009.

Costa Rica, on the other hand, has always ignored its migrant community, which is neither present in the official discourse, nor in government documents such as national plans of development, or in the priorities of foreign policy. Lack of accurate statistics has perpetuated the perception that the Costa Rican migrant community is small, although it could range between 100,000 to 200,000 migrants (or between 2 and 4 % of the population). These percentages, indeed, are relatively small compared to countries

such as El Salvador but, as the elections of 2006 demonstrated, if these migrants would have voted in the national elections that year, they could have changed the outcome of the elections (as Oscar Arias, candidate of PLN party, was elected president with less than 20,000 votes difference over candidate Ottón Solís, of PAC party). Thus, even though it is not formed by millions of persons, this diaspora community could have a decisive political impact at the national level, and it does have social influence and a strong economic impact in certain areas of the country, as described in Chapter 4. This migrant community, then, can have strong repercussions in the home country's political and economic life, even when this is not formally acknowledged by the State. In a stable democracy such as the Costa Rican political system, the government has not needed to form alliances with non-traditional sectors, such as the diaspora community.

In summary, this means that the size of the migrant community and the financial impact the diaspora has on the home economy are key differences between El Salvador and Costa Rica, and these are fundamental factors that moderate the differences in the State-diaspora relations in each of the two countries, but there are other differences beyond these two factors, such as the presence of a transitional democracy rather than a stable democracy, and such as the specific projects advanced by the president in each country, that characterize and differentiate the State-diaspora relations in El Salvador and Costa Rica.

### **Differences Between El Salvador and Costa Rica Beyond Size of the Migrant Community and Financial Impact of Remittances in the Home Country**

El Salvador, in the last 20 years, but especially since 2004, as described in Chapter 5, has gone through a process of self-analysis and recognition of the hard and unfair contexts of exit of its migrant community. A high number of migrants (counted in

the hundreds of thousands) left the country during the 1980s, affected by the bloody civil war happening in El Salvador for 12 years. Millions more followed in the 1990s and 2000s, deeply hurt by poverty, afraid of political instability and repression, tired of working in no-end jobs, hopeless about the future in El Salvador.

Although the financial hardships of El Salvador have not finished yet, and they keep pushing Salvadorans away from the territory, there has been a shift in the relationship-building process between the State and the diaspora in the last decade that has allowed the construction of a closer relation between the government and the diaspora in recent years. It has been a process that has gone from the State recognizing the importance of the diaspora, to the State realizing that it needs the diaspora's contributions to the home country for El Salvador to survive, to the State understanding that it needs to create a win-win situation for both the home country and the diaspora members, instead of just a one-way process of asking the diaspora for its help without giving anything in return. The need of the competing political parties for political legitimacy has been another factor in this equation, where each political party has tried to attract the loyalty and gain the favors of the diaspora community.

### **A new way of governing in El Salvador**

With the government of Elías Antonio Saca (2004-2009), right-wing party ARENA adopted a more centrist political position, granting some benefits to migrants, such as the creation of the Vice-Ministry for Salvadorans Abroad, the organization of two Presidential Forums for Salvadorans Abroad, and the creation of several "consulates of protection," whose main objective was the protection of in-transit migrants' human rights. This initial process of "courting the diaspora" (Kunz, 2008; Ragazzi, 2009; Margheritis, 2010) stemmed from the State recognition that El Salvador needed to keep

remittances coming and needed the migrants' investments in local productive projects. Besides, with leftist party FMLN gaining more political power election after election, ARENA needed to form new alliances to keep its political legitimacy.

The economic crisis in El Salvador since the 1980s forced the State, especially in the 2000s, to look beyond its borders to ask for support from its citizens, using the strategy of making the diaspora responsible for the wellbeing of the migrants' communities of origin, reminding the diaspora members about their identity as Salvadorans, even if they were not residing anymore in Salvadoran territory; reminding Salvadorans abroad that the State could not fund all the improvements needed in the local communities, so they should step up and help their loved ones in their communities. In a sense, this position of the Salvadoran State is congruent with the neoliberal policies adopted by the Salvadoran government since the 1980s, where the State started diminishing its size, advocating for privatization of some State enterprises, decentralizing power, defending free trade, and expecting non-traditional sectors to contribute to the State's development. At the time, the State vision seemed to be summarized in the following hypothetical sentence targeted at the diaspora community: We need you, and we need your money now, even though we practically forced you to leave the country in the past.

### **Change of paradigm**

When leftist party FMLN reached power for the first time in 2009, President Mauricio Funes and the political elites of that party, consistent with the socialist ideology defended by FMLN, acknowledged the need for restitution to the migrant community, the need for incorporating migrants in a more active way in the home political, social, and financial life, the need for protecting migrants' human rights, the need for protecting

Salvadoran citizens, no matter where the citizens were physically located. Besides, as a first-timer leading the Executive Power, FMLN needed to establish itself as a party capable of governing the country. Also, as a party that won the 2009 elections by a narrow 2% margin, it had to establish alliances with a base of voters that had been ignored, looked down, or even neglected, in the past, by other political forces.

This change of vision towards inclusion in the home life and towards the defense of human rights required not only a consensus among the FMLN leaders but also a strong support from the head of the Executive Power, President Mauricio Funes. As it happens in other countries of Latin America, the support of the president to any given project speeds up the rate at which the rest of the country accepts and moves toward making the project a reality. The opposite can also happen: Even if a project is considered a national priority, if the president relegates that project to a secondary role, it is probable that the project will not advance at the desired speed, or it will not advance at all. The Salvadoran State vision toward the diaspora, currently, seems to be some variation of the following basic idea: We still need your money, but we know we are in debt with you. We want to and need to give something back in return for your continued support, which we will keep on asking.

As part of this change in paradigm, the Salvadoran State has emphasized, mainly in the last three years, the defense of the diaspora's human rights, in giving restitution to the diaspora community through some political concessions such as the absentee vote (this discussion is still in progress), and through the participation of diaspora members in productive projects that provide revenue for the diaspora investors, while

creating jobs and revenue in the home country, especially in the migrants' communities of origin.

### **Innovative partnerships**

The Salvadoran State has also become more flexible in terms of communicating more frequently and collaborating more intensely among the different Government entities, as well as in terms of establishing innovative alliances that involve partnering with diaspora members, local community organizations, non-government organizations (NGOs), international funding agencies, municipalities, and other groups, mimicking what Iskander (2010) described, for Mexico and Morocco, as the development of a "creative state," and placing more attention to relationship-building efforts with the diaspora, nurturing a stronger relation with a public that Varadarajan (2010) has called "the domestic abroad."

This change of vision also reflects a new way of governing, where the private sector and citizen groups are welcome to collaborate with the State, where the State relies more heavily in the responsibility of these groups toward the home country's well being, where more flexible structures are created within the State to promote multi-sector partnerships, and where mechanisms and structures already in place are revamped to include innovative components, such as diaspora-targeted opportunities. For instance, while the Salvadoran State has had instruments in place, for decades, to attract foreign direct investment, there are components now developed specifically to attract diaspora members in that pool of possible "foreign" investors, through loans, tax breaks, technical assistance, and the like, provided by the Salvadoran State.

The Salvadoran State has incorporated migrants and their remittances in the country's future development to such a strong degree that, in the following months, the

BRIDGE program will fund broad infrastructure projects and social initiatives in El Salvador, as described in Chapter 5. In this innovative bi-national relationship, the United States will loan money to El Salvador to develop social projects and to build infrastructure, and both El Salvador and the United States are counting on future migrants' remittances to be sent to El Salvador for this Central American country to be able to pay back this loan.

What this means is that remittances have been fully institutionalized as part of the home GDP, have been apprehended by the State, and have been incorporated as part of the country's foreign income. For this reason, the State needs to guarantee that this income will keep on coming, and it needs to guarantee that the migrants will keep on feeling responsibility toward the well being of the home country and toward the progress of their home communities. To maintain this linkage, the State is forced not only to ask for support from its migrants, but to give them restitutions in return.

### **International public relations implications**

From an international public relations point of view, these changes imply, for the State, the need of strengthening community relations, both in the home and the host countries, of identifying migrant leaders and engaging them, establishing connections with diaspora associations, establishing more and better channels of communication with the diaspora, accepting innovative types of partnerships to attain common goals, scanning the environment to follow trends and issues and to respond to them, adopting more symmetrical interactions, "coming down from Heaven" (as one of the interviewees described the attitude of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in the past, of being unattainable to the common citizen) to interact with the diaspora members "on Earth," and, in

general, adopting more frequent two-way communication processes, whether the State officials like it or not.

There has been, in the past, and there will keep on existing, in the future, some resistance to this change in the relationship-building approach, because opening spaces for the diaspora and engaging the diaspora in conversations imply having more interlocutors, receiving more criticism, having to deal with criticism more openly instead of ignoring it, acknowledging flaws and weaknesses, adopting a flexible style of governing to reach goals, and dealing with the fact that some projects and initiatives require human and material resources, as well as courses of action and bureaucratic mechanisms, that the country is not ready to commit or to provide at this point in time, or that is going to prioritize in a different way.

For instance, more personnel in some consulates and embassies is needed, as well as more consulates in certain states of the United States, but these entities might not be getting those resources any time soon, while, at the same time, more consulates of protection have been opened in Latin America and in the U.S.-border areas, more employees have been hired to help with the hotlines, and more financial advisors have been added to certain embassies and consulates to channel diaspora's investments to the home economy.

Also, the Salvadoran government has placed a greater emphasis in and attention to the communication processes that start in its Secretariat of Communications in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, and in the communications that stem from the Executive Power, as the State has indicated that increasing transparency and timely communications is part of the priorities in the interaction with the Salvadorans abroad.

This will require a careful management of the communication goals, strategies, and tactics, and it will require finding an adequate balance between coordination and control of the Salvadoran State global public relations. All these changes, discussions, and adjustments going on in El Salvador, though, have not even started to happen in Costa Rica, where the State interaction with the diaspora is limited to basic consular services.

### **Costa Rica: A country where the diaspora community is almost invisible**

In contrast to El Salvador, in Costa Rica there is an almost complete disregard for the diaspora community, either because it is considered “too small,” or because it is considered weak in terms of political and financial impact in the home country, as described in Chapter 4. The interaction of the Costa Rican State with its diaspora, so far, is mainly limited to the offering of traditional consular services in a few embassies and consulates around the world (for instance, only eight in all the United States), where the largest consulates have five employees, and the average consulate has about three employees (the general consul, the consul, and an office assistant). The budget allocated to each consulate allows its personnel to get their salaries, pay for the office’s rent and utility bills, and for office supplies, but does not allow them to offer any other services to the Costa Ricans living in that jurisdiction.

On top of that, as there are no public relations goals, strategies, or tactics defined toward the diaspora, and as the diaspora is not even mentioned in the Strategic Plan of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, several communication channels that could be used efficiently and cost-effectively to reach the diaspora members, such as the Ministry’s website, or possible Facebook™ pages or Twitter™ accounts, are not used at all, or not used to their fullest extent, to engage this public in a conversation or to establish alliances. For instance, so far, the Ministry’s website is used to provide general

information about Costa Rican foreign policy, about what the leaders in the Ministry are doing while they travel to meet their peers in other countries, about the achievements Costa Rica has reached in international forums, and the like, but there is no section dedicated specifically to communicate with the diaspora. The Ministry's Facebook™ page replicates these same actions, of being mainly a resonance box for the Ministry's accomplishments and news, instead of using it as a mechanism for establishing dialogue and interaction with publics such as the diaspora, which otherwise are not easy to reach. It is true that people post comments on the Ministry's Facebook™ page, but the page is handled almost as a bulletin board where users can comment on the news, not as a relationship-building tool. At the end, it is a two-way communication tool used almost as a one-way communication medium.

The process of self-analysis and recognition of the importance of the diaspora has barely started in Costa Rica, even though migrants send more than \$500 million a year in remittances, even though their contributions are essential for the well being of their families in certain regions of the country, even though their contributions alleviate the social problems in agricultural-based communities all over the country, and even though migrants could eventually change the outcome of the presidential elections if they united to support a specific candidate (as it would have occurred in 2006 in the national elections if at least 20,000 migrants would have voted for Otton Solís, of PAC party, the candidate who lost against Oscar Arias, of PLN party, for less than 20,000 votes). In this regard, there is no doubt that the diaspora community in Costa Rica is smaller and weaker than the Salvadoran diaspora, but it is also true that the Costa Rican diaspora

has a financial impact and could have a political influence that has not been recognized by the Costa Rican State.

The political impact of the Costa Rican diaspora could be much stronger if the migrant community was better organized to portray its existence, to showcase its importance, and to voice its opinions (and, in this regard, it is important to point out that there are opportunities for public relations goals, strategies, and tactics to be defined and developed by the Costa Rican diaspora community in Costa Rica). Given the size of the country, and the impact the Executive Power has on national priorities, a relationship-building campaign to increase the diaspora's interaction with the president and other politicians such as congress representatives, party leaders and city majors – supported with some media relations to build awareness among average Costa Rican citizens—could go a long way to start this process of self-analysis and recognition. The political impact of the diaspora will probably become stronger, nonetheless, after year 2014, when absentee vote will start to occur, but it will be a process that will take time, so increasing the level of activism of the Costa Rican diaspora could go a long way in the meantime.

Financially, the remittances sent by the diaspora community have an impact that is strong in certain specific areas of the country, and it is in those areas where local citizens and diaspora members could start demanding stronger attention to the diaspora's rights and needs on the part of the municipalities. Also, because Costa Rica is a small country with only 57 congressional representatives, those diaspora communities could, through a relatively easy process, establish public relations efforts with the specific goal of connecting with and engaging the local congressional

representatives and the local city majors to have the diaspora's concerns heard and the diaspora's needs acknowledged.

What is true is that, so far, Costa Rica has not started the process of analysis and recognition that El Salvador started 20 years ago. The Costa Rican Ministry of Foreign Affairs does not have the structure to serve the diaspora, as El Salvador does, through its Vice-Ministry for Salvadorans Abroad. Costa Rica is more concerned with being heard at international forums such as the United Nations, where the country has tried to gain a stronger presence in different committees, than in serving its own citizens abroad. Some persons, such as political leader Otton Solís, of PAC party, call this position "petulant" and "cruel" toward the migrants (O. Solís, personal communication, April 12, 2011). Others think that this attitude is not based on arrogance, but on lack of recognition of a public that should be taken into account in the ministry's priorities.

Even more, Costa Rica has not established the executive committees that El Salvador has formed to develop and work on initiatives where several government entities are involved at the same time, along with ONGs, migrant organizations, and private citizens, in the national territory or abroad, to develop productive projects in the home country. This integration of efforts toward a common goal has not occurred spontaneously in Costa Rica, and migrants, up to now, have not been able to exert pressure to demand recognition for their contributions to the home country.

In the field of public relations, it is well accepted that, in a plan or campaign, the strategies and tactics to be followed respond to the goals and objectives set in advance. If migrants are not even mentioned as a relevant public in the State's strategic planning, and, as a result, establishing State-diaspora relations is not an objective or goal in the

State's vision, the invisibility of the diaspora will continue to occur. Government officials in Costa Rica need to be more in tune with international trends, where migration issues are of great importance; they need to acknowledge the existence of thousands of Costa Rican migrants residing mainly in the United States, and they need to respond to these forgotten citizens with political and financial restitutions, as these migrants contribute to the well being of their communities of origin through their remittances.

As this process of recognition has not happened spontaneously, it is reasonable to think that some degree of activism on the part of the Costa Rican diaspora could raise awareness among government officials but, up to this point, Costa Rican migrants have not been able to organize themselves in a long-term, meaningful structure in such a way that they can exert pressure on the home government to acknowledge their needs, wants, and contributions in the home country.

### **Some Similarities Between El Salvador and Costa Rica in Regard to State-Diaspora Relations**

There are some similarities between El Salvador and Costa Rica in their State-led transnational efforts directed to engage their respective diaspora, although, within these similarities, there are some differences of intensity or activity between the two countries. To start with, both countries offer traditional consular services through their networks of embassies and consulates around the world, although while El Salvador is increasing both its consulates of protection and their normal consulates, and it is adding personnel to some of its embassies, as described in Chapter 5, Costa Rica eliminated its consulate in Chicago in 2009 to save money.

A second similarity is that both countries use social activities and artistic events to connect with their diaspora communities. Nevertheless, while El Salvador embassies

and consulates organize their own social, sports, and religious events—sometimes even bringing Salvadoran migrants back to El Salvador to participate in forums, sports tournaments, and artistic encounters—,and while El Salvador consulates support these types of events when organized by the Salvadoran diaspora, the Costa Rican consulates do not have a budget to organize this type of activities, so some consuls try to attend, instead, to the events organized by the migrants when the time and the resources allow them to be present in these activities. In the United States, only the Costa Rican embassy has a limited budget to organize social events such as concerts.

A third similarity is that both Costa Rican and Salvadoran consulates use free spaces in communication channels offered by Univision (such as the network's website, radio stations, and TV stations) to disseminate information among their migrants. Nevertheless, El Salvador also uses extensively its Ministry of Foreign Affairs' website, as well as different Facebook™ pages and Twitter™ accounts, to stay connected with the diaspora community, while Costa Rica, so far, has not used the ministry's website or social media to engage the diaspora in particular, just to post general foreign policy information and news.

Fourth, both countries' high level officials in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs have the perception that the resources they have available are not enough to serve the diaspora's needs. Nonetheless, El Salvador has not only a higher budget to communicate with its diaspora, but also a stronger institutional support: a Vice-Ministry for Salvadorans Abroad, a General Direction of Migration and Development, and a General Direction of Human Rights, while, in Costa Rica, the network of consulates and embassies belong to the Foreign Service, which is just a General Direction in the

Ministry of Foreign Affairs (which is one of the ministries with the lowest budgets in Costa Rica) (High-Level Government Official at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs #1, personal communication, May 11, 2011).

Finally, there is only one similarity in which Costa Rica seems to be taking the lead compared to El Salvador: in granting absentee vote to its diaspora members starting in year 2014. Although both countries are in the process of offering long-distance vote to the diaspora members in the United States, Costa Rica's Congress already approved the project and modified the laws to make this possible, and the Electoral Supreme Court is already working in the logistics to make this happen in the next presidential elections, while in El Salvador there is an inter-sector, multi-partisan committee working on finding the best way to make absentee vote possible, but the initiative has not even reached congress yet for approval.

### **Comparative Analysis**

The purpose of this Chapter was to offer a comparative analysis of the State-diaspora relations maintained by El Salvador and by Costa Rica, highlighting key differences and similarities by which the States of Costa Rica and El Salvador have managed their relationship-building process with their diaspora. The purpose of offering a comparative analysis was accomplished not only by pointing out how two small-size countries in the same region of the world can have opposite approaches in their relationship-building strategies and tactics toward their diaspora, but, more importantly, by describing the historical and contextual factors that explain those differences, and by signaling the "turning points" faced by those two States in the process of establishing State-diaspora relations. The comparison also showed how El Salvador has given stronger, faster steps to connect with its population abroad, but the Chapter also

indicated that these steps have happened after a process of self-analysis and maturing that has taken about 20 years to develop, a period in which the Salvadoran State has advanced a different vision, a different paradigm, accompanied by the development of long-term State policies, bureaucratic processes, and flexible ways of partnering with other government sectors, with NGOs and private groups.

This process of self-analysis and of building the conditions necessary to strengthen the State-diaspora relations has not started yet in Costa Rica, at least not beyond offering traditional consular services to the best of the consular personnel's abilities, a task constrained by low budgets but, more than that, by the absence of a clear State vision toward the diaspora, which is a public that remains practically invisible in the eyes of the Costa Rican state, even though the Costa Rican diaspora sends about \$500 million a year to the home-country economy, and it keeps hundreds of families afloat in their communities of origin.

What comes next, based on the description of each case and on the comparative analysis offered previously, is to present theoretical propositions that contribute to theory building in the field of State-diaspora relations for the case of Central America, and to introduce a model of State-diaspora relations that highlights some factors that can strengthen or weaken the relations between a State and its diaspora, from the government viewpoint, in countries such as Costa Rica and El Salvador.

Table 6-1. Comparison of the State-diaspora relations between El Salvador (ES) and Costa Rica (CR). Two opposite cases in the same region.

Similarities between both State-diaspora relations	Differences between both State-diaspora relations	Core factors influencing the differences
Offering of traditional consular services through the network of consulates and embassies	Opposite State perceptions about the size of their diaspora community	Historical factors (civil war in ES in the 1980s that pushed millions abroad; political stability in CR)
Relationship building through social activities such as arts exhibitions and concerts, although ES is more active in this social involvement of the diaspora than CR	Self-definition of ES as a transnational country; self-definition of CR as a migrant-receiver country	Size (real or perceived) of the migrant community: about 33% of the population for ES; about 2% for CR
Use of communication channels offered by Univision (website, radio stations, TV stations) to connect with migrants	Active State engagement of the ES diaspora in the national life to attract remittances and maintain its identity. Invisibility of the CR diaspora in the national life, except for migrant-sending regions	Impact of remittances in the local economy: about 18% of the GDP in ES; about 2% in CR
Both countries are moving forward to offer absentee vote to the diaspora starting in 2014, but CR is ahead in the process (Congress already approved the initiative)	Constant presence of the diaspora in the political discourse in ES; not in CR	Influence of the Executive Power, mainly the president, in policies developed to favor the diaspora: This influence has benefited the diaspora in ES; it has perpetuated the invisibility of the CR diaspora
Perception of not having enough resources to develop all the initiatives necessary to develop relations with this public	Protection of the diaspora's human rights abroad is a central topic in ES's State agenda; not in CR	Higher level of activism of the Salvadoran diaspora; low level of activism of the Costa Rican diaspora (few initiatives are goal-specific, not long term)
	Intensive use in ES of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs website and social media to connect with the diaspora, with targeted content. Low use of websites and social media in CR, mainly giving general information about foreign policy.	
	Creation of Ticotal network in CR; nothing similar in ES.	

## CHAPTER 7 CONCLUSIONS, THEORETICAL PROPOSITIONS, STATE-DIASPORA RELATIONS MODEL AND FUTURE RESEARCH

Based on the results of this research endeavor, which presents two governments' viewpoints about how and why they establish relations with their diasporas in the United States, this dissertation suggests a set of eight theoretical propositions that can inform future research in the field of State-diaspora relations, and it also introduces a model of State-diaspora relations that seems to present an accurate description of factors that, from the government viewpoint, influence the strength of the relation between a State and its diaspora in two opposite cases of State-diaspora relations in Central America: Costa Rica and El Salvador. As a simplification of reality, this model is expected to serve as a tool for theory building, and, as Shoemaker, Tankard, and Lasorsa (2004) explained, this model is a representation of a portion of reality that tries to highlight the "key elements or parts of the object or process . . . making salient certain aspects of reality" (p. 110). The following is the set of eight theoretical propositions, stemmed from the findings presented in Chapter 4, Chapter 5, and Chapter 6, followed by the explanation of the model presented in Figure 7.1.

### **Theoretical Propositions About State-Diaspora Relations That Inform the State-Diaspora Relations Model**

- Proposition 1: The size of the diaspora community moderates the strength of the relation between the State and its diaspora: The larger the diaspora community, the stronger the attention the State will give to the relationship-building process with the diaspora.

**Discussion.** This dissertation cannot establish a precise size of the diaspora, in terms of percentage of the home country's population, at which the attention of the State switches from weak to strong, as other factors also moderate the relation. Nevertheless, it appears that while in Costa Rica having an estimate 2% of the

population living abroad has not attracted the attention of the State toward building a stronger relation with its diaspora, in El Salvador, having an estimate 33% of the country's population living abroad has sufficed for the State to give priority to the diaspora as one of its key publics. If we analyze other cases in Latin America, such as Mexico or Haiti, having above 10% of the country's population living abroad seems to be a percentage big enough to trigger the interest of the State in building a better relation with the diaspora, but the exact percentage of the population needed abroad for the State to strengthen its relation with its migrant community is hard to establish with exactitude. A 2% seems to be low, a 10% seems to be enough, a 33% seems to be more than enough, based on the two cases analyzed for this dissertation, and based on the other cases referenced as part of the literature review.

- Proposition 2: The financial impact of the diaspora's remittances in the home country's economy moderates the strength of the relation between the State and its diaspora. The stronger the financial impact of remittances on the home country's GDP, the stronger the attention the State will give to the relationship-building process with the diaspora.

**Discussion.** This dissertation cannot establish a precise percentage of the GDP that remittances have to reach for the State to switch from giving a weak attention to giving a strong attention to its diaspora. Just as a reference, it seems that the approximately \$500 million that migrants send back to Costa Rica every year have not been able to attract the State's attention, as they only constitute about 2% of Costa Rica's GDP. In El Salvador, remittances account for about 16% to 18% of the home country's GDP, and this percentage appears to be strong enough to entice the State to pay top attention to its diaspora as a key public. The percentage that triggers the attention of the State seems to be somewhere in between.

- Proposition 3: The strength of the State-diaspora relations in countries such as Costa Rica and El Salvador will also be moderated by the political projects and priorities of the Executive Power, especially of the president. The higher the interest the president shows in the diaspora, the stronger the State-diaspora relations will be.

**Discussion.** With political systems where the figure of the president is strong in most of Latin America, if the home country's president does not see the State-diaspora relations as a political priority, or at least as a relevant relation to have, the communication and public relations plans, strategies and tactics developed and adopted by the State will not engage this population as a key public, even if the State communications or public relations/public information departments have the technical, human, and financial resources to do so. This finding, for Costa Rica and El Salvador, is consistent with what Margheritis (2007, 2010) found for Argentina and Ecuador, respectively, in terms of the role of specific political projects advocated or promoted by the president, and the role of "domestic political factors" (Margheritis, 2010, p. 1). As Margheritis (2010) explained, in countries such as Ecuador, the executive power plays an "overwhelming role . . . in setting the policymaking agenda" (p.3).

- Proposition 4: The State-diaspora relations can change, even drastically, from one political term to the next, if one home country's president is not interested in engaging the diaspora but the next president is, even if they belong to the same political party. Accordingly, political projects of the president at any given time can weigh more than the political priorities and goals established in middle and long-term national plans of development and in institutional strategic plans.

**Discussion.** This is the case because in Costa Rica and El Salvador, similar to the rest of Central and Latin America, the figure of the president has a strong influence in the development of State policies and in the decisions undertaken by congress, which produces, in some cases, low continuity levels in government plans and policies from one government to the next. The lack of continuity in government priorities, policies, and

plans can be explained, in the Latin American context, both by historical reasons that come from colonial times, and by recent global developments.

Historically, the strong influence of the president in the Latin American context is related to one of the characteristics of the political and business environments in Latin America: personalism (Becker, 2004; Wiarda & Kline, 2007), which extends all the way to the president, who has “vast power” to make decisions (Wiarda & Kline, 2007, p. 37).

About the roots of personalism, Becker (2004) explained:

The institution of personalism in colonial Latin America has its roots in the feudal system of land tenure and patrimony that has prevailed in Spain and Portugal since the eighth century. That durable system was transferred virtually intact to the New World. . . . As one’s personal position in the colonial hierarchy was directly related to one’s personal position in the colonial social order, there was no separation between the person and his prerogative to exercise the authority of his position. . . . (p.82) Rule by armed forces became the normal pattern of authority in Spanish America for 150 years after independence. It was not until the 1980s that more of the region’s citizens lived under democratically elected governments than under dictatorships (p.93).

Latin America has also gone through relatively recent, strong changes in its business environment, from the period of Import Substitution Industrialization in the 1940s, 1950s and 1960s, to the recession of the 1970s, to the Lost Decade of the 1980s, to the neoliberal era and the adoption of free trade agreements starting in the 1990s (Bulmer-Thomas, 2003; Becker, 2004). These transformations have forced government policies and priorities to change constantly to face all sorts of obstacles, including “hyperinflation, plunging currencies, crushing debt, falling commodity prices, mass unemployment, and civil unrest” (Becker, 2004, pp. 33). Besides, in the past, especially prior to the 1990s, politics and corruption also influenced the development of policies and the establishment of priorities by the different governments in the Latin American region, adding to the volatility of the plans and directions established by

political leaders. As Becker (2004) stated, prior to the 1990s “government corruption was a pervasive and unavoidable fact of business life” in Latin America (p. 103).

This personalism trait in the political systems in most of Latin America has contributed to the lack of political stability and continuity of government policies and priorities in the region. As Clawson (2006) said, “*Personalismo* has also contributed to much of the historic political instability of the region through the maintenance of political parties that are sustained principally through the patronage generated by a charismatic leader” (p. 190, italics in the original).

For the reasons explained above, in a region like Central America, the projects of a country’s president can have a stronger impact than the goals and objectives defined in a long-term national plan of development. One instance that illustrates this statement is the example of the changes in priorities in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, from one government to the next, which happened recently both in Costa Rica and in El Salvador.

In Costa Rica, after the elections of 2010, the new president and the new head of the ministry belonged to the same political party than the previous president and head of the ministry (President Oscar Arias’ political term finished and President Laura Chinchilla’s political term started in 2010, both from PLN party), and yet, the priorities for the ministry were radically different from one term to the next. And, according to the opinions expressed in Chapter 4 by political leader Ottón Solís, of PAC party, his priorities in terms of foreign policy would have been also different from the ones of the Chinchilla’s and Arias’ terms, especially in the relation with the Costa Rican diaspora, due to the political views of his party but also to personal reasons (namely, his origin from a Costa Rica migrant-sending community, factor which, in his opinion, makes him

more sensitive to the issue and more inclined to value having strong State-diaspora relations).

The influence of the president, this time in El Salvador, was also felt when, after the elections of 2009, the new president and head of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs belonged to a different political party than the previous president and head of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (Elías Antonio Saca, from ARENA party, ended his term in 2009, and Mauricio Funes, from FMLN party, started his term immediately after). In this second case, the priorities that Funes established for the ministry were clearly different than the priorities established previously by Saca. Not only the goals and objectives were modified in the ministry's strategic plan, but the ministry itself was also restructured with new directions and departments to reflect those changes.

The strong presidential influence in Central American political priorities may affect State-diaspora relationship-building efforts and techniques in several ways, as it will be discussed in more detail later on in Chapter 7. On one hand, for example, it makes short and middle-term public relations plans more useful than long-term ones, as contingencies may arise based on personal interests and preferences on the part of the Executive Power. Also, it makes flexibility an important quality in the public relations planning process. At the same time, it seems to show the need for public relations practitioners—and for other government officials who interact with the diaspora—to try to institutionalize processes and promote the creation of stable policies, so that changes of government will not impact, so strongly at least, the priorities toward the diaspora.

At the practical level, this presidential influence seems to indicate that there will be a need for public relations practitioners to scan the environment more frequently to

understand the trends and the points of view of the ruling political leaders. It also seems to mean that public relations practitioners working with the Executive Power will have to brief, every few years, the new president and the new head of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs about the characteristics and relevance of the diaspora community. Besides, public relations practitioners may have to deal with contingencies, such as changes of mind of the president, or changes in political priorities of the Executive Power, and those changes might alter the public relations strategies and tactics established previously. Whether public relations practitioners like it or not, this study seems to indicate that strategic communication plans in this type of environment become temporary guidelines that will have to be adjusted and rerouted periodically.

An implication, in Central America, of the weight of the president's point of view in national issues for the diaspora community is that establishing government relations will be essential in the diaspora's efforts to gain visibility in the home country, and these government relations will have to be renewed every few years with government changes. Stewardship efforts will become relevant in a process of this sort, where high-government officials rotate or change, partially or totally, with changes in the political leadership.

- Proposition 5: The State-diaspora relations in Costa Rica and El Salvador are not monolithic but fluid and in constant evolution over time, and they are likely to be shaped by the socioeconomic, political, and cultural contexts of the Costa Rican and Salvadoran realities in the home country at any given moment, and by the socioeconomic, political, and cultural contexts of the Costa Rican and Salvadoran diasporas in the host countries at any given time

**Discussion.** The context of the home and host countries, as well as the context of the diaspora cannot be ignored in the analysis of the State-diaspora relations, given that different socioeconomic, political and cultural conditions in the home country, in the host

country, and in the diaspora community itself will moderate the strength of the relation between the State and the diaspora, and will also impact the quality of the relation (see discussion about relationship quality later in Chapter 7, under Proposition 7). This focus on the relevance and impact of contextual factors is consistent with the findings and perspectives of public relations researchers such as Molleda (2008); Molleda and Moreno (2008); Gaither and Curtin (2008); Vercic, Grunig and Grunig (1996); Sriramesh and Vercic (2009); Holtzhausen (2007); Wakefield (2007); Newsom, Vanslyke and Kruckeberg, (2001); Zaharna (2001, 2000); Taylor, (2001) and Valentini (2007), among others, and also with the findings of researchers in the field of State-led transnationalism about the factors that influence states' practices toward their diaspora communities (Portes & Rumbaut, 2006; Gamlen, 2008; Koslowski, 2005; Levitt & de la Dehesa, 2003; Levitt & Jaworsky, 2007; Ostergaard-Nielsen, 2003; Margheritis, 2010) . For example, Margheritis (2010) indicated that the variety of explanatory factors in the State-diaspora relations suggest the need to develop case studies "that pay due attention to context-specific variables" (p. 6) to enrich the understanding of state-led transnationalism.

- Proposition 6: The existence of a democratic government and/or a stable financial situation in a given country does not guarantee, per se, that the State in that country will be interested in establishing strong communication channels and public relations goals, strategies and tactics with its diaspora.

**Discussion.** The data collected in this dissertation indicates that, at least in a region like Central America, democratic, stable governments, such as the one currently governing in Costa Rica, may not need to "flirt with" or attract non-traditional populations, such as the diaspora, to solidify their political decisions and plans, perhaps because democratic, stable, mature governments do not face legitimacy issues and do

not need to form alliances with non-traditional sectors, as the diaspora community. In contrast, the data seems to indicate that governments that face legitimacy issues or stronger political opposition, or that have to deal with stronger economic crises and financial instability in the home country, are forced to form alliances with more interlocutors and to look for help in more places, probably setting the conditions for a stronger State-led transnationalism and for stronger State-diaspora relations than in stable democracies. The findings of this dissertation seem to indicate that in countries where political parties face stronger competition and where these parties have no strong dominance over the electoral preference, the governments will have to form alliances and attract populations that have been ignored, even neglected, in the past, by those same political forces.

In this regard, this proposition seems to be in tune with the observation of Margheritis (2010) for the case of Ecuador, where she points out the importance of exploring, among other factors, “the development of specific political projects that made use of policy innovations to strengthen precarious political regimes” (p. 3) and to empower transitional democracies.

- Proposition 7: The creation of specific communication products to engage the diaspora—such as websites, Facebook™ pages, Twitter™ accounts, news releases, speeches, brochures, magazines, bulletins, etc.—can be seen as an indicator of the quality of the State-diaspora relations, because the presence of these communication products seem to indicate stronger State-diaspora relations than the absence of these communication products, especially when two-way communication is practiced, but this media audit does not suffice to evaluate the quality of the relationship.

**Discussion.** It is necessary to think of the State-diaspora relations in a global, encompassing manner, involving all the elements moderating the relation: from the communication products or the interpersonal communication efforts, to the consular

activities in embassies and consulates, lobbying efforts, community relations, political rights offered to the diaspora, financial incentives, social opportunities involving the diaspora, and the like. The communication products are just one part of the equation.

Besides, the body of knowledge of public relations suggests that relationship quality has to do with variables such as trust (L. Grunig, J. Grunig & Ehling, 1992; Huang, 1997, 2001; Ledingham & Bruning, 1998; Hon & J. Grunig, 1999; Kim, 2001; Jo, 2006); commitment (Huang, 1997, 2001; Ledingham & Bruning, 1998; Hon & J. Grunig, 1999; Kim, 2001; Bruning & Galloway, 2004; Jo, 2006); control mutuality (Ferguson, 1984; Huang, 1997, 2001; Hon & J. Grunig, 1999; Jo, 2006); satisfaction (Ferguson, 1984; L. Grunig, J. Grunig & Ehling, 1992; Huang, 1997, 2001; Hon & J. Grunig, 1999; Bruning & Ledingham, 2000; Bruning, Langenhop, & Green, 2004; Jo, 2006), and openness (Ferguson, 1984; L. Grunig, J. Grunig & Ehling, 1992; Ledingham & Bruning, 1998, Hon & J. Grunig, 1999).

Then, States such as the one of Costa Rica and El Salvador need to evaluate these quality indicators of the relationship, either through qualitative research methods such as focus groups and in-depth interviews (J. Grunig, 2002) or discourse analysis, or through quantitative methods, such as surveys. For the latter, multi-item scales like the ones developed by Hon and J. Grunig (1999) could be useful for States to evaluate the quality of their relation with their diaspora communities. In Hon and J. Grunig's (1999) scale, each indicator can be measured through the use of a multiple-item survey with questions or statements for which the respondent can choose one option in a nine-point scale. Hon and J. Grunig (1999) included, in their study, a list of statements that can be used to measure each of the indicators listed above. States can also evaluate their

relationship building strategies, in this case, using Ki and Hon's (2009) multiple-item scale, that measures relationship cultivation strategies using six indicators: access, openness, positivity, sharing of tasks, assurances, and networking (Ki & Hon, 2009; Hon & J. Grunig, 1999).

It is not the purpose of this dissertation to suggest a specific multi-item scale to measure the quality of State-diaspora relations, but it is important to indicate the need for future research to focus on developing an instrument for studying State-diaspora relations using a quantitative approach. In that regard, one challenge will be to bring the measurement of the variables that have been used to study the quality of a relationship at the interpersonal level to the international level, as, in this case, researchers will be measuring variables that happen in diaspora groups located in a host country, and variables that occur at the State level in the home country. Without trying to go deeper in this matter, as it requires a serious effort through future research, one suggestion for a starting point could be to consider the State as an "organization," to then try to follow the lead of OPR researchers in using multi-item scales to measure the quality of the relationship between a public (the diaspora) and an organization (the State).

- Proposition 8: The "guilt" factor, "retribution" factor or "we-want-to-make-it-up-to-you" factor can play a role in the strengthening of State-diaspora relations in political regimes with legitimacy issues or economic crises.

**Discussion.** The "guilt" or "retribution" factor has not played a strong role in Costa Rica in the establishment of State-diaspora relations, except on the side of the Electoral Supreme Court (TSE) trying to provide electoral rights to a population that has lacked them until now. This seems to be the case because the political system in Costa Rica has no strong legitimacy issues, and the economic situation in the country, although fragile, is stable. The opposite is the case in El Salvador, especially now, that the FMLN

is in power for the first time in history, after transitioning from a revolutionary force that played an active role during the bloody civil war of the 1980s to a formal political party trying to guide the destiny of El Salvador for the first time. In contrast, for Costa Rica, the data collected and analyzed for this dissertation does not show the Costa Rican State as having an attitude of trying to compensate or give retributions to the diaspora for “forcing” it to leave the country, or for serving as a push factor, as the literature review shows is the case in other Latin American countries such as México or Ecuador, where the governments have recognized that the State has failed the diaspora and has expelled these citizens abroad and, for that reason, the State needs to compensate this population with political rights and economic advantages. That recognition was not present in the data collected for Costa Rica, but it was very much present in the data collected for El Salvador, where the political system is a transitional democracy, where the country’s financial situation would be critical if the level of remittances dropped, and where the economic crisis that started in the late 1970s has not been overcome.

Based on the previous eight theoretical propositions, the following model of State-diaspora relations was developed to highlight what seem to be, from the government viewpoint, the main factors that moderate the strength of the relation between the State and the diaspora community in the cases of Costa Rica and El Salvador. This model could serve as a starting point to analyze other cases in Latin America and around the world, in order to compare and contrast the common circumstances and unique characteristics of each case. This model, then, is a starting point, a contribution to study state-diaspora relations at a global scale, but it is definitely a model that has to be further revised and tested.

## **Explanation of the State-Diaspora Relations Model**

The State-diaspora relations model introduced in this dissertation [Figure 7.1 about here] shows that, according to the government's viewpoint, the strength of the relation between the State and the diaspora in countries such as Costa Rica and El Salvador will be moderated by factors that can weaken or strengthen the relation. The factors that seem to strengthen the relation, according to the government viewpoint, are showed in the upper part of the model, signaled by the arrow with the plus sign, while the factors that seem to weaken the relation, according to the government viewpoint, are showed in the lower part of the model, signaled by the arrow with the minus sign.

Instead of focusing on the kind of activities that the Costa Rican and Salvadoran States engage in with the purpose of interacting with their diaspora communities (which are described in the narrative and also listed in the tables offered in Chapter 4, Chapter 5 and Chapter 6), the model focuses on the factors that explain the strength of the relation, on the "why" factors rather than on the "what" elements. Examples and real instances of each of the influencing factors in the model were described in Chapter 4, Chapter 5, and Chapter 6.

### **Implications of the Theoretical Propositions and of the Model of State-Diaspora Relations for Theory Building in Public Relations**

For theory building in public relations, this dissertation offers a contribution to understand the government viewpoint, for the cases of Costa Rica and El Salvador, about the factors that moderate how relations between a State and its diaspora form, and how strong—or not—that relation becomes between the State and the diaspora, based on contextual factors that range from historical developments in each country to recent global events such as the recession that started in 2008 in the United States.

Besides, this dissertation points out factors that moderate the State-diaspora relations in El Salvador and Costa Rica that go beyond the size of the migrant community or the financial impact of remittances in the home economy.

Also, contrary to typological efforts developed in the past, undertaken by public relations researchers who have placed different publics in definite, independent categories based on the public's level of collaboration or opposition toward an organization, based on the public's level of involvement or knowledge about an organization or issue, or based on the public's geographical location, this dissertation shows that some publics, such as diaspora communities from Central America, are not monolithic, but fluid, that some publics can be placed in different categories at different times, and that a single public can be placed in different categories all at once. Also, it shows that some publics change over time, and that diasporas do not easily fit the external/internal, aware/unaware, collaborative/uncollaborative, or national/international categorizations of publics offered in the past by public relations scholars.

Diasporas are specific publics in global public relations that need to be analyzed at specific moments, not as an isolated public but as one that changes according to the contexts that surround it, and that is why the processes of doing environmental scanning and background research are essential to interact effectively with this type of public, a public that can be local and international, collaborative and oppositional, and aware and unaware, all at the same time, depending on the circumstances.

Also, this dissertation indicates that, in the planning process in public relations programs or campaigns at the government level, there are factors in the State-diaspora relations that seem to be capable of drastically altering the progression that starts with

the definition of public relations goals and objectives, and that finishes with the evaluation of results. In the case of Central American governments, political goals (and public relations goals that accompany them) can drastically change with changes in the political leadership of the country, and the changing priorities of the Executive Power can easily alter the definition of goals, objectives, strategies, and tactics, as well as the definition of key publics for the State. In this regard, the State-diaspora relationship-building process seems to fit Contingency Theory better than more structured theories such as Excellence Theory, because there is, indeed, a continuum for public relations efforts that goes from total accommodation to total advocacy, with contextual factors constantly altering the public relations place in that continuum, as well as the public relations goals, strategies, tactics, and key publics defined in a public relations program or campaign at the government level.

For diaspora groups from a Central American origin, this dissertation seems to indicate that activism efforts should concentrate on establishing and/or improving government relations at the top level, especially with the president, party leaders, and congressional members, and that, because the strength of the relation between a State and its diaspora can vary so drastically between one political term and the next, a strong stewardship strategy on the part of the diaspora is essential to keep the continuity of the relations established in the past, and to obtain political and financial gains in transitional times (for instance, during electoral campaigns).

Another contribution of this dissertation to theory building in public relations is that, counterintuitive to authors that indicate that public relations thrive in democratic societies and stable economies (Sharpe & Pritchard, 2004; Cutlip, 1994), State-

diaspora relations in El Salvador seem to have strengthened under conditions of hardship: Economic crises and transitional democracies seem to be environments under which States are forced to engage diasporas in stronger ways (using public relations strategies and tactics, whether they are called that way or not) to support the national economy and to offer legitimacy to the political system, while conditions of political stability and economic progress, at least in the two cases studied in this dissertation, had not been conducive to strong State-diaspora relations, as the State is not forced to engage, “flirt,” “court,” or “cultivate” the diaspora to obtain economic or political gains.

This study also seems to indicate that, in State-diaspora relations from the government viewpoint, from a perspective of communications and global public relations, academicians, practitioners, and educators need to see and analyze this relation beyond the specific communication products generated by the State to communicate with its diaspora. Instead, the task seems to be to analyze, in a holistic, inclusive manner, the different ways the State establishes relations with its diaspora, and how the relation evolves, including aspects such as the development of laws and regulations to provide political rights to the diaspora in the home country, the creation of initiatives for the defense of the diaspora’s human rights in the host countries, the creation of customer-service mechanisms to improve the attention given to diaspora members in embassies and consulates, the development of tools to facilitate the interaction between the State and the diaspora in the home country (including mechanisms to attract and increase productive investments in the home country), the organization of cultural and social activities shared with the diaspora, the interpersonal

communication routines established with this public, the informal and formal interactions of the State in the diaspora community, and the creation of mechanisms to evaluate the quality of this relationship, among other considerations.

Finally, this dissertation indicates that, for a case such as the study of State-diaspora relations in Central American countries, longitudinal studies can be useful to explain trends, motives, and changes in the strength of the relation. For example, in El Salvador, the bloody civil war of the 1980s, the neoliberal policies of the 1990s, and the ideological divisions between right-wing party ARENA and left-wing party FMLN have shaped the high levels of distrust of the average citizen in the government. At the same time, the move to more centrist paths since the late 1990s, both in the case of ARENA party and FMLN party, and the change of paradigm toward the defense of the diaspora's human rights since 2009, have allowed some "acercamientos" between the State and some Salvadoran migrant associations in the last years, a process that would have been impossible in the 1980s and early 1990s, but that is starting to happen thanks to some retributions the State is beginning to offer its diaspora.

### **Implications of the Theoretical Propositions and of the Model of State-Diaspora Relations for the Public Relations Practice**

For public relations practitioners working in the United States, this dissertation is a contribution because it describes the complexities of and the challenges faced by a public formed by immigrants, by Hispanic immigrants in particular, which is a growing segment in the United States and a public that most corporations and organizations of all kinds (i.e., private, public, nonprofit, activist) are trying to engage in their public relations and strategic communication plans. But engaging this public without understanding how the contexts of exit from their home countries, how the contexts of

reception in this host country (the United States), and how the socioeconomic and cultural characteristics of their community shape the experience of Hispanic migrants in the United States is the sure path for failure. This dissertation helps to understand not only the complexities of diaspora groups as publics, but also the unique characteristics each diaspora community has depending on its country of origin and on historical developments both in the home and the host countries. This knowledge is relevant because, according to the projections released in 2008 by the U.S. Census Bureau, minorities currently constitute one third of the U.S. population, and they will constitute 54% of the U.S. population by 2050. In that regard, CNN U.S. reported:

The group predicted to post the most dramatic gain is the Hispanic population. It is projected to nearly triple, from 46.7 million to 132.8 million, from 2008 through 2050, the bureau said. Its share of the total U.S. population is expected to double from 15 to 30 percent. "Thus, one in three U.S. residents would be Hispanic," the Census Bureau said in a news release. (CNN U.S., 2008, ¶ 6)

This dissertation shows the characteristics of Costa Rican and Salvadoran migrants in the United States (with Salvadorans being one of the largest Hispanic populations in the country), but it also describes their transnational connections to the home country, because the reality is that migrants integrate themselves, at different levels, to life in the United States, but they keep ties and different degrees of involvement with their home country. In the past, it was said that migrants were neither here nor there, but now the trend is that migrants are both here and there.

As Basch et al. (1994) defined the process, immigrants live transnational lives in which they "forge and sustain multi-stranded social relations that link together their societies of origin and settlement" (p. 6). These transnational activities permeate several areas and aspects of the migrants' lives and occur at different sites (home country, host

country, and transnational spaces), and include, as Levitt & Jaworsky (2007) pointed out, economic activities (for example, remittances and investments in productive projects in the home country), political participation (for instance, electoral participation as voters or candidates, as well as membership in political associations in both countries), and social interactions (changes in their social life that include transformations in family structures). Besides, transnationalism also occurs in the cultural realm (where cultural practices and expressions from more than one country combine, in different intensities for each person), and in the religious practices (not only connecting some migrants with others in the same country, but also as global religious movements link coreligionists in different geographical spaces). This information about the transnational nature of the diaspora communities is valuable not only for Central American governments trying to build relations with their migrants, but also it is strategic information for public relations practitioners trying to engage these publics in the United States.

This dissertation also shows public relations practitioners in the United States that diasporas are complex, ever-changing publics, communities that cannot be placed under a single category in a typology, communities that have faced different hardships and have different needs, and publics that cannot be “homogeneized” or “labeled” simply as Hispanics, let alone Latinos, given that there are definite characteristics and contextual factors that have shaped the Salvadoran diaspora experience in a different way than the Costa Rican diaspora experience. There is no easier way to offend a community from Latin America than to compare it or blend it with another Latin American community, as they have different characteristics. This dissertation shows

how historical reasons, different contexts of exit from the home country, different contexts of reception in the host country, and different socioeconomic, political, and cultural circumstances define the diasporic experience for each community in particular.

These insights are of the uttermost importance for public relations practitioners trying to build relations with migrants in the United States, especially with migrants coming from Latin America because, whether public relations practitioners working in the United States expect it or not, it is likely that they will have to interact with diaspora communities sooner or later, given that, by 2050, one in every three U.S. residents would be of Hispanic origin (CNN U.S., 2008), constituting a key public for most organizations in the United States, public, private, non-governmental, or activist.

For public relations practitioners working for governments in El Salvador or Costa Rica, this dissertation highlights some of the challenges that different States, in general, and different government entities, in particular, will face when trying to engage their diaspora community. The dissertation shows that several factors will impact the success of public relations strategies and tactics to create stronger relations between a State and its diaspora, from “external” factors —such as the levels of trust shown by the different diaspora members in their home country government (which, in turn, will impact the likelihood that diaspora members will react positively to public relations plans), or possible economic crises in the host country that will affect the levels of investment and of community remittances the diaspora members will be able to send back to the home country—, to “internal” factors such as the interest of the president in the diaspora community or the effect that an economic crisis at home will have in the

likelihood that the country will consider the diaspora a key public in its national development plan.

Public relations practitioners working with diasporas will have to consider both the forest—for example, whether the level of development in the democratic system at home will impact the likelihood that the State will require to attract the diaspora community as a partner to increase the government’s political legitimacy—and the tree—for example, whether long distances and bad previous experiences at the consulates will prevent absentee vote from taking off among migrants. This dissertation constitutes a resource for public relations practitioners in Central America to focus both on the forest and on the tree.

For diaspora organizations trying to increase its influence in the home country’s life, this dissertation seems to indicate that public relations can be helpful in raising awareness about the size of the community abroad, about the impact the diaspora has in the local economy through remittances and investments, and the about other contributions the diaspora offers to the home country (for instance, technology transfer and education opportunities for the relatives at home). Public relations can also raise awareness about the need to offer stronger political rights at home and offer human rights’ defense abroad to the diaspora community, which are trends that are starting to happen in El Salvador, but have not started to happen yet in Costa Rica (except for the absentee vote).

Besides, this dissertation seems to show that the diaspora community, in the cases of Costa Rica and El Salvador, should concentrate its public relations efforts in building government relations, especially with the president, as well as with

congressional members, party leaders, and municipal leaders. Media relations can also contribute to the advancement of the diaspora goals, but, given the limited budgets and limited human resources that most diaspora groups have, focusing the efforts in engaging the president seems to be the most cost-effective strategy for diaspora groups, as the president can have a strong, fast impact in designating the diaspora a key public for the State (in the case of Costa Rica) or in keeping the diaspora in the front of State concerns and recognition (in the case of El Salvador).

Disadvantageous conditions in the home country —such as economic crises and weak democracies—actually constitute opportunities for diasporas to increase their presence at home, to gain political rights, and to obtain financial benefits, but besides establishing strong public relations efforts focusing on top-level government officials, this dissertation also helps to point out the importance, for the diaspora community, of keeping the continuity of public relations efforts through stewardship strategies from one political term to the next.

### **Limitations**

The main limitation of this collective case study is that it presents only the government viewpoint, for the cases of Costa Rica and El Salvador, without including the perspective of the migrants in the analysis of the State-diaspora relations. The process of building State-diaspora relations and the interpretation of the factors that seem to moderate the strength of the relation are explored only based on the data collected from the government point of view (through the document analysis, through observations, and through the in-depth interviews).

This is an important limitation, as this collective case study offers only the perspective of half of the sectors involved in the relation, but it is a limitation that I, as a

researcher, was conscious about when I started this research endeavor. As it happens in any research project, there are constraints in terms of the time and resources one can invest to develop the project, and in terms of the scope that the researcher gives to the project at a particular moment in time. Studying this first part, the government viewpoint in the cases of Costa Rica and El Salvador regarding State-diaspora relations, constitutes a starting point in a growing research agenda and in a larger path that will explore in the future, as the following section in Chapter 7 describes, the other side of the equation: the exploration of State-diaspora relations from the diaspora communities' point of view. The diaspora viewpoint is missing in this study but, again, this dissertation is a starting point in a research agenda that will include, in the future, the diaspora perspective.

The second limitation this study has is the less-than-ideal situation of having to conduct phone interviews, rather than face-to-face interviews, in the case of the in-depth interviews with high-level government officials, journalists, and politicians from El Salvador. As I described in Chapter 3 (Methodology), obtaining access to the sources in El Salvador was not an easy task. Access to the participants is, indeed, one of the problems a researcher faces when trying to reach key informants, especially in the case of elite sources, given that elites tend to be busier and less available, and tend to be more cautious about sharing information with interviewers, even in academic settings (Odendahl & Shaw, 2002; Kezar, 2003). Nonetheless, given that the phone interviews lasted one hour in average, given that there were previous communication instances with the participants through e-mails, given that I gave them the opportunity to analyze and reflect on their answers during the phone interviews, and given that I was well

trained to interview them, not only through the revision of the literature, but also through 12 years of experience interviewing sources as a journalist, and through the training I obtained by interviewing the participants in the case of Costa Rica, I think this limitation did not hinder the quality of the information collected.

This does not mean that I, as a researcher, do not recognize that face-to-face interviews are more powerful because of the personal connection one can establish with the participants, and because the non-verbal communication one can observe also communicates, and these non-verbal nuances cannot be obtained through phone interviews. Nonetheless, given the previous training I had as a researcher and in the professional field, and given the generous length of the majority of the interviews, I deemed the data collected as valuable, trustworthy, and credible, and I proceeded, with confidence, to the analysis of the cases.

Besides, given that I used collective case study methodology, the information obtained through the interviews was just one part of the total information obtained through the data collection process, which also relied on the analysis of secondary interviews, on observations throughout the process, and on the analysis of documents such as government reports, news releases, transcription of speeches, websites, government strategic plans, news stories, and the like. Because I used triangulation of sources (documents, observations, and human sources) constantly, this limitation did not affect the quality of the results.

### **Future Research**

Exploring the different ways two States communicate and establish quality relations –or not—with their diasporas, in the cases of El Salvador and Costa Rica, and establishing initial theoretical propositions and a model of factors that influence the

strength of State-diaspora relations in those two countries is just an initial step in a field where a larger research agenda is waiting to be developed.

In this dissertation, two cases were selected to explore the communication efforts and public relations strategies and tactics undertaken by the State toward its diaspora, but there is the strong need to explore the other side of the equation: the perspective of the diaspora members towards these State-led initiatives, and the study of the communication efforts that diaspora communities have undertaken –or not—to establish relations with their governments in their home countries. Both qualitative and quantitative research projects are needed, then, to try to answer questions such as the following ones:

- How have migrant communities organized themselves to have their voice heard by their State to obtain political and financial gains?
- Can any of the activism activities and strategies developed by diaspora communities be described as public relations? Research in this area could be guided by the study developed by De Moya (2011) about public relations activities in organizations that serve the Dominican diaspora in the United States.
- Can successful diaspora-led transnational efforts and advancements be adapted or even replicated in different settings?
- How do different diaspora communities perceive and evaluate the quality of their government's transnational efforts towards building State-diaspora relations?
- Are the “advances” described by different governments in their State-diaspora relations seen as real advances by their diaspora communities, or are the governments describing progress when this progress is not really perceived as such by the migrants?
- How is the experience of the absentee vote for migrants from countries such as El Salvador and Costa Rica going to be, once this political right is established? (In these two countries, absentee vote should start happening in 2014.) What are going to be the implications of absentee vote in the political impact of diaspora communities in their home country?

- Why is it that some diaspora communities, such as the Costa Rican diaspora, have low levels of activism and/or organization? Why do some diaspora communities remain invisible in their home country?
- What are the demographic characteristics of different diaspora communities? For example, in the case of Costa Rica, even though the accurate numbers might never be known, it is possible, through qualitative or quantitative research, to explore why do Costa Ricans migrate, where to, under what conditions, and through which channels they kept connected, or not, to the home country and to the home communities.

Besides developing research projects to answer the previous questions, it could be relevant to develop a case study, particularly about Costa Rica, of some instance or project in which Costa Rican migrants have gotten involved in financing or supporting a social project or an investment project in their communities of origin. A case study analyzing an example of migrants' transnational support could help explain the challenges faced and the lessons learned, the type of communication established, the institutional barriers encountered, the "flexible" partnerships created with the State, and it could also contribute to replicate similar initiatives in other communities. I am suggesting this type of case study specifically for Costa Rica because initiatives of this type have already been documented in El Salvador, so having a Costa Rican case study could also help to the process of doing comparative research.

Also as part of future research endeavors, it is important to point out that this dissertation constitutes a broad overview of the State-diaspora relations established in the cases of El Salvador and Costa Rica so far, from the government viewpoint, but one can also start to "dissect" the parts of this study and analyze certain particularities. For instance, a project that intrigues me and that I hope to accomplish in the close future is to content analyze the government communications (through websites, news releases, speeches, social media, and future emergent communication technologies) in each

country, to study the type of discourse each State creates about its diaspora, which is an aspect that deals with the way the State conceptualizes the diaspora, courts the diaspora and cultivates the diaspora (Gamlen, 2008). As a counterpart, it would be relevant to study later on if the diaspora is accepting this State conceptualization or not, if the diaspora is accepting the idea of becoming “ambassadors,” “agents of change,” “active participants,” “intermediate actors,” and “partners” of the home country abroad, or, if, on the contrary, there is resistance (or even resentment) to be given responsibility in the home development and survival, on what Ragazzi (2009) called “practices of resistance” and of “counter-conduct” (p.392).

Looking beyond Costa Rica and El Salvador, there are interesting opportunities to study other cases of State-diaspora relations in Central America and Latin America, as well as around the world, with the aim of contributing to the development of a global State-diaspora relations theory that describes common characteristics among cases and particular factors that moderate the relation in each case. Even though each country has its particularities and its uniqueness, and for that reason each case is appealing to do research on, one interesting starting point would be to study the case of Nicaragua. For me, Nicaragua is an especially interesting case because of the divided situation it has when it comes to migration. On one hand, the “better off” migrants of Nicaragua go to the United States, mainly to Miami, in search of the “American dream,” while the “less fortunate” migrants go to Central America, to Costa Rica in particular. No matter where the Nicaraguan remittances are coming from, though, whether from Miami, USA, or from San Jose, Costa Rica, they are essential for the well being of the migrants’ relatives at home and for keeping up the economic indicators of Nicaragua.

How does the State deal with a situation where any State-led initiative has to address both its migrants in the North and its migrants in the South is an interesting question to answer. Also, how Nicaraguans perceive and evaluate the quality of the State-diaspora relations is a topic worth investigating.

Methodologically speaking, future research needs to focus on developing a measurement instrument, for instance, a multi-item scale, for studying State-diaspora relations using a quantitative approach as well. As mentioned in a previous section in Chapter 7, one challenge in this area will be to bring the measurement of the variables that have been used to study the quality of a relationship at the interpersonal level to the international level, as, in this case, researchers will be measuring variables that happen in diaspora groups located in a host country, and variables that occur at the State level in the home country.

Finally, to end up emphasizing on the importance of conducting comparative research, it is relevant to point out that, by developing the cases of Costa Rica and El Salvador, this dissertation is contributing to the body of knowledge about State-diaspora relations in Central America, but more comparative research is needed in the region, given that Central America is an under-researched area in any field, including the field of State-led transnationalism. It is true that a growing body of research is being formed in Latin America and the Caribbean, especially in countries such as Mexico, Haiti, the Dominican Republic, Ecuador, Argentina and Brazil, but there are avenues that still need to be explored.

Gamlén (2008), for example, compared 64 cases of State-led transnationalism around the world, but his research sacrificed depth for breadth. Maybe the time has

come to try to replicate his analysis, but focusing on Latin American countries only, to be able to study, in more detail, the State-led initiatives, the reasons that explain the increased State-led transnationalism in the region in recent years, and the motives and goals behind those initiatives.

**State-diaspora relations model: Factors that influence the strength of the relationship**

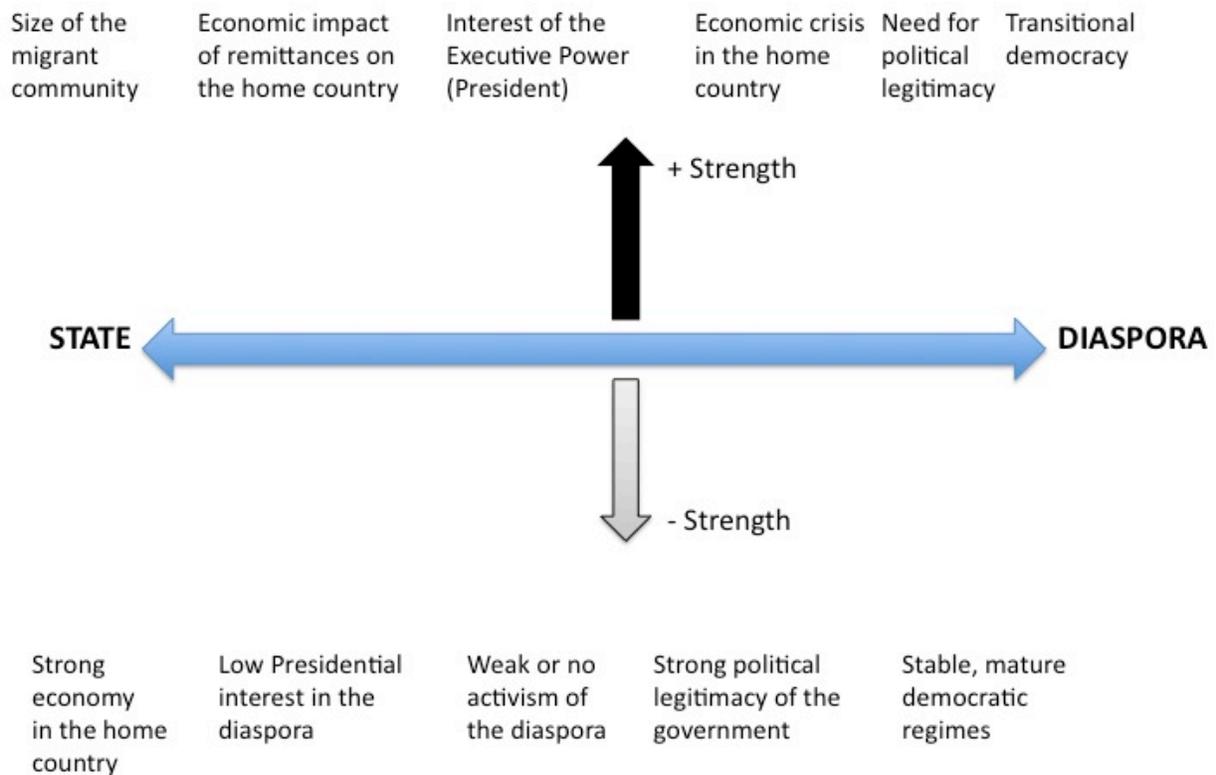


Figure 7-1. State-diaspora relations model: Factors that strengthen or weaken the relation of a State with its diaspora, from the government viewpoint, for the cases of Costa Rica and El Salvador.

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## BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

Vanessa Bravo is a journalist, editor, and public relations practitioner with 14 years of experience in the field. She worked for newspaper La Nación — the most important daily in Costa Rica — as a junior journalist (1993-1997), as a senior journalist (1998-2001), as the online editor (2003-2005) and as the managing editor of the features daily magazine (2005-2007). Bravo worked for one year (1997-1998) as the Communications Director at Paniamor Foundation, with responsibilities ranging from managing the media relations to creating and updating the foundation`s website.

She earned her Master of Arts in Mass Communications at the University of Florida, in the spring of 2003, thanks to a Fulbright scholarship. Bravo earned her Licenciatura degree in journalism and her Bachelor`s degree in mass communications at the Universidad de Costa Rica (UCR).

In the spring of 2005, Bravo started her teaching career when she became an instructor at UCR. Between 2008 and 2011, Bravo taught different courses (as instructor and as teaching assistant) at the University of Florida, such as Writing for Mass Communication, Communications on the Internet, and Public Relations Writing. In the fall of 2011, she moved to North Carolina to start teaching at the School of Communications of Elon University, as an assistant professor.

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