

**Abstract**

**Highly Skilled Expatriates Associations:  
Vanishing Doubts and Increasing Evidence**

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During the mid-1990s, the diaspora option – i.e. the connection of the highly skilled expatriates with their country of origin in order to contribute to its development- emerged as a possible mitigation of the brain drain and of the shortage of adequate S&T human resources in the South. As a paradigmatic shift and revolutionnary policy option it has come under scrutiny and has naturally faced a number of critiques. These critiques questioned the magnitude of the phenomenon, the sustainability of diasporic initiatives and their impact on the countries developments.

Since the beginning of this decade, systematic studies have been conducted by different teams, bringing converging evidence. Today, the highly skilled diasporas can no longer be minimised and they even appear as a more consistent and powerful developmental trend than it had initially been thought. To highlight this phenomenon has required new investigative techniques and methods, due to the particular characteristics of the research object : virtual (in)visibility and worldwide dispersion. It is a fact, now, that the existence of numerous expatriate associations is fully established and verifiable.

It is from the Asian highly skilled diasporas that the most convincing evidence comes. Dozens of specialised associations from many countries have been identified. Some of these are being studied by various organisations and the processes through which they build themselves, link members and counterparts, and act towards collective goals are precisely described and analysed. Nonetheless, the theoretical challenge of actually demonstrating the effectiveness of their activities in the long term is only partially addressed. The design of policies regarding diaspora knowledge networks also remains a crucial issue for the years to come.