

Editorial: diaspora as a social phenomenon: cultural integration and political influence

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Abstract

This editorial introduction presents a thematic issue of *Sociologias* devoted to diaspora, identity, and inter-group relations in post-Soviet and Central Asian societies. The issue departs from conventional treatments of diaspora as a marginal social condition, repositioning it instead as a lens through which to examine questions of belonging, civic life, cultural reproduction, and economic security. Four empirical studies are brought together around a shared concern with the social consequences of population movement in societies shaped by Soviet legacies, post-1991 border reconfigurations, and ongoing demographic pressures. The first study examines interethnic tolerance among youth in Kyrgyz-Uzbek border zones; the second analyses a state-sponsored civic identity model implemented through higher education in Kyrgyzstan; the third investigates how emigration, aging, and low birth rates compound economic vulnerabilities in Armenia relative to its South Caucasus neighbours; and the fourth conducts a comparative analysis of Kyrgyz, Uzbek, and Karakalpak epic traditions as mechanisms of folk pedagogy and collective memory transmission. Together, the contributions illuminate how diaspora operates simultaneously as a political, pedagogical, cultural, and demographic phenomenon. The issue calls for further comparative scholarship engaging with societies underrepresented in mainstream sociological literature.

Keywords: diaspora; post-Soviet societies; interethnic relations; civic identity; collective memory.

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Editorial: a diáspora como um fenômeno social: integração cultural e influência política

Resumo

Esta introdução editorial apresenta uma edição temática da revista *Sociologias* dedicada à diáspora, identidade e relações intergrupais em sociedades pós-soviéticas e da Ásia Central. A edição se distancia das abordagens convencionais da diáspora como uma condição social marginal, reposicionando-a como uma lente através da qual se pode examinar questões de pertencimento, vida cívica, reprodução cultural e segurança econômica. Quatro estudos empíricos são reunidos em torno de uma preocupação comum com as consequências sociais dos movimentos populacionais em sociedades moldadas pelos legados soviéticos, pelas reconfigurações de fronteiras pós-1991 e pelas contínuas pressões demográficas. O primeiro estudo examina a tolerância interétnica entre jovens nas zonas fronteiriças quirguizes-uzbeques; o segundo analisa um modelo de identidade cívica patrocinado pelo Estado e implementado por meio do ensino superior no Quirguistão; o terceiro investiga como a emigração, o envelhecimento da população e as baixas taxas de natalidade agravam as vulnerabilidades econômicas na Armênia em relação aos seus vizinhos do Cáucaso do Sul; e o quarto realiza uma análise comparativa das tradições épicas quirguizes, uzbeques e caracalpaques como mecanismos de pedagogia popular e transmissão da memória coletiva. Em conjunto, as contribuições elucidam como a diáspora opera simultaneamente como um fenômeno político, pedagógico, cultural e demográfico. Esta edição apela a mais estudos comparativos que abordem sociedades sub-representadas na literatura sociológica dominante.

Palavras-chave: diáspora; sociedades pós-soviéticas; relações interétnicas; identidade cívica; memória coletiva.

The movement of people across borders – driven by conflict, economic necessity, or political circumstance – has been one of the defining features of the modern world. Yet the social consequences of this movement remain incompletely understood. Diaspora communities do not just relocate; they negotiate identity, reconstruct cultural meaning, and participate in the political life of both their host and origin societies (Brubaker, 2005; Faist, 2010). This thematic issue of *Sociologias* brings together a set of studies that approach diaspora not as a marginal condition, but as a question about belonging, civic life, and inter-group relations.

The articles collected here share a concern with post-Soviet and Central Asian societies – regions where diasporas are shaped by the legacies of Soviet policy, the redrawing of borders after 1991, and things like emigration and population aging. Authors raise the questions – how are interethnic relations managed? how is civic identity transmitted? how do demographic shifts threaten economic stability? how do cultural traditions sustain collective memory across generations? (Kianpour et al., 2025; Nassimov, 2024).

The first article, *Interethnic Interaction in the Context of Border and Territorial Issues*, addresses a question that is often left implicit in diaspora studies: what happens to interethnic relations in contested border zones, where state boundaries and ethnic communities do not neatly coincide? Drawing on an ethnosociological survey of Kyrgyz and Uzbek youth aged 16 to 30, the study maps the conditions under which interethnic tolerance is sustained or eroded. Several findings deserve particular attention. First, the relationship between age and tolerance runs in opposite directions. Second, digital environments have emerged as a significant new arena for interethnic interaction. Third, the resolution of border disputes is perceived by young people as directly linked to the quality of interethnic relations.

The second contribution, *A Comprehensive Model of Civic Identity Formation and Pedagogical Conditions for Its Implementation*, shifts the focus from border communities to formal educational institutions, examining how the Kyrgyz state has sought to construct civic identity through higher education.

The article reconstructs the internal logic of the “Kyrgyz Zharany” model – an eight-component framework for civic education embedded in university curricula – and evaluates the pedagogical conditions associated with its effectiveness. The article makes a dual contribution: it provides an empirical account of how civic education operates, and it offers an evidence-based framework – that is designed to be scalable across similar educational systems.

The third article, *Demographic Challenges as a Threat to Armenia’s Economic Security: Regional Perspectives and Mitigation Strategies*, takes a structural approach to the consequences of diaspora formation, examining how sustained emigration, combined with low birth rates and population aging, shapes the economic security. Set against the demographic profiles of Georgia and Azerbaijan, Armenia emerges as a case where emigration loss is compounding other structural vulnerabilities. The article reframes diaspora as not only a cultural or political phenomenon but an economic one.

The fourth article, *Folk Pedagogy and Ethnic Identity in Central Asian Dastans: A Comparative Analysis of Kyrgyz, Uzbek, and Karakalpak Epics*, brings a humanistic dimension to the issue by examining the role of epic tradition in the reproduction of ethnic identity and cultural memory. Through comparative content analysis of three major dastan traditions – the Kyrgyz *Manas*, the Uzbek *Alpamysh*, and the Karakalpak *Kyrk Kyz* – the article demonstrates that these texts function as vehicles of folk pedagogy: they transmit moral values, social norms, and collective memory. The contribution of this article to diaspora studies lies in its treatment of cultural heritage not as a passive repository of identity, but as an active mechanism.

The four studies in this issue cover different grounds: interethnic relations, civic education, demographic pressures, and cultural memory. What connects them is a shared attention to context and a commitment to grounded empirical work.

We would like to express our sincere gratitude to the editorial board of *Sociologias* for the opportunity to curate this thematic issue and for their commitment to publishing scholarship that engages with the social

realities of societies often underrepresented in the mainstream sociological literature. We are equally grateful to the authors whose research forms the substance of this volume.

It is our hope that this issue will contribute to ongoing conversations about migration, identity, and social cohesion – and will invite further comparative work across the regions and traditions represented here.

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