



Latin American Jewish life in the 21st Century: The paradox of shrinking communities, and expanded - revitalized Jewish life

In the second decade of the 21st century, Latin American Jewish life faces new opportunities and challenges created by globalization and migration processes. Globalization and its contradictory nature have sharpened sectorial inequalities while posing new opportunities affecting Jews. New economic models have brought achievements and cyclical crises, and growing pluralism and democratization processes have reached high points. Economic and political changes combined with social inequalities provoked increased emigration fluxes of Latin American Jews from the region, leading them to transition from communities of immigrants to communities of citizens and simultaneously, of emigrants; also to new professional opportunities and expanding markets.

Indeed, in the last decades, the net direction of migration flows tended to be from Latin America to other destinations. Outward mobility of Latin American Jews is part of a larger globalization phenomenon of unexpected scope – from 75 million migrants in 1965 to 120 million in 1990, and 214 million in 2009 (Held et al. 1999; UNDP 2009). It is estimated that in the past 40 years between

150,000 and 250,000 Jews have emigrated from Latin American countries, both inside and outside the region, mainly to the United States, Israel, and to a lesser extent, countries in Western Europe (Spain) as well as Canada. Thus, there has been a significant drop in the number of Jews in the region – from 514,000 in the 1970s to 392,000 today (DellaPergola 2009, 2011). Argentina still hosts the largest Jewish community on the continent in spite of its significant demographic reduction – from an alleged half a million in the 1960s to 390,000 a decade later, and subsequent radical drops. Today, its core population numbers around 180,000.

The demographic profile of the Jewish population in Mexico has been more stable, due to more traditional socio-demographic patterns and the influx of Jews from other parts of Latin America. Mexican Jews presently number 40,000. The Jewish population in Uruguay has dropped from 50,000 to 22,000; in Venezuela, from 30,000 to 15,000; and in Chile, from 30,000 to 21,000. El Salvador, Ecuador, Peru, and Paraguay have also experienced significant decreases in their Jewish populations since the 1970s. In Brazil, the number of Jews fell from 140,000 to 96,000, mainly as a result of

assimilation. In the last few years, however, this trend has stabilized and the numbers even show a slight increase (Ibid.).

Sharp Jewish population decreases in Central American countries since the mid-1980s represent relatively significant outflows. But in the case of Guatemala, more than half of its population decided to remain in their homeland. Neighboring Costa Rica has increased its Jewish population by two-thirds since 1967, while Panama became

35% of Argentina's Jewish population migrated between 1970-2009 and yet only 8% expressed that emigration constitutes a serious threat

a relocation destination for groups of Jews from other Central American countries.

Migration waves from Latin America are of different nature and scope; they reflect both needs and opportunities: they encompassed forced migration and exiled individuals at high risk (e.g. politically

involved activists and intellectuals); voluntary household relocation motivated by safety, security and economic considerations; and movement of professionals seeking opportunities and entrepreneurial expansion within a context of interconnected markets. Indeed, there has been a sustained movement of professionals in privileged occupations who began or operated businesses and sought education; Jews constituted a high proportion of them. The diverse processes leading to emigration have operated selectively. Thus, changes in migration streams shed light on

different moments of migratory movements and their impact on communities and societies of the region.

Current scenarios can be viewed from diverse perspectives. The new trends point both to emigration and to an expanded and revitalized Latin American Jewish life in origin countries and beyond the territorial borders of local communities, nation-States, and the region at large. Migration flows influence both sending and receiving Jewish communities/national societies within wide social spheres and institutional arenas characterized by increasingly dynamic relationships between Jewish individuals and groups (Bokser Liwerant 20 02, 2006). For the various receiving Jewish communities, immigration constitutes a factor of demographic support while bringing cultural enrichment and institutional renovation. Thus, one cannot analyze Latin American Jewish life through conventional dichotomous categories (such as internal-external, periphery-center) but rather via elastic and comprehensive frameworks based on a transnational perspective. The recent election of Chávez's successor, President Nicolás Maduro, will likely reinforce the prevailing trend.

As stated, a contrasting case in the leadership's perceptions is Argentina, which has also experienced a significant demographic reduction (-35% of its Jewish population, 1970-2009), and yet only 8% expressed that emigration constitutes a serious threat. We may explain the differences in perceptions first, as a result of an ongoing process of institution building and communal recovery, and secondly, because of return movements that have taken place there. The perception of emigration as

a serious threat is shared by the leadership of other Latin American Jewish communities: Colombia (45%), Peru (33%), Mexico (25%), Uruguay (20%), and Chile (10%). Venezuela stands out with the highest percentage (90%). For the majority (8 out of 10 respondents), their country would likely not receive Jewish immigration in the coming years, thereby signaling a negative balance between emigration and immigration.

Contemporary migration has also expanded Latin American Jewish life. It includes steady, repeated, circular, bi-local and multi-local movements. In a world in flux, new phenomena include expanded mobility, multiple relocations, transmigration and the creation of sustained links and interactions across borders of the nation-states. Furthermore, new patterns of circulation of people and knowledge develop, as well as the exchange of intellectual, scientific, and cultural production. Latin American Jews are part of the cohort of qualified migrants with “red carpet” status who increasingly move to OECD countries. Because of its proximity and the opportunities it offers, the U.S. attracts a large number of highly qualified Latin American migrants. In the first decade of the 21st century there were 494,000 scientists of Latin American origin; this number represents 15% of foreigners incorporated into the science and technology system. At present, education of Latin American students at U.S. universities and their insertion into the academic and professional spectrum is widespread. In 2007, 229 Mexicans, 180 Brazilians, 141 Argentines, and 121 Colombians obtained a PhD in the U.S. In 2003, naturalized individuals or non-residents constituted 19% of

those who had graduated with a PhD or were engineers employed in the U.S. (UNESCO 2010). Yet, within a region that ranks as the third highest source of migrants in the world, the increased mobility of qualified migrants coexists with large marginal sectors of non-skilled workers and the rural poor who lack formal education and face restrictive immigration policies (so-called “red card” migrants) (Faist 2010).

In this context of interconnected realities, according to the AJDC survey of opinion makers, almost all interviewees (99%) agreed that it is “very important” to “strengthen” relations among Jews living in various parts of the region. 8 out of 10 agreed that “Latin American Jews had a special responsibility to one another.” 77% agreed that “Latin American Jews have unique and valuable perspectives to share.” However, 6 out of 10 disagreed with the statement that “each local community was strongly integrated to other Latin American Jewish communities.” Thus, while there seems to be great interest in closer cooperation and exchanges across Latin American communal-territorial borders, this expectation has not necessarily been matched by the reality on the ground. It remains a challenge to communal regional and global policy.

Demographic trends associated with the migration of Latin American Jews mainly to North America, Israel, and Europe imply diverse models of Jewish life

An estimated range of between 100,000 and 133,000 Latin American Jews live in the U.S. today

that partly reflect global trends, and partly reflect the specificity of the region. As to their presence in the United States, precise numbers still need to be discerned. But estimates range between 100,000 and 133,000 (by core and enlarged definitions – DellaPergola 2011) and 156,000 (Sheskin and Dashefsky 2011). It is calculated that a similar number migrated to Israel (115,000/150,000 – core/enlarged definition) and 12,500/20,000 to other places. In comparison to other Jewish

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migrant groups in the United States, the various Latin American flows feature steady growth, although differences prevail in each particular national context.

The relocation of Latin American Jewish life in the U.S. should be seen within the broader Hispanic/Latino concrete and imagined world. Hispanic/Latinos have reached

nearly 50.5 million in the U.S. (16.3% of the total population) and have become the largest minority in the United States, a 61% increase since 1990. It is estimated that they will comprise 25% of the U.S. population by 2020.¹ This demographic trend is even more significant when compared to the growth of the total U.S. population and the demographic trends of the U.S. Jewish population. Given their group's size and profile, Hispanic/Latinos residing in the U.S. have significantly increased their social and cultural influence –

ranging from literature to music – as well as their political leverage, as demonstrated in the 2012 presidential election.

Latin American Jews have incorporated into different “American” milieus while maintaining their socio-cultural distinctiveness, both with respect to their culture of origin and their Jewishness. Jewish collective models have been transferred to and recreated into educational institutions and communal organizations in the United States while hybrid models are also part of the new scenarios. In a global Jewish world characterized by high institutional and organizational density, Latin American Jews can incorporate and even integrate into different host communities by displaying multiple identities – as Jews, as Latin American Jews, as Latin Americans or Hispanic/Latinos, as Mexicans, Colombians, Argentines...Americans/Israelis. Their increasing arrival numbers and their demands for inclusion test conventional boundaries and mutual perceptions of similarity and difference.

Permanence amid mobility characterizes urban sites where Latin American Jews have relocated. In the United States, Jewish communities become magnets for settlement. For example, Miami-Dade county in Southern Florida and San Diego in Southern California constitute new centers where diverse transnational processes operate concurrently: out-migration, translocation, relocation, return, short-term and temporary experiences. In both places, the non-homogenous character of American Jewish life stands out. San Diego's Jewish population of 89,000 is smaller than the traditionally large community of Argentina,

but larger than the Mexican Jewish community. The Jewish community in Miami-Dade county, combined with the neighboring Ft. Lauderdale and Palm Beach areas (Southeast Florida), represents the third most populous in the country. Although updated data needs to be collected, the number of Latin American Jews is estimated at 16,000 individuals in Miami-Dade (Sheskin 2004) and 600-700 Mexican Jewish families (or 2,400 Jews) in San Diego (private estimates).

Mobility and relocation widen the spectrum of social and cultural encounters between distinct principles, historical trajectories, models and logics of the collective: congregational and community (*kehillah*). However, both differences and similarities today shape the paths of incorporation and mutual influence with outcomes still in the making. Overall, affiliation rates in Latin America are higher than in the United States. While the gap between Mexico City and San Diego is striking (80 and 35%, respectively), cities in Brazil and Argentina have far lower affiliation rates (40-45%), closer to the U.S. national average. Inter-marriage rates in the U.S. (about 50%) contrast with much lower rates in Mexico and Venezuela (less than or just above 10%) but are similar to those in Argentina and Brazil.

The integration of Latin American Jews into the U.S. and the keeping of both original collective codes of old-country cultural norms/models and of transnational connections are not mutually exclusive social processes; therefore, the possibility of “simultaneity” is increased (Levitt and Glick Schiller, 2004). In turn, integration is not a one-sided process; it entails reciprocal influences

that are part of the connecting-reconnecting experiences across communities within American Jewry and which widen and enrich the scope of Jewish life.

Migratory waves to Miami from Venezuela, Colombia, Argentina, and Mexico draw convergent scenarios of trans-local status. Mexican Jews in San Diego travel to Tijuana/Mexico City; Venezuelans and Mexicans do so from Miami to Caracas and Mexico City. The well-established connections of Venezuelan and Mexican Jewish businessmen in Florida highlight the way current economic changes create favorable conditions for transitory migration that, as will be seen, do not exclude permanence or incorporation into American Jewish communities/society.

Mobility and relocation widen the spectrum of social and cultural encounters

Educational institutions in the U.S. reflect a mosaic of experience that ranges from more religious frameworks to pluralistic ones. In both Miami and San Diego, stable Jewish educational settings, which are also socially cohesive, have attracted Latin American Jews even when characterized by greater religiosity levels than those to which they belonged in their countries of origin. Some Jewish educational settings – with a significant ratio of Latin American migrants – show integration and mutual influence, and the reciprocal adoption of new religious and quotidian cultural practices

within bilingual environments. Pluri-national and sub-ethnic origins act as defining factors of practices and institutional arrangements (Bokser Liwerant, 2013).²

Paradigmatic examples of patterns of participation, leadership, and activism of these migrants can be observed in local communal organizations (e.g., Jewish Federations, Hillel, AIPAC, Israel's University Associations). Similar to *Hebraica/JCC* in Miami, the *Ken* in San Diego

Links and attachment to Israel have a central role in Jewish Latin American life

can be seen as an ethno-national bordered space that reproduces and sustains Latin American Jewish social practices (including language, food, music, social gatherings, and Zionist identification).

Additionally, it is worth underscoring the transfer of the *Hebraica/Latin American communal model* worldwide,

including to the United States, Central and Western Europe and the FSU, mainly through global Jewish institutions and highly mobile individuals with key community roles. The Jewish communities of Spain, mainly in Madrid and Barcelona, have experienced revival of Jewish life through this model aided by the presence of Latin American Jewish educators, intellectuals, and professionals. The clear bond between *Hebraica* and JDC can be found in Eastern Europe as well.

The Latin American presence in Israel, where they have been incorporated in major scientific, academic, sociocultural and economic realms, points to high levels of integration and the centrality of the place and role of the Zionist idea and the State of Israel in the region (Roniger and Babis, 2011).

While sharing global trends and expressing singularity, the links and attachment to Israel have a central role in Jewish Latin American life. Political concepts, values, aspirations, and organizational entities of the global Jewish world played a fundamental role in the cultural and institutional formation of the Jewish communities, while the State of Israel and the Jewish/Zionist ethos were singular actors/catalysts in one center-periphery model. Family ties, youth travel programs, and educational programs are today understood as key to strengthening support for Israel.

Data on Mexico and Argentina show that the level of importance attributed to Israel and the degree of proximity are largely determined by age³ and country of origin.⁴ In the region, Mexico has exceptionally high rates of visits to Israel while lower rates characterize Argentina, Brazil and Venezuela. Past tendencies in the U.S. show that just over one third of all American Jewish adults have been to Israel (35%), almost two thirds (63%) of American Jews say they are emotionally attached to Israel, and nearly three quarters (72%) say U.S. and Israeli Jews share a common destiny (NJPS, 2001). In America, ties to Israel also vary by affiliation and age. The affiliated are uniformly more connected to Israel than the unaffiliated. However, an interesting debate regarding the

“distancing hypothesis” has developed. While some researchers claim that there is a growing distance from Israel by the younger American Jewish cohort, with the exception of Orthodox youth, and this trend will likely lead to a general distancing of American Jews from Israel, (Cohen and Kellman, 2009), others do not find a dramatic change in attachment. According to Sasson, Kadushin and Saxe (2010), the weakened attachment among the young is not the result of a distancing pattern but a characteristic of the Jewish life cycle. Further discussion has highlighted the increased complexity of Israel-diaspora relations and the lack of conclusive evidence regarding the above mentioned erosion, which shows the need to consider both the changing circumstances of American Jewish life and Israel’s social and political scenario (Rosner and Hakman, 2012).

On their part, Latin American youngsters in the U.S. increasingly participate in *Taglit*, a watershed initiative that has come as an alternative to the study trips and *Hachsharot* in their countries of origin (Saxe et al, 2011). Recent data reveal that *aliyah* propensities in the U.S. are the lowest of any country worldwide (DellaPergola, 2011). Cultural activities and events, public opinion and political support for Israel are growing in importance, though differentially in the region, depending on the scope and nature of the public sphere, civil society, and citizen participation (Sznajder and Roniger, 2013). New public codes have developed legitimizing transnational links of the Jewish communities both related to Israel and other communities through a wide web of lateral ties and interactions.

An important perspective from which to analyze border crossing and mutual influences is the impact on individual and communal religious practices (in Latin America and beyond its geographic boundaries) by both the Conservative and Orthodox religious movements, as part of old and new Jewish transnationalism. In the 1960s the Conservative movement spread to South America providing the first congregational model that was imported from the United States (instead of Europe). This movement brought the synagogue to the forefront of communal and societal life by mobilizing thousands of otherwise non-affiliated Jews (Elazar 1989). One proof of the lack of religious leadership to which Elazar refers and its importance to religious development is found in the success of Rabbi Marshall Meyer.

In the 1960s the conservative movement spread to South America providing the first congregational model imported from the United States

Rabbi Meyer took upon himself the task of preparing a new rabbinical leadership, establishing the *Seminario Rabínico Latino Americano* in Argentina. Today its graduates serve throughout Latin America and beyond. Their presence in communities in the United States is not only due to the lack of opportunities in local communities, but also reflects the new phenomenon of regional migration. Close to 22 rabbis presently serve throughout the United States. They circulated to the North due to new windows of opportunity

associated with regional migration as well as to growing shared patterns of collective life. Latin American rabbis and their participation in the new settings contribute to the expansion of communal practices, as Congregation B'nei Jeshurun in New York City exemplifies.

These rabbis maintain links with their communities of origin by travelling to the region to lead holiday services. As mobile agents of change across national borders, they recreate a congregational-communitarian matrix. Thus,

Orthodox groups have gathered new momentum; the spread of Chabad is one exemplary case. In Latin America there are close to 80 Chabad centers

the relocation of Latin American Jews in the U.S. constitutes a case that allows examination of such processes by looking at frontier experiences, cultural trade-offs, and incorporation strategies in a globalized Jewish world where diverse historical trajectories and shared trends coexist.

The transnational religious circuit has also spread to Orthodoxy. Indeed, Orthodox groups have gathered new momentum, founding new religious congregations and supplying communities with religious leadership. The spread of Chabad is one exemplary case. In Latin America there are close to 80 Chabad centers. Its presence is noteworthy in small and large cities in the U.S. and other countries; thousands of Chabad *shlichim* (emissaries) currently work around the world.

Connecting processes that imply social transformation are also evident along a North-South influence axis as illustrated by the recent establishment of Hillel chapters in Argentina and Uruguay (by individuals connected to Taglit-Birthright Israel).

Although extreme religious and self-segregation strategies are still marginal in Latin American Jewish life, their growing presence corresponds to global Jewish trends. Jewish communal life and concomitant identity building processes face new challenges. In fact, in a seemingly paradoxical context of shrinking and expanding in revitalizing Latin American Jewish communities, identity referents are being redefined as new expressions of spirituality and forms of religious sociability fill some vacuums. In certain ways Buenos Aires, Mexico City, Sao Paulo, Miami, San Diego, New York City, Jerusalem, Madrid and Zurich express similarities along the transnationally constituted Jewish communal-religious axis.

Local communities face different opportunities and challenges with respect to central issues of continuity. Along the region, strengthening Jewish education is a top priority for Jewish communities. Education has had a central role in the shaping of Latin American Jewish life. Jewish education has been historically prioritized over other collective needs in the region, and characterized by integral education in day schools. In Mexico, close to 93% of Jewish children today attend Jewish schools with a constant student population from kindergarten through high school. A strong organizational structure of 16 day schools has developed (one school for each 2,500 Jews in Mexico City). The

student population has grown 16.5% in the last eight years as compared to a 6% Jewish population growth earlier.

Ashkenazi schools show the greatest percentage of decrease, 28%, and Maguen David (*Halebi*) schools show the highest growth rate with 46% of the total student population. Of this group, 40% attend Haredi schools. The increase of attendance numbers in religious schools reflects both demographic changes in community composition and the arrival of educators from intensively Orthodox South American communities. It also reflects a global trend in Jewish education.

A comparative look at Argentina sheds light on meaningful changes. While in the last decade of the 1990s a total of 16 schools closed and only six were able to pass through rational institutional restructuring, today there are a total of 42 schools out of which 14 day schools educate from elementary through high school levels, and 17 are limited to kindergartens and elementary schools. While figures show a systematic increase of the school population compared to previous years (only 17,075 in 2002, against 19,274 in 1999), they point to a total coverage of 43% of Jewish school-age children. The highest enrollment numbers are found in religious schools. These educational trends should be seen in light of the changing approach to education in the Jewish world. Precisely, over the last two decades, the number of children educated in Jewish day schools has increased at an unprecedented rate. In the United States, it is estimated that there were 60,000 pupils in days schools in 1962, but by 1982-83 there were some 104,000 students (10% of the Jewish school-

age population); in 2000, approximately 200,000, nearly one quarter of all Jewish school-age children attended Jewish day schools. Today, estimates point to 242,000.

Linking the concepts of continuity and education in public discourse was a relatively recent phenomenon outside Latin America. It developed in full force in *A Time to Act*, the deliberations of the Commission on Jewish Education in North America (1990–1991). This expansion in Jewish education and the high population growth rates among the Orthodox sector have become central trends that parallel new regional and world Jewish patterns.

Similar to other Jewish communities worldwide, Latin American Jewish collective life has been radically transformed by global patterns showing both convergent and divergent trends: transitions from individualization to collective affirmation as well as the reverse; from congregational to communal axes simultaneous with the growing role of synagogues; from secularization to rising religiosity. Even among Latin American Jews, these trends are not linear; instead, they reflect different moments, fluctuations and crossing paths.

Amid processes of globalization and transnationalism, the Palestinian-Israeli conflict

Latin American states play a key role in the positioning of Palestinian statehood as a central issue on the world political agenda

reflects the complex interplay between international, regional, national and local dynamics. Latin American States play a key role in the positioning of Palestinian statehood as a central issue on the global political agenda. As early as December 2010, there emerged a chain of recognitions of Palestine by different Latin American states. Brazil took the initiative and was followed shortly after by Argentina, Bolivia, Ecuador and Paraguay-, neo-populist governments

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in Venezuela, Bolivia, Ecuador and Nicaragua had a leading role (see Annual Assessment JPPI 2011).

It has been further facilitated by the international and national realignments of interests and similar “cultural codes” that identify wide sectors of public thought, media, progressive camps and leftist intellectuals.

Latin America’s historical and ideational trajectory of anti-Americanism, anti-colonialism, and anti-imperialism has led to the mutual reinforcement of meanings between different components: anti-Semitism, anti-Zionism, and anti-Israelism (Volkov 2007; Bokser 2012).

However, on September 23, 2011, with Brazil once again a key detonator, a parallel process of worldwide political legitimation of the Palestinian cause developed following the support given by more than 100 countries to the Palestinian proposal

of Statehood to the United Nation’s General Assembly. Latin America can be seen as a fertile soil for the two simultaneous but opposing processes of de-legitimation of Israel and legitimation of Palestine. The latter has followed a pattern of *Transnational Advocacy Networks* of activists bound together by shared values, a common discourse, and dense exchanges of information and services. They are significant insofar as they interact with states and other non-state actors (civic associations and NGOs, academics, media, unions, students) thereby contributing to the convergence of social and cultural norms (Keck and Sikkink 1999; Wajner 2013).

When analyzed in Brazil, one observes that in the media struggles that legitimize the creation of a Palestinian state, a wide spectrum of regional, ethnic, social, religious, labor and academic organizations converge (Ibid).

Across the region, interacting and similar trends favor a fertile soil for emerging civil societies in the process of democratization. The degree of legitimation of Palestinian aspirations to statehood among local populations that results from *Transnational Advocacy Networks* is largely founded on the presence (or lack thereof) of a “primary base” of support (e.g., a large Arab population in Brazil – estimated at 11 million among which 60,000 are Palestinian, and a significant Palestinian population in Chile: 400,000). As in the past, this could today lead to a domino effect that could very likely result in the further realignment of positions by Guatemala, Mexico, Chile, and Costa Rica.

Other expressions of transnational realignments that were nationally anchored in a conflicting scenario of political polarization are the latest developments in Argentina regarding the government's agreement with Iran to create a joint Truth Commission to investigate the 1994 terrorist attack on the Jewish community center, AMIA. Protracted and failed investigations were followed by the formal accusation of Iran by two Argentinian prosecutors (Alberto Nisman and Marcelo Burgos). In 2007, the Argentinian government issued arrest warrants against 6 Iranians, including the defense minister and former president. The agreement to create a joint truth commission represents a new regional and transnational realignment between Argentina and Iran.

The search for a leading role in the continent after Chávez's death and the interest in widening economic relations with Iran, have acted as main motors behind Argentina's stance. This agreement, approved by Congress, and its condemnation by the community's leadership condenses a series of processes related to complex interactions between citizenship, loyalty, and the global Jewish world. The role and Jewish identity of Foreign Minister Timerman, who has played a crucial function in the negotiation process; the expressions by different world actors – from the State of Israel to the World Jewish Congress who opposed the agreement – throw light on such interactions.

The confrontation with the government reached unprecedented high points and unified a leadership that otherwise mirrors political national divisions in an extremely polarized scenario. Thus, issues of being and belonging, of collective participation as

well as of the overlapping community/national spheres of debate and action point both to a singular case of communal politization and a shared growing visibility of Jewish communities in the region. Latin American Jewish communities have achieved a growing presence and participation in the expanding public spheres of regimes that have succeeded in democratizing processes and autonomous civil societies.

Policy Recommendations

International migration and new patterns of circulation point to the need to design community policies oriented toward identifying: a) the mobility patterns that characterize Latin American Jews and thus the human resources available in both origin and destination countries; b) the circuits and networks that facilitate the intellectual, scientific, educational, and artistic exchanges so that knowledge and creative products no longer remain isolated but instead can be accumulated, transmitted, and shared. Thus, Jewish communities in the region develop in more equitable terms; c) the definition of mechanisms and platforms – in situ and virtual – for intra-regional and global cooperation.

Increasing migratory fluxes of Latin American Jews to the United States, Israel, and other destination places pose new challenges to the host communities' diversity and therefore demand from Jewish institutions strategies of incorporation addressing specificity instead of searching after homogenizing responses. Avenues for creating intercultural dialogue within communities, and synergies between collective models should also be devised.

Taking into consideration the already largest and growing Latino-Hispanic minority in the U.S. (reaching 50 million), Latin American Jews should be understood by policy planners as potential bridge builders and they should, consequently, formulate strategic inter-group collaborations.

New signs of change point to the need to define ways to approach policy making vis-à-vis Latin American Jewish life that are less based on collective support in critical times, and more oriented toward prevention and consolidation of communal life, which take into account cultural legacies. A multi-centered reality and increasing lateral ties between the new and old home(s) should also guide the design of new perspectives by key actors from Latin America in leadership positions.

Transnationalism today points to the need to think globally and, accordingly, global approaches are required when responding (or influencing) local and regional public policies vis-à-vis Israel. They should further take into consideration two levels: on the one hand, coordinated policies at the governmental level and on the other, new strategies oriented toward civil society, its changing role as well as its new actors and mechanisms of participation.

Notes

1. The number provided by the Pew Hispanic Center (2009) is smaller: 48,348,000 Hispanics live in the U.S.. Of this total, 31,674,000 are Mexican (based on self-described family ancestry or place of birth). <http://pewhispanic.org/>
2. Exemplary cases of Orthodox settings are Soille Jewish Day School in San Diego and Hillel School in Miami. The Jewish Academy in San Diego works in a pluralistic framework, while Chabad Schools are present in both settings.
3. While among members of the Mexican Jewish community above 70 years, 97% declared that Israel is of utmost importance, among the age group between 18 and 29 years old only 77% feel this way.
4. Figures are much higher in Mexico than in Argentina (Jmelnizky and Erdei, 2005).

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