

Migrants' transnational political engagement in Spain and Italy

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Abstract

International migrants' cross-border political activities challenge singular notions of national citizenship and political belonging. Yet most sociological studies of migrants' transnational political engagement are based on single national groups in the USA, and limit themselves to examining how assimilation and contexts of reception determine migrants' propensity to engage with homeland politics—thereby under theorizing the influence of origin countries. This study moves beyond this approach by recognizing the multi-directionality of migration, and testing the applicability of existing theoretical approaches across two different origins and receiving contexts. We compare a sample of Colombian and Dominican migrants in Spain and Italy, analyzing how contexts in countries of origin, as well as migrants' social networks across borders, interact with assimilation and contexts of reception to determine migrants' political transnational engagement. Findings reveal migrants' transnational political engagement in Spain and Italy appears to be a highly selective process dominated by a small minority of well-educated males from high social status in origin. Findings also suggest immigrant incorporation and transnational political engagement form a dialectical relationship operating at different scales that is simultaneously complementary and contradictory. Contextual conditions in origin countries explain observed much of variation in Colombian and Dominican migrants' transnational political engagement.

Keywords: Transnational political participation, transnational migration, Colombian migration, Dominican migration, context of origin and transnational engagement, assimilation and transnationalism, dual citizenship

1. Introduction

Human socio-spatial mobility and cross-national connectivity challenge conventional notions of citizenship while remaking the demographic, socio-economic and political landscapes of both migrant origin and destination societies. Sociologists deploy a transnational perspective to analyze and understand how micro-, meso- and macro-level dimensions of

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international migration simultaneously affect migrants' homelands and their places of settlement (Levitt and Jaworsky 2007, Portes, Guarnizo and Landolt 1999b, Waldinger 2015). Much sociological literature focuses on migrants' transnational political engagement by emphasizing how processes of assimilation and contexts of reception ultimately determine migrants' propensity to engage with their countries of origin (Guarnizo, Portes and Haller 2003; Østergaard-Nielsen 2003, 2001; Morales and Morariu 2011; Waldinger and Soehl 2013; Waldinger 2015). This approach tends to limit our understanding of the determinants of migrants' political involvement across borders, narrowing them to these two factors. We address this epistemic limitation by analyzing how the context in origin countries, as well as migrants' social networks across borders, interact with assimilation and contexts of reception to determine migrants' likelihood and level of migrants' transnational political engagement.

The vast majority of studies of migrant transnationalism examine single national groups in one (Levitt 2001; Smith and Bakker 2008; Lopez 2014), or multiple destinations (Østergaard-Nielsen 2001; Lafleur and Martiniello 2009; Østergaard-Nielsen and Ciornei 2012; Morales and Pilati 2014; Bermudez 2016). However, only a few studies compare transnational practices across different groups in one (Guarnizo, Portes and Haller 2003; Levitt 2007), or more receiving societies (Ahmadov and Sasse 2015; Chaudhary 2017; Pilati and Morales 2016). As a result, much of the theorizing in this field is informed by research based on single national groups, particularly on the transnational engagement of Mexican and other Latin American migrants in the USA (Guarnizo 2001; Levitt 2001; Smith 2006; Smith and Bakker 2008; Waldinger 2008, 2015).¹ However, migration is a global, multi-directional process that involves multiple origins and destinations. As such, it demands theoretical arguments that are applicable and falsifiable across national contexts, regardless of the migrant-flow size or countries involved.

To address this epistemological challenge, we have chosen to study two relatively small-scale migrant groups (Colombians and Dominicans, both of which have been widely studied in the USA) in two different emerging European destinations (Spain and Italy). This approach allows us to deepen the theoretical exploration of migrant transnational engagement by building on theoretical arguments constructed from the US experience. The characteristics of the selected migrant groups and receiving countries make them ideal for this kind of endeavor. After centuries of being major emigration countries, Spain and Italy have recently become major immigration countries. The proportion of the foreign-born in Spain and Italy (14 per cent and 9 per cent, respectively; OECD 2015) is among the highest in the European Union and comparable to that of the USA (13 per cent; U.S. Census Bureau 2014). At the same time, Colombia and the Dominican Republic have among the highest proportion of emigrants in Latin America (10 per cent and 13 per cent of the national population, respectively, compared to Mexico, which has 11 per cent of its population abroad: Guarnizo, Portes and Haller 2003; Martinez et al. 2014; OECD 2014). What is more, the transnational engagement of these two Latin American migrant groups has already been extensively studied in the US context. By investigating these groups' transnational political engagement in new European destinations, we are able to examine the generalizability of existing US-focused literature while also probing the extent to which assimilation and transnationalism are complementary or contradictory processes, a topic central to current sociological debates (Portes and Fernández-Kelly 2015; Waldinger 2015).

The following four questions guide our analysis. First, what are the key determinants of Colombian and Dominican migrants' transnational political engagement in Spain and Italy? Second, to what extent are assimilation and transnational political engagement complementary or contradictory processes? Third, to what extent do contextual conditions in the origin and destination countries explain differences in transnational political engagement among Colombian and Dominican migrants in Spain and Italy? Fourth, to what extent do US-based theoretical understandings of migrant transnationalism explain transnational political engagement among Latin Americans in new immigrant destinations in Europe?

Data come from a small-scale survey, which is part of *New Landscapes of Migration* (NELMI), a comparative study of the migration process, mode of incorporation, and transnational experiences of a sample of Colombian and Dominican migrants in Europe. Our findings reveal several similarities between Latin American migrants' transnational engagement in the USA, and their engagement in Spain and Italy, starting with the fact that transnational political engagement on both sides of the Atlantic appears to be a highly selective process dominated by a small minority of well-educated males with high social status in origin. Findings also suggest that immigrant incorporation and transnational political engagement represent a dialectical relationship that is simultaneously complementary and contradictory, and that this relationship operates at different scales. Finally, we find that contextual conditions, coupled with the dominant political culture in Colombia and the Dominican Republic, can help explain observed differences in the level of transnational political engagement between Colombian and Dominican migrants.

This research contributes to existing theoretical understandings of migrant political transnational engagement by revealing that national political contexts in the country of origin are a key factor in explaining differences in transnational political engagement, in addition to assimilation and contexts of reception abroad. Successful assimilation or inclusive contexts of reception are indeed positively associated with transnational political engagement, as demonstrated by previous research. However, the present study suggests that contextual conditions in migrants' homelands as well as their social networks of support may be as important, or even more important, than assimilation in determining migrants' propensity to engage politically across borders. Studying smaller migrant communities in emerging immigrant destinations also helps us pinpoint common factors that explain the likelihood of engaging in transnational politics on both sides of the Atlantic. The multi-local approach of the present analysis thus contributes to our general theoretical understanding of transnational processes by moving beyond bipolar analyses of migration flows between Latin America and the USA.

2. Perspectives on migrant political transnationalism

2.1 The assimilation perspective

Assimilation and the context of reception remain the dominant theoretical concepts used to explain the process of immigrant incorporation (Alba and Nee 2003).² The assimilation perspective conceptualizes immigrants as newcomers who, over time and across

generations, are expected to shed their original national identity, cultural customs, and political allegiances as they acculturate and incorporate themselves into the dominant socioeconomic and political structures (Warner and Srole 1945; Gordon 1964). This perspective focuses exclusively on the extent to which immigrants' practices, achievements, identities, and socio-economic positions reach parity with the native-born mainstream in the receiving society, generally ignoring the significance of migrants' ongoing connections with their homelands. When such cross-border relations are considered, they are seen as temporal and evanescent (Rumbaut 2002; Alba and Nee 2003; Waldinger 2008).

With respect to politics, the assimilation perspective expects immigrants to hold one – and only one—national identity and to be exclusive members of only one nation-state, closely mirroring the assumptions laid out in the 1930 Hague Convention (League of Nations 1930). According to this view, adopting a new cultural and sociopolitical identity inherently implies and requires renouncing the previous, original one. Hence, immigrants' political engagement with their new polity means severing their political engagement with their homeland. For example, Waldinger (2008, 2015) finds that Mexican immigrants in the USA undergo a political re-socialization, suggesting that local and transnational political participation represents a contradictory, zero-sum relationship, in which the receiving society signals to immigrants that their acceptance 'is contingent on a transfer of loyalties from home to host state.' As migrants are re-socialized, they '*discard one political identity for another*, all the while attaching a hyphenated, cultural modifier (of Mexican-, Chinese-, Italian-, etc.) to the newly acquired national identity (of -American)' (Waldinger 2008: 8–9; emphasis in original). Thus, in the political domain, assimilation is seen as weakening migrants' institutional connection to their home polity, thus leading 'to spiraling disengagement' (Waldinger and Soehl 2013: 1242).

From this perspective, citizenship status is the institution that regulates belonging, allegiance, and commitment to the national polity. As naturalized citizens, immigrants gain formal membership and political rights in the receiving polity, while giving up their original ones (Schuck 1998; Aleinikoff and Klusmeyer 2002). Immigrants' naturalization signifies formal incorporation into the receiving polity, and their active participation in local political life indicates their successful political incorporation. These two processes militate against participating in any transnational political activities.

Assimilation and transnational scholars alike recognize how contextual conditions in receiving societies shape the incorporation and transnational engagement of migrants. Inclusive contexts of reception may facilitate the social incorporation of migrants more than restrictive or exclusionary ones (Bloemraad 2006; Portes and Rumbaut 2006; Fernández-Kelly 2015), while easing migrants' political incorporation, increasing their overall political participation and civic engagement within the receiving society.

Because these assimilation arguments are based on migrants' experiences in the USA only, their explanatory power regarding the role of the national context of reception on migrants' transnational political engagement is open to discussion. To address this theoretical question, we studied Colombian and Dominican migrants' transnational political participation in two receiving countries that are quite different from the USA in sociocultural, economic, institutional, and political terms, as well as in their historical relationship with the countries of origin.

In sum, the assimilation perspective leads us to hypothesize that:

Hypothesis 1: *Dominican and Colombian migrants in Spain and Italy who are politically incorporated (i.e. are naturalized and active in local politics) are significantly less likely to participate in transnational political activities, ceteris paribus.*

2.2 The transnational perspective

The transnational perspective on migration differs from the conventional assimilation perspective in a fundamental dimension: it assumes that the social organization of a given society is not limited to the territorial jurisdiction of the nation-state. As such, it overcomes some of the epistemological limitations engendered by the methodological nationalism inherent in the assimilation perspective (Wimmer and Glick-Schiller 2002). To understand the dynamics, determinants, and effects of migration, transnational researchers look not only within the country of reception, but also across national borders (Basch, Glick Schiller and Szanton Blanc 1994; Guarnizo and Smith 1998; Portes, Guarnizo and Landolt 1999a; Faist 2000; Levitt and Jaworsky 2007; Faist, Fuser and Reisenauer 2013). They analyze migrants' mode of incorporation into their receiving societies, and expand their analytical gaze to include substantive practices, ties, and commitments that migrants maintain with their societies of origin from abroad. Analytically, these practices are seen as falling into three main domains of action: sociocultural, economic, and political (Portes, Guarnizo and Landolt 1999b).

Using this approach, recent studies of immigrant groups in the USA have found a positive relationship between successful socioeconomic assimilation and transnationalism. Accordingly, migrants who are better incorporated socially (i.e. do not experience discrimination) and are doing better socioeconomically (i.e. have experienced upward mobility) are the most likely among their compatriots to sustain strong transnational political, economic, and sociocultural links with their societies of origin (Itzigsohn and Giorguli Saucedo 2002; Portes, Haller and Guarnizo 2002; Guarnizo, Portes and Haller 2003; Joppke and Morawska 2003; Morawska 2003, 2004). Migrants' transnational political engagement suggests that successful acculturation and active transnational engagement go hand in hand (Guarnizo, Portes and Haller 2003: 1239). On the contrary, from these arguments we hypothesize:

Hypothesis 2: *Colombian and Dominican migrants in Spain and Italy who are better socially and economically incorporated (i.e. are not discriminated against and have experienced upward social mobility) are significantly more likely to engage in transnational political actions, ceteris paribus.*

Many studies have demonstrated that both assimilation and transnational engagement are highly gendered processes. Women from developing societies tend to experience improvement in their social and economic status *vis-à-vis* their male counterparts (Grasmuck and Pessar 1991; Kibria 1993; Zentgraf 2002). As a result, women are more likely than men to assimilate as they acquire the sociolinguistic, civic and social skills to deal with mainstream society, as their commonly assigned roles as caretakers demand (Hondagneu-Sotelo 1994; Goldring 1996). They are thus more likely to prefer staying in the new country to returning to, or staying engaged with, their homeland. Men, in turn, appear to be more likely to keep alive their connections with, and their desire to return to, their homeland (Jones-Correa

1998; Pessar and Mahler 2003; Medina 2008). Although there are variations across national groups, men tend to monopolize the leadership of civic and political organizations and initiatives oriented toward the homeland (Goldring 2001a, b; Guarnizo, Portes and Haller 2003; Smith and Bakker 2008). This leads us to hypothesize that:

Hypothesis 3: Colombian and Dominican men in Spain and Italy are more likely than women to be engaged in transnational political activities, ceteris paribus.

Another key aspect of the transnational perspective that differentiates it from the assimilationist approach is an emphasis on contextual conditions in migrants' countries of origin. Thus, research on transnational political engagement moves beyond analyses of assimilation and contexts of reception by examining how countries of origin determine and influence the types and frequencies of transnational activities undertaken by migrants. However, since most studies focus on one-way flows between a single origin and destination country (i.e. Colombian or Dominican migrants in the USA) the extent to which origin-country's context affects transnational engagement remains unclear. Furthermore, existing research largely overlooks how the dialectic between contexts in multiple origin and receiving countries may affect migrants' propensity to engage in transnational activities. This study addresses this limitation by analyzing the transnational political engagement of two migrant groups from different origin countries.

2.3 Social network perspective

The study of social networks in the migration and economic sociology literatures has generated a robust conceptual framework that complements the assimilation and transnational perspectives. This framework is particularly useful for understanding the micro-social structuring and social embeddedness of migration. According to this view, migration is a network-building process. Social networks mold and facilitate migration. Social network scholars argue that even after the original macro-structural factors that first trigger mass emigration disappear, social networks help sustain the migration process through microstructures of solidarity, reciprocity, and social control (Portes and Bach 1985; Massey et al. 1987). Thus, social networks make migration a self-sustaining process in which earlier departures open the way for subsequent ones in a sequence that tends to lower the costs, risks, and uncertainties of initial displacements. A study of the transnational political participation of three Latin American immigrant groups, including Colombians and Dominicans in the USA, found that the size of migrants' personal networks of support has a positive effect on their transnational political engagement (Guarnizo, Portes and Haller 2003). An analysis of second-generation Mexicans in the USA suggests a similar finding (Waldinger and Soehl 2013). Thus, we hypothesize:

Hypothesis 4: The larger the migrants' social network size, the more engaged they will be in transnational politics, ceteris paribus.

Migrants' transnational political action is also embedded in social relations across borders, and is shaped by the expectation on the part of migrants' relatives back home about the length of their family members' journey. Merton called these 'socially expected durations' (SED), and saw them as decisive elements influencing social interactions and decisions

(Merton 1984). In applying Merton's SED concept, Roberts (1995) showed that migrants' likelihood of engaging in self-employment consistently varied with the socially expected duration of their migratory journey (Roberts 1995). Guarnizo et al. (2003) also used SED as a determinant of migrants' transnational political involvement and found a significant effect: migrants whose families expected them to return to their homeland were more likely to be engaged in transnational politics than those whose families expected them to stay abroad for good. Accordingly, we hypothesize:

Hypothesis 5: Dominican and Colombian migrants whose families expect them to return to their homeland are more likely to be engaged in transnational politics than their counterparts whose families do not expect them to return, ceteris paribus.

2.4 Contexts of reception: Spain and Italy

Spain and Italy's recent emergence as new immigrant destinations for Latin American and other migrants reflects the complex and multidimensional nature of global international migration (Hunton 1998; Pastore 2004; Ambrosini 2007; Hierro 2013; McMahon 2015). Three structural factors help explain this. First, the consolidation of the European Union since the early 1990s reduced the economic gap between southern and northwestern Europe. As Spanish and Italian economic growth accelerated, the countries' labor demand, especially for low-wage workers in the growing personal service, care-work,³ and construction sectors, expanded significantly (Gabaccia 2000; Colectivo Ioé 2001; Gabaccia and Ottanelli 2001; Izquierdo Escribano 2004; Calavita 2005; Caritas 2006). Second, this growth period coincided with increasingly restrictive immigration policies in the USA and northern Europe, making countries like Spain and Italy attractive alternative destinations (Pastore 2004; Cachón Rodríguez 2009; Diaz, Gallardo and Castellani 2012). Third, as a result of the securitization of immigration policies following the 9/11 terrorist attacks, Spain and Italy enacted a series of restrictive policies and quotas that targeted African and Asian migrants from predominantly Muslim-majority countries, but were less draconian against Latin Americans (Diaz et al. 2012).

Despite these structural similarities, the contexts of reception that Spain and Italy offer Colombian and Dominican immigrants differ in historical, sociocultural, and institutional ways. Because of a long and complex colonial history, Spain offers a far more inclusive reception to Latin America immigrants than does Italy. For the most part, Spain and Latin America share a common language, religion, and other cultural practices. Latin America has also been the main region of settlement for millions of Spanish migrants and, more recently, has been a major arena for Spanish corporate investment and trade (*The Economist* 2009; Rucinski and Hetz 2012). These historical and contemporary links in great part explain Spain's preferential immigration policies toward Latin Americans. For example, until the first decade of the 21st century, Colombians and Dominicans were able to travel to Spain without visas, until the EU forced the Spanish government to impose such controls (Diaz et al. 2012).⁴ Latin Americans are eligible for Spanish citizenship, which is in fact European citizenship, after two years of legal residence, and can obtain a two-year legal temporary status by demonstrating local residency and an employment contract (McMahon 2015). Spanish immigration policies also grant Latin American migrants

who are registered locally (i.e. *empadronados*) access to full social rights (i.e. public education, health care, housing, etc.). In addition, in the early 1990s, Spain signed bilateral, temporary labor-migration agreements with Latin American countries, including Colombia and the Dominican Republic. In sum, shared sociocultural and linguistic endowments, and the preferential treatment given to migrants from former Spanish colonies, result in a uniquely inclusive context of reception for Colombian and Dominican migrants in Spain.

Italy's historical connections with Latin America are also longstanding, although of a very different nature. From the late 19th to the early 20th centuries, a significant proportion of Italian migrants went to South America, mostly to the Southern Cone (i.e. Argentina, Chile, Uruguay, and southern Brazil) (Gabaccia 2000). Since 1992, Italian law, based on *ius sanguinis* principles, grants Italian citizenship to children and grandchildren of Italian migrants (Rosti 2011). This status, however, does not protect Latin Americans of Italian descent against discriminatory treatment as *extracomunitari* (non-European immigrants from low-income countries). With the exception of a shared religion, Italy lacks the kind of socio-cultural or historical linkages to Latin America that Spain has. Yet, since the early 1990s, a significant number of Latin Americans (as well as Africans and Asians) began arriving, attracted by the rapid expansion of the Italian economy, and particularly by low-wage service jobs. Meanwhile, Latin American migrants, who represent the second largest group of extracomunitarian migrants in Italy (Caritas 2006), tend to be considered somewhat preferable compared to migrants from Muslim-majority countries. However, existing research strongly suggests that, as non-European migrants, they have generally encountered a hostile context of reception in Italy, where restrictive immigration laws constitute a more exclusionary context of reception than in Spain (Calavita 2005). In contrast to the preferential treatment afforded to Latin Americans in Spain, in Italy, the government imposes more stringent immigration conditions that require much longer periods to obtain citizenship or permanent residency (McMahon 2015).⁵

The historical, sociocultural, and institutional differences between Spain and Italy result in divergent contexts of reception, which we expect will engender different propensities for Colombians and Dominicans in the two countries to engage in transnational politics. In line with the assumptions of the assimilation perspective, we thus hypothesize:

Hypothesis 6: The more inclusive and favorable Spanish context of reception will decrease Colombian and Dominican migrants' likelihood to engage in transnational political actions, as compared to that of their co-nationals in Italy.

2.5 Context of departure: Colombia and the Dominican Republic

Colombia and the Dominican Republic diverge not only in the size of their economies and populations, but also in their respective political contexts (Table 1). The population of Colombia is much larger, less impoverished, more urbanized, better educated, and less likely to be unemployed than that of the Dominican Republic. However, the higher socio-economic standing of Colombians *vis-à-vis* Dominicans does not translate into higher rates of formal political engagement, as might be expected from existing literature, which shows that, worldwide, education increases political participation (Olsen 1980; Tarrow 2011).

Table 1. Migrants' country of origin profile

Context of origin	Colombians	Dominicans
<i>Sociodemographic characteristics</i>		
2013 Population (in millions)	48.37	10.29
2012 GNI per capita (\$)*	7,104	5,530
2010 Income Share—Richest Quintile (%)	60.2	52.8
2011 Gini index of income inequality	00.50	00.60
2011 Poverty Rate (%)	34.2	42.2
2010 Adult Literacy Rate (%)	98.1	96.8
2010 Population 25 yrs+ with full tertiary education (%) [†]	20.0	18.7
2011 Unemployment (%)	11.3	14.3
2012 Urban population (%)*	76.0	70.0
<i>Political Context</i> [‡]		
External Voting Introduced	1962	1997
Voter Turnout (Presidential)	46.5	72.8
Voter Turnout (Parliamentary)	42.5	51.0
<i>Emigrant population</i>		
Total number of emigrants (1,000)	4,243	1,500
<i>Context of Reception</i>		
Total number of immigrants (1,000)		
Spain [§]	251	89
Women (%)	55	58
Italy [§]	21	26
Women (%)	64	66

Sources: Data are drawn from Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (2013, 2011).

*World Bank 2013. Statistics reflect 2010 World Bank Estimates.

[†]Colombian information is for 2012 (OECD 2014), Dominican information is for 2007 (OECD 2012).

[‡]IDEA, International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance. Data for Colombian elections are from 2002; data for Dominican elections are from 2002 (parliamentary) and 2004 (presidential).

[§]These are official figures of documented Colombians and Dominican residents in Spain and Italy by 2011 (<http://en.istat.it/popolazione/>; <http://www.ine.es/>). These figures underestimate the actual size of these populations that include a non-insignificant proportion of undocumented migrants, particularly in the case of Italy. The proportion of women in each group was much higher at the time of the study (<http://en.istat.it/popolazione/>; <http://www.ine.es/>).

Indeed, voter turnout in presidential elections is almost twice as high, and in parliamentary elections it is almost 10 percentage points higher, in the Dominican Republic than in Colombia (see Table 1). In fact, electoral participation in Colombia has historically been very low, evidence of Colombians' disengagement from and mistrust of the formal political process. Meanwhile, the Dominican polity is more dynamic and inclusive, its citizens more likely to engage in electoral politics than their Colombian counterparts.⁶

Previous research on Colombian and Dominican migrants' transnational political engagement seems to reflect this trend. In the USA, Dominicans have been found to be more likely than Colombians to engage in their home country's politics (Guarnizo and Diaz 1999; Guarnizo, Portes and Haller 2003; Itzigsohn and Villacrés 2008). This difference persists even after the significant institutional reforms (i.e. dual citizenship, overseas voting rights, parliamentary representation) introduced in the two countries in the 1990s to encourage and facilitate their respective diasporas' political participation (Lafleur 2013; Waldinger 2015). Some researchers argue that Colombians' low levels of transnational political participation may be a result of the political culture in Colombia (Itzigsohn 2000; Guarnizo, Portes and Haller 2003; Guarnizo 2008; Landolt and Goldring 2010; Bermudez 2011). Based on the diverse political contexts in the countries of origin, and on previous research in the United States, we hypothesize:

Hypothesis 7: Dominican migrants in Spain and Italy will be more likely to engage in transnational politics than their Colombian counterparts, ceteris paribus.

3. Data, measurement, and methodology

Data come from NELMI's small-scale survey of a random sample of Colombian and Dominican migrants conducted in four major cities in Italy and Spain, namely Rome, Milan, Barcelona and Madrid.⁷ The final sample size used in the analysis is 582.⁸ Data collection required an innovative research and sampling design featuring a cross-fertilization of divergent approaches. At the time of the data collection (2005–2006), the availability of and access to official data on immigrants in Spain and Italy was very limited. Moreover, a large number of Colombian and Dominican migrants were undocumented in both countries, making it unfeasible to generate conventional probability sampling frames based on census data. Instead of trying to map the geographical location of the population under study, a difficult and costly proposition when little was known on its residential distribution, we constructed a list of the places frequented by Colombians and Dominicans in each city. Analysts referred to these as *centers of aggregation* (Migliorati and Terzera 2002; Pratesi and Rocco 2002).⁹ We adopted a targeted sampling strategy in each center. Specially trained, professional interviewers selected every third individual present for recruitment into the study.

While this method cannot be considered a probability sample, the random selection of respondents within these sites ensured a degree of heterogeneity and a higher level of representativeness than would have been achieved using a traditional snowball or a convenience sampling strategy. Indeed, this strategy generated a very diverse sample that included a broad range of subjects with quite varied socio-demographic characteristics and diverse migratory trajectories and histories, thereby maximizing variation in the dependent variables of interest (Marshall 1996). The empirical generalizability of our findings is restricted to the sample, rather than the population of Colombian and Dominican migrants in Spain and Italy. Still, this limitation does not detract from the theoretical generalizability of the findings. Indeed, the Italian and Spanish samples allow us to test the extent to which theories and findings from previous research on Colombian and Dominican (and

other Latin American) migrants in the USA explain the political transnational engagement we observe in these European countries. Moreover, non-probability samples generated for the purpose of theory testing are particularly useful for analyzing processes and relationships shaping particular behaviors and practices (Biernacki and Waldorf 1981).

3.1 Dependent variable

Most studies that examine transnational political participation are limited to analyzing migrants' voting in their country of origin from a single location abroad (Bauböck 2007; Boccagni 2011; Waldinger and Soehl 2013).¹⁰ Instead, we compare two different contexts of reception and by using a more inclusive definition of political engagement that builds on a similar definition introduced by Guarnizo, Portes and Haller (2003) a decade ago. We understand migrant transnational political engagement as a social domain composed by multiple electoral and non-electoral activities that migrants undertake seeking to influence processes in their country of origin. We then analyze the determinants of migrants' transnational political engagement, the relationship between their transnational and local political participation, and the role that the context of reception, migrants' conditions of departure, and personal social networks play in shaping political engagement.

We operationalize transnational political engagement as a count variable composed of four electoral and three non-electoral activities. Electoral activities include: membership in a political party in the country of origin; engagement in political campaigns there; monetary contributions to a home-country party; and voting in home-country elections. Non-electoral activities include: membership in hometown associations; monetary contributions to community development projects in the country of origin; and membership in philanthropic organizations focused on providing help for the home country (see Table A1 in the Appendix and Table 3 later). Each of these activities is coded as dichotomous variables; respondents are assigned a 1 if they engage in the activity and a 0 if they do not. The count of the respondents' transnational political activity is the total sum of the seven dummy variables measuring the electoral and non-electoral activities (i.e. 0–7 range).

In turn, we categorize these activities according to their frequency in order to differentiate between sporadic or episodic, and regular transnational engagement. The survey asked respondents to indicate how frequently they undertook each one of the seven political activities using a five-point scale in which 'never' = 1, 'very few times' = 2, 'once in a while' = 3, 'many times' = 4, and 'regularly' = 5. Using a *strict* definition, we measure our dependent variable as a count of the seven transnational political activities recoded as '1' if undertaken 'many times' or 'regularly,' otherwise '0.' Using the broad definition, our dependent variable is a count of the seven transnational political activities recoded as '1' if undertaken at all (i.e. from 'very few times' = 1 to 'regularly' = 5), otherwise '0.' We thus use two dependent variables for our analysis: a count measure of *strict* transnational political engagement, and a count measure of *broad* transnational political engagement.

3.2 Independent variables

In keeping with the rationale of our theoretical argument, we organize independent variables in four blocks (see Table A1 in the Appendix and Table 2 later for descriptions and

Table 2. Characteristics of the sample

Variable	Colombians	Dominicans	All
<i>Dependent variables</i>			
Count of regular involvement in transnational political activities (strict)	0.231 (0.677)	0.515 (1.13)	0.364 (.930)***
Count of occasional involvement in transnational political activities (broad)	0.668 (1.18)	1.00 (1.49)	0.826 (1.34)**
<i>Independent variables</i>			
<i>Personal demographic characteristics</i>			
Age (years)	35.5(9.92)	34.4(9.52)	34.9(9.74)
Gender (male)	33.7	27.7	30.9
Married (%)	48.1	52.5	50.2
<i>Place of origin</i>			
Large city	67.2	29.6	49.5***
Small city or town	23.1	26.6	24.7
Rural	9.7	43.8	25.8***
<i>Human capital</i>			
College graduate	38.0	21.5	30.2***
<i>Social networks</i>			
Network size	11.88(5.19)	11.66(5.89)	11.78(5.52)
Network scope	0.414(.413)	.371(.405)	0.394(.419)
Family expected return migration	73.7	79.6	76.8
<i>Context of departure</i>			
Immediate family in country of origin	79.9	82.1	80.9
Politically motivated migration	16.9	9.49	13.40**
Invested money in country of origin	13.3	16.4	14.8
<i>Context of reception</i>			
<i>Place of current residence</i>			
Italy	52.6	47.8	50.3
Spain	47.4	52.2	49.7
Years since arrival	5.72 (5.09)	6.35 (5.58)	6.02 (5.33)
Have EU citizenship	15.9	27.4	21.3**
Social mobility	0.087 (1.01)	0.000(1.00)	0.046 (1.01)
Participation in local political activities	0.065 (0.256)	0.080 (0.319)	0.067 (0.282)
Have experienced direct discrimination	63.9	47.1	56.0***
N (unweighted)	308	274	582

Note: *P* values are from *t*-test of significance of between-group differences. Definition and measurement of variables appear in Appendix Table A1. Standard Deviations are italicized and appear in parentheses next to means. **P* < 0.05; ***P* < 0.01; ****P* < 0.001.

distributions). The first block includes variables measuring migrants' sociodemographic characteristics, which include age (years), gender (male = 1), marital status (married = 1), type of place of origin (large city, small city or town, or rural), and a measure of human capital (college graduate = 1).

A second set of independent variables is associated with the social network perspective and affiliated hypotheses. These include a dichotomous variable measuring whether a respondent's family expected him or her to return to the country of origin, and two variables measuring the overall size and scope of respondents' social networks.¹¹ Network size is measured by the total number of alters in a respondent's network of support, while network scope is a ratio of locally-based alters to the total number of alters in the network.

A third set of variables captures the context of departure in the country of origin and respondents' non-political transnational links. We capture the effect of country of origin by using a fixed-effect dummy variable that measures respondents' nationality (Colombian or Dominican). We also include three dichotomous variables measuring whether respondents' emigration was politically motivated, whether they invested money in the country of origin, and whether respondents still had immediate family in their respective countries of origin.

The overall effect of the context of reception in Spain and Italy is captured by the last set of independent variables. A fixed-effect dummy variable assigns either Spain or Italy to respondents, depending on their country of residence. Other covariates used in the analysis measure migrants' length of time abroad, overall socioeconomic attainment, local political participation, possession of European Union citizenship, and social acceptance as measured by whether they have experienced discrimination. The length of time a respondent lived in the receiving country is measured by the years since first arrival. We operationalized respondents' social mobility by comparing their current social status in Spain/Italy with the status they had in their respective countries of origin. We calculated social mobility as a standardized ratio of the current social status to their status in the country of origin; with higher values representing upward social mobility and negative values representing downward social mobility (see [Table A1](#) in the Appendix for a detailed description). A crucial dimension of the context of reception has to do with migrants' local political incorporation. We measured this with a count variable of respondents' regular participation in three local political activities: taking part in electoral campaigns; giving money to Spanish/Italian political parties; and voting in Spanish/Italian elections (see bottom panel, [Table 3](#) later).

3.3 Modeling

We used analogs of the Poisson regression model—the most widely-used distribution in modeling count data. One of the central assumptions of Poisson models is equi-dispersion, that is, the mean and the variance of the residuals are approximately the same. We determined that the variance of our dependent variable, measured under either a strict or broad definition, was around twice the size of the mean.¹² In this case, a negative binomial regression (NBR) model was more appropriate, for it takes this over-dispersion into account ([Cameron and Trivedi 1998](#)).

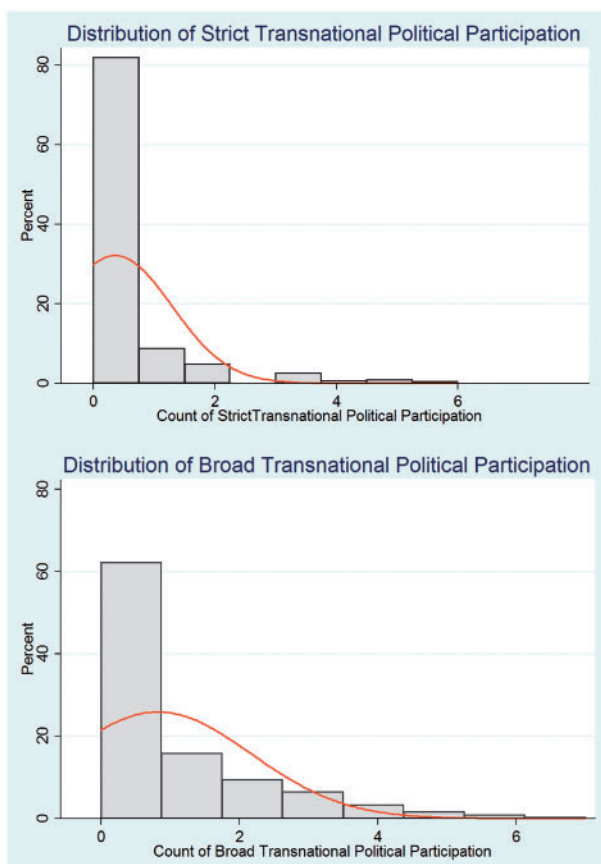
A count variable is technically a rate, for it actually measures the number of activities over a unit of time t (i.e. months, years) called *exposure*. In other words, exposure is the length of

Table 3. Transnational and local political practices (%)

	Regular engagement (%) (strict definition)		At least occasional engagement (%) (broad definition)			
	Colombians	Dominicans	All	Colombians	Dominicans	All
Transnational participation						
<i>Electoral politics:</i>						
Membership in home country political party	4.22	14.23	8.93	7.14	25.55	15.81
Takes part in home country electoral campaigns	2.27	12.41	7.04	9.74	19.71	14.43
Gives money to home country political party	0.65	1.46	1.03	2.27	3.28	2.75
Votes in home country elections	8.77	9.85	9.28	24.68	18.61	21.82
<i>Non-Electoral Politics</i>						
Membership in civic hometown association	2.60	5.84	4.12	8.77	14.23	11.34
Gives money for community projects in home country	1.30	1.82	1.55	4.87	8.03	6.36
Membership in charity organization active in home country	3.25	5.84	4.47	9.42	10.95	10.14
Overall transnational participation***	13.76	23.10	18.20	33.64	42.41	37.80
Local participation*						
<i>Electoral politics:</i>						
Takes part in Spanish/Italian electoral campaigns	0.32	1.82	1.03	2.60	3.65	3.09
Gives money to Spanish/Italian political parties	0.32	0.00	0.17	0.65	0.36	0.52
Votes in Spanish/Italian elections	4.87	6.20	5.50	12.01	15.33	13.57
Overall local participation	4.86	7.28	6.02	12.46	16.23	14.66
N (unweighted)	308	274	582	308	274	582

Note: * *Local Participation* refers to respondents' participation in the three political activities listed in their place of residence in Italy or Spain. The regression analysis uses Regular Local Participation only. Two-group mean-comparison *t*-test on the overall transnational political participation, *** $P < 0.001$.

time during which the events are recorded. NBR assumes that each subject in the sample has the same exposure (Cameron and Trivedi 1998). If activities are reported for different periods of time, regression estimates would be biased. This is precisely our case. The transnational political activities reported in the NELMI survey occurred during the period of time our subjects had resided abroad, which was different for each respondent. To adjust the regression estimates, we used the 'exposure' option in Stata using the measure for number of years since arrival. While NBR accounts for over-dispersion, it also assumes that the dependent variable does not have an excessive number of zeros. As Graph 1 shows, however, our dependent variable, using either the strict or broad definition, had an excessive number of zeros (81.3 per cent and 61.5 per cent, respectively), which clearly violated NBR assumptions. Thus, in this case, the Zero Inflated Negative Binomial (ZINB) regression model was the most appropriate (Cameron and Trivedi 1998; Du et al. 2012).



Graph 1. Distribution of strict and broad transnational political participation.

The ZINB model assumes that the excess zeros are generated by two separate processes, so excess zeros can be modeled independently. The model assumes that some zeros occur because of a Poisson process, but others do not, so the model examines whether there is some misclassification due to some latent process, with the result that some covariates show more zeros than expected. Theoretically, there is a process that determines if the individual is eligible for a zero response (i.e. no engagement in transnational political action), and another that determines the count of that response for eligible individuals (i.e. how much transnational action the person engages in). For example, some migrants report no transnational political activity engagement because, for whatever reason, they do *not* want to participate in homeland politics. Meanwhile, others, who also report a zero transnational political activity count, really would like to participate in transnational politics, but cannot do so due to conditions beyond their control; for example, their work schedule, a lack of necessary resources, and so forth. Still a third group of migrants may have both the inclination and the necessary resources for engaging in transnational political action, and thus report a count of one or more transnational political activities. Migrants who willingly prefer not to participate in transnational politics are certain to have a count of zero transnational political engagement. They are referred to as a certain zero group (CZG). The probability of being in the CZG is modeled by ZINB using a logistic regression. Migrants in the latter two scenarios (those who wanted but could not participate, and those who wanted and had participated) are considered to come from the not-certain zero group (NCZG) and are modeled by NBR (in ZINB) in the part that allows for the possibility of a predicted zero or higher number of transnational political activities.

Again, the ZINB regression produces two separate models: one is the count model (NBR) and the other is a logistic model predicting the latent binary outcome—that is, predicting whether each predictor is a ‘certain 0’ or not. In the following, we report key findings from ZINB models that offer insights into the likelihood of engaging in transnational politics and the factors that may contribute to non-engagement or belonging to the CZG.

4. Results

Data show that the respondents are, on average, relatively young, married, and that the majority of them are women (Table 2). On average, these migrants arrived in Europe at a prime productive age and experienced very little upward social mobility since their arrival—40.94 per cent of them actually experienced downward mobility at the time of the study (data not shown). They have an average personal social network of 12 people, a substantive proportion of whom (40 per cent) live in the same city.

However, there are some significant differences between the two groups. First, the vast majority of Colombians (67 per cent) come from large cities, while almost half of Dominicans (44 per cent) are originally from rural areas. Similarly, while one-third (34 per cent) of Colombians have a college degree or higher level of education, only one-fifth (22 per cent) of Dominicans do.

In assimilationist terms, one could expect that Dominicans, given their rural origins, lower education level and racial composition (the majority of African descent) would have a lower rate of naturalization and a higher likelihood of experiencing discrimination, and

thus be more likely to be involved in transnational political action than Colombians. Contrary to these expectations, Table 2 shows that Dominicans are *less likely* to have experienced discrimination and *more likely* to have naturalized and been engaged in transnational political action than Colombians. These preliminary results suggest that national origin is a better predictor of political transnationalism than traditional socio-demographic factors such as level of education and urban origin.

Table 3 shows frequency distributions for the seven transnational political activities included in the study broken down by group, and by whether these activities are defined strictly or broadly. The bottom panel of the table presents the distribution of migrants' participation in three local political activities (participating in Spanish/Italian electoral campaigns, giving money to Spanish/Italian political parties, and voting in Spanish/Italian elections). Overall, almost two-fifths (38 per cent) of the sampled migrants engage in transnational political activities on an occasional or regular basis, while around one-sixth (15 per cent) engage in local political action. However, when political action is restricted to only those who are regularly participating, the overall proportion of transnationally active migrants is halved (18 per cent), while the proportion of local activists is drastically reduced (by two-thirds) to just 6 per cent of respondents. These data confirm Dominicans' higher level of political activism, both locally and transnationally, as compared to that of Colombians. As expected, both groups are much more likely to participate in transnational than in local political activities. Interestingly, this level and pattern of participation is, overall, very similar to that observed by Guarnizo et al. (2003) in the case of Colombians, Dominicans, and Salvadorans who had resided, on average, for 15 years in the USA, as compared to our respondents whose average length of residence abroad is just 6 years. However, these data do not reveal the extent to which assimilation, receiving and origin contexts, transnational ties and social networks affect transnational political participation. We examine these effects through a multivariate analysis.

4.1 Multivariate analysis

Results from the ZINB model are reported in Table 4.¹³ They are arranged in two sets of columns: columns 1 to 3 report regression results for transnational political participation, *broadly* defined. Columns 4 to 6 present the results for transnational political participation, *strictly* defined. The top panel of the table reports the results from the NBR model predicting the count of transnational political activities, while the bottom panel presents the results from the logit model predicting a zero outcome—that is, the likelihood of not being transnationally politically engaged (certain zeros). We mainly focus our discussion on the statistically significant covariates in the model for strictly defined transnational engagement, for they provide the main evidence for testing our hypotheses.

How significant are respondents' personal characteristics in determining their transnational political engagement? Some of the socio-demographic coefficients confirm that such engagement is a gendered and class-based process. The NBR coefficients show that regular transnational political action is mostly a male activity. The count for men's mean transnational activities is 75 per cent higher than women's, with other variables held constant. This relationship is confirmed by the logistic regression results, which show that women are 72 per cent more likely than men to report zero transnational political activities.

Table 4. Zero-inflated negative binomial regression of immigrant political transnational activities on selected predictors

	Transnationalism (broad definition)			Transnationalism (strict definition)		
	Coefficient	Z	% change	Coefficient	Z	% change
	1	2	3	4	5	6
<i>Personal demographic characteristics:</i>						
Age	-0.0304	-0.60	...	-0.0564	-0.67	...
Age2	0.0004	0.58	...	0.0007	0.69	...
Gender (male)	0.5899	3.67***	80.4	0.5601	1.95*	75.1
Marital status (married and living together)	-0.1912	-1.15	...	-0.3385	-1.25	...
<i>Place of origin:</i>						
Large city	-0.3052	-1.44	...	-0.1601	-0.45	...
Small city or town	-0.5127	-2.23*	-40.1	-0.7033	-1.96*	-0.50
<i>Human capital:</i>						
College graduate	0.9088	5.33***	148.1	0.7672	2.24*	115.4
<i>Social networks:</i>						
Network size	0.0527	2.93**	5.41	0.0635	2.07*	6.55
Network scope	-0.4535	-2.20*	-36.5	0.0637	0.16	...
Family expected return migration	0.3794	1.95*	46.1	0.8194	2.55*	126.9
<i>Context of departure:</i>						
Immediate family in country of origin	0.4063	1.90	...	0.2748	0.77	...
Politically motivated migration	0.3046	1.62	...	-0.1853	-0.59	...
Invested in country of origin	0.2098	1.11	...	0.0472	0.15	...

(continued)

Table 4. Continued

	Transnationalism (broad definition)			Transnationalism (strict definition)		
	Coefficient 1	Z 2	% change 3	Coefficient 4	Z 5	% change 6
Colombian	-0.6644	-3.54***	-48.5	-1.150	-3.06**	-68.3
<i>Context of reception:</i>						
Italy	0.7141	3.29**	104.2	1.194	2.59*	229.9
EU citizen	-0.9724	-5.13***	-62.2	-0.9833	-2.88*	-62.6
Local political participation	-0.0748	-0.33	...	-0.9512	-2.34**	-61.4
Social mobility	0.0701	0.71	...	0.3139	1.94	...
Experienced discrimination	-0.2565	-1.59	...	0.1518	0.51	...
Constant	-1.743	-1.81	...	-1.803	-1.02	...
Years since arrival						
<i>Inflate equation: Certain zero</i>						
Age	0.0226	0.80	...	-0.0640	-2.22*	-6.20
Gender (male)	0.4455	0.74	...	-1.278	-2.06*	-72.2
Marital status (married and living together)	-0.5906	-0.90	...	-0.2917	-0.53	...
<i>Place of origin:</i>						
Large city	-0.5334	-0.72	...	-0.5600	-0.76	...
Small city or town	-1.276	-1.64	...	-1.163	-1.42	...
<i>Human capital:</i>						
College graduate	0.2880	0.42	...	-1.033	-1.51	...
<i>Social networks:</i>						

(continued)

Table 4. Continued

	Transnationalism (broad definition)			Transnationalism (strict definition)		
	Coefficient 1	Z 2	% change 3	Coefficient 4	Z 5	% change 6
Network size	-0.0143	-0.23	...	0.0261	0.44	...
Network scope	3.470	3.89***	3115.1	3.391	3.89***	2869.8
Immediate family in country of origin	-0.6693	-0.98	...	-0.3242	-0.49	...
<i>Context of departure:</i>						
Family expected return migration	0.4897	0.70	...	0.9384	1.17	...
Politically motivated migration	-23.15	-0.00	...	-3.206	-3.15**	-95.9
Invested in country of origin	-5.128	-3.50***	-99.4	-1.618	-2.17*	-80.2
<i>Nationality:</i>						
Colombian	-0.6435	-0.95	...	0.7581	1.18	...
<i>Context of reception:</i>						
Italy	4.661	2.43*	10,471.1	2.043	2.32*	67.1
EU citizen	-1.855	-2.19*	-84.4	0.2812	0.39	...
Frequent local political participation	-4.163	-1.78	...	-4.949	-1.87	...
Social mobility	1.280	3.20**	259.8	0.5852	2.26*	79.5
Experienced discrimination	0.0680	0.13	7.04	0.2840	0.51	...
Constant	-5.090	-1.94		1.389	0.74	
Log likelihood		-679.26			-367.70	
Log likelihood χ^2 (d.f.)		77.38(37)***			118.86(37)***	
α		76.1***			17.14***	

(continued)

Table 4. Continued

	Transnationalism (broad definition)			Transnationalism (strict definition)		
	Coefficient	Z	% change	Coefficient	Z	% change
	1	2	3	4	5	6
Vuong		4.65***			4.73***	
McFadden's pseudo R^2		0.054			0.139	
Bayesian information criteria (BIC)		-2092.12			-2715.23	
Total observations N		582			582	
Zero observations		358			473	
Non-zero observations		224			109	

Note: For description of variables, see Appendix Table A1. The reference category for 'place of origin' is 'rural'; for 'college graduate' it is less than college degree; for 'nationality' it is 'Dominican'; for 'Italy' it is 'Spain'. The '% change' results are calculated from 'incidence rate ratios' (not reported). The significance levels and z-scores are computed with regular standard errors. α likelihood-ratio test of alpha = 0 (equi-dispersion of conditional variance). Higher values indicate departures from the assumption that $\mu = \sigma$ = exp (x, β) and hence, the inappropriateness of zero-inflated Poisson regression models. The Vuong statistic ensures that the zero-inflated negative binomial model fits the data better than a standard negative binomial model. The Bayesian Information Criteria (BIC) and McFadden's pseudo R^2 are computed according to Long (1997). * $P < 0.05$; ** $P < 0.01$; *** $P < 0.001$.

That is, men are much more likely than women to be regular political activists in their homeland, a finding that supports findings from the USA, as well as Hypothesis 3. On the other hand, having a higher education, a typical marker of class position, has a very significant effect on the level of transnational political engagement, with college graduates increasing their mean transnational count by 115 per cent relative to non-college graduates, while holding the other variables constant. Meanwhile, NBR coefficients for place of origin indicate that migrants from 'small cities or towns' are less likely than those from rural areas to be transnationally engaged. No statistical difference exists between those migrating from rural areas and large cities. The fact that people who migrate from rural areas in the Third World to comparatively rich European cities are more likely to remain engaged with their homelands is consistent with assimilation expectations.¹⁴

More surprising, instead, is our finding that migrants who originally come from large metropolitan areas in the Third World are just as likely to remain engaged across borders as their compatriots from rural areas. These results suggest a bimodal process in which highly educated men from metropolitan areas and those from rural areas are more likely to be transnational political activists than women, the less educated, and those from small cities and towns. As such, these findings in part support the assimilation perspective, as well as earlier findings reported by transnational scholars in the USA (Guarnizo, Portes and Haller 2003; Smith and Bakker 2008).

Measures associated with the context of reception reveal a mixed picture with respect to the hypothesized relationships between migrants' social and political incorporation in the receiving society, and their transnational political engagement. To start, we hypothesized that, given their historical cultural, linguistic, and religious closeness to Spain, plus their preferential treatment by Spanish law, Latin American migrants there would be more likely to assimilate and thus be less likely than those in Italy to engage in transnational action, therefore exhibiting a smaller count of transnational activities (Hypothesis 6). Yet coefficients indicate that respondents in Italy have a mean count of regular transnational activities over twice as large as those in Spain (230 per cent), with other variables held constant. At the same time, the logit model reveals that respondents based in Italy are around 70 per cent more likely to abstain from all transnational political activities (more likely to be certain zeros) than those in Spain.

Such results defy our expectations. How is it possible that migrants in Italy could be both more likely to have a higher level of transnational engagement while at the same time being more likely *not* to be politically engaged transnationally? What these apparently contradictory results indicate is a bimodal relationship. While those in Italy are significantly less likely to be transnationally engaged than their counterparts in Spain (i.e. much more likely to be certain zeros), the few who are so engaged have an above-average count of transnational participation. In effect, the aggregate mean count of transnational activities of migrants in Spain, including people reporting zero activities (i.e. broad definition), of migrants in Spain is significantly higher than that of those in Italy (Spain \bar{x} = 0.510; Italy \bar{x} = 0.220, $p < 0.0001$, $n = 582$). However, there is no statistical difference if we compare the mean count of transnational activities of migrants excluding zeros (i.e. strict definition). In sum, respondents in Spain are more likely than those in Italy to be transnationally active. Their sociocultural closeness to dominant Spanish society and their inclusive official reception by its state is positively, rather than negatively, associated with their

transnationalism. In other words, the context of reception mattered, but not necessarily in the direction that the assimilation perspective predicted.

How does migrants' social incorporation affect their level of transnational engagement? Results suggest that migrants' upward social mobility has no effect on their mean regular transnational activities count, holding other variables constant. However, logistic coefficients show that social mobility was positively associated with abstaining from all political transnational activities (certain zeros). In other words, the more migrants move up socially *vis-à-vis* their original social status, the less likely they are to be transnationally engaged.

At first glance, this finding refutes social assimilation expectations in Hypothesis 2, and challenges findings reported about Colombians and Dominicans in the USA, according to which upward social mobility was positively related to transnational political action (Guarnizo, Portes and Haller 2003). This interpretation, however, must be qualified, for upward social mobility in this case is negatively associated with social status before migrating. In effect, the better-off in origin (who are more likely to be politically active) are more likely to experience downward mobility upon migrating than are the worse-off.¹⁵ Indeed, upon arrival, highly-educated extra-communitarian migrants find it almost impossible to translate their skills into well-paid, high-status positions comparable to the ones they had back home. Given local labor market conditions and dominant perceptions of migrants from non-European, low-income countries, they are forced to take low-paid, dead-end jobs socially constructed as 'immigrant jobs,' such as construction jobs, domestic work, and domestic care-taking positions, alongside their less qualified co-nationals. Put differently, the worse-off in origin (who also tend to be the least educated and thus the least likely to be active in politics) are more likely to experience upward social mobility, while their better-off counterparts face a significant social downfall. Thus it is not surprising to find that upward social mobility is negatively associated with being engaged in homeland politics. This strongly suggests that the selectivity of migrants (i.e. who goes where) explains the difference between the European and American experience.

Epistemologically, this finding alerts us to the importance of analytically considering the social continuities in the lives of migrants *vis-à-vis* the opportunities offered by receiving societies. That is, migrants' socioeconomic performance upon arrival (and their likelihood to act transnationally) should not be interpreted as being disassociated with their positionality in their homelands. In brief, our findings suggest that upward social mobility in southern Europe is experienced by a different segment of the Colombian and Dominican populations than that in the USA, where better-off migrants are more likely to experience upward social mobility (Guarnizo, Portes and Haller 2003). In sum, the likelihood of political engagement with the homeland is strongly associated with migrants' social origin, with the better-off being more likely to be politically active after migrating, regardless of the context of reception.

The other dimension of social incorporation that we examine is that of experiencing no discrimination, an operational expression of inclusion which, we hypothesized, would predict a lower likelihood of being transnationally engaged (Hypothesis 2). Surprisingly, there is not a statistically significant effect of discrimination on the mean level of transnational engagement. Since both groups report a very high rate of discrimination (Table 2), this finding suggests that migrants' transnational engagement is not a reactive response to social exclusion, but is determined by other factors like class background.

This leads us to the next dimension of the context of reception, namely, migrants' political incorporation. We use two variables to measure migrants' political incorporation in the receiving polity: naturalizing as an EU citizen, and participating in local political activities (Hypothesis 1). We expected that naturalization would temper migrants' drive to be politically active across borders. NBR coefficients indicate that indeed, naturalized migrants' mean count of regular cross-border political activities (strict definition) is 63 per cent smaller than that of non-naturalized migrants, while holding other variables constant. However, logistic coefficients show that, when holding other variables constant, non-naturalized migrants are 84 per cent more likely to be transnationally disengaged (i.e. more likely to be certain zeros), than naturalized ones. In sum, while naturalization tends to lower migrants' mean count of strict cross-border political activities, it does *not* sever their political engagement with their country of origin altogether.

The second variable measuring political incorporation is the count of regular local political participation. NBR results support the idea that local and transnational political participation represents two opposite processes—a zero-sum game, as US assimilation scholars suggest. Indeed, each additional point in the count of local political activities in which respondents' participate in the receiving country reduces the mean count of regular transnational political participation by 63 per cent. But, as in the case of naturalization, migrants who are regularly involved in local political action are *less likely to have totally cut out* their transnational political involvement than those who are not involved locally (see Table 4). In other words, being regularly involved in local political activities tends to lessen transnational political engagement, but not to the point of abandoning it altogether. Migrants' political participation extends across national polities, although there is a greater emphasis in the place where they reside, rather than in the origin country. The political field of action is transnational, but its intensity varies significantly across space. In conclusion, these findings do not support Hypothesis 1, which states that migrants who have naturalized and are engaged in local politics are significantly less likely to be transnationally engaged.

We now turn to the relationships between the context of departure and migrants' transnational political engagement. To begin, NBR coefficients show no significant effect of 'politically motivated migration,' which includes having migrated because of direct political persecution or because of general political hostility, on the mean count of transnational political activities, however defined. Similarly, NBR coefficients show no significant effect of investing in the country of origin on migrants' transnational activism. However, the logit model coefficients tell a different story. With other variables held constant, politically induced migration shows a negative relationship with the likelihood of not being engaged in regular transnational activities. Political migrants, some of whom hold refugee status, are more likely than those who migrated for other reasons, to be politically active in regular transnational activities—they are not certain zeros. Those whose political ideas and activism led them out of their country seem to keep their political engagement alive from afar, although the intensity of their transnational political commitment is not statistically different from that of migrants who migrated for other reasons. Similarly, and not surprisingly, migrants who made monetary investments in the country of origin are *less* likely to be politically disengaged (not certain zeros) than those who had not done so. Again, although their mean transnational score is not significantly different from that of non-investors,

transnational investors are more likely to be politically active in homeland politics than their counterparts are.

These findings highlight political continuities in the migration process. The dialectic relationship between economic and political interests seems not to be cut off by distance or national borders, even at this scale of action. The political migrant and the investor, while motivated by quite different reasons, are both less likely to stay aloof from their country of origin's political situation. While one remains singularly motivated by political ideals, the other seems motivated by her/his economic investments back home.

A vast literature demonstrates that migration is socially embedded in networks of support, solidarity, and control (Portes and Bach 1985; Massey et al. 1987; Portes and Rumabut 2006). The ZINB model results confirm it and show how complex this relationship can be. NBR coefficients indicate that, as stated by Hypothesis 4, the size of migrants' personal social network of support has a positive effect on the mean count of transnational political activities, however defined, while holding other variables constant. Each additional alter in the network increases the mean count of strict regular activities by 7 per cent. However, this effect is mediated by the spatial location of alters in the network. Indeed, while the ratio of locally-based alters to network size has no effect on the mean count of regular transnational activities it does have a strong negative and significant effect on the likelihood of being transnationally engaged. The larger the proportion of locally based members of the network, the larger the likelihood of having a zero mean count of transnational activities is. In brief, the larger the support network (i.e. the wider the sources of support), the greater the possibilities of being transnationally active are. But, the greater the proportions of members of the network living in the respondents' city of residence, the less likely they are transnationally engaged in political activities. This latter conclusion highlights the social embeddedness of migrants' political life—that is, the more socially engaged migrants are locally, the least likely they are to be politically engaged across borders.

The effects of social embeddedness become more complex when we add to the analysis the strong and positive effect that family-expected durations have on the mean count of transnational activities. NBR coefficients offer support for Hypothesis 5, indicating that migrants whose families expect their migration to be temporary increase their mean count of transnational activism by around 130 per cent, holding the other variables constant. In sum, these findings suggest that in the process of engaging in transnational political activism, migrants respond to various and often contradictory pressures and expectations generated by their transnational personal networks of support both locally and transnationally. While relatives' expectations of migrant's return encourage the latter's transnational engagement, migrants' locally-based network members, which represent social attachment to the receiving new society, seem to discourage it. Overall, this suggests that engaging in transnational politics is a demanding process of continuous social negotiation, rather than a simple individual choice.

The final variable capturing the effect of the context of origin is the fixed effect for Colombia and the Dominican Republic. After controlling for demographic and contextual factors, the evidence strongly confirms that Dominicans are much more likely to be transnationally engaged in their home country's politics. Colombians have a mean count of transnational political activities that is two-thirds smaller (68 per cent) than that of Dominicans, with other variables held constant. These results confirm findings reported

in the USA and offer strong support for Hypothesis 7—that is, Dominican migrants are more likely than Colombians to engage in transnational politics.

Nationality, like gender, education, and social expectations, exercises a highly significant effect on transnational political involvement, regardless of the context of reception. To sum up, transnational political activism is significantly determined by migrants' polity of origin. It is the field of the more educated men hailing from large cities or rural areas, with political interests that preceded their emigration, who have a higher social status background, but tend to have experienced downward mobility upon migrating, and are expected to return to their homeland. In this sense, transnational political engagement tends to be mostly fueled by pre-existing relations and commitments in or with the country of origin, rather than being determined solely or mainly by the context of reception.

5. Discussion

Following, we elaborate on the theoretical implications of our findings in light of the seven hypotheses under analysis and summarized in [Table 5](#).

5.1 Assimilation, transnationalism and context of reception

The assimilation perspective, which dominates the empirical literature on immigrant incorporation, focuses only on the context of reception and on migrants' socio-demographic characteristics, while conceiving of citizenship and state membership as a singular, exclusive status. Accordingly, immigrants are expected to undergo a political re-socialization in which they eventually forgo their original political identity and incorporate into the receiving polity ([Waldinger 2008, 2015](#)). From this perspective, migrants' political incorporation precludes transnational political engagement (Hypothesis 1). Meanwhile, transnational studies have found that social assimilation (upward social mobility and no discrimination against) actually encourages it (Hypothesis 2).

Our findings do not support the expectation that migrants' political incorporation, as measured by being naturalized and actively involved in local politics, precludes their transnational political engagement (Hypothesis 1). However, the evidence is mixed in relation to Hypothesis 2, according to which migrants' social assimilation, as measured by lack of discrimination and experiencing upward social mobility, has a positive effect on their likelihood of engaging in transnational activism. On the one hand, contrary to expectations, discrimination has no relationship with migrant's transnational political activism—that is, experiencing social exclusion or inclusion abroad does not propel or prevent transnational activism. On the other hand, as predicted by the assimilation perspective and contrary to findings from Colombian and Dominican migrants in the USA, those experiencing social upward mobility *vis-à-vis* their status of origin, are significantly less likely to engage politically across borders (see [Table 5](#)). Thus far, the evidence suggests that migrants' transnational political activism and their social and political assimilation constitute a nonzero-sum, rather than a zero-sum as expected from an assimilation perspective.

This leads us to examine the next dimension, namely, the official context of reception. Existing literature emphasizes how processes of immigrant incorporation are largely

Table 5. Determinants of transnational political participation: Theoretical results

Hypotheses	Predicted effect	Observed effects		Conclusion
		Broad	Strict	
<i>H1: Political incorporation</i>				
1A: Naturalized citizens	–	+	+	Reject
1B: Active in local politics	–	+	+	Reject
<i>H2: Social incorporation</i>				
2A: Not discriminated against	+	0	0	Reject
2B: Social mobility	+	–	–	Reject
<i>H3: Gender</i>				
3A: Males	+	+	+	Support
<i>H4: Social network</i>				
4A: Size	+	+	+	Support
<i>H5: Socially expected duration</i>				
5A: Family expected return	+	+	+	Support
<i>H6: Country of reception</i>				
6A: Spain	–	+	+	Reject
6B: Italy	+	–	–	Reject
<i>H7: Country of origin</i>				
7A: Dominicans	+	+	+	Support
7B: Colombians	–	–	–	Support
<i>Complementary findings</i>				
Higher education	–	+	+	Reject
Social network's local scope	–	–	–	Support
<i>Place of origin</i>				
Rural areas	+	+	+	Support
Large cities	–	+	+	Reject
Small city or town	+	–	–	Reject
<i>Migration circumstances</i>				
Political migrant	+	+	+	Support
Economic investor	+	+	+	Support

Note: A negative sign represents the prediction or finding of an inverse relationship between each individual predictor and the dependent variable; a positive sign indicates the opposite; a zero indicates no relationship.

dependent on the level of inclusiveness of the context of reception (Portes and Rumabut 2006). Because of the cultural affinities and preferential legal treatment that Spain affords to migrants from its former colonies, we hypothesize that Spain offers a more favorable context of reception for Colombians and Dominicans than does Italy. Drawing on the

logic of the supposedly contradictory relationship between assimilation and transnational engagement, we thus hypothesize that Colombian and Dominican migrants residing in the less inclusive Italian context would be more likely to engage in transnational politics than those residing in Spain (Hypothesis 6).

Our results challenge that expectation, as Colombians and Dominican migrants in Italy are significantly less likely than their co-nationals in Spain to engage in transnational politics. Yet the few migrants in Italy that do engage in transnational politics do so more intensely than their counterparts in Spain. In other words, contrary to assimilation expectations, a more favorable context of reception greeting migrants is more conducive for migrants to maintain some level of transnational political engagement. In this sense, transnational political action cannot be seen as the reactive outcome of a hostile context of reception.

These findings suggest that the relationship between migrants' political and social assimilation and transnational political engagement may be more nuanced than just a zero-sum, contradictory binary, as assimilation scholars expect (Waldinger 2015), and that it may not be explainable simply by complementary processes, as transnational scholars argue (Guarnizo, Portes and Haller 2003). This is due to the multidimensionality of these two processes (which tend to be seen as monolithic) and because their interaction takes place at different scales ranging from micro (individual characteristics and original social status in origin) to meso (social networks extending across borders) to macro (contextual conditions in origin and reception). Moreover, the assimilation-transnational relation is embedded in, and is thus shaped by, social, economic, institutional processes and relationships forming a transnational social space connecting origin and destination polities (Faist 1998; Pries 2001; Glick Schiller 2005; Çağlar and Glick Schiller 2011; Faist, Fuser and Reisenauer 2013).¹⁶

5.2 Social networks and context in origin country

Previous studies overemphasize the importance of the context of reception in determining migrants' political activities across borders. Our evidence shows that transnational political action is also embedded in a transnational space formed by social networks of support and expectations, and is significantly determined by the contextual conditions in migrants' country of origin. We hypothesized that migrants' social networks' size (Hypothesis 4) and family ties to countries of origin (Hypothesis 5), coupled with political contexts in Colombia and the Dominican Republic (Hypothesis 7), would explain differences in the observed mean number of political activities Colombian and Dominican migrants regularly undertake. In keeping with our fourth and fifth hypotheses, our results indicate that the mean number of transnational political activities is positively associated with the size of migrants' social networks and homeland families' expectation of return. These coincide with US-research findings, according to which migrants' social networks help explain both the frequency and character of their transnational engagement (Portes, Haller and Guarnizo 2002; Guarnizo, Portes and Haller 2003).

Finally, results reveal how general contextual conditions in migrants' countries of origin strongly affect migrants' propensity to engage in homeland politics from abroad. In keeping with Hypothesis 7, results indicate that Dominican migrants are indeed more likely

than Colombian migrants to engage in transnational politics. This finding coincides with the conclusions of previous research on the transnational political activism of Dominican migrants in the USA (Guarnizo 2001; Levitt 2001; Guarnizo, Portes and Haller 2003). More importantly, this finding suggests that internal conditions in the country of origin, including political practices and opportunities, render some polities of origin more conducive than others to encouraging migrants' long-distance engagement in politics. Considered together, these results contribute to a better understanding of the determinants of migrants' transnational political participation; for they suggest that it is shaped by sociopolitical factors operating at multiple scales, rather than just at the local and personal levels, as understood thus far. Specifically, migrants' transnational political participation is determined by migrants' personal characteristics (gender and class), their mode of social and political assimilation at the local level (social mobility, naturalization, and political participation), their social embeddedness in transnational networks of support (size and geography), as well as by the contextual conditions in the receiving country (level of inclusiveness) and, especially, in the polity of origin (political culture and opportunity structure).

6. Conclusion

This comparative study contributes new insights that build upon and go beyond existing theoretical understandings of transnational political engagement derived from the US experience. It demonstrates that the relationship between assimilation and transnational political engagement is a nonzero-sum—that is, it is not simply a contradictory or a complementary relationship mostly determined by the context of reception, as earlier studies argue. We reach this conclusion by analyzing assimilation as a *social* and *political* process, and by analyzing transnational political action as composed by multiple electoral and non-electoral political activities affecting migrants' homelands. We find that migrants' proclivity to engage in transnational political activities is embedded in a transnational social space and molded by the structural contexts of reception and departure, as well as migrants' networks of support extending across borders.

At the individual level, results indicate that social assimilation into receiving societies is inversely related to the likelihood of engaging in transnational political activities: the higher migrants' upward social mobility *vis-à-vis* their homeland status, the less likely they are to be involved in homeland politics. However, this conclusion should be interpreted in light of the specific composition of the migrant population and the opportunities offered by the receiving societies. Specifically, the type of socioeconomic opportunities (i.e. low-paid, dead-end service and construction jobs) Spain and Italy offer to extra-communitarians makes it possible for those originally from lower social strata to 'move up,' while their upper-strata compatriots tend to move down. However, migrants' proclivity to participate or not in politics persists, with the better-off remaining more active than the worse-off. From this perspective, the likelihood of engaging in transnational political action has more to do with the interaction of migrants' class background and the opportunities they encounter abroad, than with their social mobility *per se*. So while at first glance our results contradict those from studies of Colombians and Dominicans in the USA, upon closer

examination they actually converge. Both confirm that *transnational political action tends to be the domain of the better-off immigrants*. However, our findings allow us to qualify this statement by adding that this is true whether migrants who are better-off in their country of origin experience upward or downward mobility abroad. Thus, in terms of the likelihood to engage in political action, there is social continuity across transnational space. This conclusion is reinforced by our finding that discrimination, another key measure of social assimilation, is not related to migrants' likelihood of engaging in transnational politics.

On the other hand, indicators of migrant political incorporation (i.e. political re-socialization), seem to increase, rather than prevent, migrants' political activism across borders. Such unexpected findings point to the continuity, instead of fragmentation, of political activism across transnational political space—i.e. those who are politically active on one side of their transnational space are more likely to also engage in politics on the other side.

The counter-intuitive and at times contradictory results gleaned from the present study suggest that the process of political re-socialization is dependent not just on the context of reception, but on migrants' class origins and the political culture and opportunity structure in migrants' home countries. Migrants only maintain complementary political engagements with their new countries of settlement and former homelands if they perceive of political participation as a worthy and valuable endeavor. Indeed, recent studies confirm Colombians' very low electoral political participation, which contrasts with Dominicans' high and increasing political engagement in Europe and elsewhere since 2004 (Aquino 2016; Bermudez 2016; Bermudez and Escrivá 2016; Thomas 2016). In this sense, paying attention to the specific symbolic meanings that migrants give public policies and political opportunities, and not just the nominal existence of certain policies (i.e. dual citizenship, voting rights from abroad, and so forth) may well be crucial for understanding migrants' likelihood of transnational political activism.

More recently, and consistent with the re-socialization perspective, Chaudhary (2017) finds that time since arrival is negatively associated with having voted in the last homeland election. At the same time, he finds a similar sense of political continuity between local and transnational political participation, so that immigrants who voted in the last elections in the receiving polity are also twice as likely to have voted in homeland elections. Over a decade after the collection of the data on which this study is based, current processes in Spain and Italy, and elsewhere in Europe, seem to lend support to our conclusions.

6.1 Trans-Atlantic theoretical convergence

This research offers trans-Atlantic theoretical insights that shed light on processes of transnationalism and their variations in the USA and key new Latin American immigrant destinations in Europe. Evidence gleaned from the present study, coupled with findings from the extensive literature on Latin American migrant transnational engagement in the USA, leads us to suggest the following theoretical propositions.

First, transnational political participation, as defined here, *is the field of the better-off migrants in the origin country*. This is not surprising, as this tends to be true in all nation-states. Among migrants, as well as in settled societies, regular political participation is not (for now, at least) the field of the worse-off and least educated who move from low-income countries to urban centers in the north. Again, transnationalism per se does not constitute a

more inclusive, democratic field, or a field different from that in the society of origin. Yet, at the same time, this kind of political practice across national borders constitutes a political space that could allow for the formation of new political alternatives, particularly for the polities of origin.

Second, gender represents a key determining factor associated with transnational political engagement on both sides of the Atlantic. Regardless of the context of origin and reception, *migrant political transnationalism is a gendered process dominated by men*. This does not mean that women are not political agents, or do not take part in transnational political activities. Rather, it means that this field tends to be monopolized by men, just as men tend to monopolize the political field at the local and national levels the world over, including in affluent democracies like the USA (Lawless and Fox 2012). The fact that women migrants are less likely than men to engage in transnational politics calls attention to the fact that public political engagement, whether it takes place within or across national borders, is shaped by gendered power relations. In this sense, migrant transnationalism does not necessarily create new, less unequal gender relations. So far, at least, it tends to reproduce them, although it is possible that transnational engagement may change this in the future.

Third, given the fact that political transnationalism tends to be the domain of better-educated males from higher class status who were politically active before emigrating, *regular transnational political activism is by definition the domain of the few*. This finding confirms what others have already reported (Guarnizo, Portes and Haller 2003; Lucassen 2004; Wald 2008; Waldinger 2008; Waldinger and Soehl 2013), namely, that *transnational political activists are part of a small minority*. Committed, persistent political activists, especially people regularly undertaking the seven activities included in our definition, are a minority in the USA, as well as in Spain and Italy.

Fourth, *small incidences of political transnational engagement can have a significant impact on the countries of origin and reception*. As this and US-based studies show, the fact that a minority of migrants engage in transnational activism should not be construed to mean that the effects of transnational political action are trivial. For in social action, the quantity of people engaged cannot be equated with an action's quality and the scope of its effects. Indeed, despite its low incidence, migrants' political engagement with their homelands from afar has already provoked significant institutional and practical changes in their polities of origin. They also reverberate transnationally, affecting countries of destination, and increasing migrants' rate of naturalization and economic incorporation (Faist and Kivisto 2007; Mazzolari 2009). Indeed, migrants' engagement from afar has already engendered significant changes in institutions such as citizenship (i.e. approval of dual and multiple citizenship in dozens of countries), democratic participation (i.e. voting and representation in national and regional legislatures), and in the space of action of both states and civil society, which has expanded beyond formal national borders (Gamlen 2008; Lafleur 2013).

Fifth, *the home country's political culture, conditions, and institutional context, particularly the dominant political culture, seem to play an equal or even more significant role in determining transnational political activism than the context in the country of destination*. This is true, even though the context of reception, and the way migrants engage with it, affects the likelihood of being active transnationally. This suggests that formal institutional

opportunities in countries of origin are a necessary but insufficient condition to sustain transnational political participation. Everyday political culture seems to be a *sine qua non* for sustaining this participation. Thus, while the context of reception is crucial for incorporation, the context of origin is crucial for understanding variations in transnational political engagement across migrant groups.

Notes

1. Incidentally, Mexico is one of the few cases that depart from the multidirectional mobility pattern as some 95 per cent of Mexican migrants go to the USA (INEGI 2011: 6). The World Bank puts that figure at 98 per cent (World Bank 2013).
2. See Waters and Jiménez (2005) for a detailed overview of theoretical and empirical research using the assimilation perspective
3. In both countries, a substantial increase in female participation in the labor market resulted in a deficit in the care of children and the elderly triggering the demand for care workers, which was met by immigrant women. Latin American women became ideal providers in Spain and some Italian regions (Izquierdo Escribano 2004; Catanzaro and Colombo 2009).
4. In May and December 2015, the EU lifted visa requirements for Dominicans and Colombians, respectively.
5. Between 1995 and 2006, Italy regularized the largest number of immigrants (1.3 million) in the EU, followed by Spain (1.0 million). However, while in 2006 Italy approved the regularization of 70 per cent of the applicants (a 23 per cent decline as compared to 1995), 84 per cent of applicants were regularized in Spain in 2005 (a 1.5 per cent drop compared to 1996). This further suggests that Spain tends to be more inclusive than Italy (Brick 2011).
6. Data comparing voter turnout in Colombia and the Dominican Republic are from the most recent elections before 2005, when the data for the present study was gathered.
7. The *New Landscapes of Migration* (NELMI) is a mixed-method comparative study of the migration process, mode of incorporation, and transnational experiences of Colombian and Dominican migrants in Italy, Spain, the UK, and Denmark. It includes over 400 in-depth interviews and quantitative data compiled in six major cities. The present study is restricted to an analysis of the quantitative data obtained in Spain and Italy only. Results from the qualitative component of the research are published elsewhere (Sørensen and Guarnizo 2007).
8. Models were estimated with and without cases with missing data. Since there were no significant differences in the results, we determined the missing data was random and proceeded with list-wise deletion.
9. We identified these centers of aggregation during the initial, qualitative stage of the research. The centers included public offices (i.e. consulates, health centers, relevant state offices), non-governmental and faith-based organizations providing services to immigrants, transnational business services (internet cafés, money transfer agencies, long-distance calling centers (*locutorios*), ethnic markets and restaurants), and public meeting places (bus and train stations, parks, and squares frequented by migrants).

10. The few exceptions include Ahmadov and Sasse (2014), who examine the transnational voting behaviour among Ukrainian and Polish migrants across 15 different destination countries and Lafleur (2012), who explores Bolivian transnational electoral participation from four countries.
11. The personal social network of support was measured by a battery of questions inquiring about respondents': (1) best friends; (2) the people they talk to most often on a typical week; (3) people they talk most often about work or business; (4) people who could help them find a new job; (5) people who could give them information about opening a new business or buying real estate locally; (6) people they would borrow money from; and (7) people they would trust to run their business or take care of their own family if they were to leave the city for a long time. Respondents could list up to three persons per domain. Respondents also provided basic information about each one of these alters, including sex, occupation, nationality, place of residence, and relationship with respondent (i.e. relative, friend, other).
12. (Strict: $d = 0.87/0.36 = 2.43$; broad: $d = 1.82/0.82 = 2.21$)
13. The fit of a zero-inflated model is compared to its non-zero-inflated NBR counterpart using a Vuong test (Vuong 1989). The high statistical significance of the Vuong test confirms that the ZINB model is significantly different from the standard NBR and is thus the more appropriate model.
14. From an assimilation perspective, the larger the sociocultural distance between immigrants and receiving society, the less likely they are to assimilate, and the more likely they are to remain attached to their homeland (i.e. more transnationally engaged). This would be the case of migrants hailing from poor rural areas in the Third World and moving into large European metropolitan areas.
15. Upper-class Dominicans' mean social mobility ratio is -1.373 , while that of their working-class compatriots is 0.991 . Likewise, top-stratum Colombians' mean social mobility ratio is -1.060 , while that of their counterparts from the bottom stratum is 1.209 .
16. For the analysis of the relations, dynamics, and structures generated by migrants' transnational engagement, Glick Schiller and her collaborators use the term transnational social fields. While reminiscent of Pierre Bourdieu's social fields concept, in actuality, Glick Schiller's definition and usage of transnational social field is similar to transnational social space (see, for example, Çağlar, Ayşe and Glick Schiller 2011).

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Appendix

Table A1. Variables used in the analysis

Variable	Definition of measurement	\bar{X}	SD
Dependent			
Strict transnational political engagement	Count of regular involvement in transnational political activities (see Tables 2 and 3)	0.364	0.930
Broad transnational political engagement	Count of regular or occasional involvement in transnational political activities (see Tables 2 and 3)	0.826	1.34
Independent			
<i>Personal demographic characteristics:</i>			
Age	Years	34.99	9.75
Gender	Male = 1; Female = 0	0.31	
Marital status	Married and living together = 1; else = 0	0.50	
<i>Place of origin</i>			
Large city	Yes = 1; else = 0	0.49	
Small city or town	Yes = 1; else = 0	0.25	
Rural	Reference category	0.26	
<i>Human capital</i>			
College graduate	Yes = 1; else = 0	0.30	
<i>Social networks</i>			
Network size	Absolute number of personal ties on whom respondent could rely for various needs (see endnote 10)	11.8	5.53
Network scope	Ratio of locally-based alters to total number of alters in the network	0.39	0.41
Immediate family in country of origin	Yes = 1; else = 0	0.81	
<i>Context of departure</i>			
Expected duration of migration* (family expected migrant to return)	Yes = 1; else = 0	0.77	
Politically motivated migration*	Yes = 1; else = 0	0.13	
Invested money in country of origin	Yes = 1; else = 0	0.15	

(continued)

Table A1. Continued

Variable	Definition of measurement	\bar{X}	SD
<i>Context of reception</i>			
Place of current residence			
Italy	Yes = 1; else = 0	0.50	
Spain	Yes = 1; else = 0	0.50	
Years since arrival**	Years	6.02	5.33
EU citizenship	Yes = 1; else = 0	0.21	
Regular local political participation	Count of regular participation in local political activities (see Tables 2 and 3)	0.067	0.28
Social mobility	Standardized ratio of social status in country of origin to social status in Europe, positive values mean upward mobility, negative values mean downward mobility.***	0.046	1.01
Has experienced direct discrimination	Yes = 1; else = 0	0.56	

Note: Standard deviations (SD) are only reported for continuous variables.

**Politically motivated migration* measures whether migrants left their country in order ‘to escape political persecution,’ or because of a hostile ‘country’s political environment.’

***Years since arrival* are not reported in regression models because they are treated as an exposure variable.

***Two questions tailored to the social structures of each group were used to measure *Social mobility*. The first asks for respondents’ social status in origin and the second enquires about their current status abroad. For Colombians we used an official six-stratum system (ranging from 1, the poorest, to 6, the richest), which was introduced in the early 1990s for a public services cross-subsidy programme. This classification became the measure of Colombians’ class position. For Dominicans, we employed a conventional five-class stratification system—i.e. upper-, upper-middle-, middle-, lower-middle, and working-class. Colombians were asked: ‘To what [social] stratum does your family belong in Colombia?’ and ‘What’s your stratum in this country [Spain/Italy]?’ Dominicans were asked: ‘What’s your family’s social position in the DR?’ and ‘What’s your social position in this country [Spain/Italy]?’