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Determinants of transnational political engagement among Dominican and Colombian migrants in Southern Europe

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Abstract

This paper seeks to investigate the determinants of transnational political engagement among contemporary Latin American migrants in Spain and Italy. We test a series of hypotheses drawing on conventional assimilation theory and recent transnational migration and social network studies. Zero-inflated negative binomial regression models are used to analyse survey data on Colombian and Dominican migrants in Spain and Italy collected as part of the New Landscapes of Migration: A Comparative Study of Mobility and Transnational Practices between Latin America and Europe (NELMI) research project, conducted in four European countries – Spain, Italy, Denmark, and England. Results indicate that political transnational engagement is a gendered processes dominated by highly educated men. Dominican migrants are generally more likely than Colombians to engage in transnational politics. Overall results challenge the assimilationist assumptions that incorporation and transnational engagement are opposite processes. In fact, Colombians and Dominicans living in Spain, a country with which they share the same language, religious affiliation, and a history of colonialism, are more likely to engage in transnational political action than their counterparts in Italy. We conclude by comparing the findings from the European data with previously published results examining the same groups' transnational political engagement in the United States.

Keywords: transnational political engagement, assimilation, determinants, Colombians, Dominicans, Spain, Italy

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Contents

1	Introduction	4
2	Theoretical and empirical contexts.....	5
2.1	The assimilation perspective	5
2.2	The transnational perspective.....	7
2.3	Social networks	8
3	Groups studied	10
3.1	Transnational political participation	12
4	Data and methods.....	12
4.1	Methods.....	13
5	Results.....	14
5.1	General characteristics.....	14
5.2	Multivariate models	17
6	Discussion and conclusions	22
	References	25

1 Introduction

The vast majority of existing studies on migrants' assimilation and transnational practices focus on one single country of destination. However, official aggregate data show that contemporary migration patterns of mobility are multidirectional, rather than bidirectional (United Nations 2011). Migrants from the same country commonly move to several countries of destination, encountering different economic, political, and economic opportunities and barriers. Thus, the nature and extent of migrants' long-distance social, economic, and political participation in their homeland often depends on where they are located abroad. Previous studies of migration have largely focused on a single country of reception. Despite their many merits, they do not allow us to determine how particular contexts of reception affect transnational engagement. This paper addresses this gap by comparing two migrant groups in two different countries of reception.

For the past several decades, the absolute number of people moving across national borders for work, business, refuge, solidarity, or leisure has grown exponentially, engendering significant socioeconomic and political changes throughout the world. Mobile populations have become key agents of globalisation "from below," building steady linkages and networks connecting families (Hondagneu-Sotelo 1997; Mazzucato and Schans 2008; Salazar Parreñas 2005), communities (Goldring 1998; Portes 1997; Smart and Lin 2007; Smith and Bakker 2008), social movements (Keck and Sikkink 1998; Kurasawa 2004; Tarrow 2005), and institutions across national jurisdictions (Brubaker 2010; Faist, Fuser and Reisenauer 2013; Rodriguez 2010). International migrants, especially those moving from the global South to the global North, form the world's most visible mobile population. Because of their impact on local and national societies in the north, southern international migrants have become the subject of intensive research, and a major source of concern for public administrators and politicians who seek to control their mobility and regulate their inclusion or exclusion. The increase in the proportion and diversity of the foreign-born in most metropolitan areas in the global North also poses a challenge to meanings of citizenship, socio-political participation, national identity and national membership (Vertovec 2007).

Studying and analysing migrants' cross-border practices, their determinants and implications, forces us to rethink existing research strategies and analytical frameworks. Despite the predictions and expectations of assimilation theory, migrants' wholesale severing of ties with their homeland does not seem to be taking place, at least not to the extent or in the way expected. According to the assimilationist view, migrants' persistent, long-distance engagement with their homelands militates against their assimilation and integration into the receiving social fabric (Huntington 2004). Yet current trends and research suggest otherwise. While some migrants do indeed break their ties and solidarity with their countries of origin, others, including their offspring, maintain a diverse array of trans-border practices and relationships that keep them connected to "home," creating what seem to be new forms of incorporation and national membership. Moreover, recent research finds a strong positive relationship between assimilation and transnational engagement in the case of Latin American migrants in the United States (Guarnizo, Portes and Haller 2003).

Governments, too, have begun to react creatively and adapt to these changes in ways that challenge traditional notions of the territorially bounded nation. Many states of origin have granted special rights and entitlements to their citizens residing abroad that promote homeland linkages and inclusion (Portes and Smith 2012). These include dual citizenship, voting and representation rights for inhabitants of newly created political districts outside the national territory. Several structural reasons underlie such reforms. To begin with, migrants have become a significant -- in some cases, the most

significant -- source of hard currency for their home economies (Ratha et al. 2007). They are also politically significant in at least two ways. First, states of origin see migrants as potential advocates of their own interests vis-à-vis receiving states, and thus seek to promote migrants' continuing national allegiance. Second, as their status and macroeconomic relevance increases, migrants become a new, powerful political constituency shaping the political fate of their country of origin. In short, states are increasingly aware of migrants' increasing economic and political clout, and seek ways to both mould and capitalise on this influence.

This paper investigates this shifting, multidirectional landscape of migration by examining the transnational experience of Colombian and Dominican migrants in Italy and Spain. We focus on one particular type of transnational connection: migrants' political participation with their home countries from afar. We analyse the determinants of migrants' transnational political engagement, the relationship between their transnational and local political participation, and the role that the context of reception and conditions of departure play in shaping political activism. To better contextualise our findings, the present analysis refers to transnational practices undertaken by migrants from these two national groups in the United States, as reported by previous studies (see Guarnizo, Portes and Haller 2003).

2 Theoretical and empirical contexts

In this section, we provide the conceptual structure that frames our analysis. Specifically, we review empirical findings and analytical arguments made by scholars who embrace three perspectives regarding migrants' incorporation and transnational relations with their homeland: a) the assimilation; b) the transnational, and c) the social network perspective. In turn, we generate a set of hypotheses, which we examine in light of the transnational political practices undertaken by Dominican and Colombian migrants in Italy and Spain.

2.1 The assimilation perspective

The assimilation approach was originally based on the experience of European immigrants to the United States in the late 19th and early 20th centuries. It continues to be the dominant perspective on how the process of incorporation is expected to work (Alba and Nee 1997; 2003). This perspective sees immigrants as newcomers who, over time, are expected to shed their original national identity, cultural customs, and political allegiances as they acculturate to the receiving polity and incorporate themselves into the dominant socioeconomic structures (Gordon 1964; Warner and Srole 1945). According to this view, individuals migrate either definitely (immigrants) or temporarily (sojourners) from one country of origin to another of reception. Thus, this perspective focuses exclusively on immigrants' practices, achievements, identities, and position in the receiving society, discounting the durability or significance of their relationships and connections with their homelands. When such relations are considered, they are seen as temporal and evanescent (Alba and Nee 2003; Rumabut 2002; Waldinger 2008).

The assimilationist perspective expects immigrants to hold one – and only one -- national identity (i.e., nationals of one country only) and to be exclusive members of only one nation-state (i.e., citizens of one country only). These assumptions closely mirror those laid out in the 1930 Hague Convention (League of Nations 1930). According to this view, adopting a new cultural and sociopolitical identity inherently implies renouncing the original one. Similarly, this perspective posits that immigrants' political engagement with their new polity implies severing their political engagement with their old one. The institution of citizenship is seen as regulating this switch of

allegiance and commitment. By naturalizing as citizens of a new polity, immigrants are expected to give up their original national citizenship and rights in exchange for membership in the polity of reception. This new status automatically grants them formal political rights to participate as full members of the receiving national political community (Aleinikoff and Klusmeyer 2002; Schouck 1998).

For example, a recent study by Roger Waldinger examines some transnational political practices undertaken by immigrants in the United States from an assimilation perspective. In it, he argues that the receiving society signals “to the newcomers that acceptance is contingent on a transfer of loyalties from home to host state” and that immigrants “respond positively to this message, concluding that one does better if one can present oneself just like everyone else. Thus [...] the foreigners 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]. Here, Waldinger reaffirms the conception that local political participation, or “political resocialization” as he calls it, represents a zero-sum game, as it implies the termination of migrants’ political commitment and engagement with their homeland (“the foreigners discard one political identity for another”). These arguments lead us to generate the following hypothesis with regard to Dominican and Colombian immigrants in Spain and Italy:

Migrants who have naturalized are significantly less likely to participate in transnational political activities than their non-naturalized counterparts, ceteris paribus;

and

Migrants who are engaged in local political activities are significantly less likely to participate in transnational politics than those who are not locally engaged, ceteris paribus.

The assimilation process, as perceived by its early proponents, is affected by several structural factors (Warner and Srole 1945). One of the most important of these is the sociocultural distance between immigrants and the receiving society as measured by racial and cultural characteristics, language and religion. This distance determines the receiving society’s level and ease of acceptance of the newcomers. Thus, in the case of the United States, it is expected that migrants with sociocultural characteristics closer to dominant white, English-speaking, Protestant American society will be more readily accepted than those exhibiting sociocultural characteristics more distant from this norm (Warner and Srole 1945). Such social distance may either be exacerbated or ameliorated by factors such as immigrants’ level of education and certain characteristics of their homeland. As such, it is expected that higher levels of education would greatly facilitate the assimilation process of the newcomers, thus reducing sociocultural distance. Conversely, moving from a poor rural area to a modern metropolitan region would make the process much more difficult, increasing sociocultural distance between migrants and dominant mainstream society (Srole, Langner and Michael 1962).

If we apply this view to contemporary European countries receiving Latin American migrants, we can generate the following hypotheses. Given the close sociocultural distance between the Latin American immigrants we studied and Spain on several, if not all counts (both speak the same language and profess the same, dominant religion) we propose the following hypotheses:

Migrants in Spain are significantly less likely than their counterparts in Italy to participate in transnational political activities, ceteris paribus;

and

Migrants who are originally from rural areas are significantly more likely than those from urban areas to be engaged in transnational political activities, ceteris paribus.

Sociocultural distance partly shapes the context of reception migrants encounter upon arrival. The context of reception not only includes the receiving civil society, but also official state policies, as well as the presence of a supportive co-ethnic community. Accordingly, it can range from hostile, to neutral, to welcoming (Portes and Rumabut 1996). While some immigrants encounter a negative reception and are treated as a threat to national cultural and political integrity, stability, and security, others find a favourable sociocultural environment and are welcomed and valued. Still others encounter a neutral context in which they go unnoticed by their hosts.

The assimilation model (Gordon 1964) assumes a lack of discrimination and prejudice against the newcomers as a condition of their “structural assimilation.” With reference to our research subjects, these arguments lead us to hypothesise, with respect to Dominican and Colombian migrants, that:

Migrants who have experienced discrimination upon arrival in Spain and Italy are significantly more likely than their counterparts who have not experienced discrimination 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 the way it conceptualises, constructs, and approaches its subject. In this perspective, society and social organisation are not limited to the territorial jurisdiction of the nation state (Faist, Fuser and Reisenauer 2013; Wimmer and Glick-Schiller 2002). This is particularly true in the current era of globalisation, in which the mass spatial mobility of people across national borders poses new challenges to received definitions of sociopolitical membership and social and political organisation in general (Habermas 1995; Held 2010; Urry 2007).

Thus, transnational scholars analyse migrants’ mode of incorporation into their receiving societies, but expand their analytical gaze to include quotidian and substantive practices, ties, and commitments that migrants maintain with their society of origin from abroad. Analytically, these practices are seen as falling into three main domains of action, namely: sociocultural, economic, and political (Portes, Guarnizo and Landolt 1999). In order to delimit the transnational field of action, and be able to operationalize their analysis, scholars in the transnational field argue that three main conditions should be observed: the frequency of the action (from sporadic to regular); the scope of effects (micro-, meso-, macro-social); and the incidence (the proportion of migrants involved).

In order to understand the dynamics, determinants, and effects of migration, transnational researchers look not only within the nation-state of reception, but also across national borders. To apprehend the dynamics of migrants’ mode of incorporation abroad, this analysis tries to take into account the intensity and determinants of migrants’ transnational engagement, and examine their mode of incorporation abroad (Levitt and Glick Schiller 2004).

Using this approach, recent studies of immigrant groups in the United States have found evidence of a dialectical relationship between assimilation and transnationalism. Contrary to the normative expectations of assimilation theory, these studies show that migrants who are more established (i.e., more assimilated) and are doing better economically (i.e., have experienced upward mobility) are the most likely among their compatriots to be fully committed to sustaining strong

transnational political, economic, and sociocultural links with their societies of origin (Guarnizo, Portes and Haller 2003; Itzigsohn and Giorguli Saucedo 2002; Morawska 2003; 2004; Portes, Haller and Guarnizo 2002). From these arguments we derive the next hypothesis with regard to our sample of Dominican and Colombian migrants:

Migrants who have experienced upward social mobility in Spain and Italy are more likely to engage in transnational political actions, ceteris paribus.

Studies examining the transnational engagement of members of the second generation of migrants with their parents' homeland have also found evidence that being transnationally engaged does not prevent full incorporation into the receiving society (Kasinitz et al. 2002: 118). Using a different unit of analysis, recent studies focusing on migrant organisations' contributions to homeland politics and development have also found a similarly strong relationship between transnationalism and assimilation among Latin American and Chinese migrants (Portes, Escobar and Radford 2007; Portes, Escobar and Arana 2009; Zhou 2011). Thus, the fact that migrant groups engage in transnational activism does not mean "that acculturation to the host society is not occurring or that transnational activism necessarily precludes successful integration" (Guarnizo, Portes and Haller 2003: 1239).

However, despite the significant differences between the transnational and assimilation perspectives, there are two areas in which they seem to concur. The first has to do with the incidence of transnational political participation. Several studies have found that transnational political engagement is not as extensive as initially thought and that transnational political activists tend to form a small, albeit significant, minority (Bermudez 2011; Guarnizo, Portes and Haller 2003; Waldinger 2008). The second has to do with the central role that gender plays in determining transnational action. Although there are variations across national groups, there seems to be a consensus that transnational politics is a field dominated by men who tend to monopolise the leadership of civic and political organizations and initiatives oriented to the homeland. Men also appear to be more likely than women to keep their connections with and their desire to return to their homeland alive (Guarnizo, Portes and Haller 2003; Jones-Correa 1998; Medina 2008; Pessar and Mahler 2003; Smith and Bakker 2008). From the argumentation above, we forge the following hypotheses:

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

Only a small minority of Colombian and Dominican immigrants in Spain and Italy are actively engaged in transnational politics, ceteris paribus.

2.3 Social networks

In relation to migration, social network theory and contemporary economic sociology have provided a robust conceptual framework that complements assimilation and transnational approaches. This conceptual 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 mould and facilitate migration, from the very decision to emigrate, to the actual departure, to the mode of economic and social incorporation abroad. 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. 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 the initial displacements (Massey et al. 1987; Portes and Bach 1985).

A study of the transnational political participation of three Latin American immigrant groups in the United States found that the size of migrants' personal network of support had a positive effect on transnational political engagement. It concluded that the larger the network size, the more transnationally involved migrants were (Guarnizo, Portes and Haller 2003). These findings lead us to hypothesise that in the case of Dominican and Colombian migrants in Spain and Italy:

The larger these migrants' social network of support, the more engaged they will be in transnational politics, ceteris paribus.

Another critical dimension of social network theory that helps explain migrants' likelihood to engage in transnational political action has to do with the expectation that migrants' relatives back home have about the length of their family members' journey. Merton called these "socially expected durations" (SED), and saw them as decisive elements influencing migrants' social interactions and decisions. In applying Merton's SED concept, Bryan Roberts showed that migrants' likelihood of engaging in self-employment consistently varied with the socially expected duration of their migratory journey (Roberts 1995). Guarnizo, Portes, and Haller (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. Based on these findings, we can expect to find that in Spain and Italy:

Dominican and Colombian migrants whose families expect them to return to their homeland for good are more likely to be politically engaged transnationally than their counterparts whose families expect them to return, ceteris paribus.

Finally, several studies have confirmed the uneven likelihood of transnationalism across different national groups. For example, the Colombian government has created a strong institutional structure that provides its migrants with multiple transnational rights and opportunities for political action from afar (dual citizenship, voting rights, representation in the national Congress, a national office promoting their inclusion). Yet Colombian migrants in the United States show a very low level of transnational political participation, even lower than that exhibited by migrants from countries with far fewer institutional opportunities like the Dominican Republic (Bermudez 2011; Guarnizo 2008; Guarnizo, Portes and Haller 2003; Itzigsohn 2000; Landolt and Goldring 2010). Colombians' subdued political behaviour has been explained by a dominant political culture characterised by a pervasive mistrust of electoral politics, which is commonly perceived of as inherently corrupt and rigged (Bermudez 2010; Guarnizo and Diaz 1999). On the other hand, Dominican immigrants in the United States have demonstrated a strong political drive both locally and transnationally. Dominicans have succeeded in electing several political representatives at the local and state level in New York, Rhode Island, and Massachusetts, among others. Similarly, in Italy, despite their small numbers and relative recent arrival, Dominican migrants have already been elected to public office, including Mercedes Lourdes Frías, who was elected to the Lower Chamber of the Italian Parliament representing Tuscany in 2006. These findings might lead us to expect that:

In Spain and Italy, Colombians are less likely than Dominicans to be engaged in transnational politics, ceteris paribus.

3 Groups studied

In this section, we succinctly describe the migration and national history of Colombian and Dominican migrants as a background for the analysis to follow.

Since the early 1990s, mass migration from Colombia and the Dominican Republic has dramatically increased, in part due to the swift implementation of neoliberal economic reforms in both countries at end of the Cold War (González Gutierrez 2006; Huber and Solt 2004). In both cases, this increase has been accompanied by greater sociodemographic diversity among the migrants and a wider range of destinations. These and other similarities aside, however, the experiences of these two national groups differ as a result of their particular national histories and realities, as well as their countries' position in the regional and global political economy.

According to the Colombian Ministry of Foreign Relations, some 4.4 million Colombians, or around one out of every ten Colombians, have emigrated and settled in over twenty countries across four continents (Bérubé 2005; Ministerio de Relaciones Exteriores 2009). After decades of migration, the largest concentrations of Colombians are located in Venezuela, the United States, Spain, and Ecuador, with significant communities in Italy, Canada, France, the UK, and Germany (Mejia et al. 2009). Although there are no reliable statistics on the total number of Dominicans dispersed across the world, specialists estimate that there are between 2 and 3 million (or around one out of every five Dominicans) abroad, with some 70 percent of them in the US (Ennis, Ríos-Vargas and Albert 2011; Espino 2013). Dominican authorities have also reported a growing and significant global dispersion of their citizens. The United States and Puerto Rico host the largest number of Dominicans abroad, followed by Spain, Italy, Venezuela, Switzerland, and the Netherlands (Espino 2013; Table 1).

Colombians and Dominicans are among the largest Latin American groups in Europe. In Spain, a quarter of a million authorised Colombians residents constitute the second largest Latin American group after Ecuadoreans, and the largest among South Americans, while around 90,000 formal Dominican residents form the fifth largest Latin American contingent (Instituto Nacional de Estadística 2013). In Italy, authorised Dominican (26,000) and Colombian (21,000) immigrants constitute, respectively, the third and fourth largest Latin American groups, following Peruvians (102,000) and Ecuadorians (86,000), the two largest immigrant groups from the New World (Istituto Nazionale di Statistica 2013). How did this global pattern of dispersion take form?

Table 1. Migrants' country of origin profile

Country of Origin	Colombians	Dominicans
2013 Population (in millions)	48.37	10.29
2012 GNI per capita (\$)*	7,104	5,530
2010 Income Share - Poorest Quintile(%)*.	3.0	4.7
2010 Income Share - Richest Quintile(%)	60.2	52.8
2011 Gini index of income inequality	.50	.60
2011 Poverty Rate (%)	34.2	42.2
2010 Adult Literacy Rate (%)	98.1	96.8
2011 Unemployment (%)	11.3	14.3
Migration Geography		
Major Countries of Destination	USA, Venezuela, Spain , Ecuador, Italy , Canada France	USA, Puerto Rico, Spain, Italy , Venezuela, Switzerland,

Migrant Population (1,000)

Total	4,243	1,500
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.

*** 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 (reference).

The outbreak of mass migration from these two countries dates back to the 1960s, although triggered by a diverse set of different reasons. Up until the end of the Cold War, the most important country of destination for Dominicans was the United States (Grasmuck and Pessar 1991), while for Colombians it was Venezuela, followed by the US. At the end of the Cold War this patterns of mobility changed (Chaney 1976). As the Venezuelan economic boom came to a halt and the US immigration restrictions hardened even further. Thousands of Dominicans and Colombians who could not secure a US visa, or who were returned at the border, pursued alternative shores to escape from the effects of the neoliberal onslaught. Market-centered reforms were having a heavy impact on national labour markets and particularly affecting young women. In the Dominican Republic, young women, who were not in the labour market before, were actively recruited to toil at the bottom of the labour market for wages substantially lower than those paid to men in newly opened Free Processing Zones and special agricultural zones (Reynolds 1998). For Colombians, market-centered policies increased the pool of the unemployed, particular young, middle-class women who had recently entered the labour market in significant numbers and were among the first to be laid off. In addition, deepening political and drug-related violence between the mid-1980s and late 2000s, generated over three million internally displaced people and forced thousands of political activists, labour union leaders, human rights workers, and civic leaders to leave the country in search of protection making Colombia one of the most important sources of political refugees in the world (Bermudez 2006; Restrepo Vélez 2006; UNHCR 2012). It is in this context that the consolidating European Union, and the emerging Spanish and Italian economies in particular, became the next “promised land”.

Colombians and Dominicans took advantage of the opportunities offered by the emerging conditions in Europe thanks to several structural factors that facilitated their transatlantic journey. First, Latin Americans were not required to have a visa to travel to the Old World. Visa requirement was imposed on Colombians and Dominicans only when their mass presence became noticeable in the early 2000s. A second structural factor that facilitated the transatlantic move was the rapidly expanding international tourism from Europe. Most of the new tourists were lower-middle and working-class people, especially Spanish, Italian, and German men who, thanks to the expanding European economy, could afford vacationing abroad. This phenomenon first hit the Dominican Republic in the 1980s and Colombia in the late 1990s and early 2000s. Unsurprisingly, out of this influx of tourists many romantic relationships with local women were formed connecting many families from Dominican small towns and rural areas, as well as many families from urban Colombian centers, to European urban centres such as Madrid, Barcelona, Milan, and Rome (Fieldnotes 2005-2007; Brennan 2004; Sørensen 1998; Sørensen and Guarnizo 2007). This process in great part explains the overrepresentation of women among these two migrant groups.

Unlike Dominicans, who on average were more likely to have lower levels of education, the vast majority of Colombians came from urban centers and had a high proportion of college educated, middle-class women. Regardless of their personal educational attainment, both Colombian and Dominicans were recruited to work in the same low-paid, dead-end personal service occupations, including sex work, especially in Spain and Italy.

3.1 Transnational political participation

The Dominican Republic and Colombia have implemented a series of constitutional reforms and policies designed to promote and sustain the loyalty and solidarity of their overseas populations (IDEA 2007). The Dominican Republic approved the vote from abroad in 1997. But it was not until the 2004 national elections that Dominicans residing abroad were able to vote. And after a long process, Dominicans residing abroad were granted seven seats to represent them in the Dominican Lower Chamber of Representatives. The first Overseas Representatives, from three electoral districts abroad, were elected on May 20th, 2012. Colombia, on the other hand, granted voting rights to its citizens back in 1962, but this right became politically significant only after the mid-1990s, when the number of Colombians residing abroad reached a critical mass. The 1991 National Constitution introduced the right to dual citizenship and the right of overseas residents to elect one representative to the Lower Chamber of Representatives. In early 2013, the Colombian Congress increased migrants' representation to two seats.

Thanks to a bilateral agreement signed between Spain and Colombia in 2010, authorised Colombian residents also have the right to vote in Spanish municipal elections without possessing Spanish citizenship. They made use of this right for the first time in the 2012 Spanish elections (Ortega Giménez 2011).

4 Data and methods

Data come from *New Landscapes of Migration: A Comparative Study of Mobility and Transnational Practices between Latin America and Europe* (NELMI), a survey of Dominican and Colombian migrants in Spain, Italy, the UK and Denmark conducted by Luis E Guarnizo and Nina Nyberg Sorensen. The results presented here, however, are drawn only from the Spain and Italy data. Data-gathering design combined qualitative and quantitative data gathered between 2004 and 2007 (Guarnizo 2008; Sørensen and Guarnizo 2007). Qualitative data consisted of some 400 in-depth interviews with migrants and key informants (i.e., local and national officials, scholars, and civic leaders) in Spain (Barcelona and Madrid), Italy (Rome, Milan, Turin, Genoa), and in the Dominican Republic and Colombia, including the capital cities, two regions in the Dominican Republic, and three in Colombia. Additional qualitative data was collected from participant observation in multiple public events organised by or for these two migrant groups in various locations in Italy and Spain. Quantitative data came from a convenience survey of 636 immigrants conducted in Madrid, Barcelona, Rome, and Milan, the cities with the highest concentrations of Dominicans and Colombians in these two countries. (The final sample size used in our analysis, however, was 581, due to deletion of cases with random missing values).

The literature on migrants' transnational political participation has tended to privilege a specific type of political action as the main indicator of transnational political engagement: voting abroad (Baubock 2007; Boccagni 2011; Waldinger 2008). Our inquiry departed from this approach to follow that proposed a decade ago by Guarnizo, Portes, and Haller (2003). These authors conceptualised transnational political engagement not as a singular activity, but rather as a complex

social domain composed of multiple activities that crisscross national borders. In turn, these activities were categorised according to their frequency in order to differentiate between sporadic and regular transnational engagement. Our operationalization of transnational political participation combined electoral and non-electoral activities that migrants undertook to influence processes in their home country. We included four electoral and three non-electoral activities. Electoral activities included membership in a political party in the country of origin, engagement in home county political campaigns, monetary contributions to a home-country party, and voting in home-country elections. Non-electoral activities included membership in hometown associations, monetary contributions to community development projects in the country of origin, and membership in philanthropic organisations focused on providing help for the home country.

Our dependent variable is a count of the number of these seven transnational political activities (0-7 range). In a strict sense, transnational engagement is operationalized as formed by activities undertaken only regularly. However, since the transnational field is formed by actions undertaken with a diverse range of frequency, in addition to the more restrictive definition, we also use a broad definition of transnationalism to include all transnational involvement regardless of frequency. In order to identify the frequency of involvement, 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 this strict criterion, we constructed 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 was 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.”

Independent variables include socio-demographics (sex, education, age, marital status, years of residence in the current location), as well as variables associated with transnational activities, including place of origin (large city, small city or town, and rural), size of personal social network and its scope (ratio of locally-based alters to total number of alters in the network), the presence of nuclear family members in the homeland, family- expected duration (when the family expected the subject to return), reasons for migrating (political and non-political), and variables measuring the context of reception. Variables used to measure contextual conditions included, country of residence (Spain is used as control), nationality, citizenship, count of frequent participation in local politics, social mobility since arrival (standardised ratio of the status of current occupation to last occupation in country of origin; higher values meant higher upward mobility and negative values meant downward mobility), and whether the subject had experienced discrimination. The definition and measurement of each variable are described in Table A in the Appendix.

4.1 Methods

The Poisson distribution is the most widely used distribution in modelling count data. It is a discrete probability distribution that expresses the probability of a given number of events occurring in a fixed interval of time if these events occur with a known average rate. However, one of the central assumptions of Poisson models is equidispersion, that is the mean and the variance of the residuals are approximately the same. However, unobserved heterogeneity in the data can often yield over dispersion. In this case, negative binomial regression (NBR) is used (Cameron and Trivedi 1998; Puig and Valero 2007). NBR allows for extra-Poisson variation by taking this over-dispersion into account.

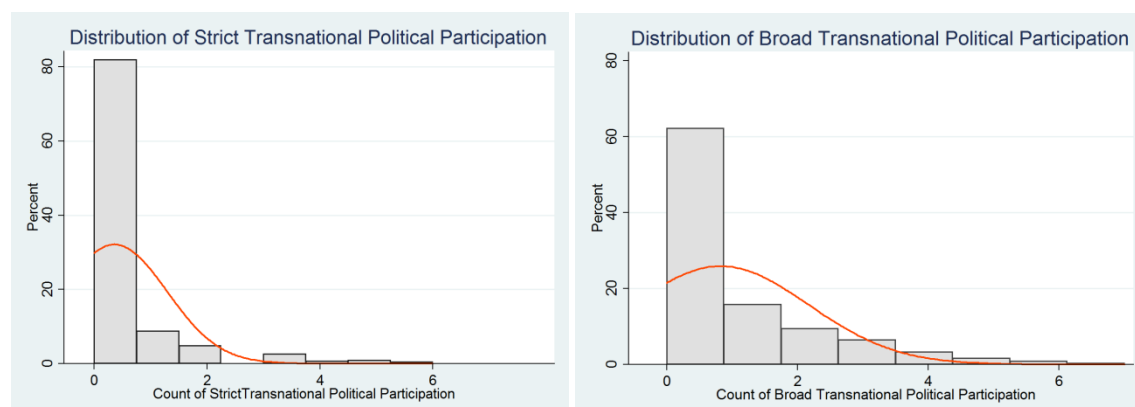
The dispersion index of a count variable X is usually defined as $d = V(X)/E(X)$. The variable is over dispersed if $d > 1$. The variance of our dependent variable, measured under either a strict or

broad definition, is around twice the size of the mean (strict: $d = .869872/.3581848 = 2.43$; broad: $d = 1.817766/.8233387 = 2.21$). Therefore a NBR model is a better fit than a Poisson regression.

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 time during which the events are recorded. NBR assumes that each subject in the sample have 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 12 (exposure (varname)) using the number of years since arrival. While NBR accounts for overdispersion, 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, has an excessive number of zeros (81.3 percent and 61.5 percent), which clearly violates NBR assumptions. In this case, the Zero Inflated Negative Binomial (ZINB) regression model is the most appropriate (Cameron and Trivedi 1998; Du et al. 2012).

The ZINB model assumes that two separate processes generate the excess 0s, so excess zeros can be modelled independently. In other words, the model assumes that some zeros occurred because of a Poisson process, but others did not, so the model examines whether there has been some misclassification due to some latent process, and some covariates show more zeros than expected. Theoretically, there are two processes at work: one that determines if the individual is eligible for a zero response (i.e., no transnational action), and the other that determines the count of that response for eligible individuals (i.e., how much transnational action). The final analysis, however, should be driven by theoretical, rather than mere statistical reasons. ZINB regression produces two separate models: one is the count model (NBR) and the other is a logit model predicting the latent binary outcome – i.e., predicting whether each predictor is a ‘certain 0’ or not.

Graph 1. Distribution of strict and broad transnational political participation



5 Results

5.1 General characteristics

Table 2 presents the general profile of the NELMI sample. The data show that the respondents are, on average, relatively young, married, and that the majority of them are women. These characteristics closely resemble official aggregate data at the time of the study. On average, they arrived in Europe at

a prime productive age and experienced very little upward social mobility since their arrival, and 40.94 per cent of them had actually experienced downward mobility at the time of the study (data not shown). They had an average personal social network of 12 people, a substantive proportion of whom (40 percent) lived in the same city.

However, there are some significant differences between the two groups that could shed light on their likelihood of engagement in transnational political activities. First, the vast majority of Colombians (67 percent) came from large cities, while almost half of Dominicans (44 percent) were originally from rural areas. Similarly, while three-fifths (62 percent) of Colombians had a college degree or higher level of education, only one fifth (22 percent) of Dominicans did. In assimilationist terms, the sociocultural distance between Dominicans and the receiving European societies was much greater than that of Colombians not only because of their origins and lower education, but also because of the possible discriminatory effects of racialization against Dominicans, the majority of whom are of African descent as compared to their lighter-skinned Andean counterparts. If this were the case, Colombians would have a higher rate of naturalization as EU citizens, and a lower likelihood of experiencing discrimination. Accordingly, Colombians would also be less involved in transnational political action than Dominicans.

Data reported in Table 2 produces a rather ambiguous picture. Contrary to the above expectations, Colombians were more likely to have experienced discrimination and less likely to have naturalized or have been engaged in transnational political action than their Dominican counterparts. In fact (and as expected) Dominicans in the study were more likely to be engaged in transnational political activities than Colombians, regardless of whether such participation was measured using a strict or broad definition. These preliminary results seem to support the argument that dominant political culture is a better predictor of political transnationalism than traditional sociodemographic factors such as - levels of education and urban origins. Data at the group level also suggest that the higher level of discrimination that Colombians reported could be related to stereotypes linking Colombians to international drug trafficking. Also, it is worth noting that despite their lower experience of discrimination, almost half of Dominicans in the study had experienced discrimination.

Table 2. Characteristics of the sample

Variable	Colombians	Dominicans	All
Dependent Variables			
Count of Regular Involvement in Transnational Political Activities (Strict)	.231(.677)	.515(1.13)	.364(.930)***
Count of Occasional Involvement in Transnational Political Activities (Broad)	.668(1.18)	1.00(1.49)	.826(1.34)**
Independent Variables			
<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	49.48***
Small City or Town	23.1	26.6	24.7
Rural	9.74	43.8	25.77***
<i>Human Capital</i>			
Social Mobility .....	.087(1.01)	.000(1.00)	.046(1.01)
College Graduate	62.0	21.5	69.8***
<i>Social Networks</i>			

Network Size	11.9(<i>5.18</i>)	11.7(<i>5.89</i>)	11.8(<i>5.52</i>)
Network Scope .....	.414(<i>.413</i>)	.371(<i>.405</i>)	.394(<i>.419</i>)
Immediate Family in Country of Origin	79.9	82.2	80.9
<i>Context of Departure</i>			
Family Expected Temporal Duration of Migration	73.7	79.6	76.8
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>			
Place of Current Residence			
Italy	52.6	47.8	50.3
Spain	47.4	52.2	49.7
Years Since Arrival.....	5.72(<i>5.09</i>)	6.35(<i>5.58</i>)	6.02(<i>5.33</i>)
Have E.U. Citizenship	15.9	27.4	21.3**
Count of Regular Participation in Local Political Activities .....	.065(<i>.256</i>)	.080(<i>.319</i>)	.067(<i>.282</i>)
Have Experienced Direct Discrimination..	63.9	47.1	56.0***
N (unweighted)	308	273	581

Note.—P values are from T-test of significance of between-group differences. Definition and measurements of variables appear in Appendix Table A. Standard Deviations are italicised and appear in parentheses next to means.

* P < .05.

** P < .01.

*** P < .001.

What was the incidence of transnational political activism among the sampled migrants? Table 3 shows frequency distributions of the seven transnational political activities included in the study broken down by group, and by whether they were defined strictly or broadly. The bottom panel of the table presents the distribution of three local political activities (participating in Spanish/Italian electoral campaigns, giving money to Spanish/Italian political parties, and voting in Spanish/Italian elections). Over one third (38 percent) of the sampled migrants engaged in transnational political activities on an occasional or regular basis, while around one-fifth (15 percent) engaged in local political action. However, when political action was restricted to only those who were regular activists, the overall proportion of transnationals was halved (18 percent), while the proportion of local activists was drastically reduced (by two-thirds) to just 6 percent of respondents. These data confirm Dominicans' higher proclivity to political activism, either locally or transnationally as compared to that of Colombians. As expected, both groups were much more likely to participate in transnational rather than in local political activities.

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						
Electoral Politics:						
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
Non-Electoral Politics						
Membership in civic hometown association	2.60	5.84	4.12	8.77	14.23	11.34
Gives money for community projects in	1.30	1.82	1.55	4.87	8.03	6.36

home country						
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	18.2	33.64	42.41	37.8
LOCAL PARTICIPATION						
Electoral Politics:						
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
<i>N</i> (unweighted)	308	274	582	308	274	582

NOTE: Local Participation refers to respondents' political participation in local politics in their place of residence in Italy or Spain. The regression analysis uses Regular Local Participation only.

A two-group mean-comparison *t* test on the overall transnational political participation *** *P* < .001.

5.2 Multivariate models

Results from the ZINB model are reported in Table 4. They are arranged in two sets of columns: the first one reports regression results for transnational political participation, broadly defined. The second set of columns presents 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 transnational (certain zeros). Our main interest centers on the results for the strict definition of transnational political activities, for they provide the main evidence for testing our hypotheses and for our conclusions. The high statistical significance of the Vuong test confirms that the ZINB model is significantly different from the standard NBR and is thus more appropriate model,

The gender coefficient confirms that transnational political engagement, however defined, is a gendered process. The NBR coefficients show that regular transnational political action is mostly a male field. Men's mean transnational activities count was 75 percent higher than women's, with other variables held constant. This relationship is confirmed by the logistic regression results, which show that women were 72 percent more likely than men to report zero transnational political activities, that is, they were much more likely than men not to be regular political activists in their homeland. When we use a more relaxed definition of transnational political activities, including sporadic and regular engagement, men's mean count was even higher vis-à-vis women (80 percent higher). Higher education had 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. Seen from the perspective of traditional electoral politics, this is not a surprising finding, for the more educated tend to be more likely to be politically engaged. This finding however, counters expectations derived from the assimilation perspective.

How does the context of reception and mode of incorporation affect migrants' likelihood of being transnationally active? Next, we examine the effect of context of reception, and the effect of migrants' mode of incorporation, on the count of transnational political activities. We do this by examining the sociocultural distance between migrants and receiving society. We hypothesised that, given their cultural, linguistic, and religious closeness to Spain, Latin American migrants there would be less likely than those in Italy to engage in transnational action, thus, would have a smaller count of transnational activities. The NBR coefficients indicated that respondents in Italy had a mean count of regular transnational activities over twice as large as those in Spain (230 percent), with other variables held constant. However, the logit model revealed that respondents based in Italy were around 70

percent more likely not to be transnationally engaged (certain zeros) than their counterparts in Spain, while holding other variables constant.

Such results defied 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? What these apparently contradictory results indicate is a bimodal relationship. While those in Italy were significantly less likely to be transnationally engaged than their counterparts in Spain (i.e., much more likely to be certain zeros), the few who were so engaged had an above-average count of transnational engagement. In other words, respondents in Spain were more likely than those in Italy to be transnationally active. Therefore, Colombians and Dominicans' sociocultural closeness to mainstream Spanish society promoted, rather than curtailed, their transnationalism.

Upward social mobility, an important measurement of incorporation, presents a similarly surprising relationship with transnationalism. NBR coefficients show that migrants' higher social mobility positively affected their mean regular transnational activities count, holding other variables constant, with the mean transnational count increasing 37 percent for each additional point in the social mobility ratio. However, logistic coefficients show that social mobility was positively associated with the likelihood of not being regularly engaged in transnational activities. In other words, the more migrants moved up socially, the less likely they were to be transnationally engaged. The same effect is observed when transnational political engagement was defined broadly: those migrants who have moved up in their occupational standing were less likely to be transnationally engaged. This finding supports assimilation expectations and counters findings reported about Colombians and Dominicans in the US according to which upward social mobility was positively related to transnational political action, the better migrants did, the more likely they were to be transnationally engaged (Guarnizo, Portes and Haller 2003). Apparently, the context of reception and the selectivity of migrants explain the difference between the European and American experience.

A third important contextual factor is naturalization. We expect that naturalization would temper migrants' drive to be politically active across borders. NBR coefficients indicate that indeed, naturalized migrants' mean transnational count of regular cross-border activities was 63 percent smaller than that of non-naturalized migrants, while holding other variables constant. This result is very similar in relation to transnationality when broadly defined. In this latter case, however, logistic coefficients show that, when holding other variables constant, non-naturalized migrants were 84 percent more likely than the naturalized to be not transnationally engaged (certain zeros). In sum, while naturalization negatively affected migrants' mean count of habitual cross-border political activities, it did not sever their political engagement with their old country altogether.

This conclusion concurs with that reported by Guarnizo, Portes, and Haller (2003) a decade ago. However, there is a caveat: while these authors found in their US study that naturalization had no statistical effect on transnational political activism, our own finding indicates a significant relationship: naturalization diminished the new citizens' mean transnational activism count vis-à-vis non-citizens. However, we found that it was the non-naturalized migrant who was more likely not to be transnational engaged than the naturalized one. Again, this suggests that the context of reception is the factor that explains this apparently subtle, but significant difference.

Surprisingly, and contrary to our expectations, discrimination did not have a statistically significant effect on migrants' mean count of transnational activism. Given the high rate of

discrimination both groups experienced, this result suggests a cognitive split between the perception of and reaction to a context of exclusion, and the likelihood of being actively connected with the homeland. This seems to be confirmed after running another analysis, not shown here, which confirms an orthogonal relation between experiencing discrimination and being transnationally active. While this calls for further investigation into the relationship between open discrimination (or exclusionary contexts of reception, more generally) and transnational engagement, this analysis is beyond the scope of this paper. This split suggests a dual frame of reference at work. Accordingly, migrants separate out their direct experiences of exclusion abroad from their sentiments for and contractual commitments with their homeland.

The next contextual factor in the ZINB model is the count of regular local political participation. Our initial expectation, following the assimilation approach, that local and transnational political participation represent two opposite processes, is supported by NBR coefficients. These indicated that, while holding other variables constant, the count of local political activities undertaken regularly had a negative effect on the mean count of regular transnational activities. Indeed, each additional point in the regular local count reduced the mean of the regular transnational count by 63 per cent. But as in the case of citizenship, migrants who were involved in regular local political action were less likely than those who were not to have altogether cut out their transnational political involvement. Put differently, being regularly involved in local political activities tended to lessen transnational political activism, but not to the point of abandoning it altogether. Migrants' political activism extended across national polities, although there was a greater emphasis in the place where they resided, rather than in the place they came from. The political field of action was transnational, but the topography of its intensity varied significantly across space.

At this point it is pertinent to mention here that the 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. However, the logit model coefficients show a different story. As expected, 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 are more likely than those who migrated for other reasons, to be politically active in regular transnational activities – they are not certain zeros. Likewise, migrants who have made monetary investments in the country of origin are less likely to be politically disengaged (no certain zeros). These findings highlight continuities in the migration process – political and economic interests tend not to be limited by distance or borders, even at this scale of action. Those whose political ideas and activism led them out of their country seemed to keep their activism alive from afar. The political migrant and the investor, while motivated by quite different reasons, are both less likely to stay aloof at their country of origin's political situation. While one remains singularly motivated by political ideals, the other seems motivated by her investments back home.

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
<i>Demographic:</i>						
Age.....	-0.0304	-60	...	-0.0564	-67	...

	TRANSNATIONALISM, BROAD DEFINITION			TRANSNATIONALISM, STRICT DEFINITION		
Age2.....	.0004	.58	...	.0007	.69	...
Gender (male)...	.5899	3.67***	80.4	.5601	1.95*	75.1
Marital Status (married & living together)	-.1912	-1.15	...	-.3385	-1.25	...
<i>Place of Origin:</i>						
Large City	-.3052	-1.44	...	-.1601	-.45	...
Small City or Town	-.5127	-2.23*	-40.1	-.7033	-1.96*	-.50.5
<i>Human Capital:</i>						
College Graduate .	.9088	5.33***	148.1	.7672	2.24*	115.4
<i>Social Networks:</i>						
Network Size .	.0527	2.93**	5.41	.0635	2.07*	6.55
Network Scope..	-.4535	-2.20*	-36.5	.0637	.16	...
Immediate Family in Country of Origin	.4063	1.90^	50.1	.2748	.77	...
<i>Context of Departure:</i>						
Family Expected Duration of Migration	.3794	1.95*	46.1	.8194	2.55*	126.9
Politically Motivated Migration	.3046	1.62	...	-.1853	-.59	...
Invested in Country of Origin	.2098	1.11	...	.0472	.15	...
<i>Nationality:</i>						
Colombian .	-.6644	-3.54***	-48.5	-1.150	-3.06**	-68.3
<i>Context of Reception:</i>						
Italy	.7141	3.29**	104.2	1.194	2.59*	229.9
E.U. Citizen	-.9724	-5.13***	-62.2	-.9833	-2.88*	-62.6
Frequent Local Political Participation	-.0748	-.33	...	-.9512	-2.34**	-61.4
Social Mobility .	.0701	.71	...	.3139	1.94^	36.9
Experienced Discrimination .	-.2565	-1.59	...	.1518	.51	...
Constant	-1.743	-1.81	...	-1.803	-1.02	...
Years Since Arrival..	(exposure)					
<hr/> Inflate Equation: Certain Zero						
Age...	.0226	.80	...	-.0640	-2.22*	-6.20
Gender (male)...	.4455	.74	...	-1.278	-2.06*	-72.2
Marital Status (married & living together)	-.5906	-.90	...	-.2917	-.53	...
<i>Place of Origin:</i>						
Large City..	-.5334	-.72	...	-.5600	-.76	...
Small City or Town	-1.276	-1.64^	-72.1	-1.163	-1.42	...
<i>Human Capital:</i>						
College Graduate .	.2880	.42	...	-1.033	-1.51	...
<i>Social Networks:</i>						
Network Size .	-.0143	-.23	...	.0261	.44	...
Network Scope .	3.470	3.89***	3115.1	3.391	3.89***	2869.8
Immediate Family in Country of Origin	-.6693	-.98	...	-.3242	-.49	...
<i>Context of Departure:</i>						
Family Expected Duration of Migration.	.4897	.70	...	.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	-.6435	-.95	...	.7581	1.18	...
<i>Context of Reception:</i>						

	TRANSNATIONALISM, BROAD DEFINITION			TRANSNATIONALISM, STRICT DEFINITION		
Italy	4.661	2.43*	10,471.1	2.043	2.32*	67.1
E.U. Citizen	-1.855	-2.19*	-84.4	.2812	.39	...
Frequent Local Political Participation	-4.163	-1.78^	-98.4	-4.949	-1.87^	-99.3
Social Mobility	1.280	3.20**	259.8	.5852	2.26*	79.5
Experienced Discrimination	.0680	.13	7.04	.2840	.51	...
Constant	-5.090	-1.94		1.389	.74	
Log Likelihood		-679.26			-367.70	
Log Likelihood Chi2 (d.f.)		77.38(37)***			118.86(37)***	
α		76.1***			17.14***	
Vuong.		4.65***			4.73***	
Mcfadden's Pseudo-R2		.054			.139	
Bayesian Information Criteria (BIC)		-2092.12			-2715.23	
Total Observations N		582			582	
Zero Observations		358			473	
Nonzero Observations		224			109	

Note.—For description of variables, see app. 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 $\alpha=0$ (equidispersion of conditional variance). Higher values indicate departures from the assumption that $\mu = \sigma = \exp(x, \beta)$ 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-R2 are computed according to Long (1997). ^ P < .10. * P < .05. ** P < .01. *** P < .001.

The final sets of factors in the ZINB are related to the role of social networks. Migration is socially embedded in networks of support, solidarity, and control. The ZINB model results show how complex this relationship can be. NBR coefficients indicate that, holding other variables constant, the size of migrants' personal social network of support had a positive effect on the mean count of transnational political activities, however defined. Each additional alter in the network increased the mean count of regular activities by 7 percent and the broad ones by 5 percent. However, this effect was mediated by the spatial location of alters in the network. Indeed, while the ratio of locally based alters to network size had no effect on the mean count of regular transnational activities; it had a strong and significant effect on the likelihood of being transnationally disengaged. The larger the proportion of locally based members of the network, the larger was the likelihood of having a zero mean count of transnational activities. In brief, the larger the support network, the wider were the sources of support, and the larger were the possibilities of being transnationally engaged.

However, a higher proportion of locally based network members, resulting in wider opportunities in the new society, also worked against transnational activism. The effects of social embeddedness become more complex when we add to the analysis the strong and positive effect that family expected durations had on the mean count of transnational activities. As the NBR coefficients in Table 4 show, migrants whose families expected their migration to be temporary increased their mean count of transnational activism by around 130 percent, holding the other variables constant. In sum, in the process of engaging in transnational political activism, migrants had to respond to and negotiate the various and often-contradictory pressures and expectations generated by their transnational personal networks of support. Engaging in transnational politics seemed not merely to be an individual, rational calculation (even when we take into account the not-uncommon presence of opportunism in the political field). Instead, it appeared to be a rather arduous and demanding process that even the better off has to negotiate.

After controlling for demographic and contextual factors, the evidence strongly confirms that Dominicans were much more likely to be transnationally engaged in their home country's politics. Indeed, and as expected, Colombians had a mean count of transnational political activities that was two-thirds smaller (68 percent) than that of Dominicans, with other variables constant. As with gender, education, social expectations, nationality is a determinant that exercises the same effect on transnational political involvement, regardless of the context of reception. Transnational political activism is the field of the more educated men, who are expected to return to their homeland – whether such expectations are ever achieved, is a totally different story, though.

6 Discussion and conclusions

Attention to migrants' political engagement with their homeland from abroad has lately captivated the attention of scholars and policy makers. The many studies on the subject have produced an enormous wealth of knowledge about this process. There seems to be a consensus on the gendered character of long-distance political activism, the small proportion of migrants who are regularly involved in the process, and the effect of the context of reception on its likelihood. However, and in part due to what Wimmer and Glick Schiller (2003) dubbed "methodological nationalism," the vast majority of this knowledge is based on studies conducted in a single country of destination. This analytical model impedes attempts to construct falsifiable theoretical propositions seeking to consolidate a transnational perspective. This comparative study addresses this shortcoming. While some of the findings presented here are not surprising or new, they provide a solid confirmation of their existence and determinants. More importantly, our comparative study contributes new insights and presents a more nuanced understanding of the dynamics of migrants' transnational political activism and allows us to outline some general propositions for its study. Table 5 presents a summary of the hypotheses we considered here in light of our results.

Table 5. Theoretical conclusions

Hypotheses	Expected effects	Observed effects		CIEP	Conclusion
		Strict	Broad		
<i>Gender (men).</i>	+	+	+	Support	Support
<i>Higher education</i>	+	+	+	Support	Support
<i>Colombian.</i>	-	-	-	Support	Support
<i>Close social sociocultural distance</i>	-	+	+	na	Reject
<i>EU citizenship</i>	-	-	+	Reject	Reject
<i>Local political engagement.</i>	-	+	0	na	Reject
<i>Upward social mobility.</i>	+	-	-	Support	Reject
<i>Discrimination.</i>	+	0	0	Reject	Reject
<i>Rural origin.</i>	+	0	0	Reject	Reject
<i>Social network's size.</i>	+	+	+	Support	Support
<i>Social network local scope</i>	-	-	-	*	Support
<i>Family temporary SED.</i>	+	+	+	Support	Support

Note: A positive sign means a positive relationship between the predictor and the dependent variable; a negative sign means the opposite; a zero indicates no relationship.

* Guarnizo, Portes, and Haller' (2003) measurement of network scope is different than the one used here. They used the ratio of non-local alters to network size. Here we use ratio of local alters to network size.

Regarding transnational political engagement, we can argue that 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, but rather, that this field tends to be monopolised by men, in the same way men tend to monopolise the political field at the local and national levels, even in rich democracies like the US (Lawless and Fox 2012). While in of itself not earth shattering, this proposition calls attention to the

fact that public political engagement, whether it takes place within or across national borders, is a gendered process. In this sense, migrant transnationalism does not necessarily create new, less unequal gender relations. Rather, so far at least, it tends to reproduce them.

Transnational political activism, as we define it here (i.e., not just voting from afar as many analysts have defined it), is the field of the better educated. This is not surprising, as this tends to be true within any nation-state in the world. Among migrants, as well as in settled societies, political action is not (for now) the field of the uneducated that move from developing rural areas to urban centres, especially to large metropolises in the North.

Moreover, results presented here and elsewhere strongly suggest that migration does not make transnational political activists out of international migrants. Rather, leaders of migrant organisations and migrants active in local and international political action, tend to have a history of activism before migrating. This is further supported by qualitative data collected for this study, but not shown here. In this sense, we shall propose that it is migrant political activists who make political action transnational. The transnational political field is the field of activists committed to social action both locally and across borders, who try to participate in decision-making processes affecting them and their community wherever they are. But it is the field of those whose political position and ideas, political commitments and actions, preceded their emigration. In sum, our evidence supports the conclusion that local and transnational political action is not a zero sum game. Local political participation, an expression of what Roger Waldinger calls migrants' "political resocialisation," implies the re-inscription of migrants' original political identity and commitments, not their erasure. In other words, contrary to Waldinger's perception in which "the foreigners discard one political identity for another," rather, our findings suggest that they add the new political identity to their old one.

Our findings also confirm what others have already reported (see for example, Guarnizo, Portes, and Haller 2003; Waldinger 2008): transnational political activists are part of a small minority. It would be utterly optimistic to expect otherwise. Committed, persistent political activists, especially people regularly undertaking the seven activities included in our definition, tend to be a minority by definition. And this is true not only among international migrants, but also among non-migrant communities across the world, in the global South, as well as in the global North.

Transnationalism is a costly proposition in pecuniary terms, so only the better off can afford it. While we do not counter this commonsensical argument, our study shows that cross-border engagement also has significant social and psychological costs as well, as migrants negotiate the many resources, expectations, and limitations imposed on them by the social milieu in which they are embedded. This is an unexplored area that deserves further attention by transnational scholars.

The argument that sociocultural distance is a good predictor of assimilation and, by default, of the possibility of transnationalism, we conclude, seems to have limited explanatory traction. We expected that Colombian and Dominican migrants in Spain would be less likely than those in Italy to be engaged in transnational political activities. After all, the sociocultural distance between them and Spanish society is minimal: they speak the same language, the majority of them profess the same religion, and have a long, shared a colonial history, all of which would make their process of assimilation faster, thereby accelerating their disassociation with their homeland. Conversely, we expected a slower assimilation process in Italy, a society from whom these migrants have greater sociocultural distance, and thus where we expected them to maintain stronger transnational linkages

with their homeland. However, we found the opposite – those in Spain showed a higher level of transnational political activity than their counterparts in Italy. These results further challenge the assumption that assimilation and transnationalism are a zero-sum game and further corroborate previous research finding that assimilation and transnational engagement are complimentary processes.

It is safe to say that although the context of reception, and the way migrants engage with it, affects the likelihood of being active transnationally, transnational political activism is more determined by the home country's political and institutional context than by the context of reception. Thus, while the context of reception is crucial for assimilation, the context of origin is crucial for transnational engagement. Undoubtedly, much of the increase in migrants' transnational political activity, even though undertaken by a small minority of male activists, is due to the new landscape of opportunities opened up by the introduction of multiple legal, political, and discursive reforms promoting special rights and inclusion of the migrant population, as well as the role political parties have played in extending their political campaigns abroad.

To close, we return to the central role that gender plays in reproducing migrants' political transnationalism. What are the limits of transnational activism as a potential force for change, especially when it remains dominated by a small cadre of male activists? This question is particularly urgent in light of the feminisation of migration, as in the two cases analysed here. As gendered structures of power evolve, scholars will be well advised to deepen their transnational inquiry with a keen eye on this issue.

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