

# Sub-state Policies on Immigrant Transnationalism: Varied Motivations behind Destination Country Political Agendas

## Políticas subestatales sobre el transnacionalismo de los inmigrantes: motivaciones detrás de la agenda políticas de los países de destino

Elena Sánchez-Montijano

Centro de Investigación y Docencias Económicas (DEI-CIDE)

E-mail: [elena.sanchez@cide.edu](mailto:elena.sanchez@cide.edu)

ORCID: <https://orcid.org/0000-0003-0194-2190>



Author

While the literature has shown the importance of the destination country in shaping the relationships immigrants maintain with their country of origin, the role of sub-state authorities is yet to be defined. This article analyses the characteristics and motivations behind transnational migration policies carried out by sub-state authorities through case studies of the Catalonia region and the city of Barcelona. Using data collected through in-depth interviews and a qualitative analysis of documents, the results show that city and regional authorities recognise transnational activities as a common good, but while certain transnational economic, political, and socio-cultural activities are given governmental support, others are not. Different political motivations lie behind transnational migration policies. This article adds two new hypotheses to the accepted in the literature. First, public authorities recognize an economic and political benefit for themselves in supporting migrant transnationalism. Second, these same authorities perceive such actions as complementary tools in the process of identity construction, such as that currently taking place in Catalonia.



Abstract

*Si bien la literatura ha mostrado la importancia del país de destino en las relaciones que mantienen los inmigrantes con su país de origen, el rol de las autoridades a nivel sub-estatal está aún por definir. Este artículo analiza, a través de los casos de estudio de Cataluña y Barcelona, las características y motivaciones de las políticas transnacionales llevadas a cabo por estas autoridades. Para ello examina datos recopilados mediante entrevistas en profundidad y análisis documental. Los resultados ilustran que las autoridades reconocen las actividades transnacionales como un bien común; mientras se apoyan determinadas actividades económicas, políticas y socioculturales transnacionales, otras no; detrás de la gobernanza transnacional, existen diferentes motivaciones políticas. Este artículo añade dos nuevas motivaciones a las ya reconocidas previamente. Primero, las autoridades encuentran un beneficio económico y político para sí mismas. Segundo, lo perciben como una herramienta complementaria en el proceso de construcción identitaria que se está produciendo en Cataluña.*

Transnational activities; sub-state authorities; public policies; identity construction; migrants  
*Actividades transnacionales; autoridades subestatales; políticas públicas; construcción identitaria; migrantes*



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## 1. Introduction: The Importance of the Destination Country

The link between immigrants and their roots of origin depends on multiple factors (Levitt, 2001; Pries, 2005; Portes, 2007; among others). Portes (2007, p. 75) suggests that the existence and variability of relations between immigrants and their country of origin depends on three dimensions: characteristics of the immigrants themselves, the country of origin, and the destination country. However, while the literature has focused on analysing the first two dimensions —immigrants as actors (Portes et al., 1999; Orozco, 2005) and the countries of origin (Martiniello & Lafleur 2008; Portes & Zhou, 2012; Gamlen et al., 2019)— the importance of the destination country of has scarcely been explored (Zhou & Lee, 2013, p. 22).

The interest in studying destination countries is particularly relevant at the local and regional level. As Østergaard-Nielsen (2011, p. 22) argued, sub-state dimensions allow for the exploration of a new and more complex level of analysis that is relevant for the study of transnational relations. Sub-state levels are relevant because, to a great extent, it is authorities at this level of governance that are in charge of managing the bulk of policies related to immigrant integration (Penninx et al., 2004). In essence, as Gamlen (2008) pointed out, migratory processes have reconfigured the “modern geopolitical imagination”, expanding actions, policies and actors. In other words, analytical nationalism has created a flowing space of analysis (Glick Schiller & Simsek-Çağlar, 2011), which is not only in constant change but is also applicable to micro levels of governance.

This article aims in particular to cover a gap in the literature, which does not investigate the policy framework that sub-state authorities develop to manage migrant transnationalism with the support of different actors in the destination countries of in the transnational space. While an emerging literature does exist (Fauser, 2011; Fauser, 2013; Østergaard-Nielsen, 2011; Sánchez-Montijano & Faúndez, 2012), there is still a large field of analysis that has not been fully explored on transnational governance, including among authorities of immigration cities, as Fauser (2013, p. 2) explains. Within this field, studies at regional levels of analysis need to be included.

Following the traditional conceptualization on transnational migrant practices in origin countries (Mahler, 1998; Smith & Guarnizo, 1998), this study of the role of authorities in the destination country in this transnational space can be approached from two perspectives —“from above” and “from below”. For the purposes of this article, the dimension “from above” will be used to explore how the location where immigrants settle — with its own particular social, political, and economic context — determines relationships with countries of origin and the types of transnational activities immigrants develop (Lafleur & Martiniello, 2009; Sánchez-Montijano & Faúndez, 2012). The “from below” dimension will analyse how migrant transnational relations directly affect the destination country, and in particular, the de-

velopment of public policies (Østergaard-Nielsen, 2011; Fauser, 2012). In this context, Faist (2010, p. 166) shows that transnationalism has sparked a change in “old institutions” (international, state, or sub-state), and forced them to adapt, to an extent, to the needs of immigrants. The changes are reflected in, for example, the broadening of the concepts of citizenship and identity, the active role of embassies and consulates, and the introduction of a set of public policies that support migration transnationalism — for instance development cooperation, or supporting the sending of remittances. As Levitt and de la Dehesa (2017) note, in this transnational space there has been an increase in politics across borders as states have “taken on new functions, and shed old ones” (p. 1520).

This article aims to explore both of these dimensions of migrant transnationalism — “from above” and “from below” — among sub-state authorities in destination countries. First, the article defines transnational policies and explores what transnational activities have an impact on them, and which do not. Second, the work revisits how public authorities have adapted to migrant transnationalism through the implementation of public policies. Finally, it reviews the reasons why authorities in destination countries develop and implement such political frameworks. It argues that it is the specific political motivations behind each case that defines the characteristics of a given transnational system. The research is based on a case study at the regional level in Catalonia, and a local level case within the region — the city of Barcelona — chosen because both sub-state authorities hold a high level of policy competencies on migrant issues.

The article is structured in four sections. A first section outlines the theoretical evolution of transnationalism in order to frame the governance of transnational activities in destination countries. Second, the article describes the methodology, focusing on justifying the case study of Catalonia, and explains the sample and the analysis techniques. A third section presents the results of the case study by addressing the aims previously mentioned; before ending with brief conclusions on the contributions of this article to the existing literature on migrant transnationalism.

## 2. The Limits of the Literature

The theoretical framework on transnationalism acquired its argumentative weight during the 2000s. The literature assumed that transnational immigration is a phenomenon that occurs inside a social space, in which transnational activities occur in a continuous manner, and that immigrants settle at the same time in more than one society (Pries, 2005; Smith, 2005). These great variety of ties between migrants and destination countries are usually classified into three types of activities: economic, political and socio-cultural (Levitt & Glick-Schiller, 2004); they can be formal or informal, and may be sustained in a regular way<sup>1</sup>. Most analyses have focused on identifying the effects of transnational activities across all of their dimensions (country of origin, community, family, destination country, etc.). The main focus of such analyses centers on the relevance that immigrants themselves and the countries of origin acquire in these transnational relations (Bauböck, 2003, p. 702; Martiniello & Lafleur, 2008, pp. 646-647; Zhou & Lee, 2013, p. 22). But, as Portes (2007, p. 75) notes, migrants are not the only actors

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<sup>1</sup> For an extensive definition of transnational activities see Levitt & Jaworsky (2007). Table 1 includes a systematic categorisation of transnational activities established in the literature.

that participate in this transnational space. While the analysis of the destination country has been the dimension least studied to date, its importance is undeniable.

Immigrants are simultaneously exposed to multiple legal and political institutions by more than one nation-state and their interests (Levitt & Glick Schiller, 2004). Vertovec (2006) notes how many countries have incorporated the transnational sphere to the national one by adding additional elements to their immigration policies. It seems clear how this inclusion is to a large extent a policy based on the classical model of immigrant integration “ethnic pluralism”, or its subsequent “interculturalism” and “multiculturalism” approaches<sup>2</sup>. In fact, the importance of transnational policies in destination countries for improving and assuring the integration of migrants has been already explored (Garha & Paparusso, 2018). Furthermore, the link between integration and transnationalism can be particularly important in the minority nationalism context, where sub-state governments formulate and mould their integration policies according to their interests in identity (Hepburn, 2014; Zuber, 2020). In this framework, Nowicka (2020) analyses how transnationalism practices are outcomes resulting from multiple belongings, and the role of state in creating or maintaining a national identity.

In any case, this new model of integration needs to be incorporated into a transnational governance framework in order to effectively manage the relations migrants maintain outside the boundaries of the country in which they reside. This new form of governance — understood as “a change of borders between the public, the private and civil society, in which the state is forced to change its role” (Rhodes, 2012, p. 32), and in which different types of actors participate at different levels (Pierre, 2000, p. 4) even beyond borders (Però, 2007), involves both sending and receiving countries (Margharitis, 2016), developing and supporting an enormous plurality of bilateral, regional and inter-regional mechanisms, both formal and informal (Betts, 2011b). Furthermore, the consequences of these public policies can be multiple, and the impact of transnational activity itself remains that which is the most affected. For instance, the decline of contact that is expected after a number of years (Jones, 2019), does not always occur once the destination country supports migrant transnationalism.

The few studies that exist on destination countries have focused mainly on the analysis of associations or organisations of immigrants settled in a community, as actors that participate in the transnational space of immigrants (Levitt, 2001; Fauser, 2013; Portes & Fernández-Kelly, 2014). Recent studies have sustained the unquestionable importance of the institutional context, and the policies carried out by destination country authorities, as actors that facilitate or hinder relations between borders (Merla & Baldassar, 2011).

Within this theoretical framework, this article aims to contribute to the literature on the political framework of sub-state public authorities in destination countries within the transnational immigrant space. On this point, it is important to highlight the contributions of Østergaard-Nielsen (2011) and Fauser (2011; 2013) on the policies that connect immigrants with the development of their countries of origin — termed *co-development* — and the sub-state level in Spain. Both authors express the need to continue advancing the study of the role of sub-state actors “at destination” in transnational relations. In their research, both have focused on how these actions develop and the motivations behind them. In general terms, they

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2. For further analysis of the “ethnic pluralism” model and the interculturalism and multiculturalism debates, see Meer et al. (2016). For the debate over the models, see Joppke and Morawska (2003).

point out how sub-state authorities perceive the relations of immigrants with their countries of origin as positive, and see these links as beneficial for society in the destination country. This positive vision of transnational links by the Spanish authorities contrasts with the discourses developed in other countries. For instance, as the study Bouras (2013) conducted in the Netherlands shows, while authorities originally maintained a positive discourse on the activities of immigrants with their countries of origin, perceptions turned negative around the mid-90s, which had an impact on Dutch migration policy. As the author notes, the adoption of a positive or negative vision on migrant transnationalism determines how political actions have subsequently been framed.

According to the existing literature, the reasons why destination countries perceive transnationalism in a positive manner, and therefore encourage immigrants to continue their relationship with the country of origin, are numerous. First, as some authors point out, authorities understand that maintaining relations leads to better integration of immigrants in the destination country (Bouras, 2013, p. 1225; Fauser, 2013, p. 10; Østergaard-Nielsen, 2011, p. 31). Second, authorities use these policies aiming to influence the management of migratory flows (Bouras, 2013, p. 1224), “including support for returning and prospective migrants” (Fauser, 2011, p. 12). Finally, authorities aim to have an effect in the countries of origin through cooperation as an instrument of development to address and combat the causes of immigration (Fauser, 2013, p. 11; Østergaard-Nielsen, 2011, p. 30).

This article will review some of the contributions already made by these authors, as well as adding new contributions to the transnational debate on destination (theory building). This can be done by increasing the scope of the focus of public actions analysed. The study analyses actions carried out by public authorities that affect transnational activities — the cultural links, the sending of remittances, and political mobilisation, among others. Although these actions resemble traditional integration policies (under the multiculturalism approach)<sup>3</sup> they include a transnational component, which is either found in its mobilisation (transnational actors) or in its impact, for instance, in the country of origin. In this sense, what Faist et al. (2013, p. 91) have called a possible new model of integration is in this case a transnational one.

### 3. Case study, method, and data

Most analyses of migrant transnationalism are based on case studies. To a large extent, this choice is driven by the complexity of the levels and actors that intervene (Bloemraad, 2013, p. 27). In this article, the research focuses on a “positive” case study, in which the expected results are to be found (Mahoney & Goertz, 2006, p. 239), à la Seawright and Gerring (2008, p. 296), and describe a case where there is variation of the dimension of theoretical interest. For this particular study, the Generalitat de Catalunya, a regional government, and the Ajuntament de Barcelona, a local government, have been selected because a framework of political action that interacts in the transnational space is currently being set in motion across both spaces.

The reasons for choosing these cases are numerous. First, Spain is unique country for analysis and can therefore give new perspectives to transnational research (Østergaard-Nielsen, 2009,

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<sup>3</sup> Following Modood and Meer (2012), interculturalism is understood in this article as a complement to multiculturalism, more so than as a new model. Transnational migration models are variants of multicultural models that question the dominant national-state as territorial container approach (Castle, 2000).

p. 20). The migration policies set in place chiefly target a first-generation population given the novelty of immigration, and the fact that Spain has one of the lowest naturalisation rates in the European Union (EU) (Dag Tjaden & Sánchez-Montijano, 2013, p. 4). Furthermore, after Cyprus, it is the EU Member State that has taken the most immigrants, in relative terms, over the past 10 years. Figures on the percent of foreign population in have increased from 3.6 per cent in 2000 to 13.7 per cent in 2018<sup>4</sup>. Second, Spain enjoys a welfare state with a high degree of decentralisation (Moreno & Bruquetas-Callejo, 2011, p. 27), and therefore the processes of immigrant incorporation occur at the sub-state levels (Bruquetas-Callejo et al., 2010, p. 307). This creates differences in the construction of policies from one place to another, which justifies the sub-state level analysis. Finally, there are three contextual singularities. In 2018, the Autonomous Community of Catalonia had 1 380 590 of immigrants, the highest number in Spain, and higher than average percentage of foreign-born population (within Spain), with 18.2 per cent of the population, according to the Spanish Statistic National Institute — INE base. At the same time, Barcelona is the largest diverse city in the country. Both Catalonia and Barcelona are recognised as advocate governments of intercultural framework, both policies and political discourse (Zapata-Barrero, 2015), in development since the early 1990s. In this regard, interculturalism provides a core framework for migration policies at the regional and local level (Conversi & Jeram, 2017). Finally, the context of Spanish nationalism provides an opportunity to explore a unique case study with specific characteristic; Catalonia has defined itself as a stateless nation, and data shows that its citizens report a distinct identity from the rest of Spain (Rodón & Franco-Guillen, 2014).

Qualitative research is used to study the sub-state governance of immigrant transnationalism, and in particular, the identification of concrete actions taken by public authorities in destination countries, using the framework of transnationalism. The categorization of responses by sub-state authorities and subsequent strategy adopted for analysis is twofold: first, it follows a deductive method based on important elements in transnational activities identified in previous literature, (table 1) as well as motivations behind the destination country’s political agendas on migrant transnationalism (table 2). Second, the analysis follows an inductive process (theory building) in which two new categories of motivations emerge from the data (included in table 2). Once the categories were coded from the raw data, the analysis concentrated on identifying common themes, patterns and relationships within responses, identifying the main discursive *topoi* (Reisigl & Wodak, 2001).

**Table 1. Transnational Activities**

Country Location	Concrete transnational activity
	Economic activities

<sup>4</sup> INEbase. Principales series de población. Población y variación interanual por Comunidad Autónoma.

Country Location	Concrete transnational activity
Origin country	E.1. Transfers money to family E.2. Sends goods E.3. Owns house E.4. Contributes to charities E.5. Invests in companies E.6. Visits country of origin for business
Destination country	E.7. Trades with country of origin, transnational entrepreneurs
<b>Political activities</b>	
Origin country	P.1. Reads newspapers published in country of origin P.2. Keeps abreast of politics in country of origin P.3. Member of a political party in country of origin P.4. Gives money to a political party
Destination country	P.5. Participates in demonstrations related to country of origin: external vote P.6. Member of organisation related to political organisation in country of origin P.7. Lobbying the authorities of one country to influence another
<b>Socio-cultural activities</b>	
Origin country	S.1. Visits family/friends/festivities in country of origin S.2. Frequent contacts with family S.3. Member of a social organisation
Destination country	S.4. Member of an organisation related to country of origin S.5. Participates in local activities/events (language, religion) related to country of origin S.6. Participates in local sport clubs with links to country of origin

Source: Own elaboration. Based on Portes et al. (1999, p. 222), Portes (2003, p. 883), and Levitt and Jaworsky (2007, p. 134-141).

Note: Every action has been classified with a different code in order to operationalise data: E (Economic activity), P (Political activity) and S (Social activity), followed by a correlative number.

**Table 2. Motivations behind Sub-state Political Agendas**

PA.1 Controlling and Managing Immigration Flows  
 PA.2 Integration  
 PA.3 International Development Cooperation  
 PA.4 Economic and Political Utility (new item)  
 PA.5 (National) Identity Construction (new item)

Source: Own elaboration. Based on Fauser (2011, p. 2013), Østergaard-Nielsen (2011), and Bouras (2013).

Note: Each dimension has been classified in the data with PA (Political Agenda), followed by a correlative number.

The analysis relies on two types of research techniques: documentary analysis and in-depth interviews. On the one hand, documentary analysis provides access to empirically objective, common, and reliable evidence (Franzosi, 1998, p. 547), through the institutional discourse and the concrete actions that have been carried out by the authorities. The sample has focused on a systematic and complete revision of normative sources, including hard law and soft law, on migration and international cooperation where the literature on transnational policies has been established (Fauser, 2013; Østergaard-Nielsen, 2011). In both the Generalitat de Catalunya<sup>5</sup> and the Ajuntament de Barcelona<sup>6</sup>. Documentary analysis is paired with semi-structured in-depth interviews, which serve a double purpose. First, interviews enable understanding the actions of public authorities through the “perspective of the subject under study” (Corbetta, 2003, p. 368). Second, they allow the validity and reach of policies set out in official documents to be checked, while facilitating understanding of the concrete actions and motivations that exist behind the policies. The sample taken consists of 10 interviews with policy makers and politicians from the two levels of government analysed, and 2 representatives from the two main labour unions in Catalonia (Unión General de Trabajadores — UGT — and Comisiones Obreras — CC. OO. —) that operate at both the regional and local levels. The 12 interviewees were selected as *political elites*, those that have the highest influence on the outcome of policies in the research of interest (Pierce, 2008, p. 119). The interviews lasted between 50 minutes and 1 hour 30 minutes. The anonymous interlocutors gave their consent to recording the interviews, so literal transcriptions were carried out, but data can be only used for this current research. The general sample is representative enough to enable the saturation and triangulation of the information obtained.

The timeframe of the analysis is the ten years between 2008 and 2018. At one end, the National Pact for Immigration (PNI) was signed all political and civil society actors in 2008. This Pact is identified as a point of inflexion in Catalan migratory policy because it defined, for the first time, the political model of migrant integration in Catalonia. The analysis ends in 2018 in order to capture the effects of the Catalan independence referendum held on October 2017, which was one of the main turning points of the nationalist process, and because most of the documentary sources analysed here were published in 2018, to cover the last four year administration.

#### 4. Results: Transnational Policies at the Sub-State Levels

The presentation of the analysis for the transnational policies of sub-state authorities focuses on the main research questions, by identifying actions put in place by the authorities, and by categorizing their main characteristics, taking into consideration the kind of transnational activities that are supported by sub-state authorities. Documentary analysis is paired with semi-structured in-depth interviews that serve to both enable understanding, and explain the

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5 These sources and codes are: Ley 10/2010 de acogida de las personas inmigradas y las retornadas a Cataluña (Law 10/2010); Pacto Nacional para la Inmigración 2008 (PNI); Plan de Protección Internacional 2015 (PPI); Plan de Ciudadanía e Inmigración (PCI) 2009-12; 2013-16; 2017-20; Plan director de Cooperación al Desarrollo (PdCD) 2007-10; 2011-14; 2015-18.

6 These sources and municipal codes are: Plan Barcelona Interculturalidad 2010 (PBI); Plan de Acogida (PA) 2007-11; Plan de Trabajo sobre Inmigración (PdTI) 2008-11; 2012-15; 2018-21; Plan Director de Cooperación Internacional y Solidaridad (PdCIS) 2009-12; 2013-16; 2018-21.



motivations behind the political agendas that encourage immigrants to continue such relations with their countries of origin.

#### 4.1. Characteristics and Actions of Transnational Policies

According to sub-state authorities, transnational migration policies have particular characteristics. First, they are interdepartmental and transversal. They are not the exclusive responsibility of the department in charge of implementing migration policy: other departments, such as development cooperation, education and labour, are also involved. This transversality is expressed in the political discourse found in the Plans analysed, at both regional and local levels. Second, sub-state authorities at both levels of government see migration policy as a sphere of action (from its definition to its implementation) shared with civil society, particularly with transnational organisations and migrant associations, and organisations that have become delocalised (Lacroix & Castles, 2011; Portes & Zhou, 2012). As one of the interviewees pointed out “without the third sector, without the migrant associations ‘fabric’, these actions would be impossible to carry out” (Interview 9, p. 3; local policymaker). Third, the development of migration policy needs intergovernmental cooperation, at least between the regional and local government. Hence, both the political discourse and the concrete actions of the two levels analysed are largely shared, in their design, and in implementation, and in funding. Finally, policy at both levels of government include as targets migrants both immigrants and asylum-seekers/refugees. An example from the PPI 2014 (p. 17) serves to illustrate: it states that migrants under a situation of international protection have the same access to public policies that immigrants do, including actions related to support for transnational activities<sup>7</sup>.

But what activities do sub-state authorities support? Building upon the transnational activities described in table 1, it is possible to identify a set of economic, political, and socio-cultural transnational activities carried out at both levels of government. Although some of these actions could be understood as actions related to integration models that promote diversity, they must be understood as transnational. Their impact, or the mobilization behind them — mostly in terms of actors — is transnational (Faist et al., 2013). In any case, as Garha and Paparusso (2018) argue, there is a clear relation between these transnational policies and the integration of migrants.

The economic transnational activities in both origin and destination countries, supported by sub-state authorities, are those carried out both privately (individual and collectively) and professionally. The PCI 2009-2012 of the Autonomous Community (p. 109), for example, supports the transfer of money by immigrants to their families in the country of origin by “working with remittance companies and financial entities to improve the conditions of sending remittances and assuring their availability in the countries of origin”. Likewise, under the same heading, the PCI references the aim to improve the investment in companies in the country of origin, in order to “improve access to credit for investment in their countries”. Similarly, the PNI 2008 of the Generalitat (pp. 48-49) states the need to “encourage transnational initiatives featuring entrepreneurial immigrant people who contribute to the development of their countries of origin”. To a great extent, and as confirmed in interviews, behind this discourse exists the possibility of creating business links between destination and origin countries.

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<sup>7</sup> Abbreviations are found in footnotes in the methodology section above.

Contributing to the development of the country of origin is the policy that receives the most support from the Catalan authorities. Both the Generalitat and the City Council support projects of development cooperation undertaken by immigrant associations or organisations. Catalan authorities have become strongly involved in cooperation with countries of origin and the relations with their immigrants through *co-development* (Østergaard-Nielsen, 2011, p. 26). The PNI 2008 of the Generalitat states “[...] the necessary implication that migrant people as actors of development in their countries of origin must have must be taken into consideration” (p. 48). It goes on to add:

It is necessary to highlight and encourage the important role that the remittances of immigrants have for the countries of origin and the training mechanisms to improve the [...] creation of social networks for support towards the families of immigrants, the availability of credit for immigrant people to invest in their country of origin, must be stressed.

The PdTI of 2008-2011 states something similar. In a section dedicated to development cooperation, it mentions that the City Council shall “promote co-development initiatives involving the immigrant entities to approach the cooperation actions in the countries of origin [...] and stimulate collaboration between immigrant entities and the development cooperation organisations to carry out joint actions of cooperation” (p. 49).

This shows that development cooperation has shifted from being an individual action, as it had traditionally been constructed, towards a form of professional and collective cooperation carried out by immigrant associations — as some of the literature has suggested (Portes & Zhou, 2012; Fauser, 2013). In this sense, the Catalan and Barcelona cases show an increase in established immigrant associations and organisations registering as development cooperation organisations, setting up co-development actions, and receiving funds from annual public tenders for cooperation.

In the same vein, both the Generalitat and the Ajuntament have financed and encouraged “the creation and carrying out of numerous courses of cooperation for the immigrant organisations, particularly in the logical frameworks of projects” (Interview 10, p. 4; local policymaker). The PCI 2009-12 establishes that Catalan actions must “encourage the participation of immigrant people as active actors of development cooperation” (p. 109) and fund “transnational initiatives featuring immigrant people collectives that contribute to the development of the countries of origin” (p. 112). A clear example of this is the political and financial support that the authorities have given to the project undertaken by the non-governmental organization (NGO) Pagesos Solidaris, who, through individual remittances as well as through collective action, have carried out development actions with Colombia, the country of origin in this case (Sánchez-Montijano & Faúndez, 2012)<sup>8</sup>.

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<sup>8</sup> The support to co-development activities should not be surprising in the Spanish context. In 2001, the central government included the first outline of a co-development policy in the Global Programme to Regulate and Coordinate Foreign Resident’s Affairs and Immigration in Spain (Plan Greco). This was followed by the development and implementation of an important body of legislation — while at the same time, the different levels of government (regional and local) were gradually developing their own policy under this general framework (Aubarell & Aragall, 2005, p. 76).

Support to development activities has been a constant during the last ten years of analysis, but the political change in Barcelona after 2015 is remarkable. With the arrival of the left-wing political party *Barcelona en Comú* to the municipality, the relation between migration and development came to an end. Neither the PdTI 2018-2021, nor the PdCIS 2018-21 include co-development actions: neither migrants nor their organisations are recognized as actors for cooperation any longer. This change of policy direction was a reaction to the most recent international criticisms, and recognition that immigrants should not carry the burden of developing their countries of origin alone, through remittances or otherwise.

Some transnational political activities receive less support from the authorities of the country of destination than others. As Lafleur and Martiniello (2009, p. 9) argue, migrants interact with all sorts of institutions, both in the country of residence and in the country of origin. What differentiates governance in origin countries from that in destination countries is that in the latter, authorities interact almost exclusively with the collective of immigrants as a community, and not through the mobilisation of individuals, as is the case of governments in countries of origin (González-Gutiérrez, 2009, p. 92). In this sense, the PCI of 2009-2012 funds “initiatives that connect civil society of immigrant origin with civil society in countries of origin, destination, and other collectives in the diaspora” (p. 112).

As many authors argue, the most auspicious time to undertake political activities of a transnational nature is in the run up to an election (Levitt & De la Dehesa, 2003). The actions of the authorities in destination countries work in the same way. Before and during polls in the respective countries of origin, the Catalan authorities freely yield public spaces for political parties to register, for the mobilisation of voters, or for voting. As one local policymaker argued:

There is a large yielding of spaces for campaigns and voting, but not only this. I remember that with the registering of the Bolivian census we had to lend them a location for three months to carry out a biometric census. It created lines and we had to manage problems in the location. Neighbours complained. We had to mobilise local police. But it is a normal practice, we always collaborate. We also lend spaces for the carrying out of meetings by different collectives when they request it (Interview 8, p. 6; local politician).

However, without a doubt, it is socio-cultural activities that generate the strongest support, precisely because these are where the identity dimension of origin is nourished. The Catalan authorities understand this as essential to support social relations with countries of origin. To this end, authorities support teaching of the language of origin, and through cultural, sporting, and artistic representations of different collectives of immigrants. For instance, the PCI of 2017-20 identifies that the incorporation of migrant sport practices (cricket is an example) to the Catalan sporting system is an opportunity to support the integration process (pp. 27-28). The same Plan recognizes the need to incorporate and promote languages of origin in educational centres, as part of the official curricula (p. 53). Those interviewed reported an obligation by the authorities to teach the languages of origin to the children of immigrants and to strengthen their identity of origin. As one of the interviewees assured: “The teaching of foreign languages implies a better understanding among the immigrants that are part of a community, between these people, and their families in the country of origin. This can only be beneficial for all” (Interview 5, p. 4; regional policy-maker).

This recognition is produced at both levels of government, and can be identified in both official documents, and in the discourse of policymakers and politicians. As the analysis shows, some of the documents analysed favour the support of initiatives that connect immigrant civil

society with social organizations in the country of origin. However, the actions that are most promoted by authorities are those carried out in destination countries. This includes, for example, supporting immigrant organisations or staging cultural events. To illustrate further, the PCI of 2009-12 includes that the Generalitat “must support the associations and organisations of migrants” and has a budget of 1 925 000€ reserved to carry it out (p. 143). Similarly, the PdTI of 2008-11 included that the Ajuntament de Barcelona must “highlight the value of current multilingualism and foment the preservation and learning of the languages of origin” (p. 35) and “include the festivities of particular collectives in the calendar of festivities of the city, encouraging their opening to the entire citizenship” (p. 36).

In the case of Catalonia, transnational governance is not exclusively defined in official documents or in the discourse of public actors, but has been constructed using a wide range of specific actions. In return, authorities at both levels of government allocate a budget for these actions and projects. Some examples carried out from 2008 to 2018 serve to illustrate these actions: the provision of Chinese, Urdu and Amazigh language courses for children of immigrants, supported by the Department of Education of the Generalitat de Catalunya, immigrant associations, public schools, and consulates; the creation of a cricket league for people of Pakistani origin, and the construction of sports facilities, supported by the Department of Immigration and Department of Sports of the Generalitat de Catalunya, Pakistani Association Pak-Catalá, and the Pakistani consulate; the celebration of national holidays such as the Mexican “El Grito” on Independence Day, the Independence of Ecuador, and the Chinese New Year, all supported by the Department of Immigration of the Generalitat, the Department of Immigration of the Barcelona City Council, immigrant associations, and consulates; negotiating with private companies that hire immigrants to manage vacation time according to the needs or interests with respect to origin, supported by the, Department of Business and Employment of the Government of Catalonia, European Social Fund, and trades unions; and establishment of economically productive projects in the country of origin that facilitate the return of immigrants, supported by the Department of Business and Employment of the Government of Catalonia, local governments in the country of origin, and Catalan private companies with operations in countries of origin.

In short, and as shown in table 3, many actions that are considered in the literature as transnational activities (table 1) are supported by sub-state authorities. Most of them are actions that sustain activities in the destination country, but they also include activities that occur directly between immigrants and their country of origin.

**Table 3. Transnational Activities carried out by immigrants, and supported by Catalan authorities**

Country Location	Concrete transnational activity
	<b>Economic activities</b>
Origin country	E.1. Transfers money to family E.4. Contributions to charities in country of origin E.5. Investments in companies in country of origin
Destination country	E.6. Trade with country of origin, transnational entrepreneurs

Country Location	Concrete transnational activity
<b>Political activities</b>	
Origin country	P.2. Keeping abreast of politics in country of origin P.3. Membership of a political party/civil society in country of origin
Destination country	P.5. Participation in demonstrations related to country of origin
<b>Socio-cultural activities</b>	
Origin country	S.3. Membership in social organisations in country of origin
Destination country	S.4. Membership in organisations related to country of origin S.5. Participation in local activities/events (language, religion) related to country of origin S.6. Participation in local sport clubs with links to country of origin

#### 4.2. Motivations Behind Political Agendas: Activities that are Supported, and Those which are Not

Despite the clear discourse in favour of the transnational activities of migrants, not all relations with countries of origin are supported by both political levels. There are ties to countries of origin that are more easily accepted and more likely to be supported by public authorities than others. As two interviewees claimed: “In private, [immigrants] have all the right to identity demonstrations, but at the public level this is different. And here is where the problem resides: the Mexican “El Grito” is not the same as the independence of Ecuador” (Interview 10, p. 4; local policy-maker). “El Grito” is a celebration for all citizens, organized by the Mexican Consulate and the Barcelona City Council. Meanwhile the independence of Ecuador initiative is only for Ecuadorian nationals and promoted by immigrant associations. “For instance, it is not acceptable to kill a sheep in the middle of the street because you do that in your country of origin. I”m sorry, but here this is not allowed” (Interview 4, p. 3; region policy-maker).

The main reason why the authorities in the two sub-state levels set in motion actions that encourage immigrant activities is related to cultivating what the interviewees refer to as the “common good”. Supporting the transnational activities of immigrants leads to a shared benefit for the whole of society and, therefore, becomes an implicit aim of any public policy. This line of thinking is expressed directly in the following quotation from an interview with a regional politician: “Everything that is for the common good must be supported by the public sector, such as the teaching of foreign languages and the links with families in the country of origin. This is a common good and therefore it benefits the entire society” (Interview 1, p. 4; regional politician).

In this regard, it is possible to identify at least five motivations behind the political agenda to support transnational activities (table 2). First, public authorities in Catalonia encourage transnational relations because they contribute to control of migration flows. As argued in the literature (Bouras, 2013; Fauser, 2013), public authorities understand that encouraging relations with countries of origin, especially through economic activities, helps alleviate the factors that lead to migration (root causes) through development. Tackling the causes of immigration will lead to a reduction in the intensity with which flows occur, especially during times of economic hardship. All PdCDs from the Generalitat, from the first (2007-2010, p.

16) to the last (2015-2018, p. 53), reference the relation between cooperation with countries of origin and the control and management of migrant flows. At the same time authorities support actions that encourage the return of migrants. There are at least two projects in place related to the return of immigrants: first, the “Catalonia-Maghreb Programme” that promotes the social integration of unaccompanied minors who have voluntarily returned to Morocco; and second, the “Productive Return Project” to encourage immigrants living in Catalonia to voluntarily return to their countries of origin to work for Catalan companies in these countries. It is remarkable then that the last PdCIS of 2012-2018, which includes a framework for action on activities with countries of origin among immigrants settled in Barcelona, also includes migration and cooperation policies around creating safe immigration routes.

Second, destination country authorities argue that encouraging immigrants to maintain relations with their countries of origin aids their integration in the destination society (Østergaard-Nielsen, 2011; Fauser, 2013; Garha & Paparusso, 2018). For authorities, sustaining a connection with countries of origin improves the integration process in the framework of an intercultural model. According with PCI 2017-2020 (p. 15), interculturalism should be understood as:

[...] the development of a common public culture based on the values of democracy, freedom and human rights in a framework of respect for cultural diversity... is based on mutual accommodation between the various cultural groups that live in the same society, through a permanent dialogue and equality plan.

It is in this framework that transnational activities must be supported and encouraged. As one interviewee mentioned, “the discourse of the Generalitat is to clearly assess the links with origin given their importance for integration, I would find it strange to hear a different speech than this” (Interview 3, 1; regional politician). There are three arguments identified by the authorities through which integration is improved: 1) integration provides immigrants, both individually and collectively, empowerment and greater visibility. The destination society will therefore know the singularities of immigrants and also recognize them as such; 2) the high levels of participation of immigrant associations in this framework is significant. This gives such associations a strong institutional recognition, and places them as active participatory agents in the host society; 3) through transnational migrant policies, immigrants can recognize their identity of origin in the host society, and therefore create respectful recognition.

A third motivation lies in international development cooperation and the win-win-win philosophy behind co-development actions already noted by Østergaard-Nielsen (2011) and Fauser (2013). Authorities see immigrants, and especially their associations, as potential actors for development cooperation. Immigrants are an efficient link between cooperation policies, the real development needs of the country of origin, and integration in host communities. Co-development actions not only have an important character in the Plans of integration but in Development Cooperation Plans. Here, two documents were elaborated by Catalan authorities: the Green Book of Co-development (2008) and Co-Development Strategy for Cooperation and Development (2009). These documents highlight the relevance of this development strategy to achieve various objectives, including improving the integration processes, regulation and control of migration flows and international development cooperation. As previously mentioned, the local government abandoned this strategy with the arrival of the Barcelona en Comú party and the elaboration of the last Plan of integration (PdTI 2018-2021) and Cooperation (PdCIS 2018-2021).

Fourth, there are two utilitarian arguments recognised by authorities, one political and the other economic. Behind the political argument it is possible to recognize two motivations. The first is to gain electoral power. As some interviewees mentioned, immigrants are potential voters, and through transnational migrant policies actions, sub-state authorities manage to mobilize the immigrant electorate. This is especially relevant at the local level, since immigrants have the right to vote in local elections (provided they have residence permits). Indeed, as some of the interviewees noted, when elections are approaching (regional or local) there is an increase in and intensification of support for transnational activities. The second motivation is related to the degree of institutionalization of the types of actions implemented. Actions that include the involvement of state actors of origin (such as embassies or consulates) tend to receive greater support from sub-state authorities. To a large extent, this is due to the fact that supporting the transnational actions of immigrants entails cooperation with the institutions of the country of origin. This collaboration results not only in an increase and strengthening of bilateral relations between the two countries, but also an increase in the foreign presence at the sub-state levels (Sánchez-Montijano & Faúndez, 2012).

The second utilitarian argument is economic. Authorities equate supporting the activities with countries of origin with harnessing the economic potential of immigrants, both for private companies, and for the society of the destination country on the whole. In this sense, supporting relations with countries of origin allows a direct and efficient link between origin and destination through transnational companies, while developing a productive economy. Supporting transnational relationships can favour entrepreneurship, and in some cases, as when migrants return voluntarily, lighten the pressure on the current labour market. The PCI 2013-2016 recognizes that languages of origin should be recognized and supported for two main reasons: on the one hand, for the individual utility to the migrant, but on the other, for the utility for “public civil servants, for business and commercial management, and relations with other countries” (p. 45). As one of the interviewees pointed out, when explaining the importance to authorities in encouraging immigrants to maintain relations with their countries of origin:

A Catalan construction company that imports materials from China just hired through us (the Generalitat) a boy that spoke Catalan, Spanish, and Mandarin and whose family is from the same region from where they import. This is an asset to the company and to the country (Catalonia), if you know how to take advantage of it. (Interview 4, p. 2; regional policymaker)

The last motivation is related to the contextual particularity of Catalonia as a nation without a state (Keating, 2002). For authorities, support for transnational activities reflect Catalan identity, and so that need to be actively supported by public policies so that this identity is not being lost within the Spanish majority. One interviewee stated that behind respect for immigrant’s identity “there is a reflection of the feeling of recognition of Catalan identity” (Interview 3, p. 5; regional politician). Zapata-Barrero (2004, p. 7) stated that, “an integration policy is a policy of identity”, and it is perceived as such by political actors of both the Autonomous Community and the City Council. In addition, the perception that there is an ongoing identity construction within this region also is present. As one of the interviewees states: “new citizens are part of this rethinking of Catalonia; they are made to understand that they are arriving to a society where the future is to be decided together” (Interview 7, p. 4; local politician). In this developing identity, both sub-state levels acknowledge that it is possible to fit double-identity affiliations within it.

Over the years, there has been an important increase in the appearance of nationalism as an issue in the migration management; particularly in integration policies (Hepburn, 2014; Zuber, 2020). If at the beginning of the period under consideration the construction of a country barely appears in the Plans and the work documents, in the final years, citations to it increase strikingly so, but within the framework of a diverse society. The more recent the policy analysed, more are the references to the importance of social diversity (and support for cultural and social differences) in the construction of the new state (PCI 2017-2020), itself related to the increase of nationalist discourse in the region.

However, this ongoing construction of identity can be threatened by other identities. Indeed, while the Catalan authorities support identities that have a cultural proximity with the Catalan one (often Western); identities that are very different are not supported. Furthermore, in certain cases, where a process of interference occurs, these more different identities are forced to adapt to the reality or interests around identity of Catalonia. A good example highlighted by one interviewee is about gender equality:

The Pakistani festivity is a good example. The first year they celebrated the festival without women. The second year we told them that without women the financial support was over. So, they celebrated it with women, but separately. The third year we required them to do it together. There was even an institutional problem, because the city councillor (a woman) was in the act and sat with the authorities, who were all men. The councillor invited the President of Pakistani Women to sit with the authorities... the situation was a little tense, but it had to be done; it is a message that must be given, and that is being transmitted. (Interview 8, p. 8; local politician)

Once more, it is remarkable the discourse from the local level authorities over these last years. Although the necessity of constructing a new identity is maintained, it is elaborated in terms of a diverse society. As the PdTI 2018-2021 highlights, there is a need to “introduce diversity as a key element in Barcelona’s identity” (p. 42). As such, “this identity will be created promoting the interaction, contact, dialogue and mutual knowledge” (pp. 11-12).

## 5. Conclusion and discussion

As Faist (2010) asserted, transnationalism has caused a change in institutions, which have been forced to adapt to the needs of immigrants. This article has shown, through a case study, the development of transnational governance by sub-state public authorities, which, as Fauser (2013) noted, supports immigrants in maintaining their relationships with their countries of origin. Thus, compared to studies “from above” that examine the effects of the actions by state authorities on transnational activities of migrants, this study has shown how the authorities in destination countries have instead adapted to the relations of immigrants with their countries of origin (“from below”, but also how these policies affect transnational activities (“from above”), and accordingly institutional interests.

The response of the political authorities in Catalonia has been to put in place a framework of action that favours and encourages immigrants to maintain transnational activities: whether economic, political, or socio-cultural in nature. Thus, they have developed their own particular migration governance with its own peculiarities (as in many other cases: see Betts, 2011a; Margharitis, 2016). which consists of transversal and intergovernmental actions that mobilize civil society, particularly through immigrant organisations, as noted by Fauser (2013) and



Østergaard-Nielsen (2011). These actions are carried out with the participation of different public and private actors, from policy and event development through implementation.

The reason why Sub-state authorities have launched such policies includes what the interviewees have called the “common good”. In other words, as Østergaard-Nielsen (2011) and Fauser (2013) explain, support for transnational actions affects the management of migration flows, impacts on the integration of immigrants, and causes an effect in the country of origin through development cooperation. By broadening the analysis of policies beyond cooperation and focusing on the specifics of the Catalonia and Barcelona cases, additional reasons that are not considered in recent literature can be identified, which are the main contribution of this paper. First, Catalan authorities support transnational activities as a way of emphasising self-recognition of the Catalan identity, feeding the ongoing identity construction in this region (Zuber, 2020). Second, for public authorities, encouraging transnational relations provides both political utility — to gain electoral credit and increase its presence as an actor in the international arena, and economic utility — for the business community, in particular, and for the destination country, in general.

Transnational relations transform the institutions of host countries “from below”. In the cases studied, sub-state authorities created a new framework for public policies on migration. The study has also shown, and as Fauser (2012) too noted, that sub-state levels and their specific characteristics matter in defining the transnational space and specific activities “from below”. In these case studies, identity creation has a crucial role to play in conditioning sub-state responses to migration transnationalism. It is yet to be seen whether the same conclusions can be reached in other contexts and other nation-building case studies (Hepburn, 2014; Zuber, 2020).

Even without transnational governance actions in the destination country, immigrant transnational relations would be maintained over time (Portes, 2007, p. 79), although is expected that after some years there is a decline in contact (Jones, 2019). However, the role of the authorities, particularly in Europe, in destination countries has expanded steadily, and their actions are in turn affecting to these ties. Unlike the United States, where transnational activities occur generally “from below”, in Europe they are not only being developed “from above” by immigrant organisations (Lacroix & Castles, 2011; Portes & Zhou, 2012; Fauser, 2013; Portes & Fernández-Kelly, 2014), but also by public authorities (Østergaard-Nielsen, 2011; Fauser, 2013).

Finally, while this article provides new insight into some of the elements of transnational migration governance of sub-state authorities in destination country, and thus makes a contribution to the literature (Betts, 2011a; Betts, 2011b; Margharitis, 2016), it also opens up new fields of analysis for future research. For example, although the article shows that Catalan authorities perceive the support of transnationalism as a “common good”, further research is needed, and indeed is necessary, to appreciate its effects. As such, there is a need to explore further the impact of governmental actions on the transnational activities of migrants. This should include not only actions in support of certain activities, but also the impact of not supporting or even prohibiting others. Second, it is important to consider what the consequences of these actions might be for immigrant communities. Third, the effect of transnational relations on the integration of immigrants in destination countries should be explored further. Finally, further to this case study, a comparative analysis could be carried out to understand how different contexts lead to different forms of transnational migration governance, and particularly relevant would be analyses of different political contexts.

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