Disentangling migrant transnationalism

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Abstract

Studies on migrant collective participation and organization either focus on their receiving country incorporation or on ‘homeland’ oriented engagements. A transnational perspective in migration research has contributed to consider the simultaneous existence of multiple agendas of migrant organizations. Nonetheless, empirical insights into dual agendas are still scarce. What is more, migrant organizations’ local activities are most frequently investigated in relation to their efforts and potential for incorporation. In contrast, cross-border engagements are seen in relation to home(town) development and change. Scholars generally sustain the congruency of local – receiving side versus transnational- origin side. However, local activities of migrant groups are also directed to situations abroad. Local political mobilizations for regime change and political reforms in origin countries are well known, for instance. At the same time, cross-border action of migrant organizations in origin countries in some cases relates to conditions in receiving countries, too.

Engaging with the concept of transnational social spaces this contribution suggests distinguishing between the geographical scope and the social and political focus of action. It thereby aims to further theorize migrants’ transnationalism and thus to disentangle migrants’ collective efforts. By using what is known from the scholarship on migrant collective

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organizations and empirical data on this topic collected within my own empirical research this contribution shows the potentially multi-dimensional character of migrant organizations engaging for situations in countries of origin and arrival, both taking place at multiple locations.

Introduction

Studies on migrant collective participation and organization either focus on their receiving country incorporation or on ‘homeland’ oriented engagements. A transnational perspective in migration research has contributed to consider the simultaneous existence of multiple agendas of migrant organizations. Nonetheless, empirical insights into dual agendas are still scarce. What is more, migrant organizations’ local activities are generally investigated in relation to their efforts and potential for incorporation. In contrast, cross-border engagements are seen in relation to home(town) development and change. This rather dichotomous perspective involves two important shortcomings. First, dual agendas of migrant organizations engaging simultaneously for the receiving side situation and that in the home country are most frequently ignored. And second, research on migrant organizations accounts for activities on the receiving side predominantly when it relates to incorporation. Cross-border action, in turn, receives attention mostly as it links to political and socio-economic change and development on the sending side.

A number of current dynamics, however, call into question this limited perspective. Most noteworthy, dual agendas exist. Although there is few systematic literature on this topic, case study evidence and survey data have revealed that dual engagements with the side of origin and reception exist. Even though in parts of this literature receiving and origin engagements have been computed against one another, this still points to the fact that both exist in parallel (Cordero-Guzmán 2005; Fauser 2010; Koopmans and Statham 2003; Østergaard-Nielsen 2003; Pries 2010). In general, organizations, their members and representatives engaging with the side of residence and origin see no paradox in these simultaneous activities. Furthermore literature on diaspora activism and transnational communities has also revealed the local or country-wide activities of migrant groups taking place in many immigration countries directed to situations abroad. These studies document the political mobilizations for regime change and reform in origin countries organized in European and US-American cities, often accompanied by efforts lobbying the receiving governments’ intervention and non-state actors’ solidarity (Adamson 2002; Østergaard-Nielsen 2003; Rivera-Salgado 2000; Shain 1999). Particularly this role of mobilization of receiving side institutions and resources for
diverse kinds of homeland-related activities has often not received greater attention in the study of migrant organizations. At the same time, cross-border action of migrant organizations not only relates to homeland politics, change and development. It also addresses immigration politics and the sending governments’ intervention and builds on the use of cross-border resources for the improvement of living conditions and rights of immigrants in the receiving country. This latter aspect is vastly ignored.

The existence of these dynamics, thus, calls for an examination of the relationship between geographical scope and social and political focus in the research on transnational migrant organizations. Engaging with the concept of transnational social spaces this contribution intends to theorize and disentangle the geographic and social dimensions of this action. It draws on existent literature and case study evidence on migrant collective transnationalism as well as empirical data gathered within fieldwork carried out by the author on migrant organizations in Spain in order to highlight of what seem rather neglected aspects. It thereby shows the potentially multi-dimensional character of migrant organizations engaging for situations in countries of origin and arrival, both taking place at multiple locations.

**Beyond dichotomies**

Dichotomies characterize a major part of migration research and the research on migrant organizations. For a long time, migrant organizations have been investigated with a perspective on their engagement with the receiving society and their contributions to incorporation exclusively. In this research, generally transnational and homeland-oriented engagements are either ignored or seen an expression of failed incorporation. Migration scholarship pointed out that migrant organizations’ contributions to incorporation are dependent on whether their focus lays on the culture and country of origin or on the incorporation into country of settlement. Only in the latter case would migrant organizations effectively be able to promote migrants’ collective and individual incorporation (Schöneberg 1985). Over time, a natural evolution from ethnic and ‘homeland’ identities to host attachments has generally been expected (Layton-Henry 1990; Park and Miller 1969).

Transnational migration scholarship has introduced a different perspective. In the early 1990s, continuity or revival of transnational ties towards families, kinship networks and communities of origin became the topics of interest. This particularly challenged the quasi-automatic, evolutionist assumptions of previous approaches. Here, full and exclusive incorporation into one place only is not regarded the only path of the social processes related to migration and
settlement (Faist 2000; Glick Schiller, Basch, and Blanc-Szanton 1992; Pries 1999b). Migrant transnationalism, thus, refers to

the processes by which immigrants forge and sustain multi-stranded social relations that link together their societies of origin and settlement. (...) An essential element of transnationalism is the multiplicity of involvements that transmigrants’ sustain in both home and host societies (Glick Schiller, Basch, and Blanc-Szanton 1994, 7)

In recent years, a slowly growing body of literature investigates cross-border migrant organizations and their transnational activities for development and change in their home countries. This research observes a growing number of cross-border organizations, more intense engagement and growing financial volumes of transfers across borders. Most empirical evidence on the involvement of migrant collective actors in their countries of origin exists on the role of Mexican hometown associations (HTA) located in the United States and their activities in Mexico (Goldring 2002; Orozco and Lapointe 2004; Smith 2003; Zabin and Escala Rabadan 1998). Empirical evidence also exists on the transnational practices of US-based migrant organizations towards other Latin American countries and the Caribbean (Landolt 2008; Levitt 1997; Portes, Escobar, and Arana 2008; Portes, Escobar, and Walton Radford 2007). In the meantime, research on migrant transnational communities and organizations in Europe and their contributions with respect to the political and socio-economic situation of the countries and villages of origin is also growing (Caglar 2006; Daum 1993; Fauser 2010; Grillo and Riccio 2004; Lacroix 2005; Pries and Sezgin 2010; Sieveking, Fauser, and Faist 2008). This research concentrates on hometown and village associations, their linkages and involvements with parties and politics at home and their contributions for political and socio-economic development there. It shows how migrant organizations contribute to collecting money, channelling investment, supporting infrastructure projects, how they engage in local hometown and national homeland politics etcetera.

Although simultaneity (of ‘home and host’) is one of the key concepts in transnational migration scholarship (Glick Schiller and Levitt 2004), the major part of this literature hardly investigates dual engagements in systematic ways. Nonetheless, some recent studies document parallel engagements for home development and host incorporation on the agendas of migrant organizations (Cordero-Guzmán 2005; Fauser 2009; Portes, Escobar, and Arana 2008; Waldrauch and Sohler 2004). This research shows that the agendas and perspectives articulated by migrant organizations representatives, public documents, official statements and statuses express the compatibility of ‘home’ and ‘host’ interests.

In all these accounts, whether looking at incorporation-oriented or transnational migration scholarship, cross-border activities are generally considered in relation to their contributions
“at home”, i.e. in the country of origin, while activities on the receiving side are expected to promote incorporation. Studies on diaspora and transnational communities’ political mobilization provide evidence which suggest that this may be too narrow. Political mobilization by exile and diasporic groups and transnational communities of other types in the countries of their immigration and refuge and their lobbying before the respective political institution, non-state actors and the media in the receiving countries have been documented for the US (Rivera-Salgado 2000; Shain 1989; Shain 1999) and also for Europe including their advocacy in a European transnational space (Adamson 2002; Kastoryano 2003; Østergaard-Nielsen 2003). In addition, there are also indications that cross-border action aims at activating resources and the state in the origin country for the improvement of the conditions of immigration and incorporation, as illustrated further down in this paper.

Scarce research is taking into account the complexities of the phenomenon of migrant organizing and thereby contributes to one-sided results. Taking a transnational perspective serious requires going beyond dichotomies in theoretical and methodological terms. Hence, the next sections intend to contribute to an understanding of the phenomenon of transnational migrant organization. It starts by pointing at a number of defining elements suggested in this scholarship. These, however, leave open the relationship between the geographical scope and the social and political focus of the activities of transnational migrant organizations. For this reason follows a discussion of this relationship using the concept of transnational social spaces. On these grounds, this contribution suggests a typology distinguishing between the two, building upon existing categories, in order to allow for further analytical distinction.

**Defining transnational migrant organizations**

Although there may not be one unified understanding of the phenomenon, some shared elements of defining transnational migrant organizations exist. First, migrant collective efforts and migrant organizations engaging transnationally is a grass-root phenomenon testifying “transnationalism from below” (Portes, Escobar, and Walton Radford 2007; Smith and Guarnizo 1999). Second, transnational migrant organizations may engage in various dimensions of activities. Most frequently these are distinguished into economic, political, social, and/or cultural activities (Itzigsohn et al. 1999; Portes, Guarnizo, and Landolt 1999). Categories of transnational migrant organizations also cover a greater spectrum of types such as civic, hometown committee, social agency, cultural, political, professional, religious, educational, sports and economic (Portes, Escobar, and Walton Radford 2007). It should be noted that the self-description or main purpose of an organization may fall into one category,
the dimensions of their activities are often manifold, as has been highlighted for many migrant organizations in different places (Cordero-Guzmán 2005; Fauser 2009; Pries 2010; Waldrauch and Sohler 2004). Third, collective efforts need to be dense, stable and lasting in order to be considered transnational. Although intensity may vary, migrant transnationalism, transnational social fields, networks and spaces are defined by a certain degree of regular cross-border activities (Faist 1998; 2000; Glick Schiller, Basch, and Blanc-Szanton 1992; Portes 1999; Pries 1996). Concerning the intensity or frequency with which transnational activities occur, scholars have distinguished narrower and broader forms. Narrow or core transnationalism can be seen as strong, institutionalized engagements, involving frequent cross-border movements of persons and here members of organizations. Other forms may be more occasional and less institutionalized and therefore constitute broader or more expanded forms of transnationalism (Itzigsohn et al. 1999; Itzigsohn and Giorguli-Saucedo 2005; Levitt 2001; Portes, Escobar, and Walton Radford 2007).

Finally, there seems less consensus among scholars around the question what makes an organization really transnational. Alejandro Portes and his collaborators (2007) define transnational migrant organizations as those being active in a country other than that of residence of the involved members. These may even exist in very loosely formalized ways, and still impact on the development of their home community.

“[T]he Cañafisteros of Bani Foundation of Boston [is] a grassroots association created by Dominican immigrants in New England to help their hometown and province (Bani). A counterpart committee in the town receives and distributes the regular donations in money and kind. So far, the Cañafistero migrants have bought an ambulance and funeral car for their town, provided uniforms for the local baseball team, bought an electrical generator for the clinic, acquired various kinds of medical and school equipment, and created a fund to give $100 a month to needy families in Cañafistol. They have literally transformed the town, which has grown increasingly reliant on the loyalty and generosity of their migrants for a number of needs unattended by the national government.” (example taken from Portes, Escobar, and Walton Radford 2007, 256).

Luger Pries (2008, 259ff., 59ff.) distinguishes transnational migrant organization according to their organizational and communicative structures. These structures are reflected in the practices, symbols and artefacts of the organization. Following this ideal-typical definition only when an organization displays decentralized structures of resources, knowledge, culture and interests and a strong coordination of all its sub-units it can be considered transnational. This applies to certain types of business enterprises or transnational companies. Different from multinational companies which allow great autonomy of their sub-units and only weak coordination, transnational organizations bring together local knowledge and its transnational diffusion across the organization. For the specific realm of migrant transnational
organizations, hometown associations or other migrant organizations closely connected to a counter-part committee in the hometown seem to qualify as examples. The definition chosen within the European comparative project on transnational migrant organization TRAMO\(^2\), however, is more demanding. This definition requires not only dual structures but also dual engagements:

Transnational migrant organizations are those organizations which are not active in the country of origin or arrival predominantly, but those which focus on the respective country of origin (Poland and Turkey) and the country of arrival, Germany, in more or less equal terms \(^3\) (Sezgin and Tuncer-Zengingül 2009, translation and italics, M.F.).

This definition most clearly reflects the idea of simultaneity as a constitutive element of migrants’ transnationalism (Glick Schiller, Basch, and Blanc-Szanton 1992, 7). Transnational migrant organizations then are not only geographically spread but also socially involved in at least two places. Still, whether a transnational migrant organization is defined by cross-border action only, or by dual structures, involving members located on different sides of the border, and displaying dual agendas for host incorporation and home development leaves open one important question. How does the social or political focus of this engagement and the geographical scope relate? And thus: does cross-border action only aim at home development? And do receiving side activities address immigrants’ incorporation only?

**A typology of scope and focus**

The question of the relationship between social focus and geographical scope requires further elaboration. For this purpose the concept of transnational social spaces offers a helpful analytical distinction between the social and the geographical. The discussion on transnational spaces has pointed to the fact that the social space and its geographical localization can no longer be taken automatically congruent. Sociological thinking – as well as political regulations – have strongly been based on the congruency of one geographical space (the territory of one state) with one social space (the corresponding national society). Although in many respects this still is the predominant perspective, transnational scholarship and methodological reflections have questioned whether this uniformity is adequately describing the social world in the age of globalization. Space is constituted by a dimension of physical extension and geographical scope as well as through a social dimension referring to the

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\(^2\) Diffusion and Contexts of Transnational Migrant Organizations in Europe (TRAMO), dir. Prof. Dr. Ludger Pries (see http://www.ruhr-uni-bochum.de/tramo/en/index.shtml, 22.02.2010).

\(^3\) Unter transnationalen Migrantenorganisationen werden dabei solche [Organisationen] verstanden, die nicht in erster Linie für oder im Herkunftsland bzw. für oder im Ankunftsland tätig sind, sondern deren Aktivitäten sich relativ gleichgewichtet auf das entsprechende Herkunftsland (Polen oder Türkei) und das Ankunftsland Deutschland richten.
relationship between things, social practices and symbolic representations. From this perspective it is possible to conceive of various social spaces in one geographical location as well as to consider that one social space may span and connect various geographical spaces over great distances. The concept of transnational social spaces refers to such social spaces which cross-cut the borders of states while linking multiple locations (Faist 2004; Pries 1997; 1999a; 2008, in particular chapter 4). Transnational migrant organizations are a visible sign of this. Social and political engagement may cross-cut the borders of two or more nation-states. They may link up to actors located in distant geographical places.

It may thus come as a surprise, that transnational, border-crossing, and hometown (engagement) are generally used synonymously, most notably in transnational migration scholarship. Generally, research on hometown related activities encompasses local and cross-border activities. Seldom does it consider other types of activities such as those related to the receiving side situation, and least when it occurs in cross-border engagement. But is transnational action, or an action cross-cutting the borders of states, linking actors and institutions in distant places, exclusively oriented towards a homeland-related (political or social) goal? How can we conceptualize dual agendas of migrant organizations across multiple locations?

Although there is little research systematically investigating dual agendas of migrant organizations insightful categories have been presented. Østergaard-Nielsen (2003) and similarly Koopmans and Statham (2003) distinguish migrants’ collective practices and claims-making into the following categories: (a) immigrant politics, (b) (transplanted) diaspora politics, (c) emigrant politics, (d) homeland politics, (e) translocal politics, and (f) transnational immigration politics. These different types can be organized in a four-fold table distinguishing scope and focus of the action. On this basis the relationship between geographical scope (local/national or cross-border) and the social and political focus (oriented towards situations on receiving or origin side) can be determined more comprehensively.

**Fig. 1 - Typology of scope and focus of migrant transnationalism**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Focus</th>
<th>Scope</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>local / national cross-border</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Receiving side</td>
<td>Immigrant politics Transnational immigrant politics</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Origin side</td>
<td>Diaspora&amp;transn. community politics Development engagement Return politics</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Homeland politics Emigrant politics Community development and cooperation</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Field 1 refers to (a) immigrant politics, i.e. activities which take place in the receiving country and address the situation of migrants, and also general politics, in the receiving country. Claims for and the exercise of political participation are examples here, and so are information, support and social services delivered by migrant organizations.

Field 2 covers those activities which take place in the receiving country, but focus on the current and future situation in the country of origin. (b) (Transplanted) diaspora activism aiming at political change or regime overthrow in the origin country is located here. Apart from direct engagement among those (politically) alike and mobilizations in the public space, this can also include indirect efforts through advocating the receiving government to act in favour of these claims before the country of origin. Literature on diaspora activism and political engagements of transnational communities from the US and to a lesser, but growing, extent from Europe has contributed to our understanding of this type of activities (Al-Ali and Koser 2002; Østergaard-Nielsen 2003; Rivera-Salgado 1999; Shain 1989; Shain 1999). This also includes electoral campaigning and the exercise of voting rights in home country elections from the place of residence. Less politicized in this field are fund raising and coordinating activities for community development projects and broader awareness raising campaigns for development issue concerning the places ‘at home’. Other types are support to (voluntary) return, round tables, and workshops advising and informing migrants about ways how to best go about such plans connected to (future) situations ‘at home’. Awareness raising and informing on both return and development may also be related to receiving side institutions and may count on financial and other support on their side since migrant organizations are increasingly considered mediators in this respect.

In field 3 we find cross-border activities oriented towards the country of origin. Here (c) emigrant and (d) homeland politics as well as (e) socio-economic (translocal) development are the topics which are addressed. Emigrant politics concern those matters relevant to the condition of migrants as citizens abroad. Citizenship rights, transfer of pensions, consular procedures, etc. are relevant in this respect. In relation to homeland and more locally oriented hometown or trans-local activities political and economic change is addressed through collective investment, development projects or political advocacy in hometowns or through the media.

Field 4, finally, speaks to a widely neglected dimension of migrant organizations’ cross-border activism. Activities involving and taking place in origin countries not only address the origin country. They may also address the situation in the receiving country and can be
considered transnational immigration politics (f). This can occur indirectly by activating political institutions in the origin country to act in the migrants’ favour vis-à-vis the authorities of the country of residence. It can also include direct efforts of migrant organizations informing, advising, and supporting emigration, legalisation, reception and future incorporation of potential migrants.

Examples for engagements in relation to these four fields may either have a stronger political or a more social and economic dimension. Actions may involve and address political institutions directly claiming rights and recognition, and indirectly advocating states to use their international relations to improve the situation for those living one the other side of the border. Migrant organizations can also develop action and address problems directly, using their own resources or activating external funds and support to improve their situation and that of others. What this typology illustrates is the two-way character of transnationalism, bringing topics on the agenda from one side to the other, and vice versa, whereas much of transnational research concentrates on migrants’ re-mittances ‘back home’ exclusively. Thereby migrant organizations may also address and make use of institutions, states and non-state actors from both sides in order to support their engagements on the respective other side of the border.

**Entangled engagements - some empirical examples**

Migrant organizations may engage in only one of these fields and, say, be exclusively focused on the immigrants’ situation engaging in support and claims-making for migrants rights in the place of settlement. A migrant organization may equally only work at the place where their members reside as a diasporic actors for the overthrow of an authoritarian regime in their home country by using national media and lobbying the political institutions of the country of reception. Migrant organizations may also be involved in all of these four fields in parallel. In many instances, particular actions and discourses are closely entangled, as we will see. The suggested typology serves analytical purposes. Expanding the perspective on these various fields, while analytically distinguishing them, allows for seeing, first potentially existing dual engagements for old and new homes, and second, it reveals that cross-border action does not merely serve political and social interests in relation to places of origin of migrants and their ancestors. The role of direct engagement on behalf of immigration and integration and that of indirectly claiming the intervention of other (political) actors and origin country governments and policy-makers is also part of migrant organizations’ cross-border activities. Limiting perspectives to only one field has hindered thorough analysis of migrant transnationalism.
In relation to Turkish migrant organizations in Germany many activities have been observed which show “how migrant politics is inseparable from homeland politics” (Østergaard-Nielsen 2003, 50 expl., see chapter four). The advocacy of these groups for EU membership of Turkey, for example, is closely linked to the situation of Turks in Germany and the improvement of their living conditions since this would make Turkish citizens European citizens. In other instances homeland engagement is meant to contribute to incorporation and harmonious co-existence and cooperation among different ethnic groups, Turks and Kurds from Turkey in this case.

This mixing of demands is mostly not the result of conscious strategic effort, but rather a reflection of the fact that these are inseparable categories for Turkish and Kurdish migrants and refugees in Germany (Østergaard-Nielsen 2003, 64).

At the same time, strong homeland engagements of different ideological orientations also constitute obstacles for cooperation in favour of shared demands towards the receiving country. In spite of this, increased engagement with Germany by these groups is documented. Simultaneous engagements and their entanglement is also one of the most striking discoveries in the research on migrant organizations which I conducted myself. Using a sample of 12 migrant organizations and networks from diverse nationality backgrounds located in Spain this research reveals how closely entangled many of their activities were, covering various purposes and meanings in parallel while some of them are also connected and addressed within the same activity.

The investigated organizations are located in Madrid and Barcelona and all work locally, some also nationally, for the support of migrants’ reception and integration. To different degrees they also engage in cross-border action, articulate simultaneous agendas and carry out projects and political mobilization in relation to political and economic situations in their countries of origin. They have either an office in that country, and/or founded counterparts there or work with networks and other actors together. The character of dual structures differs, though. While some seem strongly decentralized and united within one organizing framework, others display rather centralized structures working as non-state (developmental) actors with counterparts. Since the study did not concentrate on the cross-border organizational structures more in-depth research is needed to determine more specifically these diverging structures. The following examples illustrate some of the activities of these transnational migrant organizations based on the collected data, including (unstructured) interviews, documents, web-sites and observations.

Example 1. Migrant organizations from Latin American countries which granted absentee voting rights engage in mobilizing and informing around presidential elections. In the year
2006 Peruvian, Colombian and Ecuadorian organizations organized round table discussions and provided information about the rights and duties to vote to their co-nationals residing in Spain. In parallel, the investigated migrant organizations also advocate political rights, and in particular local voting rights for non-communitarian migrants in Spain (see also Fauser 2008).

Example 2. A course taking place in Madrid promotes labour market insertion into the local economy in Madrid, whether regular or irregular; in addition it shall support job access in the event of return. In order to facilitate return and labour market insertion ‘at home’, this organization also maintains an agreement with a company in the tourism sector in their origin country. Their training course is described this way:

„The [training] programme is designed thinking in the labour market promotion of workers who arrived without professional qualification or with a certificate, which hardly fits into the Spanish labour market, and who want to improve their situation, but also it is considered as an alternative for the return to the country of origin. “

Example 3. One of the organizations investigated maintains a radio programme which is broadcasted simultaneously in Madrid and in Santo Domingo. It serves multiple purposes at the same time: First of all it connects and mutually informs those abroad and those ‘at home’. It makes those in the Dominican Republic aware of the lives of migrants in Spain. It also intends to facilitate emigration and integration by preparing those who intent to migrate in the future. Moreover, since irregular migration and human trafficking are topics crucial to current inflows to Spain and from the Dominican Republic and elsewhere, the programme also serves to warn the risks of trafficking networks. The description of this programme published by the organization illustrates the variety of purposes:

Vereda Tropical [a radio programme] is a project of awareness building which pretends to distribute the Dominican culture at the same time as the Spanish to facilitate social integration of the immigrants. At the same time, with this programme we intend to combat networks of human trafficking and facilitate the possibility to immigrate for those who want to do it in regulated way within the agreements that exist between Spain and the Dominican Republic.

Example 4. Similarly, in other cross-border activities, some of the investigated migrant organizations intensively work around issue of emigration, the combat of irregular migration as well as support to legalization on the side of destination, i.e. Spain. Some of them maintain migration information centres in one or more places of their origin country, generally those places strongly connected to high rates of out-migration. In a few instances, these projects are subsidized by the city of Madrid, where the head-quarters of these organizations are located. In these activities, migrant organizations also work together with institutions on the side of origin where authorities and non-state actors also maintain information services around the possibilities and dangers of migration, as is the case with the Casa del Migrante in the city of
Quito installed by the municipality with which organizations in Spain are cooperating. In relation to the two last regularization campaigns carried out in Spain in 2000/2001 and 2005 Ecuadorian migrant organizations located in Spain, Madrid and Barcelona, undertook extensive information campaigns for the family members of those living in Spain without residence and work permission (see also Fauser 2009 and Laubenthal 2007).

These examples illustrate how political and developmental issues are tackled from the receiving side; they also illustrate how receiving side issues are taken ‘back home’. All the engagements here observed address multiple topics and take place at multiple locations, relating both to receiving side situations and that on the side origin, thus shaping complex transnational spaces. These are linked to states and societies on both sides, direct and indirectly.

Rethinking the relationship between transnational grassroot action and the state

Much has been written on the changing role of the state and state policies in relation to newly emerging transnational formations and spaces. At the origins of transnational migration scholarship stood the unboundedness of nations and the de-territorialization of nation-states, most notably expressed in what can be called the foundational publication of this scholarship: ‘Nations unbound: Transnational projects, postcolonial predicaments, and deterritorialized nation-states’ (Glick Schiller, Basch, and Blanc-Szanton 1994). Over time, rather the character of re-territorialization and the changing nature of the relationship between state territory and the national and political community came into the spotlight. This research put emphasis on how states expanded their sphere beyond their borders. Particularly throughout the 1990s and after, many sending countries developed initiatives to encompass their citizens abroad and developed global nations strategies (Glick Schiller and Fouron 1999; Levitt and de La Dehesa 2003; Smith 1997). Many sending states have changed strongly in this process, as sovereignty, citizenship and membership have expanded in geographic scope (Levitt and de La Dehesa 2003).

The changes and challenges on the side of receiving states through migration and transnationalism receive attention primarily in relation to increased multi-cultural diversity, which is not necessarily linked to cross-border and/or homeland-oriented activities and in relation to legal changes such as dual citizenship which potentially facilitates the persistence such ties (Bauböck 1994; Faist 2007, 16ff.). Migrant transnationalism is also discussed in relation to domestic security concerns threatened by cross-border activism. Concerning this
latter aspect, Turkish and Kurdish activism in German cities, for instance, has created great rejection by German authorities (Østergaard-Nielsen 2003, 73ff.). However, receiving states also become involved in transnational social spaces and act through transnational communities and transnational migrant organizations abroad, active or passively, voluntary or involuntarily. At least in relation to migration, they become part of agendas and addressees of cross-border action.

Hence, states, which are already connected through migrants from one country living in the other country, seem to become increasingly entangled through transnational spaces playing out locally and across borders, relating to origin and receiving countries alike. States are shaped by and shaping migrants’ transnationalism. So far, little knowledge exists on the role of receiving states’ politics in relation to the agendas and activities of transnational migrant organizations. Current dynamics imply that the relationship between states is no longer exclusively touched in bilateral and international relations. They are also getting involved with grass-root actors engaging and using resources across borders.

**Final remarks**

The conceptualization of the congruency of local/national = receiving country (incorporation) and transnational/cross-border = home country (development) in theoretical concepts and empirical research obscures parts of empirical realities. This contribution has offered a way to distinguish between geografical scope and social and political focus in order to disentangle migrant transnationalism. Such a transnational perspective allows for revealing and reflecting on the potentially multi-dimensional and multi-local character of transnational migrant organizations. Rather than considering these phenomena unbound, attention should be paid to the complex relationships between geography and society, bringing migrant organizations and states into new relationships.
References


