

# Oportunidades y costes del campo político transnacional en el contexto de la migración colombiana, peruana y uruguaya a España

# Opportunities and costs of the political transnational field in the context of Colombian, Peruvian and Uruguayan migration to Spain\*

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## RESUMEN

En este artículo analizamos las relaciones políticas entre los Estados de Colombia, Perú y Uruguay y sus nacionales en el extranjero. A diferencia de la mayor parte de los estudios sobre transnacionalismo político y vinculación estatal transnacional, en el presente trabajo analizamos tanto las políticas y programas promovidos por los Estados de origen como las acciones y reacciones políticas de los migrantes. Nuestro objetivo es mostrar cómo las relaciones entre los Estados y sus diásporas emergen y se desarrollan en el campo político transnacional atendiendo a la evaluación de las oportunidades y los costes que tienen las acciones emprendidas por cada uno de estos actores. A través de un análisis histórico y comparativo mostramos las diferencias y similitudes en la configuración del campo político transnacional de los tres países. Como conclusión llamamos la atención sobre la importancia de los contextos históricos y políticos de origen y de recepción. Al mismo tiempo, señalamos que las diferencias entre las relaciones de los Estados con sus diásporas se explican también por la historia migratoria de cada país y las características específicas de las diferentes comunidades de emigrantes.

## ABSTRACT

This article seeks to examine the political relations between sending states and their migrants abroad by focusing on the less explored context of Colombian, Peruvian and Uruguayan migration to Spain. In contrast to other research, it analyzes both the policies and programs designed by sending states to engage with their diasporas and the political actions of migrants, rather than focusing exclusively on one or the other. The aim is to understand how state-diaspora relations emerge and evolve in the transnational political field, in response to an evaluation of opportunities and costs on the part of the states and to migrants' involvement in home country politics. To achieve this, the authors use a historical and comparative approach to draw similarities and differences between the three countries studied. The main contribution of the article is to highlight the importance of the historical and political context in which state-diaspora relations occur, as well as the migration history and characteristics of different migrant communities.

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## Keywords

Transnational politics, sending states, international migration, diasporas, political rights, dual citizenship, external vote, migrant organizations, Latin America, Spain, Colombia, Peru, Uruguay.

## Palabras clave

Transnacionalismo político, Estados de origen, migración internacional, diásporas, derechos políticos, doble ciudadanía, voto externo, organizaciones de migrantes, América Latina, España, Colombia, Perú, Uruguay.

## Oportunidades e custos no campo das políticas transnacionais no contexto da migração da Colômbia, Peru e Uruguai para Espanha

## Opportunities and costs of the political transnational field in the context of colombian, peruvian and uruguayan migration to Spain

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### RESUMO

Neste artigo analisa as relações políticas entre a Colômbia, O Peru e O Uruguai e seus nacionais no estrangeiro. A diferença da maior parte dos estudos sobre transnacionalismo político e vínculos estatais e transnacionais, neste artigo se analisa tanto as políticas e programas promovidos pelos estados de origem como ações e reações de programas de migrantes. O objetivo é mostrar como as relações entre os estados e seus diásporas emergem e se desenvolvem no campo político transnacional atendendo à avaliação das oportunidades e dos custos com as ações por cada um desses atores. Através de uma análise histórico e comparativo mostramos as diferenças e semelhanças na configuração do campo político e transnacional dos três países. Em conclusão, se chama a atenção sobre a importância dos contextos históricos e políticos de origem e recepção. Ao mesmo tempo, nota-se que as diferenças entre as relações dos estados com suas diásporas são também explicadas pela história de migração de cada país e as características específicas das diferentes comunidades migrantes.

### ABSTRACT

This article seeks to examine the political relations between sending states and their migrants abroad by focusing on the less explored context of Colombian, Peruvian and Uruguayan migration to Spain. In contrast to other research, it analyzes both the policies and programs designed by sending states to engage with their diasporas and the political actions of migrants, rather than focusing exclusively on one or the other. The aim is to understand how state-diaspora relations emerge and evolve in the transnational political field, in response to an evaluation of opportunities and costs on the part of the states and to migrants' involvement in home country politics. To achieve this, the authors use a historical and comparative approach to draw similarities and differences between the three countries studied. The main contribution of the article is to highlight the importance of the historical and political context in which state-diaspora relations occur, as well as the migration history and characteristics of different migrant communities.

### Palavras-chave

Transnacionalismo político, estados de origem, migração internacional, diásporas, direitos políticos, dupla cidadania, voto externo, organizações de migrantes, América Latina, Espanha, Colômbia, Peru, Uruguai.

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## INTRODUCTION

Dual nationality and the right to vote in home and host country elections, together with other forms of formal and informal political participation, are political entitlements enjoyed by many Latin American migrants in Spain today. This reality is the product of many factors, including centuries of common history between the 'Old' and the 'New' Worlds, recent political and socioeconomic developments in different Latin American countries, as well as in Spain, and the growing numerical and economic (remittances) importance of Latin American migration flows to Spain. As such, the combined study of the policies and initiatives developed by Colombia, Peru and Uruguay to engage with their diasporas, and the political actions of their nationals in Spain, offers a unique opportunity to understand how the transnational political field connecting states and migrants abroad develops. In addition, this study offers a different context in which to analyze the emergence and functioning of a political transnational field to that of 'Latino' immigration to the United States, which has received the most attention so far.

Our focus on Colombian, Peruvian and Uruguayan migration to Spain also represents a diverse set of sending and receiving contexts (given their different timings) and migration flows (numerically, but also in terms of type of migration, "political" or "economic"), in which to analyze how sending states engage politically with their diasporas and the transnational politics of migrant communities. Finally, research on transnational politics in the context of Latin American migration has generally focused on one perspective (states' diasporic policies) or the other (migrants' political practices), rarely integrating both (exceptions include Berg and Tamagno, 2006; Bermudez, 2009; Moraes, 2010). By looking at both sets (and other types) of actors, and comparing the experiences of migrants from Colombia, Peru and Uruguay in Spain, our analysis allows us to identify some key factors that influence the type, orientation and degree of institutionalization that transnational political linkages between sending states and their diasporas adopt. These factors are: the historical and political context in the sending and receiving contexts (and at the broader regional or international level); a specific migratory history; and the composition, size and organization of the migrant communities.

In the rest of this article we offer first a brief review, based on the existing literature, of the circumstances

in which states engage politically with their migrants abroad, and how migrants are affected, and in turn affect, diasporic policies and initiatives. Second, we set out the context of Latin American migration to Spain, focusing on the three communities studied. Third, we detail very briefly the empirical research conducted by the authors in which this article is based. The main part of the article then analyzes how, historically, Colombia, Peru and Uruguay, have put in place policies and other initiatives oriented towards their diasporas, which include certain political rights. More specifically, we focus on the granting of dual citizenship and voting rights to migrants abroad, and how these entitlements are exercised (or demanded) by the communities based in Spain. In the rest of this article, first we detail very briefly the empirical research conducted by the authors in which this article is based. Subsequently, we offer a summary review, based on the existing literature, of the circumstances in which states engage politically with their migrants abroad, and how migrants are affected, and in turn affect, diasporic policies and initiatives. Third, we set out the context of Latin American migration to Spain, focusing on the three communities studied. The main part of the article then analyzes.

## BRIEF METHODOLOGICAL NOTE

This paper is the result of a collective discussion of how the transnational political field has emerged and developed in the context of Colombian, Peruvian and Uruguayan migration to Spain. As such, its main aim is not to offer new empirical evidence, but rather to build a new analytical framework to better understand the politics of state-diaspora relations. Nevertheless, the discussion is based on empirical research carried out by the authors on different aspects of Latin American migration to Spain and Europe over more than a decade. The main focus of this research has been to study the transnational political practices of Colombian, Peruvian and Uruguayan migrant communities in Spain<sup>1</sup>. In addition, the authors conducted a joint project on the local-transnational political practices and attitudes of Latin American migrants in

1 Anastasia Bermudez did her Ph.D. research on Colombians in the UK and Spain (Queen Mary, University of London, funded by the ESRC, 2008) and has collaborated in a project on the external vote of Colombian migrants in Spain and the UK (Queen Mary, University of London, funded by the British Academy, 2010). Angeles Escriva has conducted post-doctoral research on the political behaviour and attitudes of Peruvian migrants in Spain vis-à-vis home country elections (in 2006 and 2011, University of Huelva). And Natalia Moraes has studied the role of the State and migrants in the building up of a transnational Uruguayan political field (University of Granada, funded by the Spanish Education Ministry).

Andalusia (University of Huelva, funded by the Junta de Andalucía, 2008). Anastasia Bermudez then took further this research, by extending it to cover the Latin American communities in Madrid and Barcelona (Queen Mary, University of London, funded by JISLAC, 2009). This research has used both a qualitative and quantitative methodology, including in-depth interviews with hundreds of Latin American migrants and other key actors (representatives from migrant and pro-migrant organisations, local institutions and political parties, trade unions, etc.), participant observation in both country of origin and destination (in special events, gatherings, organizations, etc.), critical review of documentation on the local-transnational political participation of these migrants (including information of the emergence and implementation of transnational or diasporic policies on the part of home countries), and the implementation of at least three surveys to Latin American migrants (Colombian and Peruvian) on the subject of their participation in home country elections<sup>2</sup>.

### Political transnationalism from “above” and “below”<sup>3</sup>

Neither the transnational practices of migrants nor state strategies for engaging with their diasporas are a new phenomenon (see Smith, 1999 on the Italian case). However, these strategies have recently intensified as countries of origin have come to recognize the need, or relevance, of channeling and institutionalizing migrants’ interests, or forging new ties with them, including in the political field.

Among the factors that explain why some countries develop more strategies for engaging with their diasporas than others, or develop certain types of policies, Levitt and de la Dehesa (2003) argue that is important to consider both global or international, as well as national, dynamics. The former include the structural position of sending states within the global economy, which, for instance, makes them less or more dependent on migrant remittances, as well as the emergence of international norms to restrict migration, which can prompt sending states to come to the defense

of their nationals abroad. At the national level, it is important to consider the size and organization of the emigrant communities (and hence their economic and political potential), as well as state structures, and particularly their capacity and that of state institutions to create credible, long-term policies (Levitt and de la Dehesa, 2003).

While many studies have emphasized the growing economic potential that diasporas or emigrant communities represent for host countries (especially in the form of remittances), the political motivations of sending states have received less attention. Nevertheless, some authors have highlighted how migrants can assume an important political role vis-à-vis sending states by becoming defenders of their home country in the host society (Bauböck, 2003; Shain, 2002), as the well documented case of the Jewish diaspora in the United States shows. In other cases, home countries might be interested in neutralizing or controlling the activities of national dissidents or political exiles abroad (Østergaard-Nielsen, 2003). Likewise, migrants can play a significant role as political actors in their countries of origin (at the local, regional and national levels) through the external vote, as their political rights are extended and political representatives and parties grow increasingly interested in their support (Guarnizo, 2006; Itzigsohn, 2000).

Thereby, as Jones-Correa (2001) points out, both perceived economic and political costs, as well as opportunities (or benefits), are important determinants for sending states or home country governments when deciding to adopt certain measures to strengthen or institutionalize links with their diasporas. Examples of these measures are growing, and can include the creation of formal organizations such as migrant advisory councils, the promulgation of specific laws, for instance granting migrants the right to vote from abroad, the creation of diaspora networks, or even the signing of bilateral and international agreements (on social security payments, etc.). Such measures can be proactive or reactive (in response to migrant demands), but once they become institutionalized, they continue to exist, even if the material and historical conditions have changed, eventually becoming a legacy that can act in benefit or detriment of successive migratory flows. At the end, the political and economic costs and opportunities that these measures offer, and their degree of institutionalization, largely explain why certain forms of transnational political engagement do not function beyond

2 For more detailed information about these research projects, please refer to the authors’ extensive publications.

3 The distinction between transnationalism ‘from above’ and ‘from below’ has a broader meaning in Smith and Guarnizo’s (1998) original work, but it is used here mainly to distinguish between transnational initiatives developed by the state, or by other powers, and those which are migrant initiated.

a given situation, or instead survive the will of the incumbent government to become state policies<sup>4</sup>.

This is an important aspect to take into account when analyzing how transnational political ties are forged and what determines their recognition, support or permanency over time. For instance, when considering its limits, it is significant that while the authorities (from the place of origin or destination) believe that political activities should be channeled chiefly through formal programs and initiatives, migrants might prefer to have more freedom of action and greater options for participating in the transnational political arena in the form and manner they best see fit, as the case study of Latin American migrants in Spain analyzed below show.

### Setting the context: Latin American migration to Spain

Most of the studies conducted to date on the transnational political practices of Latin American migrants have focused on the largest, longest-settled communities in the United States, and especially on those migrant groups coming from countries not far away from the border (Mexico, Central America and the Caribbean). On the other hand, studies based in Europe, generally deal with the cases of diaspora communities that have long established themselves in so-called old immigration countries (Lafleur and Martiniello, 2009; Østergaard-Nielsen, 2003).

By contrast, Latin American migration in large numbers to Europe, and Spain in particular, is a more recent phenomenon, where migrants from South America play a more significant role, thus providing a new context to study (OIM, 2011; Pellegrino, 2004). Spain also offers a particular receiving context, given its greater geographical distance from Latin America and a different history of relations with the region, based on the country's colonial past.<sup>5</sup> This shared history is not

only invoked rhetorically in the present, but through the maintenance of linkages, the sense of historical debt and the institutionalization of measures, and it has affected current citizenship aspirations of mobile Latin Americans (Cook and Viladrich, 2009).

Given that migration tends to follow the path of colonial heritage, past population movements and economic penetration, flows between Latin America and Spain are not unexpected. Up until approximately the middle of the 20th century, migration was mainly from Spain to Latin America. To get an idea of these movements, it is estimated that between the 16th and 18th century more than half a million Spaniards migrated to Latin America. Later, from the middle of the 19th century until the 1930s, during the period of the 'great European migrations', some 60 million Europeans emigrated, mostly to the 'New World' (among them, more than 3 million Spaniards went to Latin America) (González Martínez, 1996). In the case of Spain, these flows continued more or less uninterrupted until the 1960s, when population movements start to reverse. This decade, as some authors claim, represents "the end of a dream" and "the beginnings of a new one" (González Martínez, 1996).

Thus, up until then, Latin America provided refuge to thousands of Spanish migrants fleeing from economic hardship and political repression. Nevertheless, flows began to reverse gradually in the last quarter of the 20th century, and more rapidly with the beginning of the new century, as Spain became the largest recipient of Latin American migration to Europe, and the first or second main destination (after the United States) for many of these migrants<sup>6</sup>.

Although there has always been a presence of Latin American citizens in Spain, the first significant migration flows in the 1970s consisted mainly of political exiles from the Southern Cone (Argentina, Chile and Uruguay). Data on the number of Latin Americans residing in Spain at that time varies from only 75,000 to 130,000 (Jensen and Coraza, 2009). Gradually through the 1980s and more rapidly since the 1990s, these flows increased in number, while becoming more diversified in terms of country of origin, with a prevalence of migrants from the Andean region and the Southern Cone. The latest figures from the Padrón

4 González Gutierrez (1999) highlights the need to distinguish between state and government policies. Government policies are shorter term and centered on promoting the government among communities of migrants. In contrast, state policies are longer term and independent of specific governments, and would have as their central aim to strengthen migrants' sense of belonging towards their country of origin.

5 Connor and Massey (2010) argue that while the United States represents greater geographical proximity and lower costs of movement for migrants from Mexico, Central America and the Caribbean, Spain offers greater cultural proximity and lower costs of integration for South American migrants.

6 Currently, we might be witnessing a new reversal of these flows, as emigration of Spaniards and return migration towards Latin America gathers pace as a result of the economic crisis.



Municipal (municipal registry, as of 1st January, 2013) shows that Latin American migrants in Spain now number approximately 2.4 million, representing the largest immigrant community in the country.<sup>7</sup> Within this community, Colombians represent one of the largest national groups (the second largest after Ecuadorians, with 370,823). Peruvians have a long history of settlement in Spain, but are less numerous (195,488), while Uruguayans represent one of the smallest South American groups (80,891)<sup>8</sup>.

Although the flows arriving since the 1980s are largely considered economic migrants, political and security factors have also been decisive reasons for emigrating, particularly in the case of Colombia and Peru. On the other hand, recent Uruguayan migration to Spain has been mainly economic, in contrast with earlier refugee movements. Also, in terms of gender, while recent Uruguayan migration to Spain has been balanced, among Colombian and Peruvian flows there has been a majority of women. Some studies point out that the Latin American community in Spain is relatively young and in general have high levels of education. Despite this, migrants tend to be employed in low-skilled jobs (women in domestic service, retail and catering; men in construction and services). Latin American migrants have settled throughout Spain, but the largest concentrations are in cities like Madrid and Barcelona (see Gil, 2004; OIM, 2011).

Taking into account this scenario, Latin American states have become increasingly active in promoting links with their migrant communities abroad, including in Spain, through new policies and programs. However, on occasions perceived or real economic and political costs have inhibited more concrete and enduring actions. At the same time, Latin American migrants in Spain (and other destinations) have become increasingly active in demanding greater political (and other) rights, and in engaging politically with their home countries.

7 INE (Instituto Nacional de Estadística) <http://www.ine.es> (checked 09-03-2014). The 2.4 million refers to people born in Latin America residing in Spain (approximately 950,000 had Spanish nationality). A further 56,174 people had been born in Spain but were nationals of a Latin American country.

8 Data from INE. These figures include 147,845 migrants born in Colombia who had acquired Spanish nationality, as well as 44,220 Peruvians and 33,487 Uruguayans in the same situation.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

### States as actors in transnational migration: the cases of Colombia, Peru and Uruguay

Among the main initiatives developed by countries to engage with their diasporas are: the right to dual citizenship and to vote from abroad; the development of special programs to institutionalize diaspora linkages (in the political, social, economic and cultural spheres); the promotion of investment and development projects in the country of origin; and fomenting national culture (Gamlen, 2006; Guarnizo, 2006; Levitt and de la Dehesa, 2003). Within the three cases studied here, Colombia stands out as one of the South American countries that have made the earliest advances in this regard, especially in terms of the more formal political rights. Colombian migrants were the first to obtain the right to vote from abroad in presidential elections (in 1961) (Calderón Chelius, 2003; Guarnizo, 2006). Later, in the 1970s, when Colombian emigration abroad (mainly to the United States and Venezuela) starts to gather pace, we can see the first attempts at creating initiatives aimed at linking the Colombian diaspora with the home country, such as the Programa de Repatriación de Cerebros Fugados (1970), a program designed to reverse the brain drain.

Similar steps were taken in Uruguay but a decade later, in the 1980s, with the Programa de Repatriación (Repatriation Program, 1985), coinciding with the end of the military dictatorship that ran the country from 1973-1985. Thus, in Uruguay, increasing government concern for its nationals abroad coincides with the restoration of democracy, and initially, the main objective was to promote or facilitate the return of political exiles. However, these first programs are examples of "policies of circulation and repatriation", based on the brain drain approach, and aimed at encouraging or facilitating the return of migrants, rather than at creating or forging ties with the diaspora ("diasporic policies") (Smith, 1999), although in the Uruguayan case, they contributed to the creation of some transnational networks (mainly academic). In Peru, the first government attempts to promote the return of talent did not emerge until the 1990s, and interestingly these coexisted with other initiatives, such as the Programa de Migración-Inversión (Migration-Investment Program, 1991), which offered incentives to foreigners to settle and invest in Peru

(aimed mainly at what was then considered an attractive flow of Asian immigrants).

Despite these different first steps (in timing and context), by the late 1990s (in Colombia), or with the arrival of the new century (in the case of Uruguay and Peru), these early initiatives begin to assume a more 'diasporic' stance, seeking to boost migrant communities' ties with their home countries, and their contributions, financial or otherwise. Before then, in the three cases studied, migration abroad was largely seen as a safety valve for the socioeconomic and political problems affecting these countries, rather than as an opportunity.

In Colombia, this turn of events coincided with the rapid acceleration in emigration rates, and the consequent increasing importance of migrant remittances. This gave rise to initiatives such as the Programa Colombia para Todos (Colombia for All Program, 1996) and the Programa para las Comunidades Colombianas en el Exterior (Program for Colombian Communities Abroad, 1998). In Uruguay, it followed a new wave of emigration, this time more economic than political in nature, after a severe economic crisis that brought population outflows back to the numbers seen in the 1970s (Moraes, 2009; Pellegrino and Vitorito, 2006). It was in this context that the potential that migrants represent, and the role of the state as an agent for their reincorporation and contribution to the building up of the nation, starts to be recognized (for instance, with the Programa de Vinculación con los Uruguayos Residentes en el Exterior - Program for the Engagement of Uruguayan Residents Abroad, 2001).

In Peru, although a few policy initiatives were implemented to regulate emigration in the 1990s, it was in these the early years of the new century when a series of measures were developed aimed at attracting the interest of migrants abroad, partly in response to their demands, but also following in the steps of other countries in the region. The reason why these first diasporic initiatives happened later in Peru does not have to do with the novelty of emigration flows (they had been underway in an intense manner since the end of the 1980s). Rather, the causes lay on the acute crisis affecting the country, the establishment of other priorities, and the existence of a semi-dictatorial regime throughout the 1990s. Peru would have to wait until the fall of the Fujimori regime in 2001, and the election of Toledo as new president, himself with experience as both an internal and a transnational mi-

grant, for the issue of emigration to assume a greater political role (Berg, 2010).

The historical, political and migratory context as the new century progresses has continued to determine, to a large extent, how state-diaspora relations have developed in the three countries. In Colombia, the worsening sociopolitical situation, the growing importance of migrant remittances and the political role played by some migrants abroad (mainly political exiles denouncing the situation of violence and human rights abuses in the country), have determined the path that these engagement strategies from above have taken. This helps explain the emergence of state programs such as Colombia Nos Une (Colombia Unites Us, 2002), or private initiatives such as Conexión Colombia (Colombian Connection, 2003), aimed at engaging the diaspora, where the emphasis is on promoting philanthropy and a more positive image of Colombians and their country abroad.

In Uruguay, where emigration abroad had become identified mainly with left-wing refugee flows, it was not until the election of a leftist government in 2004 that the country began to think of ways to create broader and more institutionalized ties with the diaspora through projects such as Departamento 20: la patria peregrina (Department 20: the pilgrim homeland). This initiative no longer seeks to promote the return of migrants, nor solely attract their contributions to the country of origin, but rather to facilitate the right to exercise citizenship in a broader territory (an important aspect in the case of Uruguay, where migrants still do not have the right to vote from abroad). Finally, the focus of the most recent initiatives in Peru has not only been at the symbolic level, as reflected in the coining of the expression El Quinto Suyu (an imagined fifth province in the Peruvian nation) to denote the diaspora in an inclusive manner (like in the case of Uruguay), but also in the promotion of investments by migrants in their homeland and the undertaking of bureaucratic reforms designed to protect migrants and promote their political participation<sup>9</sup>.

Thus, domestic (and international) political and economic contexts (including real and perceived economic and political opportunities and costs), and specific migratory histories, emerge as key factors explaining how state-diaspora relations begin to be configured. In the case of Uruguay, the most determi-

<sup>9</sup> For more on this, see Berg and Tamagno (2006).



ning factor seems to have been the identification of international migration with earlier refugee flows. For Peru, domestic political developments have also been important, as it has been its more recent experience as a country of immigration (as well as emigration), and the broader regional context. While in the case of Colombia, it is important to take into consideration both the rapid acceleration of migration flows abroad since the 1990s, and the mixture of social and political factors fuelling these flows. These differences will be reflected in the nature, orientation and degree of institutionalization of the transnational political fields linking Colombian, Peruvian and Uruguayan migrants with their home countries, as discussed next.

### **The extension of political rights and the emergence of a transnational political field**

#### ***The acquisition of dual citizenship***

The first aspect that establishes a framework for the granting of formal political rights within and outside a nation-state is the recognition of a nationality; a *de jure* citizenship that guarantees belonging to at least one nation-state. For migrants, dual nationality can be seen as a tool that enhances their sense of belonging, and/or participation, both in the country of origin and settlement. For home countries it can be a measure to facilitate, on the one hand, migrants' permanent settlement and social progress in the host society (by encouraging or allowing naturalization) and, on the other, the maintenance of ties with the home country to secure migrant contributions in the form of investments, remittances or political influence (Jones-Correa, 2001; Escobar, 2007).

Several studies have underlined how the possibility of acquiring dual nationality is a recent achievement for most Latin American migrants in the United States, the result of modifications in the legislation of home countries during the 1990s (or before in a few cases) rather than in the receiving society (Jones-Correa, 2001; Escobar, 2007). This right was granted to Colombians in the new constitution of 1991 and to Peruvians following the constitutional reform of 1993<sup>10</sup>, while in Uruguay it was already included (in an indirect manner) in the 1934 constitution. The processes that drove to these legislative changes were diverse. Jones-Correa (2001) argues that there is an

10 Before that, Peru only allowed double nationality in the case of those Peruvians adopting the nationality of another Latin American country or Spain (Constitution of 1979).

analytical difference between those Latin American countries which granted this right earlier, generally following a top-down approach (implemented by governments, with little or no input by migrants), and late adopters, among which there are cases both of top-down and bottom-up approaches (mostly in response to pressures from nationals abroad). Among the former would be Uruguay, which follows the principle of *ius soli*, whereby nationality is acquired at birth (if born in Uruguay) and cannot be abrogated. While an example of the bottom-down approach would be Colombia, where according to Jones-Correa (2001) the impetus for dual nationality came from migrants in the United States, who had been lobbying for it since the late 1980s based on their increasing numerical and economic power. In the case of Peru, there were both pressures from below (mainly migrants in the United States) and from above (a state interested in protecting its citizens abroad and winning their loyalty).

However, Latin American migrant flows to Spain have confronted a different, and more favorable, context, since many Latin American countries signed dual nationality agreements with Spain well before current migration flows. Both Peru and Colombia have agreements on dual nationality with Spain dating back to 1959 and 1979 respectively. This, together with the relative speed with which Latin American citizens can apply for Spanish nationality once they have obtained legal residence in Spain<sup>11</sup>, means that many of these migrants enjoy a privileged situation with regard to their possibilities of becoming involved politically both in the home and host societies. Uruguay, on the other hand, does not have a specific agreement, although as mentioned above Uruguayan law ensures that its citizens do not lose their nationality when acquiring another one. The case of Uruguay is also special because many Uruguayans who have migrated to Spain have done so on a Spanish passport, as second and third-generation descendants of Spanish citizens.

These legal provisions, which now benefit many Latin Americans who settle in Spain, were initially conceived as measures for certain groups in particular circumstances. On the one hand, they date back to a period of history in which the presence of Spanish migrants in Latin America was more notable and nu-

11 To apply for Spanish nationality, citizens from Latin America, Guinea, the Philippines and Sephardic Jews must prove that they have been living in the country for a continuous period of only two years, or one year when the applicant is married to a Spanish national.

merous than that of Latin Americans in Spain, as was certainly the case in Uruguay, and to a lesser extent in Peru and Colombia. It is interesting to observe how those measures developed to benefit the citizens of one country are later reclaimed when the situation reverts. Thus, the *Tratado de Paz, Reconocimiento y Amistad* (Treaty for Peace, Recognition and Friendship, 1870) between Spain and Uruguay, which was initially drawn up to benefit Spaniards who had settled in Uruguay, is now being resurrected by Uruguayan migrants in Spain for their benefit (Moraes, 2004). On the other hand, the signing of such agreements may have responded to the interests of the political and economic elites from these countries that had begun to settle in Spain well before the onset of the later mass migration flows. However, more recently, sending states have recognized the potential benefits, in both economic and political terms, of allowing double citizenship for all migrants, and of extending migrants' political rights.

### ***The right to vote from abroad***

Although dual nationality might not afford migrants full political rights in their countries of origin while residing abroad (Jones-Correa, 2001), in recent years many Latin American countries have also moved in favor of allowing the external vote in response to pressures both from above and below (Calderón Chelius, 2003). They are part of an international trend that goes back to the early years of the 20th century, when the vote was extended to certain categories of citizens residing abroad, but has accelerated in the last few decades (Lafleur, 2011).

The citizens of Colombia and Peru have had the right to vote in presidential elections from abroad since 1961 and 1979 respectively, two of the earlier cases in the region (together with Brazil), while in other Latin American countries it became possible only in the 1990s or even more recently. The early inclusion of these migrants in the electoral census of their countries can be explained mainly by their respective historical and political contexts. In Colombia, it coincided with the inauguration of the Frente Nacional (National Front)<sup>12</sup>, and was largely a top-down measure aimed at safeguarding the political rights of the elites belonging to the two traditional parties that had been forced into exile (Guarnizo, 2001). In Peru, the right to vote from abroad was included in the 1979 cons-

titution, which gave rise to a democratic government following a ten-year military dictatorship. This was a period marked by the extension of civil rights, since the new constitution was, in reality, the first time that universal suffrage became official in Peru (including the illiterate).

In contrast, Uruguay still does not allow its citizens to vote from abroad. This is despite the fact that the diaspora has not ceased in its demands for this right, and that the leftist coalition to win the last two presidential elections (2004 and 2009) considers this issue to be a priority<sup>13</sup>. The reasons for this are several, and include historical, political and ethical factors. First, among the current Uruguayan opposition parties the notion still exists that all migrants are left-wing (like earlier political refugees), and thus that the external vote would go largely against them. Second, those who oppose this question argue that people living abroad should not have the right to decide the future of those who are in the country, since they will not suffer the direct consequences of a particular government. Thirdly, some migrants have blamed the failure of recent governments to generate sufficient support for this reform, like for instance in the failed plebiscite of 2009, partly on the lack of public debate generated around this issue<sup>14</sup>.

However, there are other factors of an economic and organizational nature that can also put a brake on the political aspirations of emigrants, as has been discussed for the Mexican case (Parra, 2005). Elections held abroad involve a large economic outlay and an enormous effort in terms of internal coordination and negotiations with the authorities of the receiving countries. As rights granted in the past to a select minority are maintained over time and come to form part of state policy, they are extended to include a wide range of individuals. This fact turns the election process into a heavy burden for the treasury, thus discouraging some governments from proposing or making it easier for emigrants to vote. During the first round of the 2006 Peruvian elections, for instance, some 40,000 nationals were called to vote at the only polling station in Madrid, and another 20,000 in Barcelona, a mass of voters that the poorly organized consulate personnel could not manage even with the help of volunteers. This explains in part why Peruvians

12 A pact made by the two main political parties, Liberals and Conservatives, to bring the military government of Rojas Pinilla, and intra-party violence, to an end.

13 For more on this, see Padilla and Moraes (2007).

14 The plebiscite proposing to reform the constitution to allow for the postal vote required at least 50% support from the electorate, but it only obtained 37% of the votes.

abroad were exempted from paying a fine if they did not vote during the subsequent 2011 elections<sup>15</sup>.

Yet, despite the fact that migrants from countries like Uruguay keep lobbying for the right to vote from abroad, it is pertinent to ask what the real weight of electoral participation as the principal form of migrants' political engagement is. When comparing the case of Peru with that of Colombia, a marked difference can be observed in voting percentages. In the elections held in both countries in 2006, the abstention rate of Peruvian residents in Spain was 32%, while among Colombians it reached more than 70%. The first explanation for this lies in the fact that voting was obligatory in Peru, but not in Colombia. Thus many Peruvian migrants voted in order not to be penalized. In the case of Colombia, low voter turnout has also been blamed on the growing apathy of the Colombian electorate, after years of experiencing armed conflict and generalized corruption, an attitude that could be more marked among those who had to leave their country to move abroad (whether for political, social or economic reasons)<sup>16</sup>. Other factors to take into account are geographical distance, as well as history, numerical strength and composition of the different migrant communities. This could explain, for instance, why abstention rates among Colombians in the United States, where the community is larger and more established, and could theoretically sustain greater linkages with the home country due to its greater proximity, are generally lower. In the case of Peru it is the other way around, abstention rates are higher for migrants in the United States, which could be explained by their greater geographical dispersion (increasing the costs and difficulties of accessing polling stations), or a higher proportion of irregular migrants.

Finally, it is worth noting that lacking the possibility of expressing their political preferences formally, migrants can create other channels for their inclusion, as in the case of Uruguay. During the elections of 2004, some 40,000 Uruguayans living abroad traveled to Uruguay to exercise their right to vote, an episode which had a very strong media impact. Uruguayan migrants in Spain also participated in this, with some

migrant associations negotiating special charter flights with travel agencies to lower the cost of traveling to Uruguay, and other migrants who could not travel back collaborating with the initiative "pasaje amigo" (friendly ticket), put in place by the Frente Amplio (left-wing coalition) to collect money from those migrants who lived further away to finance as many migrants as possible to travel from across the border in Argentina (Moraes, 2009). This could have contributed to the narrow victory of the left in the first round, thus confirming for some the supposed leftist political-ideological orientation of these migrants. Uruguayan migrants, and especially those residing in neighboring countries (mainly Argentina), also played a role in the victory of the governing leftist coalition, this time in the second round, during the more recent 2009 elections.

Summing up, the political rights (to dual nationality and to vote from abroad) that migrants have gained vis-à-vis the home country, can be the result, on the one hand, of how states have come to recognize the importance of their economic and political potential, and on the other hand, of demands by migrants themselves. However, in the three countries studied, the most determining factor seems to have been domestic political developments, and especially the interests of political parties, with differing results in each country (see also Lafleur, 2011). Both in Colombia and Peru, the granting of these rights are largely the result of processes of democratization and efforts from above to increase state or government legitimacy, although in the case of Colombia, migrants have also played an important role in the extension of these rights. While in Uruguay, political parties' opposition to the external vote has repeatedly blocked its approval. Context of settlement also matter when it comes to the exercising of these rights, as the comparison between Spain and the United States show. In the following section, we analyze more in depth the political struggle to win the support of migrants through elections and other forms of political participation.

## The political struggle to win the support of co-nationals abroad

### Elections

As already suggested above for the Uruguayan case, the real, supposed or potential political and ideological orientation of the diaspora has been a significant factor in determining the ties that sending countries have promoted with their co-nationals abroad,

15 Voting remains compulsory in Peru for all nationals between 19-69 years of age, but Peruvians residing abroad are now exempted from economic sanctions if they do not exercise their right to vote.

16 However, high abstention rates in Colombia must also be placed in the context of a possible decrease in electoral participation versus other forms of political participation at the global level, and the fact that expatriate electoral turnout is generally low (Calderón Chelius, 2003; IDEA/IFE, 2007).

although this has received less attention in the literature. Home country governments, political parties and the rest of the political class will attempt to foment certain types of political participation, or no participation at all, among migrants abroad depending on their political leanings, as the cases of Colombia, Peru and Uruguay show.

Although migrant communities do not constitute a homogeneous electorate or ideological sector, it is possible to talk about dominant tendencies (that are not fixed, but can change) in political support based, for instance, on the results of elections. The episode mentioned above on the vote of Uruguayan migrants serves as a precedent. In contrast, both in the case of Peru (in the first election round)<sup>17</sup> and Colombia, the 2006 presidential elections were marked by majority migrant support for the political 'right'.<sup>18</sup> In the case of Colombia this represented continued support for the incumbent government, and especially its hard-stance security policy (which has achieved some successes in the war against the guerrillas), while in Peru it could be interpreted as a rejection of left-wing populist politics and preference for neoliberal macro-economic policies.

This majority support for the center-right among Latin American migrants has also been noted by other authors, for example among 'Latinos' in the United States (Fernández Barbadillo, 2006). For some migrants, like in the case of Peruvians, it can demonstrate disenchantment with past and present populist governments. Many of these migrants had to leave their country due to the worsening economic, social and political instability, and might take a more pragmatic stance (rather than ideological) while abroad. We could talk about a process of deideologization, whereby migrants come to consider economic and political stability in the home country as a priority, to be achieved through support for political parties that advocate neoliberal economic programs and recognize individual effort and merit; the same effort and merit they have put into progressing through their migration<sup>19</sup>. In line with this reality, many initiatives to engage the diaspora that appear in institutional we-

bsites consist of programs that emphasize migrants' economic contribution to investment, the balance of payments (through the influx of foreign currency in the form of remittances) and the promotion of trade relations. In the case of Colombia, a country plagued by socioeconomic inequality and violent conflict, diaspora programs also emphasize migrants' contribution to social causes, and to create a more positive image of the country abroad.

Thus, although the electoral weight of Latin American migrants in homeland politics, and more specifically of migrants in Spain, may be small in many cases, governments and political parties have come to recognize it as potentially and symbolically important. Many countries in the region do not have a strong two-party political system. Thus in these countries, support strategically obtained, within and outside, may well help the victory of minority groups or leaders in an election. Likewise, the political lobbies of groups (re)constituted and legitimized abroad should not be underestimated. In the case of Colombia, political refugees and other migrants abroad have proved to be an important source of support for recently created political movements in the country, such as the left-wing coalition PDA and the Christian-backed MIRA (Bermudez, 2009), the same way that Uruguayan refugees played a role during the struggle against the military dictatorship in the 1970s and 1980s.

In response to this, migrants abroad are demanding further political rights to increase their political representation and influence in the home country, such as through the creation of electoral circumscriptions that represent residents abroad in the national parliaments. This concession has already been adopted in Colombia (as enshrined in the 1991 constitution), and is under discussion in Peru. Colombian migrants can also vote from abroad in legislative elections, but these extensive political rights can be interpreted as an attempt to legitimize Colombian democracy given the country's problems, and as such the result mainly of proactive strategies from above. Interestingly, in countries like Colombia or Peru, where emigrants are represented in special electoral circumscriptions, or there are discussions to create this, the political struggle among migrants has now shifted to a debate about the level of representation afforded to different communities, depending on their geographical location and economic weight. In this debate, migrants in Europe have come together to pursue greater representation vis-à-vis those who have settled in the United States, so that their voices, which are more

17 In the second round, both candidates were from the political Left.

18 In the more recent 2010 elections, Colombians abroad once again voted mainly for the centre-right candidate (especially in the case of migrants in Spain), although this support was less massive than in the previous elections. In the case of Peru, during the second round of the 2011 elections, migrants abroad preferred Fujimori to the left-wing candidate, Humala.

19 See Escriva, Santa Cruz and Bermudez (2010), for more on this in the case of Peruvian migrants in Spain.



recent and less significant numerically, are better represented<sup>20</sup>. These struggles have also emerged in the context of other, less formal, forms of transnational political participation, as explored below.

### **Advisory councils and other migrant organizations**

Finally, this analysis of the more institutionalized political linkages between migrants and their countries of origin requires turning our attention to other forms of migrant organization and representation, beyond electoral politics. Home country politics transcend national borders not only through the periodical holding of elections, but also on a daily basis through the actions of parties, migrant organizations and state agencies. Latin American political parties are with increasing frequency installing their offices on foreign soil. Although it is at election time when parties become most active, well organized parties, like for example Peru's APRA, have found other ways to make themselves visible and channel their influence, for instance through advisory councils and other migrant organizations in the receiving country<sup>21</sup>.

Clearly not all the advisory councils take place in the midst of party struggles. Depending on the characteristics of each migrant community, these councils have become more or less politicized. In Spain, given the size of the communities studied, and the political capital that many migrants brought with them (especially, but not uniquely, political refugees) (see Bermúdez, 2011a), these councils have often become vehicles for political party members to support or oppose the government in power in the home country. In practice, however, these strategies have impeded working for the good of the migrants. As a consequence, on occasions, former members of the advisory councils have grouped with other highly motivated community members to create alternative "depoliticized" bodies. This has been the case within the Peruvian community in Spain, and the formation of two new Federations of Peruvian organizations (FEDAP in Madrid, and FEPERCAT in Barcelona), although with time, these organizations have also become

highly politicized, with members becoming aligned with different political parties in the home and host countries. Moreover, in 2008, the García government in Peru took away many of the functions of advisory councils, possibly because of fear of, or incapacity to control, their voices and activities. Since then, Peruvian leaders and activists have vetoed the constitution of new councils in Madrid and Barcelona.

The recent experience of the advisory councils within the Uruguayan migrant community in Spain has also been less than promising. In this case, initial difficulties were not related to the direct interference of parties, but to the prior existence of strong associations in Spain fearful of losing their power and legitimacy to a new organization. There are reasonable doubts as to the ability of these councils to capture the heterogeneity of the existent diverse associations, as well as a certain amount of suspicion that they might become a springboard for the political aspirations of particular individuals and orientations. This charge also applies to other types of migrant organizations in the three communities studied, given the growth and prominent position that Latin American migrant organizations in general have assumed in the Spanish context in a relatively short period of time (Morales and Jorba, 2010).

Nevertheless, in both the Peruvian and Uruguayan case, participation in these councils and other organizations has allowed greater contact among members living in different countries and with the civil and political society of the host and home countries. These virtual or personal contacts, for example, through the organization of international or regional meetings of all the councils, have made possible the articulation of common interests and the strengthening of transnational networks. In the Peruvian case, representatives gather regularly for the meetings of the World Federation of Peruvian institutions (FEMIP) that have usually taken place in the United States, while the Uruguayan migrant advisory councils have celebrated three international congresses so far.

In the case of the Colombian diaspora, the organization of these advisory councils is still in its early stages. Presumably, however, the fact that these councils are organized and promoted at the behest of consulates will not attract all migrants, particularly political exiles. However, Colombian migrants abroad have been active in other types of organizations and groups, with greater or lesser political influence. These include those initiatives promoted from above, such as Conexión Colombia or Colombia Nos Une, which have opened

20 In Colombia, the congressional seat representing migrants abroad was generally won by candidates residing in the United States, but in the 2014 elections migrants abroad were able to elect two representatives (however, one seat might be eliminated again).

21 Advisory councils are civil society organizations promoted by emigration states to act as representatives of migrant communities vis-a-vis the home country. The way in which these councils are established and their members elected, as well as their specific functions, vary from country to country.

'chapters' abroad to attract migrant involvement (with varying degrees of success), but also initiatives from below, such as groups organized by political refugees to attract international attention to the conflict and human rights situation in Colombia, or other organizations focused on improving the lives of Colombian migrants in the host country more generally.<sup>22</sup>

Thus, once state-diaspora relations have been established, the struggle for political influence and power, both from above and below, in the context of Latin American migration to Spain has developed depending mainly on the domestic political situation, with similarities but also different outcomes in each case.

## CONCLUSIONS

Current international migration flows offer new and unique possibilities to participate in emerging political transnational fields, and the exercising of transnational political citizenships for an increasing number of people. At times, states and incumbent governments have developed comprehensive policies and mechanisms to promote the political inclusion and participation of migrants abroad, taking advantage of the opportunities this provide, while at other times, they seem to be reluctant to do so based on their evaluation of the costs (economic and political) involved. In this article, we argue that a vibrant political transnational field can emerge and develop through time, depending on these opportunities and costs, as the analysis of the three case studies here show. Our focus on Colombia, Peru and Uruguay, and their migration flows to Spain, offers an innovative and interesting context to study, given that most research to date deals with the most numerous and longest-settled Latino migrant communities in the United States, and to a lesser extent with older diasporas based in Europe.

Second, we emphasize that to understand the measures adopted by states, their consequences, and the initiatives and responses of migrants, it is necessary to address the historical and political context in which they were adopted and have continued to be implemented, as well as the specific characteristics of each migrant group and their relations with the sending and receiving societies.

The comparison between the three Latin American countries studied here shows that although the current impetus by sending states to strengthen links, in-

cluding at the political level, with the diasporas generally date back only to the 1990s or the beginning of the 21st century, coinciding with the mass migration flows coming out of some of these countries and the increasing importance of remittances, the origins of specific policies and initiatives are set in very different contexts. This helps explain how these state-diaspora relations have evolved since then.

Thus, the fact that Colombians abroad enjoy very generous formal political rights is the consequence, in the first place, of the country's troubled history, and the need to legitimize the political system, and only later of migrant pressure. Peru's more recent history of engagement with the diaspora can be seen, on the other hand, as the result of a very specific national political and migratory context (end of the Fujimori government, increased migration flows abroad combined with immigration into the country), and international setting (the desire to follow in the steps taken by other regional governments). We could say then that in both these cases, the opening up of the political system to migrants abroad was seen mainly as an opportunity by the ruling forces. However, both also reveal how rights granted in the past to what was considered a minority, when maintained over time and transformed into a state policy, and extended to an ample sector of individuals, can become great institutional challenges (with increasing costs). Indeed, given budgetary and organizational constraints, and divisions within and among migrant communities (for example between supporters and detractors of incumbent governments), there is a difference between obtaining political rights and creating the conditions that allow a true transnational political citizenship to emerge. Finally, in the case of Uruguay, past migration history, and how different political parties ('right' or 'left' wing) have interpreted these, explains to a large extent why migrants cannot vote from abroad yet, since in this case the perceived (mainly political) costs have outweighed the potential opportunities.

Another reality observed in the study of these three cases is how sending states are increasingly more inclined to channel and institutionalize the transnational practices of migrants, particularly their political expressions; a fact that does not always please nor benefit migrants, as the experiences of the advisory councils explored above show. The opportunism of governments, parties and factions in dispute is most evident at times of elections, especially in those cases like Colombia and Peru where migrants can vote from abroad. In this sense then, migrants perceive

<sup>22</sup> For more on this, see Bermudez (2009, 2011b).



some of these initiatives from above to build a transnational political field as having greater costs (risk of manipulation, etc.) than the opportunities they create. However, migrant communities are not totally powerless or passive, given their increased numerical and economic relevance, and the role that independent organizations (from below) play.

Finally, two important aspects that have not been addressed in this article are the engagement of Latin American migrants in the political practices of the receiving societies, and the view of receiving states on migrants' political transnationalism. The political aspirations of Latin American migrants in Spain are channeled not only through their linkages with the home country, but also through their involvement in the host society (see, for instance, Escriva, 2013, on the Peruvian case). The new bilateral agreements signed between Spain and certain Latin American countries allowing residents from the other country to vote in local elections will give some impetus to these

aspirations<sup>23</sup>. Although this process is still in its early stages, it has significant potential, given the facilities that Latin American migrants enjoy in the Spanish context (common language, cultural links, relatively rapid access to Spanish nationality), and the fact that in general host political actors seem to favor the integration of migrants in their structures rather than allow them to organize through alternative structures. This has potential benefits not only for migrants and home countries, but also for host societies, an aspect less covered by the literature on migration and transnationalism so far. Bearing in mind this, the potential that states and diasporas have for transforming the transnational political field should not be underestimated. Further research is needed if we are to gain deeper insight into this topic and into more specific aspects, such as the influence of transnational politics in democratization processes, conflict resolution or the shaping of a transnational citizenship.

23 In 2011, non-EU migrants with more than five years of legal residence were allowed to vote in municipal elections in Spain for the first time, following the signing of bilateral agreements with several countries, including Colombia, Peru and Uruguay (see Cebrián, 2011).

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