

# Migrants, Associations and Home Country Development: Implications for Discussions on Transnationalism<sup>1</sup>

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## Abstract

The extent to which migrants participate in development projects has gained increasing prominence in the field of migration studies. In keeping with the interest of national and international institutions which promote the involvement of migrants in the development of their home countries, social research has begun to question how this phenomenon has grown (on the migrant or transnational civil society level), the nature of the organisations that drive such actions (transnational organisations) and the implications on the latter (transnational development). Many studies have seen migrant organisations as new actors in the transnational field; when not seen as emerging players, they are perceived as figures that can shape the transnational field. In order to assess the impact of migrant associations in debates of transnationalism, this article investigates the characteristics of migrant organizations located in Spain, as well as their practices aimed at development in the countries of origin.

**Keywords:** migrants, associations, development, countries of origin, transnationalism

## Introduction

Since the late 1990s, coinciding with the States and international organisations' renewed emphasis on the positive role of migration in relation to development, migrants have been the subject of particular attention: First, their role as individuals sending remittances, and later, the role of their organisations and function as a collective. By recognizing the capacity for these individuals and organisations to solve social problems in civil society – once the state and market acknowledged their own weaknesses and limitations – migrant activity has been seen

as unexplored territory with significant potential. This new political approach coincided with the rise of the transnational perspective in academia, in which the idea that the new fields created by migration and discussed across boundary lines brought about a shift in thinking about social relations. These ideas and discussions contribute to a deterritorialised framework. In conjunction with discussions on transnationalism, the study of migrant organisations has helped to expose one of the factors that serves as a basis for the very transnational paradigm. The consolidation of transnationalism as a new approach to the study of migration – and this is perhaps one of its main merits – has allowed one to see migrants as agents. However, migrant agency continues to face many obstacles, including those imposed

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by States in terms of international mobility and the difficulties faced by the migrants to achieve positive integration within new borders, as Roger Waldinger has emphasised in various works (Waldinger and Fitzgerald 2004; Waldinger 2010). In this context, critically considering the role of migrants as transnational agents of development is especially relevant, because, its organisational weakness often contrasts with the role attributed to them, both in host countries as in the countries of origin. This is true especially by states that have reduced public contributions to international or national development, then transferring this responsibility to the migrants themselves.

Considering all these factors, this article aims, firstly, to shed light on the differences between various national migrant groups, starting with their organisational characteristics, available resources and fields of activity, going beyond the tendency to portray migrants as a homogeneous body in their behaviours. Secondly, the key question we ask is to what extent migrant associations, who participate in development projects in their home countries, can actually be considered as transnational development organisations.

Employing a survey of 206 migrant associations from eight countries (Algeria, Bulgaria, Colombia, Ecuador, Mali, Morocco, Romania and Senegal) settled in Spain, we aim to illustrate the diverse dynamics that different groups apply in the field of development and international solidarity. Our main hypothesis is that not all national groups are involved to the same extent or in the same manner; we thus challenge the notion of generalised transnationalism. From our point of view, transnational development led by migrant organisations not only responds to a minority of them – as already noted by Waldinger (2010: 34) – but rather fits, to a greater extent, certain national groups and organisations within them. These groups have either been able to take advantage of the opportunities created by the States of settlement and origin, or have been able to utilise community ties among those who migrated and those who remained back home.

### Discussions Concerning the Role of Migrant Organisations in a Transnational Context

The volume of studies on transnational migrant organisations and their role in the home country development has expanded considerably in recent years. Facilitated by initiatives taken by organisations such as the Global Forum on Migration and Development, and by the renewed interest shown by various national and international organisations, studies on migrant associations have acquired relative momentum. They have, in most cases, been primarily linked to remittances and their impact on development. In 2006, the International Organisation for Migration published a report on political agendas of development called the Migration Incorporation (*Incorporación de la migración en las agendas de políticas de desarrollo*). This report warned that, even though cooperation with Diasporas had become a topic of general interest, there had not been any research on the subject in Europe at that time. This is, the report indicated, something indispensable when promoting the participation of migrant communities<sup>2</sup>. Similarly, studies that focus on the form taken by these organisations, and the logic that lies behind their creation and maintenance over time, continue to be scarce. In the same way, the most common pattern emerges in corresponding case studies<sup>3</sup>, while studies of a comparative

<sup>2</sup> However, we should mention previous studies, such as the OECD's work entitled "The contribution of migrants to the development of their country of origin" published by Libercier and Schneider in 1996. (In this investigation, a total of six migrant communities were studied simultaneously: Cape Verdeans in the Netherlands, Haitians in Canada, Italians in Switzerland, Malians in France, Tunisians in Italy and Zairians in Belgium.) Similarly, we should refer to the work of Christophe Daum (*Typologie des organisations de solidarité internationales issues de l'immigration*, 2000) and of Elodie Millet (*La place des associations de migrants dans la solidarité internationale*, 2005), that detected the existence of more than a thousand migrant associations in France, oriented towards international solidarity.

<sup>3</sup> The question of migrant participation in the development of their home communities has been addressed by various authors with studies focused on several countries with a significant prevalence

nature between different national backgrounds are less frequent<sup>4</sup>.

The international literature reviewed in our research has allowed us to identify a number of criteria, which comprises part of the debate on migrant organisations and their participation in the development of their home countries. The first of these concerns the transnational dimension of the migrants' actions in the context of the discussion on the same transnational perspective. The second theme, closely related to the previous one, revolves around the definition and conceptualisation of the organisations themselves. The third refers to the relationship between migrant organisations and other actors involved in the field of development (such as home and host countries and market and civil society organisations concerned with development). The fourth theme is related to the constraints that migrant organisations face in terms of resources and capabilities, in contrast to the high expectations associated with their role.

The anthropologists Basch, Glick Schiller and Szanton Blanc provoked a minor revolution in the study of migration in 1994, with the publication of the book *Nations Unbound: Transnational projects, postcolonial predicaments and deterritorialised Nation-state*. Transnationalism has since been at the centre of numerous intense theoretical and methodological debates. In its initial formulation, transnationalism was defined

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of international migration. For example, in El Salvador (Landolt 2003), the Philippines (Asis 2010), Mali (Daum 1993; Gauvrit and Le Bahers 2004), Morocco (Daoud 1997; Lacroix 2005; Mernissi 1998), Mauritania (Yatera 1997), Mexico (Escala 2005; Lanly 2002; Moctezuma 2005), Nigeria (Odaman 1990) and Senegal (Quiminal 1991; Conde and Diagne 1986).

<sup>4</sup> We placed a special emphasis on those works which display a comparative or general character, or present compilations of studies realised within different countries, such as those by Portes, Escobar and Walton (2006), Sørensen (2007), Merz, Chen and Geithner (2007) or Van Naersen, Spaan and Zoomers (2008). The aforementioned papers highlight migration's role in the development of societies of origin, but they also accentuate the limitations and doubts generated by the participation of migrants, both individual and collective, as transnational development agents.

as "the set of processes by which immigrants create and maintain multidimensional social relations which link societies of origin and destination". The three authors supplemented this definition by stating: "we label these processes transnational, to emphasise that many immigrants today build social fields that cross geographic, cultural and political borders" (Basch, Glick Schiller and Szanton Blanc 1994: 7). In contrast to methodological nationalism, the transnational perspective made the growing bonds connecting migrants and non-migrants visible, through transfers of money, goods, ideas, values, and new behavioural patterns (including political and organisational conduct). It thus became possible to speak of creating new transnational fields as a result of the convergence of all these forces and their transformative potential. The very participation of migrants in organised development projects within their home countries was taken as an indicator of transnational behaviour. A good example of this is the study by Levitt (2001), which concerns organisations of Dominican migrants in the United States and their impact on the society of origin.

In *The Transnational Villagers*, Levitt shows us how the action from outside the Dominican migrant organisations – properly classified as transnational organisations – provokes both positive results and conflicts in the development of their home communities. These actions also affect the lives of those who did not emigrate, which is a trend that is pointed out in what Levitt terms the transnational community development. Subsequently, Levitt's thesis that migrants contribute in creating new transnational fields by means of social remittances (the latter including political connections and migrant development projects), has been supported by several authors (e.g. Goldring 2002), nuanced (e.g. Portes, Escobar and Walton 2006) or questioned (e.g. Waldinger 2013).

Authors such as Goldring have delved deeper into Levitt's suppositions to reinforce the idea that the actions of those referred to as "transmigrants", through the various ways by which they

connect with their home communities (remittances, political activism, social philanthropy), facilitates the structuring of “transnational social fields”. Portes also largely accepts the existence of transnationalism – not only as an analytical perspective, but also as fact. He, however, connects it with his thesis of compatibility through the assimilation of migrants into the host society. According to Portes, the study of transnational organisations of Colombian, Dominican and Mexican immigrants in the United States allows one to see the existence of different patterns in the forms of transnationalism that they adopted. These patterns are influenced by the respective human capital and also by the increasingly more active policies of both their home and host country’s governments (Portes, Escobar, Walton 2006: 13). In contrast, other authors (Waldinger and Fitzgerald 2004) are sceptical regarding the scope of transnationalism and migrants’ ability to create transnational fields or influence States in formulating new policies (Iskander’s thesis regarding the cases of Mexico and Morocco). Waldinger (2013) posits that international migration inevitably creates connections and generates bonds between both sides of the border, but he believes it to be an exaggeration to speak of migrants’ actions as transnational. From Waldinger’s perspective, borders remain a major constraint on migration and a clear limit to the transnational nature of migration and the migrants themselves. This point is made with Fitzgerald’s (2004) proposal of limiting to the use of the term transnationalism.

The second topic of debate concerns migrant organisations involved in projects in their home countries. Within this debate, the international literature shows various denominations and, on occasion, refers to different distinct realities. For example, Portes, Escobar and Walton (2006) and Levitt (2001) use the term “transnational migrant organisations” while Goldring (2002) speaks of “transmigrant organisations”, although they only share an indistinct notion of the term, which would include multiple bodies and initiatives with varying degrees of organisation and formal-

sation. In fact, in Portes’ work, an explicit definition of transnational organisations of migrants that goes beyond considering them as collective organisations of immigrants that promote projects in their home countries and communities, is not listed. However, in the subsequent analysis of the practices, both government initiatives and initiatives from civil society, such as foundations, non-governmental organisations, associations or clubs interchangeably, are included. In other studies, such as that of Roberts, Reanne, Lozano-Ascencio (1999), the term transnational migrant communities is used, enabling the inclusion of both organised activities that rely on coverage at an institutional level as well as other more informal activities that can meet the challenge of accomplishing more or less concrete commitments between those who left and those who stayed. Indeed, if we move to the other side of the Atlantic, we find that in France, Daum (2000) coined terms like “Organisations de Solidarité Internationale issues des Migrations” (OSIM) – translated as International Solidarity Organisations emerging from Migration, and sometimes likened to Anglophone “Immigrant transnational organisations” – but in reality encompasses both migrant associations and other organisations of solidarity that can incorporate a significant number of immigrants, although they were not necessarily created by the latter. This overview of conceptual dispersion is further complicated if we include other denominations that respond to more local realities, such as the case of the Home Town Associations (HTA) in the U.S. or *los clubes de oriundos* in its Mexican version.

The discussion on the relations between the different actors involved in the field of transnational development is not an unresolved debate. For some authors, this remains a problematic issue; they see the emphasis on transnational migrant organisations as an attempt to relegate the obligations of States. Faist (2005), in his article “Transnational space and development: an exploration of the relationship between community, state and market”, agrees that the ideas relating to the role of communities in develop-

ment and communities against other principles of social order, such as the market and the state, merit our attention. However, he also asserts that the great interest in the role of Diasporas and transnational migrant organisations, in many ways, reflects conceptual changes in development. These same changes guide national and international institutions and NGOs in matters of public policy (Faist 2005: 5). In this way, the relationship between migrant associations and NGOs is also questioned. Thus, the study conducted for the OECD by Libercier and Schneider (1996) concluded that migrants' contribution to the development of their home communities is not highly valued, which limits their participation to completing small local projects. They are, therefore, not recognised in their protagonist role when it comes to designing and carrying out the cooperation projects in their communities of origin. The OECD highlights how the NGDOs (Non-Governmental Development Organisations) themselves, as incontrovertible players for development cooperation, do not have an equal relationship with migrant associations. Besides a few exceptions, however, they only intervene in favour of these associations to provide them with intermediary service or to obtain financing. However, the same study emphasises and has proven, how, compared to the international cooperation NGDOs, migrant associations have the advantage of knowledge of their home countries and a closer relationship with the local population; furthermore, the immigrants' dual social belonging bestows upon them an important quality to act in a transnational environment. Finally, the fourth area of discussion critically examines the potential of migrant organisations in relation to the challenges of development. A study by Kirstin Schuttler (2008) delves further into this issue, in which she analyses the cases of Mexico, Morocco, the Philippines and Turkey. After showing what impact migrants' collective remittances in these four countries have, she arrives to the conclusion that "migrant organisations contribute to income-generating activities in their countries of origin through collective

donations, collective investments and collective savings. Each type of activity has its respective potentials, challenges and constraints (...) The potential of collective remittances should not be overestimated as a panacea for employment generation and development. Migrants' engagement cannot be a substitute for state or private direct investment. Moreover, for governments trying to foster these collective activities, interaction with migrant organisations can be difficult, and the transactions costs are high: the organisations are dispersed across recipient countries and their activities are based on voluntary work, therefore reaching operational limits" (Schuttler 2008: 27-29). So, compared to common positions in major international organisations and development agencies, who often see migrant organizations as emerging players in international development, one must call into question their actual ability to meet challenges of this magnitude, and the interests that operate behind such exaltation (Faist 2008).

We are, in other words, far from reaching a consensus on the proper transnational character of migrants' associations and actions (on occasion we highlight the confusion between the transnational nature of the organisations and the transnational nature of their practices). We also have not identified the role they could or should play in the development of their home societies.

### **Methodology of Study**

The empirical evidence on which we base our argument stems from a research project carried out in Spain over the last three years, entitled *Diasporas and co-development from Spain: The role of immigrant associations in the development of their home countries*. This project used secondary sources in the initial exploratory phase, followed by primary data collection, which utilized various quantitative techniques<sup>5</sup>.

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<sup>5</sup> The research also has a qualitative dimension that has developed into a second phase by interviewing fifty associations with programs in their home countries and gathering information about their projects, but this information is not used in this text.

In order to develop a comprehensive map of migrant associations established in Spain, and faced with the impossibility of preparing a record that conforms fully to reality and does not overestimate the size of the migrant population, an inventory of associations was established. We did this by comparing the data with that of official records (The Ministry of Justice's National Register of Associations and the Regional Associations Records), as well as various directories in order to complete and contrast some of the data (Directory of immigrant entities in Spain, La Caixa Foundation and other directories specific to the field of immigration and the third sector). Thus, when establishing the amount of migrant associations (852 associations), all of those organisations which do not constitute an ethnic base (mixed associations with the presence of immigrants, but where the majority are non-immigrant partners), which do not clearly correspond to one of the national groups under study (there may be some immigrants from selected countries, but also from other countries which are outside the study) or those which group together several associations (federations and confederations) were dismissed.

The primary data used in our analysis employs a quantitative methodology, based on a statistical analysis of the results from a structured survey aimed at leaders and representatives of migrant associations<sup>6</sup>. The questionnaire consisted of five thematic sections: 1) Details of the association; 2) The association's activities in Spain; 3) The association's activities in the country of origin; 4) Activities in the country of origin with a direct relation to development; 5) Activities in the country of origin defined specifically as co-development<sup>7</sup>.

<sup>6</sup> The survey was carried out between November 2012 and February 2013.

<sup>7</sup> In the questionnaire, we referenced the activities in the country of origin, such as home-country development, as well as the activities in the home countries as those defined specifically as co-development. This distinction allows us to work separately with: Firstly, home-country and global actions; Secondly, with actions directed in a more determined way towards local development with a transnational focus; Thirdly,

On the other hand, the difficult access to the associations, due to their geographic dispersion and the low response rate – which, from a methodological view point of view, are reflective of several studies that one way or the other have addressed migrant association movement over the last decade in Spain (Aparicio and Toros 2010; Morell 2005; Martín 2004) or in certain Autonomous Communities (Cloquell 2012; Albert, Moncusí and Lacomba 2011; Veredas 2003) – has forced us to come up with an alternative approach to the associations without an a priori calculation of the sample size.

The fieldwork was divided into several phases: First, we sent a letter of introduction and an invitation to respond to a questionnaire on the Internet to all associations included in our study population who had access to this method of communication (62.7% of the organisations). This letter, sent via email, presented the study and stressed the importance of participation and the value of the associations' collaboration in order to highlight their work. An access code was attached so they could complete the questionnaire via a website set up for this purpose. This website also had the ultimate goal of exhibiting the project and highlighting the actions of migrant associations<sup>8</sup>. After realizing that many associations had problems when answering the questionnaire through this system, we decided to send it electronically via e-mail. Still, only 57 associations responded through both procedures. It should also be noted that 3.1% of the emails sent were returned due to incorrect email addresses. Secondly, considering the low response rate obtained, and with the aim of achieving a better representation of the associative map in Spain, we chose to administer the survey by telephone. To do this, we called all of the associations that had not responded to the questionnaire through the above procedures and also appeared in the registers consulted for this method of contact (78.7% of all organisations).<sup>9</sup>

to identify how the term co-development is utilized in said actions.

<sup>8</sup> <http://www.diasporasycodesarrollo.org>

<sup>9</sup> In 164 cases the available number does not match that of the association or had stopped working.

Through phone interviews, we obtained responses of 153 other associations. However, we faced certain drawbacks, such as the association's legal representative or president's unavailability to respond to the survey, as well as recent policy changes in the organizations, which subsequently led to a lack of organizational knowledge as to how to answer some of the required information. The most challenging aspect, though, was the migrant organizations' distrust and discouragement to participate in these kinds of studies, due to the saturation of research centred on migrant associations and general lack of return feedback on the information they provided. All of these issues acted as major barriers for our research.

Despite the aforementioned difficulties, 206 out of 852 migrant associations were surveyed, although the differences in response rates were significant between the various national groups and according to the total number of associations per country (from 223 associations identified in the case of Ecuador to 29 in the case of Mali)<sup>10</sup>.

### The Results

As noted above, one of our main objectives was to show to what extent migrant associations are involved in development activities in their home communities, and the differences between their organisations and other national groups. From the outset, the profiles of the eight national study groups showed the diversity that exists among them, both in relation to their numeri-

<sup>10</sup> Sampling error in a finite population for an accuracy level of 95% and in which P and Q were equal to 0.5. We can say that the sampling error obtained (6%) is within acceptable statistical standards.

$$e = k * \sqrt{\frac{N-n}{N-1} * \frac{PQ}{n}} = 2 * \sqrt{\frac{852-206}{852-1} * \frac{0,5 * 0,5}{206}}$$

**Table 1: Size and number of associations by country**

| Country      | Number of associations | Number of interviewed associations | Percentage of interviewed associations |
|--------------|------------------------|------------------------------------|--|
| Algeria      | 36                     | 7                                  | 19,4                                   |
| Bulgaria     | 57                     | 18                                 | 31,6                                   |
| Colombia     | 124                    | 26                                 | 21,0                                   |
| Ecuador      | 223                    | 55                                 | 24,7                                   |
| Mali         | 29                     | 16                                 | 55,2                                   |
| Marocco      | 95                     | 34                                 | 35,8                                   |
| Romania      | 177                    | 23                                 | 13,0                                   |
| Senegal      | 111                    | 27                                 | 24,3                                   |
| <b>TOTAL</b> | <b>852</b>             | <b>206</b>                         | <b>24,2</b>                            |

Source: Author, developed on the basis of research findings.

cal weights and their evolution (Figure 1), and in terms of their arrival dates, skill levels and social and economic insertion in context of their reception in Spain and associative participation<sup>11</sup>.

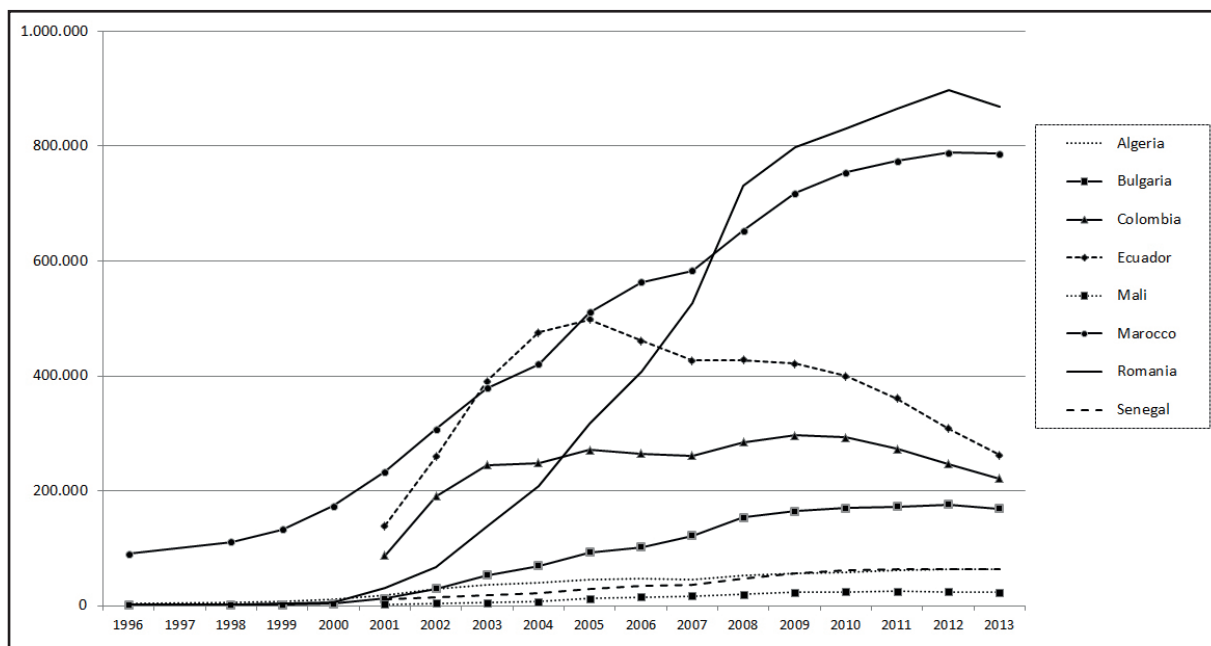
First, according to the results of the survey, it is noteworthy that the organisations involved in different activities in the country of origin<sup>12</sup> represent more than half of the 206 associations that are part of the study (115, or 56% of the total). This percentage drops to 49% (101 associations) when referring to activities specifically related to development in the countries of origin<sup>13</sup> – those that focus on our interests –, and

<sup>11</sup> The rates of association, according to the number of associations identified by country and the number of migrants in Spain in 2013, are as follows: Algeria 5.6 associations per 10,000 migrants; Bulgaria 3.4; Colombia 5.6; Ecuador 8.5; Mali 12.2; Morocco 1.2; Romania 2; Senegal 17.4. The average rate for the whole country would be 3.5 associations per 10,000 migrants.

<sup>12</sup> The activities included in the survey were: youth projects, unaccompanied minors projects, prevention of irregular migration, support for reintegration upon return, psychosocial support for migrant families, promotion of their own culture (ethnicity, indigenism), religious activities, sports activities, arts activities, claiming political rights (voting), human rights defence, research and media (newspapers, radio, television).

<sup>13</sup> Activities that were considered in the questionnaire were: educational projects, health projects, infrastructure projects (water, electricity), rural development projects (agriculture, livestock), solidarity tourism, social welfare, humanitarian/emergency

**Figure 1: Evolution of the population of the eight sample populations**



Source: Author, on the basis of data from the municipal registration, National Institute of Statistics (INE).

further still to 29% (60 associations) when asked about those activities defined among the latter, such as co-development<sup>14</sup>.

Comparing the involvement in development activities in home countries with that of the associations' provenance of origin, we observed significant differences. This can be seen in the way that the associations of North Africa and Sub-Saharan Africa are involved to a greater extent (63.4% and 58.1% respectively) than the organisations in Latin America (46.9%) and Eastern Europe (29.3%). In this way, if we focus on national origin, differences in the degree of participation is further emphasised among the groups studied, those with a higher percentage of implementation of development projects in the country of origin are the organisations originating from Mali, Morocco, Colombia and Senegal, in that order (Table 2). In the case of Roma-

nia and, to a lesser extent, Ecuador and Bulgaria, a significant drop occurs when moving from the activities in their home countries to the activities related to development.

**Table 2: Participation in general activities and activities related to development in the country of origin.**

| Country      | Associations with activities in country of origin | Associations with development activities in country of origin |
|--------------|---|---|
| Algeria      | 3 (43%)   | 3 (43%)   |
| Bulgaria     | 8 (44%)   | 7 (39%)   |
| Colombia     | 16 (62%)  | 15 (58%)  |
| Ecuador      | 28 (51%)  | 23 (42%)  |
| Mali         | 12 (75%)  | 12 (75%)  |
| Marocco      | 25 (74%)  | 23 (68%)  |
| Romania      | 9 (39%)   | 5 (22%)   |
| Senegal      | 14 (52%)  | 13 (48%)  |
| <b>TOTAL</b> | <b>115 (56%)</b>                                  | <b>101 (49%)</b>  |

Source: Author, developed on the basis of research findings.

aid (natural disasters), environment, gender equality (female), fair trade, microcredit, co-operatives and investment remittances.

<sup>14</sup> In the last decade, co-development in Spain was understood as a form of cooperation for the development of countries of origin, carried out by the migrants themselves, and was largely driven institutionally.



In the same way, in order to further explore the dynamics of participation, we proceeded to draw an organisational profile of the associations involved in development projects in the countries of origin, using the Chi-squared test. Thus, in a first analysis, we compared the relationship between participation in such activities, focusing on structural and organisational variables relative to the migrant associations that we have studied in the survey (Table 3).

**Table 3: Results of the Chi square test of the variable “participation in development activities” and other structural and organizational variables**

| Organizational characteristics     | p-value |
|------------------------------------|---------|
| Region                             | ,010*   |
| Nationality                        | ,009*   |
| Autonomous region of residence     | ,102    |
| Year of Founding                   | ,108    |
| Membership in umbrella association | ,732    |
| Ownership of a community place     | ,070    |
| Geographic scope of implementation | ,000*   |
| Provision of personal contract     | ,000*   |
| Own funding                        | ,262    |
| Funding from Spanish sources       | ,002*   |
| Funding from international sources | ,003*   |
| Funding from country of origin     | ,147    |
| Number of members                  | ,771    |

\*p < 0,05

Source: Author, developed on the basis of research findings.

As we can see, the region of origin and the nationality of the organisations make up the combination of structural and organisational variables related to participation in development projects in the country of origin. Some of these variables are, for example, the provision of a room for meetings and activities, the geographic scope of implementation, and the provision of contracted staff and the acquiring of Spanish and

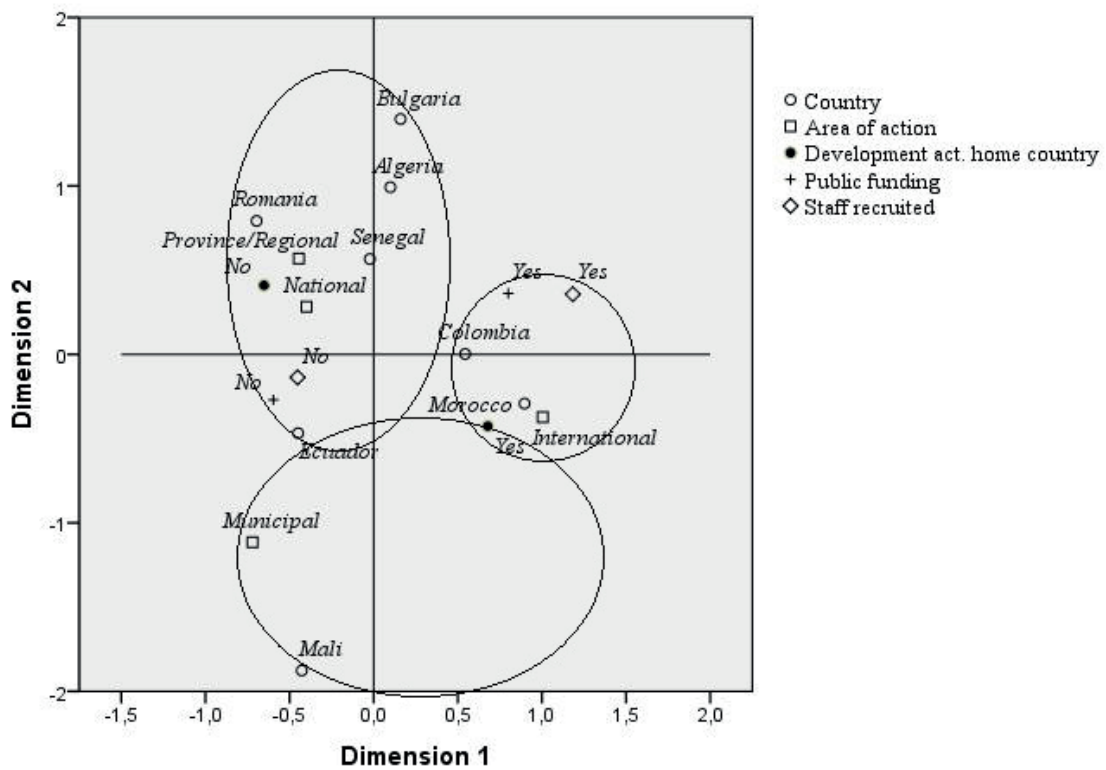
International financing (public funds). Taking this into account, through the analysis of multiple correspondences, we can identify the elements that characterise the associations involved in such activities from those that are not.

Given the data shown in Figure 2, the organisational profile of the associations involved in development projects in the country of origin consists mainly of organisations that are internationally established, have hired staff, and have acquired public funding, and are mostly made up of Colombian and Moroccan migrants (these associations are also the same that have agreed, to a greater extent, on public projects). With regard to the profile of the associations that are not involved in development activities within the countries of origin – that are implemented at national or regional level – these organisations have no public funds nor contracted staff. Finally, they are mainly composed of immigrants from Ecuador, Bulgaria, Romania, Senegal and Algeria<sup>15</sup>. However, associations of Mali are an exception, as they respond more to the latter group profile, which is characterised mainly by their degree of implementation at a local level and lack of resources. However, they show the highest degree of participation in development projects in their home country.

Analysing the type of development activities carried out in the home societies by the associations of the eight countries, makes evident that the majority of the initiatives pertain to: the field of education (remodelling and expansion of schools, provision of computer equipment, donation of educational materials), promoting gender equality (education and training of women), the construction of local infrastructure (development and electrification of streets, paving roads and highways, water treatment, sanitation and well building) the establishment of co-operatives

<sup>15</sup> It can, therefore, be specified, and should not be confused with the fact that a given group is represented in one profile or another. As we have seen in Table 2, each of the profiles obtained here consist mostly, but not entirely of all nationalities that are involved in varying degrees in development activities in the countries of origin.

**Figure 2: Results of the multiple correspondence analysis for the variable “participation in development activities in country of origin” and other structural and organizational variables, related by Chi square test**



Source: Author, developed on the basis of research findings.

(agricultural, livestock and textiles) and the promotion of social economy (see Table 4).

When referring to the type of activity and the group that is responsible, we observe several distinct realities, but which maintain one certain regional pattern. On the one hand, Malian and Senegalese organisations (Sub-Saharan Africa) present a very similar behaviour, focusing their projects on humanitarian or emergency aid, facing, for example, natural disasters and the construction or renovation of infrastructure at a local level, like health projects and rural development. Similarly, Ecuadorian and Colombian associations (Latin America) also share much of the variety of development projects in their countries of origin. They have focused on gender, cooperatives, environment, solidarity tourism and microcred-

its, to which, in Colombia's case, we could add fair trade. In between these two regional groups would be the case of the Moroccan associations, which fundamentally share projects in the areas of infrastructure, rural development, health and education with Mali and Senegal – while projects of an economic nature, like remittances and cooperatives – are more in line with those of Ecuador and Colombia.

In contrast, as seen in Figure 3, although the Algerian, Bulgarian and Romanian groups appear inactive in the Cartesian diagram in any area of intervention; this does not mean to say, however, that they do not engage in projects within their home countries. Rather, the initiatives that they support, actually being few, are very heterogeneous in character.

**Table 4: Type of development activities carried out in the home societies by the associations of the eight countries**

| Type of activity              | %    |
|-------------------------------|------|
| Educational projects          | 57,6 |
| Gender                        | 40,2 |
| Infrastructure                | 31,5 |
| Establishment of cooperatives | 30,4 |
| Rural development             | 28,3 |
| Health                        | 23,9 |
| Solidarity tourism            | 18,5 |
| Environmental projects        | 17,4 |
| Emergency assistance          | 16,3 |
| Welfare                       | 14,1 |
| Remittances                   | 10,9 |
| Microcredits                  | 9,8  |
| Fair trade                    | 9,8  |

\*Multiple answers

Source: Author, developed on the basis of research findings.

### Discussion of Results

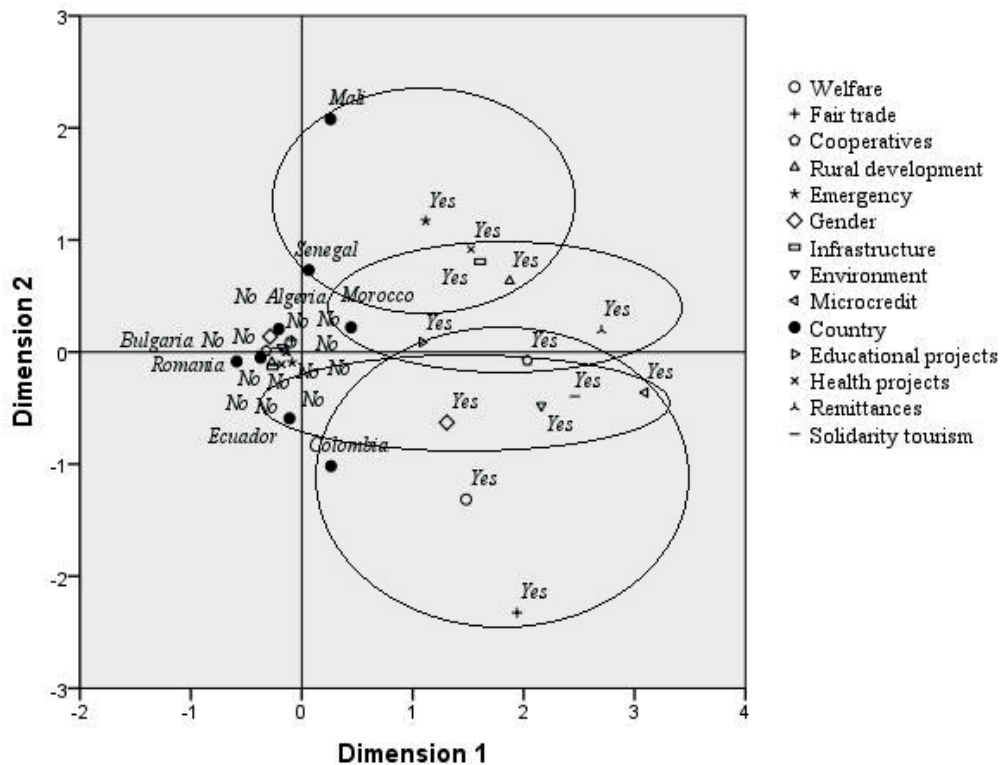
The results from the survey show varying as well as common elements and behaviours among migrant associations. At the level of structural characteristics of the associations (age, financial and human resources), they illustrate an important distinction between those who are active in their country of origin and those who do not. In this sense, the associations that represent more established collectives, and thus have had more time to structure themselves (Moroccan and Colombian institutions), would be more likely to engage in development activities in their home countries. This contradicts the idea that the assimilation of migrants involves the disconnection from their societies of origin, an idea that Portes, Escobar and Walton (2006) already has questioned, and that Moctezuma further underlines by stating that “migrants, whilst they adapt and participate in new social circumstances, are also capable of maintaining ties and commitments geared towards their organisation and

communities of origin” (Moctezuma 2008: 101). However, there may also be exceptions or, at least, early cases in which the involvement of the communities of origin takes place from the outset, thus surpassing the transition expected from social networks to subsidiary communities and from the latter to organisations of transnational migrants (Moctezuma 2008: 99). The latter would be the Malian migrant associations, which, despite the recent arrival of migrants and corresponding recent creation of associations, have managed to carry out a significant number of projects in their country of origin. This forces us to take into account other variables that may be critical for some of the collectives, including the influence of the ethnic root’s local solidarity (many of the Malian associations’ names carry references of regions or towns from which their members originate), but also other factors, such as the external support received. In fact, Malian associations actively participated, in recent years, in a program aimed at strengthening co-development driven by the Spanish NGO MPDL (Movement for Peace, Disarmament and Liberty). A number of associations’ involvement in Mali in the aforementioned program would not have been possible without a prior community agreement. One of the effects of their participation has been the acceleration of the process of formulating projects in the countries of origin, which has not occurred in groups that have not had such extensive support<sup>16</sup>. Consequently, both the pre-existence of strong ethnic ties and community solidarity, as well as established alliances with civil society organisations in their host countries, may be able to accelerate the appearance of certain associations with increased transnational projections.

Similarly, we should not overlook the vitality of civil society in the sending countries. This is a critical component in the success of the activi-

<sup>16</sup> A similar case to that of Catalonia would be the Senegalese group, which for some years also relied upon a program of associative strengthening and co-development that was driven by the Catalan Fund for Development Cooperation.

**Figure 3: Results of the multiple correspondence analysis for the variables “national background” and “type of activity”**



Source: Author, developed on the basis of research findings.

ties in the country of origin, because without an associative network that acts as a counterpart in the country of origin, it is difficult for the projects to be successful. These differences in support among countries at this level are notable: Morocco and Colombia demonstrate very dynamic emerging civil societies, with an extended associative network, while weakness is greater in the cases of Algeria, Bulgaria, Romania and Senegal, or is supplemented by international development NGOs in the case of Mali. The synergy between these two variables – partnerships within the destination’s civil society and support from a civil society active in the country of origin – can ensure, to a large extent, the success or failure of philanthropic projects and the constitution of associations and organisations capable of influencing the country of origin.

Likewise, the material conditions underlying the associations revealed important differences in regard to their shift toward projects in the

country of origin on a regular basis. The adoption of cross border initiatives is made enormously difficult without having certain conditions in place, such as a minimal infrastructure (a place to meet and plan projects), economic means (sources to fund projects) and human resources (the possibility of hiring contracted staff with some technical skills). However, in this area there may also be exceptions and alternative strategies such as those shown within the Malian or Senegalese collectives (substituting, for example, the lack of an official meeting place for association meetings in members’ homes or by using collective donations to offset the lack of external financing) or Ecuadorian collectives (organised sports leagues to finance projects in their country of origin).

As for the type of projects implemented in the country of origin, there are significant differences between the groups in this study. Such differences may be explained by considering the needs in each of the countries of origin, such

as the case of Mali and Senegal, who lack infrastructure, as well as the identifications that these migrant groups conduct from a distance. This is seen particularly in the priorities established by public calls that fund the projects. The cases of Ecuador, Morocco and, to a lesser extent, Colombia, have notable differences in the activities of associations, which could be attributed to the effect of access to public calls in the extensive search for funding, combined with the needs, identifications and the various requests received from the communities of origin.

On the other hand, the types of projects undertaken definitely have a direct relation with the degree of maturity of organisational structures (Moctezuma 2008). The same associations may even have different levels of formalisation or adopt different strategies and organisational interests (Escala 2005). In fact, especially in the cases of Colombia and Morocco, most organisational maturity has expanded the scale and scope of its activities in the countries of origin. Ecuador presents both organisations with a high degree of formalisation, as well as informal groups that have been able to implement small projects in their communities of origin. Mali and Senegal present some exceptions because, in many of their projects, the weakness of their formal structures has been substituted by the vitality of their bonds and community networks. Bulgaria and Romania disagree with structuring a broad associate network, which is considered as unrepresentative and, above all, thought to meet the social and cultural needs of the group rather than to influence the development of the country of origin. Finally, Algeria is a complex case in which a significant proportion of the surveyed associations claim to carry out development projects in the country of origin<sup>17</sup>, although in reality none of these classify as co-development but rather as welfare or humanitarian projects.<sup>18</sup>

<sup>17</sup> In any case we would be talking about a very small number of both organisations surveyed (seven) as well as associations with projects in the country of origin (three).

<sup>18</sup> The assistance provided in situations of natural disasters such as earthquakes registered in the country.

Our study found that the Algerian collective has largely detached itself from their home countries' development. This detachment makes sense when considering Algeria's recent experiences of political trauma, but that can also be explained by the lack of integration of Algerian migrants in Spain.

### Conclusions

As this study shows, not all migrant groups necessarily adopt the same associative behaviour in relation to the development of their societies of origin.

In the Maghreb, Algerian associations actually represent a very small number in the survey, but what is significant is the contrast between the associations of that country with those of Morocco in regards to their involvement in the development of their home countries. It should be noted that almost three quarters of the associations in Morocco carry out activities in the country, and more than half have developmental actions themselves. The difference between the two countries cannot be explained without reference to the home countries' internal stability and political conditions, the dynamism of its civil society (much more evident in the case of Morocco) and the political cooperation and co-development which their host States launched in recent years (by France and Spain, towards the Moroccans but not the Algerians).

Ecuadorian associations, which are very prevalent in Spain, only carried out development activities in their country of origin in 42% of respondents' cases. (The percentage drops to 18% when you specifically ask for co-development activities; however, there are highly significant examples classified as co-development and initiated from Spain by Ecuadorian associations.) In contrast, Colombian associations reached a percentage of 58% of development activities in the country of origin and 46% in co-development activities, which may be attributable to the impact of its increased organisational culture. This higher percentage is also a result of the long conflict in Colombia; there was an important and qualified

Diaspora that generated changes from abroad. Co-development policies promoted from Spain had Ecuador, and not so much Colombia, as one of its priority countries.

Eastern Europe is where we find some of the lowest percentages of associations with development projects in their countries of origin (22% in Romanian associations surveyed and 39% in Bulgarian associations). Here the parallels are quite narrow, and the influence of associations on the development of their home countries does not appear to be among their priorities. This could add a high degree of mistrust in relation to public sector management, in both political and economic aspects, within the origin countries. Furthermore, if we add to this the exclusion of the two countries as beneficiaries of official government cooperation programs for development, it is easier to understand the distancing of both from the sphere of transnational development.

Finally, the countries in sub-Saharan Africa – and, above all, Mali – represent a relative exception in two ways: Firstly, they present a trend of highly active participation in the development of the origin country, and secondly, they show similar behaviour in their projects. Both Mali and Senegal are characterised by high percentages of associations with development activities in their home countries (75% in the first case and 48% in the second), also closely coinciding with them are actions defined as co-development. Its main feature is that the Diaspora closely links them to the country of origin and generates very transnational behaviour, which is collectively organised abroad and directs its activities towards the towns of migrants based on community and ethnic bonds. On this basis, the orientation of official co-development policies and non-governmental programs towards the two countries, both from Spain as well as from France in collaboration with the States of origin, have had leverage on the dynamics of migrant participation in local development in recent years.

Overall, the study of migrant associations from eight countries shows that they tend to redirect their activities towards their country of

origin while simultaneously achieving consolidation and strength, although not all do it to the same degree or at the same time, and there may be significant differences. To understand the differences between various groups, one must refer to variables such as the age and size of their organisations or sources of funding and available resources, but also other factors such as the nature of the migratory flow itself (economic, labour, political) and the impact of policies aimed at promoting their participation, together with differentiated organisational logics, in which solidarity commitments and ethnic and cultural ties with their home communities play an important role. Similarly, the conditions for integration into the host country (economic-employment, social integration, immigration and cooperation policies) and the characteristics of current affairs in the country of origin (political situation, social unrest, economic stability, cultural identity) have a fundamental impact on the dynamics of participation.

In the literature on transnationalism, the involvement of migrant organisations in the development of their home countries has usually been taken as an indicator of their transnational behaviour. However, distinctions have not been clearly established between organisations that are considered transnational and those that are not, as well as differences between transnational development practices and development practices of a national character. Our study of migrant associations in Spain and their participation in development in their countries of origin leads us to lower our expectations regarding their transnational dimension. A significant number of associations play a praiseworthy and important role in development from a distance, although this role varies widely between countries. A few of them go further in connecting home and host communities, but that is not necessarily enough to be considered transnational. Speaking of transnational development organisations, it is assumed that we are at least supposed to have migrant associations with stable complex organisational structures articulated between here

and there, which would include both migrant and non-migrant participation. Speaking in regards to transnational development practices, we would need these to be programmed and implemented with the joint participation of those who emigrated and those who remained, and that they would respond to shared interests. In either case, in order to consider migrant associations as transnational, we need to rely on precise indicators. Furthermore, to classify these associations' actions as transnational, we also need to know which elements are actually international development projects. This is the challenge that we will consider in future works.

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