Integration Policy
Transnationalism and Integration

Bram Dekker, Melissa Siegel, Maastricht University
melissa.siegel@maastrichtuniversity.nl

Migrants’ engagement with transnationalism, defined as their continued involvement in the affairs of their country of origin, is increasingly being viewed as part of the integration process. This study of four migrant groups in the Netherlands - Ethiopians, Burundians, Moroccans, and Afghans – asks the question of whether transnational participation and integration in the receiving society are complements or substitutes.

Two competing theories purport to explain the link between transnational relationships and integration in the receiving country. The first is zero-sum transnationalism (Tsuda, 2012) or additive theory (Erdal and Oeppen, 2013) in which the link between transnationalism and integration are ‘substitutes’ meaning that when integration in one country increases, transnational ties must weaken correspondingly. An opposing theory of transnationalism is that integration in one country leads to positive reinforcing of one’s existing identity, to use Tsuda’s terminology (2012), or that transnational identities are synergistic to use Erdal and Oeppen’s terminology (2013): in this theoretical construction integration and transnational links can be said to be ‘complementary’.

In support of the substitutes model, scholars have suggested that the level of marginalisation experienced by a migrant group increases their transnational engagement, which is seen as answering a need for social fulfilment that is unmet in the receiving society (Itzigsohn & Saucedo, 2002; Levitt, 1998). From a different perspective, Marger suggests that transnational ties themselves impede integration in the receiving society (2006). Since resources, particularly money, are fungible, an individual living a transnational existence must decide where to spend his or her money and this, according to Ostergaard-Nielsen (2003) can hinder the political integration of migrants in receiving countries, particularly when their resources are scarce.

However, in support of the model of transnationalism and integration as complements, Lacroix suggests that an increase in resources, as a result of economic integration in the receiving society, can lead to increased transnational participation (2013). Skill development in the receiving country can also increase a migrant’s involvement in his or her country or origin (thereby encouraging transnational activities) (Tsuda, 2012; Morales & Morariu, 2011). However, there is evidence that this positive reinforcement is more likely to occur among highly-skilled migrants and entrepreneurs (Tsuda, 2012; Portes, 2002) and wealth and transnational activity have been found to be a function of length of stay in the receiving country (Mazzucato, 2008).

This study explores the link between transnational practices and integration using a heterogeneous sample of migrants to the Netherlands. The data used are taken from a survey conducted by the IS Academy on Migration and Development of 1022 households in the Netherlands from four migrant groups – Ethiopian, Burundian, Moroccan, and Afghan – collected over the period from July 2010 to July 2012. From this dataset only first-generation migrants were retained for a sample of 259 Afghan,
Moroccan, 164 Burundian and 350 Ethiopian migrants. Adopted from the poverty literature, a multidimensional transnationalism index (MTI) was created for this study. After the construction of the index a double cut-off was used (in the spirit of the Alkire and Foster methodology (2011)) in order to rate whether an individual is transnational on each individual indicator and again in each dimension. Three dimensions were used (political, economic and the socio-cultural) and within each dimension all indicators were equally weighted. A respondent was considered dimensionally transnational if they were transnational in more than fifty percent of the indicators used in that dimension. A third cut-off was applied to determine being multidimensionally transnational when taking into account all dimensions.

Based on Snel et al. (2006), the indicators used to construct the political dimension refer to consumption of media from the origin country and membership of political organisations. The economic dimension refers chiefly to remittances and expenditures and investments in the origin country. The socio-cultural dimension is composed of indicators measuring contact with individuals and social organisations in the origin country. Since many of the indicators are ordered categorical variables it was also possible to construct an ‘intense MTI’ cut-off point to identify those with the highest or most frequent participation in transnational activities. Across the sample as a whole 37.4% of the sample were found to be multidimensionally transnational and 10.8% to be intensely multidimensionally transnational.

Probit regressions were estimated using a binary dependent variable for whether or not an individual was above the cut-off point for being multidimensionally transnational (and again for whether they were intensely multidimensionally transnational). Different types of integration – structural, socio-cultural, political and economic – were used as independent variables.

The results indicate that all levels of integration (with the exception of structural integration) produced a positive effect on MTI, with well-integrated individuals being more likely to be multidimensionally transnational. Interestingly, time spent in the Netherlands had an effect on intense MTI, with those migrants who had stayed for less than 3 years being more likely to be intensely multidimensionally transnational, holding other factors constant. Age at time of migration was positively associated with MTI, suggesting that the complementarity model is more likely to hold true for those who migrate at an older age. Permanent migrants also had higher odds of being multidimensionally transnational, possibly, which might lend credence to the theory that resource and skill acquisition over time increases the complementarity of transnational and integrated lifestyles.

Inability to afford basic needs is negatively associated with transnational activities which reinforces the interpretation that there is a certain threshold of resources required for a transnational lifestyle to be fully actualised. Across ethnic categories, statistically significant differences are only observed for Afghan migrants, who exhibit a higher likelihood of being multidimensionally transnational.

These findings suggest that the model of transnationalism and integration in the receiving country as complementary states can be applied with some accuracy to the situation of migrants in the Netherlands. From a policy perspective this is a meaningful conclusion in that reflects an awareness of multiculturalism on the level of the individual. Given that length of stay and the acquisition of
resources also appear to affect the possibility of transnational ties being compatible with integration. This has further implications for how policy can be directed to foster engagement or disengagement among migrants with their origin countries depending on policy goals.

References


Integration as a three-way process – the role of the countries and communities of origin in integration of Third Country Nationals in the EU

Anne Unterreiner, Agnieszka Weinar, European University Institute, Florence
Agnieszka.Weinar@EUI.eu, Anne.Unterreiner@EUI.eu

The presentation falls under the following subject matters of the conference: External dimension, Migration and development (synergy; the comprehensive partnership with the countries of origin and of transit). Its objective is to explore a new dimension of the external action of the EU that emerged in the timespan the Stockholm Programme, i.e. cooperation with the countries of origin on integration of immigrants in the EU Member States.

We will discuss the ramifications of the evolution of the definition of integration policy on the EU level to include a variety of external actors. We will present the multi-level and multi-actor conceptual framework of EU integration that includes international cooperation in main nine areas: access to nationality, civic participation, education, labour market outcomes, language, political participation, religion, residential integration, social interaction.

We will ask main leading question: what is the role of the actors of the country of origin (the government and CSOs) on integration of TCNs in the EU Member States?

The presentation is based on the project co-funded by the European Integration Fund: “INTERACT - Researching third country nationals’ integration as a three-way process”, currently implemented at the Migration Policy Centre. It is the first such a big research project addressing the otherwise understudied dimension of integration. In our presentation we will discuss preliminary results of the on-going research that can influence integration policies on the EU-level. We will also provide recommendations for the EU external action in the area of integration to be included in the future multiannual programme of Justice and Home Affairs.

Description of the project:
Around 25 million persons born in a third country (TCNs) are currently living in the European Union (EU), representing 5% of its total population. Integrating immigrants, i.e. allowing them to participate in the host society at the same level as natives, is an active, not a passive, process that involves two parties, the host society and the immigrants, working together to build a cohesive society.

Policy-making on integration is commonly regarded as primarily a matter of concern for the receiving state, with general disregard for the role of the sending state. However, migrants belong to two places: first, where they come and second, where they now live. While integration takes place in the latter, migrants maintain a variety of links with the former. New means of communication facilitating contact between migrants and their homes, globalisation bringing greater cultural diversity to host
countries, and nation-building in source countries seeing expatriate nationals as a strategic resource have all transformed the way migrants interact with their home country.

INTERACT project explores several important questions: To what extent do policies pursued by EU member states to integrate immigrants, and policies pursued by governments and non-state actors in origin countries regarding expatriates, complement or contradict each other? What effective contribution do they make to the successful integration of migrants and what obstacles do they put in their way?

Our proposed presentation will address them in nine main dimensions of integration: access to nationality, civic participation, education, labour market outcomes, language, political participation, religion, residential integration, social interaction.

INTERACT is implemented by a consortium bringing together the Migration Policy Centre at the EUI (leader), CEDEM (Université de Liège), GRITIM (Universitat Pompeu Fabra) and Migration Policy Institute Europe.
Integration policy: Understanding policymakers

Michiel Swinkels, Radboud University Nijmegen
m.swinkels@maw.ru.nl

This PhD research project studies the development of Dutch immigrant integration policy from the perspectives of the actors that are involved. The aim is to map the process of policymaking from a ‘native’s point of view’ and understand how policymakers reflect on their work, focusing on the experiences, perceptions and opinions of individual actors. Despite numerous studies that have taken Dutch immigrant integration policy as a case, the stories of the many different actors that have been involved in its development remain largely unheard. By studying individuals, their ideas and their practices in detail, this research contributes to a better understanding of political decision making, institutional development and evolving governing processes.

Among other issues, the Stockholm Programme is concerned with national integration policies and the need for cooperation in this field on the EU-level. This research sheds light on the implementation of this part of the Stockholm Programme in the Netherlands by studying the role and meaning the EU has in the eyes of Dutch integration policymakers. Because the research has just started results are preliminary, but point at interesting directions, such as the ambivalent relation between the two levels of government.