



UNIVERSITÀ POLITECNICA DELLE MARCHE

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DIPARTIMENTO DI SCIENZE ECONOMICHE E SOCIALI

**LINKS BETWEEN TRANSNATIONALISM  
INTEGRATION AND DURATION OF RESIDENCE:  
THE CASE OF EASTERN EUROPEAN MIGRANTS IN  
ITALY**

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QUADERNO DI RICERCA n. 386\*

ISSN: 2279-9575

*Novembre 2012*

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**\* La numerazione progressiva continua dalla serie denominata:  
Quaderni di Ricerca - Dipartimento di Economia**



# LINKS BETWEEN TRANSNATIONALISM, INTEGRATION AND DURATION OF RESIDENCE: THE CASE OF EASTERN EUROPEAN MIGRANTS IN ITALY

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## Abstract

Transnationalism of first-generation migrants, usually considered as the core element of their migratory projects, is taken nowadays to some extent for granted. Several migration scholars have mainly focused their research on demonstrating the complementarity or dualism between integration and transnationalism and the degree of persistence of the latter over one's life course and generations. In line with this research, the aim of the present study is to examine empirically the relations of transnationalism with duration of residence and integration of Eastern Europe communities in the specific case of Italy. Data come from the Integrometro survey 2008-2009, encompassing more than 4500 Eastern European migrants, currently representing half of the foreign population in Italy, allowing us to study nationalities that have been overlooked by migration research in transnational topics. Our results clearly show a positive relationship between migrants' economic integration and transnationalism, suggesting that economic resources facilitate the maintenance and development of cross-border ties. Being more integrated socio-culturally, however, is accompanied with weaker transnational practices. Moreover, the level of transnational behaviour decreases the more years Eastern European migrants spend in Italy, which cannot be fully attributed to a higher level of socio-cultural integration.

**JEL Class.:** F22, F24

**Keywords:** migration, transnationalism, integration

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# **LINKS BETWEEN TRANSNATIONALISM, INTEGRATION AND DURATION OF RESIDENCE: THE CASE OF EASTERN EUROPEAN MIGRANTS IN ITALY**

## **1. Introduction**

For a long time, migrants were assumed to assimilate inevitably over time. The classical assimilation theory argued rather convincingly that the longer migrants stay in the host society, the more they will be integrated and the less they will remain connected to their home country (Alba 1985, Alba and Nee 1997, Gordon 1964). Although researchers were aware of migrants sending remittances or travelling back for vacation in the country of origin, according to that mainstream of migration studies, countries of origin and destination were considered as two different and separate societies (Itzigsohn and Saucedo 2002).

A major shift of thinking, however, occurred since the introduction of the concept of transnationalism into the migration debate in the 1990s. Transnationalism, defined as the process “by which immigrants build social fields that link together their country of origin and their country of settlement” (Glick Schiller et al. 2006), is a perspective introduced by the cultural anthropologists Nina Glick Schiller, Linda Basch and Christina Blanc-Szanton (1992) and has been developed afterwards by Portes (1996, 1999) and his colleagues (Portes et al. 1999) and applied to second generations as well (Fokkema 2011; Fokkema et al. 2012; Portes and Zhou 1999; Schneider et al. 2012). This process results in multiple social relations that transcend national borders linking migrants and non-migrants in different countries (Basch et al. 1994, Faist 2000, Portes et al. 1999). Accordingly, the introduction of the transnational paradigm has shaped and influenced scholars’ conception about the migration phenomenon and its multiple faces in relation to the multiple spaces, giving room to connect the two dimensions ‘here’ and ‘there’, represented by life and relations in the settlement country and those at the origin.

The emerging transnational perspective pushed researchers to move forward the study of migrants’ process of integration in the host society and to focus also on migrants’ multiple ties with their country of origin (Guarnizo et al. 2003). More particularly, it has challenged migration scholars to think more deeply and creatively about the linkages between duration of residence and integration on the one hand and transnationalism on the other hand. As a result,

segmented assimilation theory emphasizes the importance of individual and contextual factors in determining the degree of integration and, contrary to the classic assimilation assumption, do not consider any more the ties with the home country as a barrier to integration process. The theory of segmented assimilation acknowledges the existence of both strong ties with countries of origin and successful integration paths into the countries of settlement. It argues that migrants could become part of the middle class natives, integrate in the economic sphere while sending remittances back home (Guarnizo et al. 2003, Portes and Rumbaut 2001, Portes and Zhou 1993). In the last two decades, scholars following the segmented assimilation perspective address the multiple links migrants weave with their countries of origin, although they become more and more integrated into the host societies (Basch et al. 1994, Faist 2000, Glick Schiller et al. 1992, Itzigsohn et al. 1999, Kivisto 2001, Levitt 2001, Portes et al. 1999), suggesting that migrants' ties with their home country do not imply a slower assimilation pattern, but, as argued by some scholars, can be supportive of a successful adaptation into the host society (Portes et al. 1999).

However, not all scholars agree with the assumed positive relation between migrants' integration and transnationalism (Basch et al. 1994, Faist 2000, Portes 1997) and only a few studies have focused on "how transnational practices change over time or the extent to which they remain salient beyond the first generation" (Levitt 2001: 196). Doubts about an universal positive relationship between integration and transnationalism are strengthened by real life data: different degrees of integration and transnationalism occur across migrant groups. While some migrant groups are characterized by a high level of integration and a low level of transnationalism, others are marginalized and excluded in the host society and do not have strong ties with their homeland either. Moreover, not all migrants live in transnational spaces, and for those who are engaged in border-crossing practices linking host and home country, variation in types and strength of transnational ties occur.

To represent the broad range of transnational practices and to make the complexity of the relationship between transnationalism and integration more manageable, a number of researchers have identified typologies of transnationalism. In this approach the issue of time (duration of residence in the host society) is key feature in understanding the evolution of transnational behaviour and the motivations of such changes. Faist (2000), for instance, distinguishes three different typologies of transnational spaces: (1) *transnational kinship groups*, characterized by reciprocity and obligations among small groups like family members or within kinship/friendship relations. An outcome of this transnational space is, for example, represented by remittances as co-insurance informal agreement sent back home to the

household members to insure the risk of worsening of the economic and social conditions of the family at home. Short-lived transnationalism and assimilation as the time goes by, due to family reunification and/or death of first-generation migrants, are the outcomes of this first typology. Hence, the underlying assumption is a *positive* relationship between duration of residence and integration and a *negative* relationship of duration of residence and integration with transnationalism; (2) *transnational circuits*, typical in trading networks, characterized by mutual obligations among actors involved. This typology applies, for example, to entrepreneurs who exploit their advantages like own language and networks in more than one country, allowing them to establish cross-border economic relations. According to Faist (2000) this kind of transnational space is the outcome of a successful integration in the country of settlement. In this second typology, we find the assumption of *positive* relationships between duration of residence, integration and transnationalism; and (3) *transnational communities*, such as diasporas or village communities, characterized by enduring ties over time between migrants abroad and those staying behind, based on a sense of solidarity arose from a common religion, nationality, ethnicity, language, and/or culture. In this type of transnationalism, *no* relationship is assumed between duration of residence and integration on the one hand and transnationalism on the other hand.

Itzigsohn and Saucedo (2002), in the attempt to analyze incorporation and socio-cultural transnationalism, identify three forms of transnationalism: (1) the *linear* one, suggesting that, as time passes, migrants will be incorporated in the host society, while the ties between the movers and the stayers through, for example, remittances or travels back home, will be “slowly weakened (Ibidem: 773). Hence, the linear typology, like the ‘transnational kinship groups’ typology of Faist, assumes a *positive* relationship between duration of residence and integration into the host society and a *negative* one between the formers and transnationalism; (2) *resource dependent transnationalism*, implying the availability of time and financial resources necessary to engage in cross-border practices. As those means are lacking in the beginning of one’s migration experience, Portes (1999) argues that transnationalism is specific to the most successful migrant entrepreneurs who have the necessary economic resources to engage in cross-border activities. In other words, transnationalism materialize slowly, since it depends on the accumulation of the necessary resources. Accordingly, like the ‘transnational circuits’ typology of Faist, the resource dependent transnationalism assumes *positive* relationships between duration of residence, integration and transnationalism; and (3) the *reactive* one, which could be the result of discrimination or a negative experience of integration that migrants face in the host society,

related for example to the dissatisfaction with career or social status. In this case migrants pursue transnational activities, like sending remittances, in order to strengthen his/her reputation at home (Portes et al. 1999). Therefore, the reactive typology assumes *positive* relationships between duration of residence, exclusion (negative integration) and transnationalism.

In sum, transnationalism and integration, considered in a broad concept, are processes that represent two sides of the same coin, that is the migration phenomenon. These processes can influence each other in a positive (as in the case of segmented assimilation theory) or negative (as in the case of classical assimilation theory) way, or intersect several times over the life course. More in general, the relationship of transnationalism with duration of residence and integration can be assumed to hold different forms according to migrants' characteristics (e.g. age-retirement, civil status, feelings of altruism, duty and loyalty) and resources and specificities of the country of origin and destination (e.g. immigration policy regime, discrimination, families and friends left behind). As a consequence, not all migrants are involved in transnational activities in the same way and to the same degree. In addition, over one's life course migrants could be more focused on the host country than in maintaining relations with the homeland (Kivisto 2001) and vice versa, resulting in variation in forms of transnational behaviour over time.

Prior research on the relationship between migrant's transnationalism and integration has found mixed findings rather than evidence conclusively pointing in any particular direction. Some studies support the idea that integration and transnational ties are not necessarily substitutes, but can be complements, in particular in the case of economic integration: Egyptian, Moroccan and Turkish first-generation migrants with a stable employment are remitting more money (Van Dalen et al. 2005); the level of transnational engagement among second-generation young adults of Turkish, Moroccan and former Yugoslavian descent in several European countries increases significantly in proportion to one's level of economic integration (Fokkema et al. 2012); transnational activities facilitate successful adaptation among Colombian, Dominican and Salvadoran migrants, by providing opportunities for entrepreneurship and economic mobility, otherwise not applicable within one country (Portes et al. 2002); socio-cultural integration increases socio-cultural and/or political participation into the home country among Salvadoran, Dominican, and Colombian migrants (Guarnizo et al. 2003; Itzigsohn and Saucedo 2002). However, in the research of Sana (2005) among male Mexican migrants in the US, for instance, the more successfully integrated migrants sent remittances less often and were less engaged in other transnational



activities. In above-mentioned study of Fokkema et al. (2012), a negative association was observed between second generations' level of socio-cultural integration and transnational engagement. In the study of Itzigsohn and Saucedo (2002), there was support for the existence of reactive transnationalism among Salvadorans in the US, as a reaction to a lack of assimilation. The same type of transnational behaviour was found among the Salvadorans in the US in a study of Landolt et al. (1999), and for the Mayan community of Guatemala in Los Angeles in a study of Popkin (1999).

Despite the large number of studies investigating the transnational lives of migrants, there is still a dearth of research on migrants' strength and types of transnational activities they engage in and their links with one's duration of residence and integration process into the host society. Firstly, so far the majority of studies on transnationalism have been qualitative in nature (Guarnizo et al. 2003) and mostly focused on specific aspects of transnational lives among a particular migrant group; there is a lack of quantitative studies analyzing the overall level of transnationalism across migrant groups and its links with factors like duration of residence and integration. Secondly, most of the previous studies have been conducted in the United States. Consequently, the transnational behaviour of migrants in Europe is less documented than the one among the main migrant groups (e.g. Mexican, Dominican, Salvadorian, Colombian migrants) in the United States. Finally, as far as European studies are concerned, the attention is almost exclusively focused on the more old migration groups (e.g. Moroccans and Turks) rather than on the more recent ones, like those from Central and Eastern Europe, and there are surprisingly few comparative empirical studies across different migrant groups (Fibbi and D'Amato 2008).

The emergence of mostly female communities from Eastern Europe in Italy, engaged in the domestic sector, have increased the attention of many scholars on the multiple relations they maintain with the countries of origin. So far, the focus has particularly been on motherhoods' practices at distance and conjugal relationships (Ambrosini 2005, Banfi and Boccagni 2011, Castagnone et al. 2007, Catanzaro and Colombo 2009, Vlase 2006). In addition, some studies have been conducted on both their integration patterns in Italy and their ties with relatives left behind (Ban 2009, Cela and Moretti 2011, King and Mai 2002). These studies, however, are almost exclusively qualitative of nature and restricted to one of the main communities, like Romanians, Albanians, Ukrainians and Poles. Accordingly, there is a lack of quantitative research on the prevalence and determinants of transnational relations across migrants from East Europe in Italy.

This study addresses these gaps by examining empirically the strength of transnational

ties among Eastern European migrants in Italy and how these ties vary by their duration of residence and level integration into the Italian society. As alternative and competing hypotheses are possible regarding the relationships between duration of residence, integration and transnationalism (see the theoretically possible connections outlined above), the study will be explorative in nature; no specific hypotheses have been formulated beforehand.

## **2. Data and methods**

The data stem from the Integrometro survey, a national wide survey on the specific topic of integration, carried out during October 2008 – February 2009, in 32 provinces and towns across Italy, selected according to the high incidence of migrants and their diversification in relation to the socioeconomic context. Respondents were selected using the aggregation center sampling technique (Baio et al. 2001 ), which is a suitable method for taking into account both legal and illegal migrants. This methodology had two steps. The first one is a random selection of those places that are frequently visited by migrants from developing countries. The underlying assumption is that in each territory migrants are considered as a set of statistical units, that for daily activities migrants necessarily need a number of contacts with some centers or ‘aggregation places’ that can be official or unofficial (hospital, church, café, associations, malls, phone centers, etc.), located in the territory. In the second step migrants were selected random for the face-to-face interview. Weights were finally applied, in order to avoid distortion in the sampling caused by the probability of a migrant to be present in more than one center.

The aim of the survey was to get insight into the degree of migrants’ integration in the Italian society (Cesareo and Blangiardo 2009). In all cities, an identical questionnaire was used, which made it possible to pool the data sets. The survey collected information on a total sample of 12,047 individuals aged between 18 and 71 years old, among 128 different nationalities from developing countries, with different religions and different types of migration, both in terms of socioeconomic position and in terms of migration waves. For the purpose of our analyses, the data set is reduced to N=3,484 individuals from Eastern European countries.

### *Dependent variable*

*Transnationalism.* The Integrometro survey contains various indicators that are

generally used to measure migrants' level of transnationalism (e.g. Beauchemin et al. 2011, Fokkema et al. 2012, Kasinitz et al. 2008). As our focus is on transnational behaviour *per se* rather than that on each transnational indicator individually, we carried out a Principal Components Analysis (PCA) with varimax rotation. This analysis extracted one factor, with an eigenvalue of 1.91 and explaining 48 per cent of the total variance, using the following indicators: (1) *remitting*, based on the question 'Do you ever send money to your country of origin?' with the answer categories 0=no never, 1=yes, whenever I can and when there is a need, and 2= yes, regularly; (2) *return intention*, proxied by the question 'Do you intend to settle in Italy?' with the answer categories 0=forever, 1=for a long period, 2=don't know, and 3=for a short period; (3) *feelings of belonging to the country of origin*, running from 0=not at all to 3=very much; and (4) *interest in the country of origin*, i.e. the extent to which one wants to know what happens in their home country, running from 0=not at all to 3=very much. Table 1 shows the factor loadings, that is, the correlation of each of these four transnationalism indicators with the extracted factor. All factor loadings are above 0.50, indicating that our chosen indicators strongly determine transnational behaviour. Based on the factor loadings, each respondent was assigned a transnational score (regression scoring coefficients, see Table 1, were used to calculate the score). After standardizing this to mean 'zero' and standard deviation 'one', we use the transnational score as the dependent variable in the multivariate regression model. The interpretation of the transnational score is as follows: the higher the score, the higher respondent's level of transnational behaviour.

Table 1. Factor loadings and scoring coefficients for transnational behaviour (N- unweighted=3,484)

	Factor loadings	Scoring coefficients
Remitting	0.52	0.27
Return intention	0.56	0.29
Feelings of belonging to country of origin	0.82	0.43
Interest in country of origin	0.81	0.42

*Source:* Integrometro Survey

#### *Key independent variables*

*Duration of residence.* Respondent's duration of residence refers to the length of time (in years) one lives in Italy, measured by the difference between the year of interview and the

year at arrival.

*Integration.* The Integrometro survey included a series of questions aimed at capturing respondents' integration into the Italian society: (1) *educational attainment*, i.e. the highest level of education an individual has completed; (2) *employment status*, distinguishing between 0=out of the labour force (retired, disabled, housewives, students), 1=employed with an unstable labour market situation (temporary contract, irregular work) and 2=employed with a stable labour market position (permanent contract, own business); (3) *perceived economic condition of the family*, with the answer categories 0='we have difficulties to make ends meets', 1='we spend everything we earn' and 2='we manage to save something'<sup>1</sup>; (4) *self-reported Italian-speaking proficiency*, running from 0=not at all to 4=very well; (5) *ethnic composition of respondent's friends*, with the answer categories 0=only non-natives, 1=more non-natives than Italians, 2=both, and 3=more Italians than non-natives; (6) *sympathy for the Italian lifestyle*, running from 0=not at all to 1=very much<sup>2</sup>; (7) *acceptance of exogamous marriage*, i.e. the level of agreement with the statement "In case your daughter marry an Italian man, to what extent would you approve this marriage?", running from 0=not at all to 3=very much; (8) *feelings of belonging to Italy*, running from 0=not at all to 3=very strong; and (9) *interest in Italy*, i.e. the extent to which one wants to know what happens in Italy, running from 0=not at all to 3=very much. To obtain a reduced set of variables representing integration, we ran a Principal Components Analysis with varimax rotation on these indicators. The PCA identified two factors, with an eigenvalue of 2.51 and 1.29 and explaining 28 and 14 per cent of the total variance, respectively (Table 2). The first factor mainly capture the non-economic indicators (4-9) and is therefore referred to as 'socio-cultural integration', whereas the second factor, labelled the 'economic integration', is highly loaded on the economic indicators 'employment status', 'perceived economic condition of the family' and, to a lesser extent, 'educational attainment'.<sup>3</sup> Following the same process as for

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<sup>1</sup> Personal income, the objective measurement of income available in the survey, was not included for two reasons: respondents' personal income variable was categorical, thus impeding the calculation of an exact income, and included many missing values.

<sup>2</sup> The respondents were asked to what extent they are in favour of seven lifestyle aspects of the Italians, namely the way they (a) raise their children; (b) work; (c) go through the family relationships, (d) dress; and (e) spend their leisure time; and (f) their food. The response categories ranged from "don't like at all (including don't have information about it)" to "like it very much". The scores on these seven items were converted into one summary scale, reflecting the degree of sympathy for the Italian lifestyle.

<sup>3</sup> The rather low factor loading of educational attainment on *economic* integration is likely to be related to a severe mismatch between migrants' skills and jobs. This is a contextual factor due to the Italian legislation (and lack of bilateral agreements with origin countries) that does not recognize migrants' qualifications, resulting in their embeddedness in low skilled and paid jobs without possibility of upward mobility. At the same time, the factor loading of educational attainment on *socio-cultural* integration is rather high, which is not surprising given

the dependent variable transnationalism, an individual socio-cultural resp. economic integration score was calculated: the higher the score, the greater respondent's degree of socio-cultural resp. economic integration.

Table 2. Factor loadings and scoring coefficients for socio-cultural and economic integration (N-unweighted=3,484)

	Factor loadings		Scoring coefficients	
	Socio-cultural	Economic	Socio-cultural	Economic
Educational attainment	0.33	0.24	0.12	0.16
Employment status	0.03	0.76	-0.04	0.60
Perceived economic condition of the family	0.00	0.79	-0.06	0.62
Italian language proficiency	0.66	0.07	0.26	0.01
Ethnic composition of friends	0.72	-0.01	0.29	-0.06
Sympathy for Italian lifestyle	0.55	0.02	0.22	-0.02
Approval of exogamous marriage	0.55	-0.03	0.23	-0.07
Feelings of belonging to Italy	0.71	-0.01	0.29	-0.06
Interest in Italy	0.58	0.17	0.22	0.09

Source: Integrometro Survey

#### *Control variables*

Finally, we included the following control variables in the analyses: (1) respondent's *age at arrival* (measured in years); (2) *gender*, represented by the dummy variable man; (3) *partner status*, using two dummy variables comparing individuals with a same-ethnicity partner and those with a partner of a different ethnic background, respectively, to unpartnered individuals; (4) *parent status*, using two dummy variables comparing parents whose children are all living in Italy and parents with one or more children living abroad, respectively, to those without children; (5) *religion*, using a series of dummy-coded variables comparing Muslims, Orthodox Christians, Catholics and those with another religion, respectively, to non-religious individuals; and (6) *country of origin*, distinguishing the main emigration countries in the Integrometro survey (5 per cent or more of the total Eastern European migrant population

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that highly educated people generally have a more secular and open worldview and that highly skilled migrants are likely to experience fewer class and attitudinal differences with native-born populations and to face less Discrimination (Fokkema and De Haas 2011).

sample) – Romania, Albania, Ukraine, Moldova and Poland – from the other Eastern European countries.

Table 3 provides descriptive information on all variables used in the analyses.

Table 3. Descriptive statistics of the dependent and independent variables  
(*N*-unweighted=3,484)

	Range				
	%	Mean	SD	Min	Max
<b>Transnational</b>		0.00	1.00	-3.56	1.47
<b>Integration</b>					
Socio-cultural		0.00	1.00	-3.36	2.28
Economic		0.00	1.00	-2.31	1.90
<b>Length of residence</b>		7.35	4.65		
<b>Control variables</b>					
Age at arrival		29.85	10.85		
Man	41.5				
Partner status (ref. no partner):					
Partner, same ethnicity	74.1				
Partner, other ethnicity	14.5				
No partner	11.4				
Parent status					
Children, all in Italy	22.6				
Children, one or more abroad	36.3				
No children	41.2				
Religion					
Muslim	19.1				
Orthodox	47.0				
Catholic	22.7				
Other	3.5				
No religion	7.7				
Country of origin					
Romania	32.7				
Albania	31.1				
Ukraine	12.4				
Moldova	5.0				
Poland	6.4				
Other Eastern European country	12.4				

Source: Integrometro Survey

### 3. Results

To examine the impact of duration of residence and integration on the transnational behaviour of first-generation Eastern European migrants, stepwise multiple regression analyses were carried out. Models 1, 2 and 3 subsequently include the control variables, the duration of residence variable, and the socio-cultural and economic integration factors. The results of these analyses are presented in Table 4.

#### *Basic model*

Looking first at the control variables in Model 1, age at arrival has the expected positive impact on transnationalism. The effect is linear; additional analysis showed a non-significant effect of the squared age at arrival. Thus, the younger the respondents were at the time of their move to Italy, the less they were oriented towards their country of birth at the time of the interview. Respondents' gender also emerges as a significant predictor: men report higher transnational scores than their female counterparts. With regard to the partner status, as expected, it is not so much the fact of having a partner that affects transnational behaviour, but the ethnicity of one's partner. Compared with their single counterparts, respondents whose partner is of the same ethnicity exhibit a higher intensity of transnational practices; no differences in transnationalism scores are found between those with an exogamous relationship and those without a partner. Being parent coupled with the residence of one's children is significantly associated with the level of transnational engagement. Parents whose children are all living in Italy are less transnationally engaged than their childless counterparts, whereas transnational practices are more frequent among parents who have one or more children living abroad, presumably in the home country. The latter is likely to be an 'automatic' effect of exposure: migrants whose children are in the country of birth have more opportunities and responsibilities to be involved in transnational relations, to travel to the country of origin, to maintain various linkages with the country of origin (Beauchemin et al. 2011). Respondents' denomination has an effect on transnationalism as well. Compared to those who identify themselves as non-religious, Muslims, Orthodox Christians and Catholics report higher transnational scores; those with another religion do not diverge from the non-religious ones. Finally, the level of transnationalism is found to be linked with respondent's origin, being the highest among those born in Poland and Ukraine.

### *Duration of residence*

Model 2 shows that duration of residence has a significantly negative effect on transnationalism: the more years living in Italy, the lower the level of transnationalism. Additional analysis suggests that this effect is more or less linear: the coefficient of the square of the duration of residence is negative but not significant.

Introduction of the duration of residence variable leads to a substantial increase of the explained variance, from 15.6 to 17.4 per cent, and does hardly affect the direction and significance of the effect of the control variables. The only exception is that the previously observed strong effects of having a same ethnicity partner (positive) and children living in Italy (negative) lose strength substantially, although both effects remain their significance.

### *Integration*

Respondent's level of integration determine their engagement in transnational practices to a considerable extent, increasing the explained variance in Model 3 by 8.0 per cent. The effect directions of socio-cultural and economic integration, however, are each others opposite: the transnational score decreases significantly in proportion to one's level of socio-cultural integration while a positive association is observed between one's level of economic integration and transnational engagement. Moreover, the strength of the impact of economic integration on transnational engagement, though significant, is modest compared to that of socio-cultural integration. All else equal, the transnational score decreases by about three-tenths of a standard deviation with each standard deviation increase in the socio-cultural integration factor score.

Once the economic and socio-cultural integration variables are taken into account, no significant differences are found anymore between the distinctive migrant groups. Additional analyses show that the relatively high transnational score of the Polish migrants is mainly the result of their low level of socio-cultural integration into the Italian society, while both the high level of socio-cultural integration and the low level of economic integration are attributable to the relatively high level of transnational engagement among those born in Ukraine. Furthermore, the previously observed positive effects of being a man and having a same ethnicity partner become insignificant, as do the negative effect of having children who all live in Italy. In addition, above-average level of transnational engagement among Muslims reduces substantially once integration is taken into account, although the difference between



Muslims and non-religious respondents is still significant. The most relevant finding, however, is the persistent negative effect of duration of residence on transnational behaviour, suggesting that their relation can not be explained exclusively by a higher level of socio-cultural integration over time. Overall, the variables included in the regression analyses explain 25.4 per cent of the variance in the level of transnational engagement.

Table 4. Determinants of the level of transnationalism among first-generation migrants from Eastern Europe ( $N$ -unweighted=3,484)

Model:	1	2	3
<b>Control variables</b>			
Age at arrival	0.02 ***	0.01 ***	0.01 **
Man	0.14 **	0.16 ***	0.08
Partner status (ref. no partner):			
Partner, same ethnicity	0.18 **	0.12 *	0.10
Partner, other ethnicity	-0.10	-0.10	0.02
Parent status (ref. no children):			
Children, all in Italy	-0.23 ***	-0.12 *	-0.07
Children, one or more abroad	0.38 ***	0.43 ***	0.35 ***
Religion (ref. no religion):			
Muslim	0.32 ***	0.28 ***	0.18 *
Orthodox	0.25 **	0.22 **	0.19 **
Catholic	0.17 *	0.16 *	0.16 *
Other	0.12	0.10	0.09
Country of origin (ref. other Eastern European country):			
Romania	0.05	-0.02	-0.00
Albania	-0.09	-0.07	-0.03
Ukraine	0.17 *	0.15 *	0.09
Moldova	-0.04	-0.11	-0.11
Poland	0.20 *	0.20 *	0.13
<b>Duration of residence</b>		-0.03 ***	-0.02 ***
<b>Integration</b>			
Socio-cultural			-0.29 ***
Economic			0.14 ***
Adjusted R <sup>2</sup>	0.156	0.174	0.254

\*\*\*  $p < .001$ ; \*\*  $p < .01$ ; \*  $p < .05$

Source: Integrometro Survey

## 4. Conclusions

The aim of our paper was to examine empirically the strength of transnational ties among Eastern European migrants in Italy and how these ties vary by their duration of residence and level of integration into the Italian society. We pursued this goal through the analyses of Integrometro survey data on migrants in Italy and focused on transnational behaviour *per se* rather than on each transnational indicator individually. As alternative and competing hypotheses are possible regarding the relationships between duration of residence, integration and transnationalism, the study was explorative in nature.

Immigrants' transnationalism and integration are inflamed topics both in the political and academic debate. Although they represent two sides of one phenomenon – migration – maintaining transnational ties is sometimes considered either to impede the integration of migrants or to be a reaction to experiences of exclusion (negative integration) and discrimination. This was partly confirmed by our study: a strong negative association is observed between Eastern European migrants' level of socio-cultural integration and their transnational engagement. However, in accordance with several previous studies and the 'transnational circuits' and 'resource dependent' typologies of Faist and Itzigsohn and Saucedo, respectively, there was a clear positive relationship of transnationalism with economic integration. The opposite directions of the effects of socio-cultural and economic integration suggest that only economic resources (both in terms of human capital and income) are helpful in maintaining and developing transnational ties, while being socio-culturally integrated in the host society weakens the ongoing relations with the countries of origin.

As pointed out by Guarnizo and Haller (2003) with regard to Colombians, Salvadorans and Dominicans, the national origin and the context of exit and reception turned out to be important determinants of migrants' relations with home countries. This is the case of Poles and Ukrainians, although their effects on transnationalism are mediated by the level of integration. This comes as no surprise: their specific migration motivations – pay for children's or nephews' education, meet future marriage expenses, investment in housing at home – and migration model – they come to Italy at a rather old age (40-50 years old), many of them are widowed, divorced or just escape from disastrous marriage relations – strongly affect their integration in Italy (Banfi 2009). In addition, institutional factors in Italy such as migration and labour market policies affect their possibilities to integrate or likelihood to be marginalized and shape their projects. For Polish women, for instance, entry in Italy has become easier since 2004, the year that Poland joined the EU. Before 2004, the obligation to

repeatedly renew their work and residence permits has boosted pendular migration based on the exchange/replacement of their work position with a co-national, generating a system of circular migration at the same working place. Moreover, the desire to take care of their young children left behind is paradoxically represented by a strategy of ‘staying at home’ instead of ‘leaving home and going away’ (Morokvasic 2004). Circular migration for Poles results in irregular working conditions, that often is a choice, since a regular job would narrow their possibilities to return more frequently at home than once a year during summer holidays and accordingly in less economic and socio-cultural integration in Italy. Contrary to Poles, Ukrainians enter Italy usually with a short (few days) tourist visa and then become overstayers. So their primary objective is to obtain a permit of stay which takes a long time. After becoming regular they return home once/twice a year (Banfi 2009).

Other individual characteristics that turned out to be associated with transnationalism and for a large part through the mediating role of integration, are gender and the ethnicity of the partner: males and those with a same ethnicity partner are less integrated into the Italian society and hence, more transnational activists. An explanation for the difference between men and women can be found in the different gender roles within their exit context: for many women migration represents both an escape route from patriarchal societies, unsuccessful marriages, domestic violence etc. and an empowerment path, thanks to the economic independence achieved. This process could contribute to transform their migratory projects into a definitive settlement and hence to weaken the ties with their country of origin.

The findings of our study also revealed a number of individual characteristics that are associated with a high level of transnational engagement, regardless of their level of integration: older age at arriving (which can be a proxy for a higher number of relatives and friends left behind), the presence of children living abroad (that implies close family contacts in the home country and responsibilities and obligations towards them), and being Muslim/Orthodox/Catholic (probably religion acts as a transnational institution, that helps to keep alive and strengthen the community bonds in and towards Italy, as found in the ethnographic study of Cingolani (2007) on Romanians in Italy). Perhaps the most striking finding is the persistent negative relation of length of residence with transnationalism, that is not entirely attributed to a higher level of socio-cultural integration over time.

Our study, however, has some limitations, one of the most important is the missing information about the composition of the family and friends left back home. Further explanations of migrants’ transnational behaviour could be found thanks to further multi-sited

investigation, not only quantitative, but also qualitative, that is necessary to complete and shed light to some aspects that quantitative analyses, carried out only at the destination, are not able to answer. More in general, we think that although the emerging of a transnational perspective has affected international migration studies, still a lot has to be done, since many shortcomings play along with this perspective. Contrary to the remittance topic, for example, there are no concrete assumptions and hypotheses derived from theoretical frameworks, but only a huge variety of empirical (mainly qualitative) evidence, that have advanced our knowledge concerning different aspects of transnationalism. Accordingly, systematic research on specific types of transnationalism, their magnitude and determinants is still missing. Future research on transnationalism has to challenge questions like how transnationalism is related to the process of migrants' integration in the receiving societies and to the duration of the residence: Why do studies repeatedly find a negative relationship between socio-cultural integration and transnationalism?; And why is transnational engagement negatively associated with duration of residence, irrespective of one's level of integration? Probably the first step towards answering these kind of questions is to develop a theoretical framework and generate clear hypotheses that act as a baseline for future studies.

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