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POLITICAL PARTICIPATION, MOBILISATION AND REPRESENTATION OF IMMIGRANTS AND THEIR OFFSPRING IN EUROPE

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This paper provides a qualitative overview of the state-of-the art on issues related to immigrants' political participation, mobilisation and representation, and also presents some research perspectives to be explored in the future. It is divided into seven parts. The first part addresses conceptual and definition issues. The second presents and discusses the thesis of political quiescence of immigrants. Part three part focuses on the explanations of the various forms of immigrant political participation. The fourth part presents a typology of the various forms of immigrant political participation in the country of settlement. Part five specifically discusses the issue of transnational political participation. The sixth identifies gaps in the literature to which new research perspectives might correspond. The concluding policy-oriented part addresses the issue of how to evaluate and assess the political participation of immigrants and their offspring in the country of residence.

Keywords: immigrants, political participation, citizenship

Introduction

In many EU countries, political mobilisation, participation and representation of immigrants and their offspring were, for a long time, not considered to be important issues in either academia or in politics. Immigrant workers were not considered as potential citizens. They were not supposed or expected to be politically active. As guests, they were even asked to observe a kind of *devoir de réserve* (duty not to interfere). In other words, they were invited not to get too involved with their hosts' political and collective affairs. Migrants just had an economic role in the host society: to work and to produce.

Today, EU countries are not all at the same stage in the migratory process. Some countries are more concerned with immigration - the recent arrival and settlement of migrants. Other countries find themselves in both a migration and a post-migration situation, having already faced several waves of immigration in the past five decades. In the former countries, issues linked to the political participation and mobilisation of migrants are not very high on the political and academic agenda. In the latter countries, political mobilisation, participation and representation of ethnic immigrant minorities have become topical issues, especially at the local and metropolitan levels. Sensitive debate on the integration of immigrants cannot, however, exclude the political dimension.

This paper is not a bibliographical review of the European literature on the political participation, mobilisation and representation of immigrants. Its aim is to provide a qualitative overview of the state-of-the art on those issues, as well as to present some research perspectives to be explored in the future. Even though we now have a reasonably good knowledge of immigrants' political activities, some gaps remain. The paper is divided into seven parts. The first part gives a brief outline of conceptual and definition issues. The second part presents and discusses the first major thesis to be found in the literature, namely, that of political quiescence of immigrants. Part three focuses on explanations of the various forms of immigrant political participation. The fourth part presents a typology of the various forms of immigrant political participation in the country of settlement. This typology constitutes a map for locating further research areas. Part five specifically discusses the issue of transnational political participation. The sixth part identifies gaps in the literature to which new research perspectives might correspond. Finally, the concluding policy-oriented part addresses the issue of how to evaluate and assess the political participation of immigrants and their offspring in the country of residence.

1. Definitions and Concepts

As is often the case in the social sciences, discussions about concepts and definitions can be endless. The aim here is not to resolve such academic disputes but simply to clarify how we use specific expressions.

In a broad sense, political integration has four dimensions. The first dimension refers to the rights granted to immigrants by the host society. One could say that the more political rights they enjoy, the better integrated they become. The second dimension is their identification with the host society. The more immigrants identify with the host society, the better their political integration. The third dimension refers to the adoption of democratic norms and values by the immigrants, which is often presented as a necessary condition for political integration. Finally, immigrants' political integration involves political partici-

pation, mobilisation and representation, which are the core issues discussed in this paper.

Political participation is understood as the active dimension of citizenship. It refers to the various ways in which individuals take part in the management of the collective affairs of a given political community. Unlike a lot of political science research, political participation cannot be restricted to conventional forms, such as voting or running for election. It also covers other and less conventional types of political activities, such as protests, demonstrations, sit-ins, hunger strikes, boycotts etc.

Even though the usefulness of the distinction between conventional and less conventional forms of political participation is a matter of discussion between political scientists, we claim that it is useful because the two categories involve different patterns of activities.

Apart from the level of 'conventionality', i.e. the degree to which a form of political participation is conventional, there is another important distinction. Less conventional and extra-parliamentary forms of political participation are often most relevant when they are collective. In most cases they presuppose the constitution of a collective actor characterised by a collective identity, and some degree of organisation though a *mobilisation* process. In a narrow sense, *political mobilisation* refers to the process of building collective actors and collective identity. In contrast, while not excluding comparable patterns of mobilisation, conventional forms of political participation take place within a previously structured set of political institutions. This allows for individual political participation. Demonstrating on your own does not really make much political sense, whereas voting can be interpreted as a very personal contribution to the functioning of a political community in that every single vote counts. Voting can, however, also be seen as a collective action when groups of voters organize a block vote initiative. Conversely, some unconventional forms of political participation, such as hunger strikes, may also be articulated as individual protest.

In other words, the distinctions between conventional and less conventional forms of political participation and individual and collective political participation are not very clear and don't form a perfect overlap. Conventional political participation can be both personal and collective, while less conventional forms of political participation are mostly collective and therefore the result of a process of mobilisation.

Political representation can be understood in two ways. Firstly, in modern democracies power is usually exercised by a group of people legitimised to govern by the process of free elections by which citizens mandate those persons to govern on their behalf. This process of legitimisation of government action is called political representation. Secondly, political representation also refers to

the result of the legitimisation process, namely the group of people mandated to govern on behalf of the citizens.

2. The Thesis of Political Quiescence of Immigrants
In the European literature on immigration, the thesis of political quiescence, or passivity of immigrants, was the first to emerge and was dominant for quite a long time. Migrant workers were considered to be a-political and characterised by political apathy (Martiniello 1997).

This thesis was shared both by Marxist and non-Marxist scholars. The point of departure was correct. In many countries, migrant workers had virtually no political rights. They could not take part in elections or be elected. They did not enjoy any form of direct political representation within political institutions.

According to some scholars, exclusion from the electoral process prevented migrants from playing any relevant political role in the country of residence, and explained their political apathy. Apart from being formally disenfranchised, migrants were also seen to be strongly oriented towards achieving short-term economic goals, and thus not be interested in political participation.

Other scholars saw the political passivity of migrants as a result of their lack of political and democratic culture due to the political history of their countries of origin, which were either ruled by authoritarian regimes or had only recently been democratised.

The first explanation put forward by Marxists was partially correct, but it was flawed in two ways. First of all, as mentioned above, relevant political participation cannot be reduced to electoral participation. Other important forms of political participation, such as trade union politics, associations and community organisations, have to be taken into account as well. Many studies show that immigrants have always been active in those less conventional types of participation. Secondly, the explanation tends to only consider the migrant as a worker; a factor of production whose life is totally determined by macro-economic and macro-social structures. It therefore leaves no place for agency or autonomy and, in this respect, dehumanises migrant workers. This is why many Marxist scholars were more interested in emphasizing how migrants were used to divide and demobilise the working class struggles than in studying immigrants' political activities.

The second explanation, mainly put forward by non-Marxist scholars, reflected a simplistic cultural and paternalistic approach. The view was that migrants were less culturally developed than local workers and therefore also less politically active. This interpretation was clearly problematic and refuted by the facts. In many cases, migrant workers had actually been politicised in their country of origin before their departure, and migration was a way of escaping

dictatorship. Illustrations of immigrants arriving with a strong political culture and democratic aspirations include migrants from Italy during fascism, from Spain during Franco's rule and from Greece during the colonels' regime.

Furthermore, in both explanations there seems to be confusion between quiescence or passivity and a-political attitudes. Being politically passive is not always an indicator of a general disinterest in politics. Passivity can sometimes be a form of resistance and defence. When political opportunities are limited and avenues of political participation strictly restricted and controlled, passivity can mean a transitional waiting for better opportunities for participation.

In any case, the two variants of the migrant quiescence thesis have been strongly challenged by the facts. Migrants have always been involved in politics either outside or at the margins of the political systems of both their country of origin and of residence. More recently, migrants and their offspring have become increasingly involved in the mainstream political institutions. This process has been facilitated by an extension of the voting rights to foreigners in several countries and by a liberalisation of nationality laws in others. Migrants are not more passive than other citizens, but their involvement should also not be exaggerated by regarding them as "an emerging political force" (Miller 1981), or as the vanguard of the new global proletariat.

3. Explaining the Various Forms of Immigrant Political Participation

Political science and political sociology have tried to explain political participation in many different ways. Theories of political participation abound, and each gives its own answer to the question: why do people participate in politics? Traditionally, there has been a dispute between rational choice and identity approaches to political participation. More recently, however, scholars have tried to explain the decline of political participation and the retreat of many citizens toward their private space in many democracies. These issues are obviously very complex.

They are just as complex when specifically applied to migrant and migrant origin populations. But if we accept the idea that some degree of political participation amongst immigrant populations will always exist, we can concentrate on explaining the various forms this participation takes. This will focus attention on questions such as the following: How is the political mobilisation of immigrants outside the mainstream political institutions to be explained? What is the variable intensity of immigrants' political participation? How do you explain the direction of political participation towards the host society, towards the country of origin or towards a global political space? How can the strategies of individual migrants who engage in a personal political career in formal poli-

tical institutions be explained? How do you explain the salience or weakness of union politics for migrants? How is the success or failure of consultative politics to be explained?

In order to answer such questions, it is suggested that the forms of immigrants' political participation largely and primarily depends on the structure of political opportunities present at any given time and in any given society, which is the result of inclusion-exclusion mechanisms developed by the states (of residence and of origin) and their political systems (Martiniello 1998).

By granting or denying voting rights to foreigners, facilitating or impeding access to citizenship and nationality, granting or constraining freedom of association, ensuring or blocking the representation of migrants' interests and by establishing or not establishing arenas and institutions for consultative politics, states open or close avenues of political participation for migrants and either provide them with more or fewer opportunities to participate in the management of collective affairs.

Whether immigrants and their offspring seize these opportunities in this changing institutionally defined framework depends on several variables. These include: their political ideas and values, their previous involvement in politics (including experiences in the country of origin), the degree of "institutional completeness" of the immigrant ethnic community, whether they regard their presence in the country of residence as permanent or temporary, their feeling of belonging to the host and/or the origin society, their knowledge of the political system and institutions, the social capital and density of immigrant associational networks, as well as all the usual determinants of political behaviour such as level of education, linguistic skills, socio-economic status, gender, age or generational cohort. Migrants can also mobilize to try and open up new avenues of political participation. We will then have to consider how the various theories of collective action apply to their mobilisation.

Recent academic interest in the political participation of migrants has been connected to a renewed interest in citizenship. But this interest is clearly not the same in all EU member states and in the US.

In France, a lot of work has been done on the extra-parliamentary mobilisation of second-generation immigrants during the 1980s. Studies on the importance of ethnicity in the political system have also been carried out. Particularly noteworthy is Sylvie Strudel's work on Jews in French political life, in which she deals with the hypothesis of the existence of a Jewish vote (Strudel 1996). The work of Vincent Geisser (1997) should also be mentioned. He is the author of one of the first studies on immigrant local councillors in France. One of the most prolific authors on immigrants and politics in France is Catherine Wihtol de Wenden (1988). The *sans-papiers* movement of the 1990s has also been stu-

died (Simeant 1998). More recently, religious-political mobilisation around issues concerning the veil and the evolution of secularism (*laïcité*) have attracted a lot of attention.

In the UK, the issue of the electoral power of ethnic minorities - as well as the political colour of each ethnic minority - is discussed in every election. Historically, West Indians and Asians were largely pro-Labour, but recently their votes have become a little more evenly distributed across the parties. The issue of the representation of minorities in elected assemblies has also been studied by scholars such as Geddes (1998) and Saggar (1998).

In the Netherlands and in Scandinavia, contrary to many other EU countries, detailed studies on the electoral behaviour of immigrants have been undertaken by Tillie in the Netherlands (1999), and Soininen (1999) in Sweden. In Sweden, studies have also tried to explain the decline of immigrant voter turnout during the past decade.

4. A Typology of the Various Forms of Immigrant Political Participation in the Country of Residence

This section of the paper suggests a typology that is limited to all means of legal political participation and excludes the various forms of terrorism, political violence and corruption. Examples of terrorist actions and political violence are to be found in the history of immigration in Europe, however. During the 1970s a group of Molluccans "rail-jacked" a train in the Netherlands and took the passengers as hostages. In Belgium, the UK and France, riots and urban violence involving migrants or subsequent generations can also be analysed in political terms (e.g. the Brussels' riots in 1991, the 2001 riots in Bradford, Oldham and Burnley, and the urban unrest in various French *banlieues* - popular suburbs - in the 1980s and 1990s). Although these events were not necessarily consciously politically oriented by the actors, they certainly had a strong political impact.

Different types of ethnic politics or immigrant political participation can be distinguished according to the geographic-political level of action and the level of conventionality, i.e. the contrast between state and non-state politics.

4.1. *The geographic-political level of action*

The nation state is certainly an imperfect and vulnerable form of political organisation. It currently faces both internal and external problems. On the one hand, internal regionalisms and sub-nationalisms seem to be on the increase in several European nation states and seriously questioning the sovereignty of the "centre". Among others, Italy, the United Kingdom, Spain and Belgium are also concerned with similar difficulties. On the other hand, new supranational forces representing a challenge to the nation state in its present form are emer-

ging. The emergence of supranational power blocs like the European Union, the rise of transnational corporations as well as mass telecommunication systems and other new technologies, stimulates debate about the possible demise of the nation state. Despite all these problems, however, the nation state remains a crucial setting and framework for political action. In this respect, immigrant political participation can, theoretically, be envisaged both in the country of residence and in the country of origin of the migrants.

As well as at central level in each European nation state, political action can also take place at different infra-nation state levels, from the neighbourhood to the regional. In this respect, each political system has its own specific organisation. Consequently, the expression "local politics" does not have the same meaning in every country, although opportunities for participation and mobilisation exist at all local and regional levels (district, town, municipality, county, land, region, province, canton, department and so on).

If we turn to the supranational level, the 1992 Maastricht Treaty provided a new impetus for the construction of a European Political Union. As shown by the current debate about the EU Constitutional Treaty, there are still many problems to be solved, as the shape of this regional power bloc has not been fully specified. But migrant political action certainly also occurs at the European Union level. Furthermore, there is no reason why the EU should constitute the geopolitical limit for such action. It can eventually extend to the world level, for example in the anti-globalisation movement.

4.2. *State politics and non-state politics*
The distinction between state and non-state politics more or less covers the distinction between conventional and non-conventional politics presented above. The concept of state is used here in a narrow sense to refer to the set of formal political institutions that form the core of executive, legislative and judiciary powers. Beyond the state, the polity is also made up of other political institutions and actors who - at least in a democracy - in one way or in another take part in the definition and the management of society's collective affairs.

As far as *state politics* is concerned, three main forms of ethnic participation and mobilisation can be considered, namely electoral politics, parliamentary politics and consultative politics.

Electoral politics
The issue of the black and ethnic vote has long been discussed in the United States. In Europe, one of the first studies on the importance of the "black vote" was carried out by the Community Relations Commission during the British general elections of 1974 (Solomos and Back 1991). Since then, there has been

a growing interest among political parties in gathering support from ethnic and black communities.

It is important to underline that in nearly all European states, as well as in non-European democracies, full electoral rights are reserved for the countries' nationals[2] even though some of them have enfranchised aliens at the local level. Legal obstacles to ethnic electoral participation are therefore essentially determined by rules for access to citizenship through *ius soli* or naturalisation.

Recently, the issue of the "ethnic vote" in different EU countries and in the US has attracted a lot of attention and even provoked a kind of panic. The "ethnic vote issue" has been extensively studied by American political scientists since the Voting Rights Act of 1965, which created a new electorate by removing discriminatory laws intended to prevent Black Americans from voting, even though the formal right to vote existed long before that date. However, no convincing general theory can explain the link between ethnic and racial belonging and political behaviour in general or electoral behaviour in particular. The existence of an ethnically or racially motivated vote remains dubious. Nevertheless, with each election it becomes more obvious that every candidate entering the race needs to win the votes of Jews, Blacks, Hispanics, as well as those of sexual minorities.

Consequently, the ethnic vote should always be treated as a contingent phenomenon in need of explanation, rather than as a presupposition that relies on the dubious assumption that ethnic groups tend to cast block votes. The task of research is to study the factors and circumstances likely to promote and explain the development of an electoral behaviour that is specific to an ethnic electorate; in this case the electorate of immigrant origin. There are basically two sets of factors whose interplay will determine the emergence of an ethnic vote: a) residential concentration, density of social networks, shared experiences of discrimination and the formation of political elites within an immigrant population; b) features of the electoral system such as voter registration rules, majority or proportional representational voting systems, rules for determining electoral districts ("gerrymandering" or affirmative representation of minorities) etc.

Moreover, the ethnic or immigrant vote should be clearly defined. In one sense, the "ethnic vote" refers to the individual vote cast by a voter who belongs to the same ethnic category as one or several of the candidates, or for a party which regroups candidates of this same group. These candidates or parties are considered by the voter as her automatic representatives due to their shared ethnic belonging. The latter is sufficient to account for the expressed vote irrespective of the political programme proposed. In a second and broader sense, we can talk of an "ethnic vote" when a substantial majority of voters of a same ethnic category decide to support a specific candidate or party irrespective of

ethnic belonging.[3] This collective or block vote may be subjected to some degree of bargaining between the electors and the candidates; the latter promising to give a particular advantage to the group in exchange for their votes. This vote can also result from the subjective awareness of the group that this candidate or this party really understands the concerns of the ethnic category and is therefore more likely to defend their interests. This distinction is clearly theoretical. Indeed, it is easy to imagine cases where the vote could be ethnic in both senses simultaneously. It should nevertheless be stressed that a voter with an ethnic background does not necessarily - by nature - cast an "ethnic vote" in either of the two meanings considered above.

The issue that has recently been prominent on the political agenda in Europe is the potential emergence of an Islamic vote amongst immigrant populations, although we do not know precisely how immigrant-origin Muslim citizens vote in all the member states of the EU. Studies of the electoral behaviour of Muslim citizens exist in some states, but not in others. Furthermore, although there are many Islamic associations, the Islamic parties created in the different EU countries have not so far been able to gain seats in parliamentary elections and local elections. There are probably a few local exceptions. This tends to show that, to date, Muslim citizens have voted for traditional mainstream social democratic or conservative parties.

Parliamentary politics
The representation of ethnic minorities in central government, parliament and local government is also an increasingly important issue, especially in those countries that have long-established immigrant populations like the United Kingdom, Belgium, France, and the Netherlands.

There are many different levels of research and many questions to be answered.. Political philosophers and normative theorists consider whether ethnic minorities have claims to special representation in order to offset disadvantages they face as discriminated groups in society or as "permanent minorities" whose concerns risk being consistently overruled in majority decision-making. This type of argument must, however, deflect a well-established critique of "descriptive representation" models according to which representative assemblies are expected to mirror the composition of the wider society.[4] Political scientists study how ethnic diversity affects the internal workings of parliamentary assemblies and parties, e.g. the emergence of ethnic caucuses or cross-party voting on ethnic issues. Sociologists are examining the role of immigrant and ethnic minority politicians and asking to what extent they differ from "mainstream" politicians in terms of their agenda and their mode of functioning.

Consultative politics

Electoral politics and parliamentary assemblies are not the only arenas available for ethnic political participation. Some states have created consultative institutions at the periphery of the state to deal with ethnic categories and immigration problems. These bodies usually have little power and, for example, function as advisory boards. Among the earliest examples of this were the Belgian *Conseils Consultatifs Communaux pour les immigrés* (Local Consultative Councils for Immigrants), which were established in the late sixties in several cities (Martiniello 1992).

In general, political scientists have criticised the idea of special consultative bodies for immigrants as they lead to a further marginalisation of immigrants while at the same time giving them the illusion of direct political participation. However, a recent initiative from the Council of Europe put the issue back on the table (Gsir and Martiniello 2004). As there are hundreds of consultative bodies across Europe, the Council of Europe's idea was to develop a manual of common consultation principles and guidelines that could be used by those cities interested in creating some form of consultative body for immigrants.

As far as *non-state politics* is concerned, four main avenues of ethnic and immigrant political participation and mobilisation can be singled out, namely involvement in political parties, in union politics, in other pressure groups, and the direct mobilisation of ethnic communities.

Political parties involvement

In democratic states, political parties are located at the intersection between civil society and state institutions. Their role is to translate societal interests and ideologies into legislative inputs and to train and select personnel for political offices. Party politics is therefore an element of conventional politics. However, democratic parties are also voluntary associations, rather than state institutions that exercise legitimate political authority. Moreover, not all political parties are represented in legislative assemblies. Some stay at the margin of the political system, where they often campaign for more radical political change.

In Europe, the issue of ethnic involvement in political parties first emerged in Britain with the debate about the Black section of the Labour Party in the 1980s. On the continent, the development of the association, France Plus, gave another dimension to the problem - which could also become a sensitive issue in other countries in the future. The strategy of France Plus was to encourage immigrants to join all democratic parties and negotiate their electoral support on the basis of the advantages promised by each of the parties.

Union politics
Immigrant presence in unions is an older and better-known phenomenon. One could say that union politics is the cradle of immigrant political participation. However, it is important to mention that the various European and American unions responded in different ways to the ethnic issue. Some organised specific institutions for "migrant workers" within the union, while others refused to do so in the name of the unity of the working class. In any case, the decline of unions all over Europe is a crucial dimension to take into account when studying ethnic participation and mobilisation.

Other pressure groups
Just like other citizens, immigrants can also get involved in all kinds of pressure groups and movements that defend a wide variety of interests. In this context it is relevant to mention the *sans-papiers* movements across the US and Europe, in which several unconventional types of action, such as hunger strikes or occupation of churches, is used. Immigrants can also become involved in environmentalist movements, animal rights groups or similar initiatives – just the same as any other group or citizen.

Ethnic community mobilisation
In order to promote and defend political interests, and to exert some pressure on the political system, immigrant groups can operate as collective actors along ethnic, racial or religious lines. In recent years, the mobilisation of Muslim immigrants around religious concerns has received considerable attention, even though it is only one of many forms of ethnic political mobilisation.

Combining the three geographic-political levels of action and the different avenues of participation and mobilisation in conventional and non-conventional politics generates twenty one potential arenas for political action. As not every one of these can or should be studied separately, the goal of this typology is rather to indicate the scope and variety of immigrant participation within countries of residence.

5. Transnational Political Participation
Since the early nineties, globalisation, cosmopolitanism, post-nationalism and transnationalism have become key words in the social sciences in general, and in migration, ethnic and citizenship studies in particular. As far as transnationalism is concerned, research projects and programmes have been developed, such as the Transnational Communities Programme in Oxford. Numerous conferences have been organised. New journals, such as Global Networks, have also

been launched. Many scholars have undoubtedly been attracted by the transnationalism discourse, whereas many others have been very critical of what they see as just another fashion trend in the field of the social sciences.

The concept of "immigrant transnationalism" was introduced by a group of female anthropologists in 1992. When Nina Glick Schiller, Linda Basch and Cristina Blanc-Szanton published their book, *Towards a Transnational Perspective on Migration*, they opened the way for the development of discussions and debates about transnationalism in ethnic and migration studies.

Since then, the number of understandings, conceptions and definitions of transnationalism has exploded to the extent that it is not easy to know exactly what scholars are talking about when they use the expression transnationalism.

It has often been argued that globalisation has implied, or indeed created, new patterns of migration (between as well as within states) that differ fundamentally from traditional patterns of migration, such as "guest-workers system" or chain-migration. It is also often argued that new patterns of migration lead to new mechanisms of transmigrant community building; from the emergence of new types of deterritorialised collective identities to the growth of new forms of belonging that challenge the traditional belonging to nation-states. These allegedly new developments are captured by the expressions *transnational communities*, *post-national membership* or *new cosmopolitanism*, to name but a few.

In traditional migration processes, ethnic migrant communities either tried to maintain their ethnic identity and link with the sending country or assimilate into the new society by abandoning their heritage and adopting a new national identity. Alternatively, they tried to prepare their return to the country of origin by developing, in many cases, a myth of return. The traditional literature on migration is concerned with these issues and processes. All in all, migrants were supposed to be given a choice between ethnic and national identities but, at the end of the day, they were either supposed to belong to the country of origin or to the country of settlement. If they chose the former, they were expected to return. If they chose the second, they were expected to change their political affiliation and eventually their citizenship.

In today's transmigration processes and global era, things could be different. New communities of transmigrants could come closer to the world citizen ideal. Transnational practices mean that they have to detach from their ethnic and national bonds and embrace post-ethnic and post-national identities. Transnational communities could emerge, characterised by new forms of belonging and identities that translate into transnational political practices. Although this view is not shared by all transnational scholars, it is well represented in the literature.

Transnational activities and practices can be economic, political or socio-cultural. In the field of economics, transnational entrepreneurs mobilise their contacts across borders in search of goods and suppliers, capital and markets. Economic transnationalism also includes remittances and investments made by migrants in the development of the country of origin. Transmigrants' economic transnational activities can occur between the country of origin and the country of residence. Political transnational activities can take different forms. Transmigrants can mobilize in the country of residence to produce a political impact in the country of origin. Party leaders from the country of origin can travel to the countries of residence in order to gather electoral support in transmigrant communities. Sending countries can also try to intervene in the host countries by using immigrant communities as a resource to defend their interests. Sociocultural transnational activities can be numerous and diverse. Examples of this include the selection of expatriate beauty queens to compete in the home country contest and tours of folk music groups from the country of origin to perform for migrants in their country of residence.

At a higher level of abstraction, these transnational practices reveal that a crucial change has occurred with the globalisation of the economy, namely the passage from a national condition to the transnational condition. Until not too long ago, migrants were considered to be an anomaly with regard to the nation-state framework. With the acceleration of globalisation, a new phenomenon has occurred, namely the creation of a transnational community linking immigrant groups in the advanced countries with their respective sending nations and hometowns. This defines the new transnational condition "composed of a growing number of persons who live dual lives: speaking two languages, having homes in two countries, and making a living through continuous regular contacts across national borders" (Portes, Guarnizo and Landolt 1999).

The development of this new condition has been made possible by changes that have taken place within the broader phenomenon of globalisation, such as the explosion of the technologies of communication, the reduction of the costs of travelling and the multiplication of the means of travel.

Insights into the transnational approach or perspective acknowledge the fact that immigrants' integration or incorporation in the host country and transnational practices can occur simultaneously. But more research is needed both at the theoretical and at the empirical level in order to make sense of the impact of transnationalism on immigrants' political participation.

6. Research Perspectives

There are several gaps in the literature regarding the political participation of immigrants. It is true that progress in this area has been quite dramatic over the

past decade, but our knowledge remains fragmented and largely confined to specific national contexts. Furthermore, the gender dimension of immigrants' political participation has not sufficiently been explored. Attempts to integrate the theoretical framework, and efforts to produce comparative data - both quantitative and qualitative - should be undertaken in the traditional areas of research as well as in more recent ones.

In the former, it would be interesting to design electoral surveys at EU level to try to come to a better understanding of how citizens with an immigrant or ethnic minority background vote. Their political attitudes also need to be examined in some detail. A third direction would be to try to find out who votes for ethnic minority candidates in the various member states of the EU. It would also be very stimulating to systematically analyse the gender dimension of immigrants' political participation by comparing the different immigrant groups in the same country as well as between different host societies. Finally, the possible link between access to nationality and political participation also calls for more studies.

In short, three main perspectives need to be developed:

a) The implications of transnational political participation of migrants and their offspring in Europe.
A theoretical as well as an empirical discussion is needed on the links between transnational political participation of immigrants and citizenship, both of the country of origin and the country of residence. What are the implications for an immigrant who has acquired legal citizenship (nationality) in the country of residence to participate politically in the country of origin? How does it affect the common understanding of nationality? Can one be an active citizen in more then one polity? What impact does that double participation have on identity and belonging? To a certain extent these questions have already been raised and researched in some countries for specific groups of immigrants, although a lot of work still needs to be done.

b) The links between religion and political participation in post-migration situations.
New Islamic parties have recently appeared in several EU member states. In many cases they are formed by immigrant-origin citizens or by local converts. In most instances, these parties have not yet had any dramatic electoral success. Nevertheless, in the present context they reveal new developments concerning the links between religion and politics for immigrants and their offspring.

c) The rise of virtual ethnic and immigrant political communities.

Finally, the Internet opens up new channels of political mobilisation across state boundaries. The new electronic media may be a potent resource for immigrants engaged in transnational political activities across different destination countries or between sending and receiving states. We still don't know to what extent immigrants use the Internet for political purposes, however. To date more attention has been focused on global terrorism than use of the Internet for non-violent purposes.

7. How to Evaluate and Assess the Political Participation of Immigrants and Their Offspring in the Country of Residence?

The task of constructing indicators of political participation of immigrants and their offspring that would allow for a comparison, a ranking and a benchmarking across the EU encounters several difficulties. The first difficulty refers to the variety of citizenship (nationality) laws and policies in the EU member states. Rules of access and loss of citizenship impact directly on opportunities to participate in formal political life and determine which institutions are open to immigrants and their offspring. When access to citizenship is easy, immigrants are not excluded from the right to take part in formal political life, although many may still choose not to naturalize and thus remain excluded from an eligibility to vote. Immigrants are restricted to non-conventional forms of political participation when access to citizenship is difficult and restricted. In addition to regulations concerning citizenship, there are also those that apply to political rights and opportunities for participation for non-citizen residents. As mentioned above, several EU member states grant local voting rights to all foreigners, while others limit them to EU citizens. These different legal frameworks make it difficult to compare immigrant political participation across states.

The second difficulty emerges from the fact that not all the EU countries are at the same stage in the migratory process. Some countries are more concerned with immigration - the recent arrival and settlement of migrants - while other countries have already faced several waves of immigration in the past decades and therefore find themselves in a simultaneous migration and post-migration situation. In the former countries, issues linked to the political participation of migrants are not yet high on the political and academic agendas. In the latter countries, political mobilisation, participation and representation of ethnic migrant minorities have become topical issues. In this respect there are important differences between "old" immigration countries in north-western Europe, "newer" immigration countries in southern Europe and former eastern European countries currently (re)discovering immigration. To the extent that local voting rights, for example, have been discussed in Italy, Spain and Portugal, these

three countries seem to have already become "old" immigration countries.

A third difficulty refers to the fact that "immigrants and their offspring" are not a homogeneous group in terms of political attitudes and behaviour. Some migrants are highly politicised and were politically active in their country of origin from which they often escaped for political reasons. Others, like many local citizens nowadays, are not interested in politics at all.

One should also add a technical difficulty related to the unequal availability of adequate statistical data in the various member states of the EU. For comprehensive statistical analyses one would need data on foreign nationality and on country of birth in addition to that concerning the year of immigration and ethnic self-identification. It is very difficult to quantify the political behaviour of immigrants and their offspring in countries where only foreign nationality is recorded in the official statistics. In other countries, the statistical apparatus is much more developed, and data such as that concerning the voting behaviour of ethnic minorities is more easily accessed.

Having said this, we can still suggest several indicators of political participation of immigrants and their offspring based on a distinction between conventional and less conventional forms of political participation. When using these indicators, one has to bear in mind that the forms of immigrants' political participation mainly depend on the structure of political opportunities present in a given society at a given time, which is the result of inclusion-exclusion mechanisms developed by the states (of residence and of origin) and their political systems.

Indicators of conventional political participation
In the field of conventional political participation, at least five indicators of political participation of immigrants and their offspring can be suggested:

1. Where immigrants and their offspring are enfranchised, how do you characterize their electoral turnout as compared to that of non-immigrant citizens? Do they take part in elections as voters more or less than other citizens? A high electoral turnout can be considered as a good indicator of political participation.

2. Statistical representation of immigrants and their offspring on electoral lists and in elected positions, not to mention in executive branches of government and cabinets in the various assemblies (from the local level to the European level), is another indicator of political participation.

3. The rate of membership in political parties and the activity within those parties should also be taken into account as possible indicators of political participation.

4. In some countries and regions, immigrants and their offspring form their

own political parties based on a religious or ethnic agenda and stand for election. This form of political behaviour should not be excluded in the process of selecting indicators.

5. Some states, regions or cities have created specific consultative institutions at the margin of the political system to specifically deal with ethnic and immigration issues. There are several hundreds of such consultative bodies across Europe. Participation in those institutions can also be seen as an indicator of political participation, even though it can also be interpreted as a sign of political marginalisation.

Indicators of non-conventional political participation

In the field of non-conventional political participation, we can list at least three indicators of political participation of immigrants and their offspring:

1. The presence of immigrants in trade unions is an old and well-known phenomenon in old European countries of immigration. Being active in a trade union, either as a supporter and member or as an activist or on the executive, is a relevant indicator of political participation.

2. In order to promote and defend political interests and exert pressure on the political system, immigrants and their offspring can organize a collective actor along ethnic, racial, national, cultural or religious lines. This refers, for example, to different types of associations. Here again, the existence of claim-making immigrant associations can be considered as an indicator of participation in the larger political community.

3. Just as any other citizens, immigrants can get involved in all kinds of pressure groups and movements defending a wide variety of interests, such as humanitarian movements, environmentalist movements, neighbourhood committees, customers' associations etc. The presence and participation of immigrants in these movements is another indicator of their political participation.

The above list of possible indicators of political participation is far from being exhaustive. It nevertheless points towards ways of being politically active in a democracy.

A final word of caution is that before trying to compare immigrant political participation across Europe, the political participation of immigrants and their offspring must always be compared to the political participation of non-immigrant citizens.

NOTES

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2. The United Kingdom is exceptional in this regard since it extends active voting rights as well as eligibility in national elections to all Commonwealth and Irish citizens.
3. An ethnic block vote in this second sense also includes ethnic group patterns in voting in referenda and plebiscites.
4. See, for example, Pitkin (1967), Phillips (1995).

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