

Analysing Selected Transnational Activities among Ukrainian Immigrants in Spain

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In recent years, the concept of transnationalism has become one of the main analytical tools used to assess the mobility patterns of Central and Eastern European populations. This work studies the transnational activities of Ukrainian immigrants in Spain. It examines three areas of transnational behaviour: travelling to the country of origin, the frequency of non-direct contact with the communities of origin and remittances. Our objective is to examine how gender, legal status and type of family unit (multilocal/non-multilocal) affect the frequency and extent of transnational activities. Most of the statistical data presented in this article come from the National Immigrant Survey (ENI-2007) conducted by the National Institute of Statistics (Spain). The study confirms that family ties play a crucial role in establishing and maintaining links between countries of origin and destination. It also reveals that the legal status of Ukrainian immigrants in Spain has a great impact on patterns of transnational behaviour. In this sense, it is evident that institutional factors must be included in analyses of migratory processes from a transnational perspective.

Keywords: Ukrainian migration, Spain, transnationalism, gender, irregular migrants, family

Introduction

Immediately after the collapse of the communist system, the international mobility of Central and Eastern European populations changed significantly. Along with the traditional patterns that used to predominate in these regions, such as long-term migration for economic or ethnic reasons, new forms of mobility have appeared, such as circulatory migration and the flow of temporary workers (Wallace 1999; Morokvasic 2006). These extraordinary cross-border flows have established links between receiving and sending countries and also provided material for a thorough rethinking of the traditional nation-state-centred immigration paradigm that saw East-West migration as a lineal and unidirectional process, with socio-economic and cultural assimilation as the final outcome (Favell 2008). In this context, the concept of transnationalism has become one of the main analytical tools used to assess the mobility patterns of Central and Eastern European populations (Morawska 2002; Rogers 2004; Moskal 2011).

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Surprisingly, contemporary studies of economic migration among Ukrainians have rarely focused on this transnational perspective. Yarova (2007) carried out one of the few studies that have taken this approach by analysing how doing domestic work in Italy impacted the family life of Ukrainian women in their country of origin. Along the same lines, Tolstokorova (2010) examined the implications that Ukrainian migration to European countries has for the transnational family field, emphasising issues surrounding gender, maternity and paternity, and in a recent study, Solari (2010) compared the migratory patterns of flows to California and Italy. Although the number of studies on Ukrainian immigration to Spain has increased over the years, the focus has not been on the transnational aspects of this phenomenon and, therefore, relatively little is known about them. For example, Sánchez Urios (2007, 2010) examined the ways in which Ukrainian immigrants enter the labour market and the social necessities that arise in the course of this process and Hosnedlova and Stanek (2010) recently described the general socio-demographic aspects and mobility patterns of this group.

In this article we examine certain empirical indicators related to the transnational dimension of Ukrainian immigration to Spain. To be precise, we explore the phenomenon of transnational families and various transnational activities (travelling to the country of origin, frequency of contact with the community of origin and remittances). Specifically, we aim to answer the following research questions here:

1. Does gender affect the frequency and extent of the selected transnational activities?
2. Does legal status play a significant role in shaping the selected transnational activities?
3. How does the type of family unit (multilocal/non-multilocal) influence the intensity and scope of these transnational activities?

Regarding the data, we analyse the official statistics of the Spanish Municipal Register and the data from the National Immigrant Survey (ENI-2007) conducted by the National Institute of Statistics (Spain). The first source will be used to develop the socio-demographic profile of the immigrant population in Spain; the second source will enable the analysis of transnational activities and their factors. Concerning the methods, we will implement the descriptive statistics and basic analysis using charts and cross tabulations.

The article is structured around four sections. The first part is theoretical, dealing with the concept of transnationalism. We justify our approach, present the transnational activities and other terms that will be examined in the empirical section. The second part deals with the data sources, their characteristics and limitations. The goal of the third part is to describe the group of Ukrainian immigrants in Spain in terms of basic social and demographic characteristics (e.g., intensity of flows and age-sex structure, geographic distribution, irregularity rates, type of family unit). The fourth part is analytical and addresses the issues surrounding selected transnational activities of the Ukrainian immigrants. Lastly, the conclusion summarises the main findings and evaluations. In the fifth part concluding remarks are presented.

Conceptualising transnationalism

Within the past twenty years, a period that several writers date from the seminal article on transnationalism published by Glick Schiller, Basch, Blanc-Szanton (1992), several migration scholars have shown that migrants maintain multiple ties with their countries of origin while they adapt to the host society. Transnationalism involves multiple ties and interactions linking people or institutions across the borders of nation states. Members of transnational communities move easily between different cultures, frequently maintain homes in two countries and pursue economic, political and cultural interests that require a simultaneous presence in both.

Transnationalism has become a key dimension in the analysis of migration, providing essential conceptual tools for explaining and understanding the current transformations of population mobility patterns. Nevertheless, the enormous popularity of this approach has led to a situation in which, according to Vertovec

(2003: 461): *transnationalism seems to be everywhere, at least in social science*. This is due, at least in part, to the fact that the definition of transnationalism is sometimes so broad that it cannot be used as a circumscribed and contrastable empirical reference. Portes (2001: 182) suggests that there are dangers inherent in seeking to broaden the definition of what constitutes transnationalism because in doing so one risks diluting the efficacy of the theory; in the end, every aspect of migratory praxis could be defined as a cause or consequence of transnational activity, thus encompassing everything yet explaining nothing new. In order to avoid these risks, our study borrows from the precise definition of transnationalism proposed by Portes, Guarnizo, Landolt (1999) who defined the concept as *activities that require regular and sustained social contacts over time across national borders for their implementation*. One of the advantages of this definition is that it allows us to establish a series of indicators of transnational activities which maintain and reinforce ties between countries of origin and destination.

Current academic literature suggests that transnational activities and practices may be developed in several areas of the social life. Goldring, Henders, Vandergeest, (2003: 5) for instance, list and describe the forms the transnational activities can take: 1) the social transnational activities can be represented by regular contact with relatives and friends in the home country, or by family and/or other type of visits to the home country; 2) the cultural transnational activities can be illustrated by celebrating ethnic, religious or national holidays associated with the home country; 3) the religious transnational activities can be maintaining religious identities and practices associated with specific leaders or institutions based in the home country or region, economic support for faith-based projects; 4) the economic transnational activities are known mainly as family remittances, collective remittances or investment; and 5) the political transnational activities comprise voting, raising funds for parties or social movements, lobbying the host government regarding homeland issues. In our study we deal with some of the transnational activities suggested by Goldring *et al.* (2003), namely: travelling to the country of origin and sending of remittances. The selection of these has been influenced by the characteristics of data sources and at the same time inspired by the theoretical considerations that are discussed as follows.

Numerous studies have indicated that one of the key elements of transnational activities is direct contact with social networks and communities in the country of origin through cross-border movement (Menjívar 2002; Walton-Roberts 2003). At the same time, travelling to the country of origin and face to face contact with family members or friends should not only be considered in terms of reinforcing sentimental relationships but also as an important method of transmitting information about migratory destinations, economic exchange and technological modernisation. In this sense, more or less regular visits or circulatory mobility are factors that allow direct and intense interaction between migratory communities and origin communities on various levels (homes, broad social networks, associations, political groups or churches).

Communication is another crucial dimension of transnational activities, as the vitality of transnational links relies on the strength and intensity of social contacts across national borders. A number of scholars stress the role of new communication technologies as a fundamental feature of contemporary transnational activities (Hiebert, Ley 2006). The simultaneity and immediacy allowed by modern technologies significantly intensify and expand transnational connexions (Portes, Guarnizo, Haller 2002). The telephone, internet and other ICTs open up space for transnationalism as this form of communication can cross national boundaries 'without actual bodily movement' (Guarnizo, Smith 1998: 14).

Remittances are another manifestation of transnationalism. Among transnational activities the importance of 'sending money home' has grown enormously over the past few years. This practice plays a fundamental part in improving the short-term economic situation of families, although its contribution to economic development at the local and national level is still being debated (Guarnizo 2003). What is most important in the

context of our study is that remittances cause members of a family network living in countries of origin to become economically dependent on resources coming from abroad, which reinforces ties across borders.

When studying the transnational behaviour of migrants our goal should be not only to determine the scope and extension of these activities but also to identify possible correlates. It has been suggested that a number of factors must be considered in order to understand what is involved in transnational activities (Portes, Escobar, Walton Radford 2007). For example, Portes, Guarnizo, Landolt (1999) points to factors such as access to technology, economic and human capital stocks and the distance to the homeland. Multilocal families can be regarded as another factor that determines the development of transnational activities. Due to geographic mobility, the family unit is separated into various cells that meet both in origin locations and in receiving countries. From a transnational perspective, migration involves the physical separation or dispersal of the family unit, but that does not mean that family members no longer have sentimental and economic ties with each other. Despite dispersal, family networks allow these different fragments to interact as a common entity. This new family structure links various local realities to an international setting and configures what has been called the multilocal transnational family (Glick Schiller *et al.* 1992). Geographic separation and the lack of daily contact convert the family into an imagined community which requires continual effort from its members to keep the links between them alive. The possible linking mechanisms imply maintaining, reducing, reinforcing or establishing links with family members (Bryceson, Vuorela 2002).

In addition, various studies reveal that men and women undertake transnational activities differently (Menjívar 2002; Itzigsohn, Giorguli-Saucedo 2005). In this sense, transnational activities reflect and simultaneously reproduce social and power relationships that determine the sexual division of labour roles within households. For example, Pessar (1999) revealed that Mexican men pursue a more transnational strategy in many cases with an eye on an eventual return, while women are more engaged in the social life of the receiving communities. Moreover, in some cases differentiated reproductive roles in the family might reinforce transnational behaviour. For example, in their study on transnational motherhood Hondagneu-Sotelo and Avila (1997) showed how Latina immigrant domestic workers who leave their children behind are deeply involved in family life across borders and in constant movement between locations.

Another key factor that shapes the ways in which transnational connections develop is the institutional and legal framework established by national and supranational policies. National regulations on foreigners and immigrants, the relations between countries of origin and destination and finally, processes of economic and political integration at the regional level (such as the expansion of the European Union) can either facilitate or limit the establishment and development of transnational links in the context of migration (Waldinger, Fitzgerald 2004). Immigration laws and the rights of immigrants affect their ability to move across borders and limit other forms of transnational behaviour. Irregular status in a destination country can limit cross-border mobility and also lead to greater communication *via* new technologies.

The history of geographic mobility among Central and Eastern European populations clearly illustrates the importance of the legal framework for the development of transnational activities. Without a doubt, three processes, a) the collapse of authoritarian regimes in the former Soviet Bloc, b) European Union enlargements in 2004 and 2007 and c) the removal of transitional restrictions on the free movement of workers from the new member states, greatly advanced the creation of a new transnational or, more precisely, 'trans-European' area of geographical mobility (Gil 2011).

In this context, the issues surrounding the transnationalism of migratory groups whose members find it difficult to obtain legal status become particularly interesting. Ukrainians are currently the most numerous non-community European group in Spain. An analysis of the transnational strategies and behaviours maintaining their links to their country of origin could be a valuable contribution for future comparisons with European community immigrant groups.

Data sources

As mentioned above, most of the statistical data presented in this article come from the National Immigrant Survey (*Encuesta Nacional de Inmigrantes*, ENI-2007) conducted by the National Institute of Statistics at the beginning of 2007 with a sample of 15 465 people born outside Spain (16 years of age and older), including 223 Ukrainian immigrants. The sample method of the survey was based on a three-stage sampling strategy: 1) census sections – stratification of first stage units in accordance with the size of the municipality to which the section belongs; 2) second stage units – a sample of ten dwellings was selected in each sample section; 3) third stage unit – a person was selected with equal probability from among the list of those born abroad and who reside in each dwelling (Reher, Requena 2009). A goal pursued for the survey was to present representative and reliable data. According to Reher and Requena (2009) the results of the poll can be regarded as statistically representative for all of Spain, for the main autonomous regions of the country, and for the most numerous migrant groups. With regards to the Ukrainian population in Spain, there will be some biases, as it is not one of the most numerous migrant groups in Spain, but ENI-2007 can still be considered the most reliable source of information on Ukrainians in Spain.

The National Immigrant Survey provides a set of data that complement information from traditional sources about the phenomenon of immigration (censuses and municipal registers). The survey includes data on the experiences of individuals who have immigrated to Spain, such as their participation in the labour force, their housing conditions and other relevant aspects of their lives (Reher, Requena 2009). ENI-2007 also contains a useful set of variables, including geographical distribution of family and household, frequency of visits to the country of origin, remittances, frequency and methods of communication with family members and friends in the country of origin, all of which can be used to carry out an analysis from a transnational perspective.

Despite the richness of the data source, it is subject to some limitations, the most important being that our study relies on the data from a survey conducted in the host country. This offers only limited possibilities to reconstruct all the possible patterns of immigrant mobility, since we have no access to the people who have already returned to their location of origin after a temporary stay in Spain. In addition, the ENI 2007 sample includes only immigrants who at the time of the survey had either been in Spain for at least a year or had the intention of staying in the country for at least a year. Taking into account these limitations, in order to approach the issue of the geographic mobility patterns of Ukrainian immigrants we have decided to try to examine the movements between places of origin and destination from the host country's perspective. To this end, we focus on the frequency and duration of movement not from Ukraine to the host country, but rather from Spain to the countries of origin. We distinguish two types of movements: first, 'long-term temporary migration', when immigrants return to their country of origin for a period of more than three months; and second, 'short-term temporary migration' where stays in the countries of origin never exceed three months.

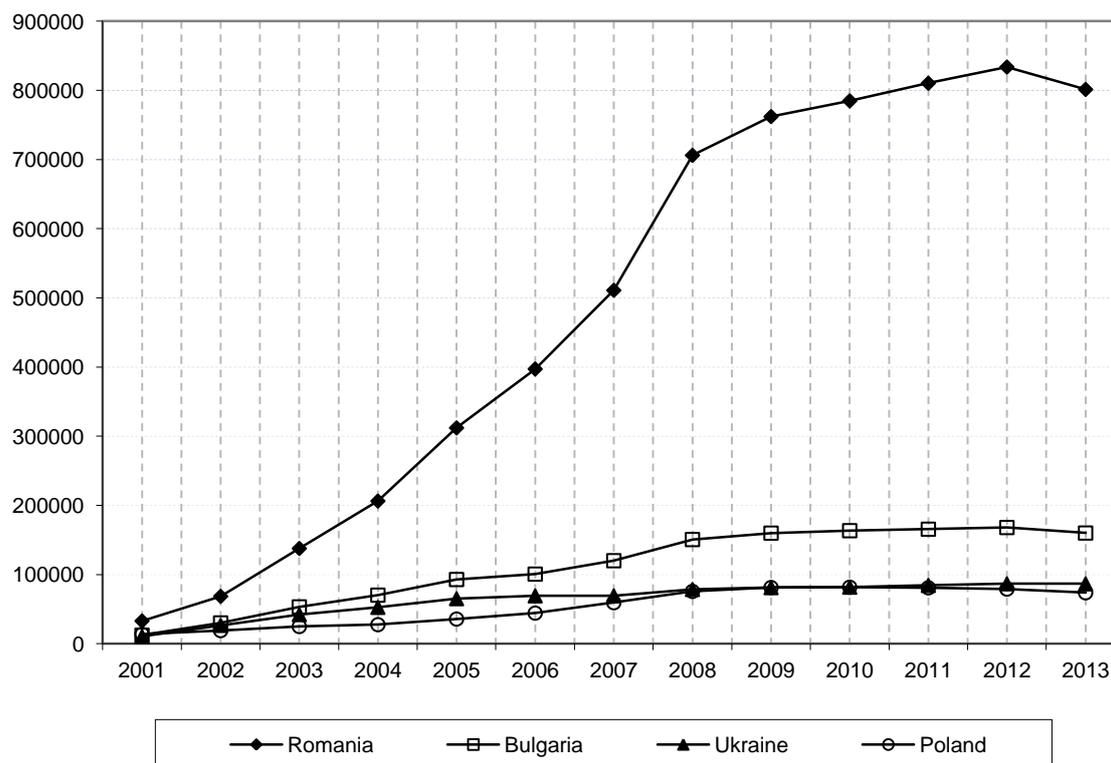
We have also used the official statistics of the Municipal Register. This source of data is an administrative register of the residents of each municipality, regardless of their legal status, and it is currently one of the most widely used sources for the analysis of the socio-demographic characteristics of the immigrant population in Spain. This register is more useful for the analysis of the core features of foreign populations than other sources available because it covers both documented and undocumented immigrants.

Ukrainian migrations to Spain – basic social and demographic characteristics

Intensity of flows and age-sex structure

The first Ukrainian economic immigrants arrived in Spain in the mid-1990s. There is no apparent relation between previous political migration (in 1940s and 1950s) and post-Soviet economic migration to Spain. Although we lack reliable statistical data for this period, it can be assumed that the influx was relatively large. After the regularisation processes in 2000 and 2001 Spanish statistics displayed a sharp increase in immigrants of this origin. Between 1996 and 2001 the number of Ukrainians with residence permits grew from 240 to approximately 9 500 (Ferrero Turrión 2005). In the same period approximately 25 500 Ukrainians were registered in Spanish municipalities. Over the following years the number of Ukrainians registered in the Municipal Register increased exponentially, reaching 81 243 by 2009. However, in recent years the inflow of Ukrainians to Spain (as well as migrants of other origins) has slowed down as a result of the economic downturn and the corresponding dramatic increase in unemployment and budget cuts. At the beginning of 2013, the total number of Ukraine-born migrants registered in Spain was approximately 86 697. However, this apparent stagnation in flows contrasts clearly with the significant decrease in the number of other major Eastern and Central-Eastern European migrant groups such as Romanians, Bulgarians and Poles.

Figure 1. Changes in the number of major immigrant groups from Central and Eastern Europe in Spain 2001-2013

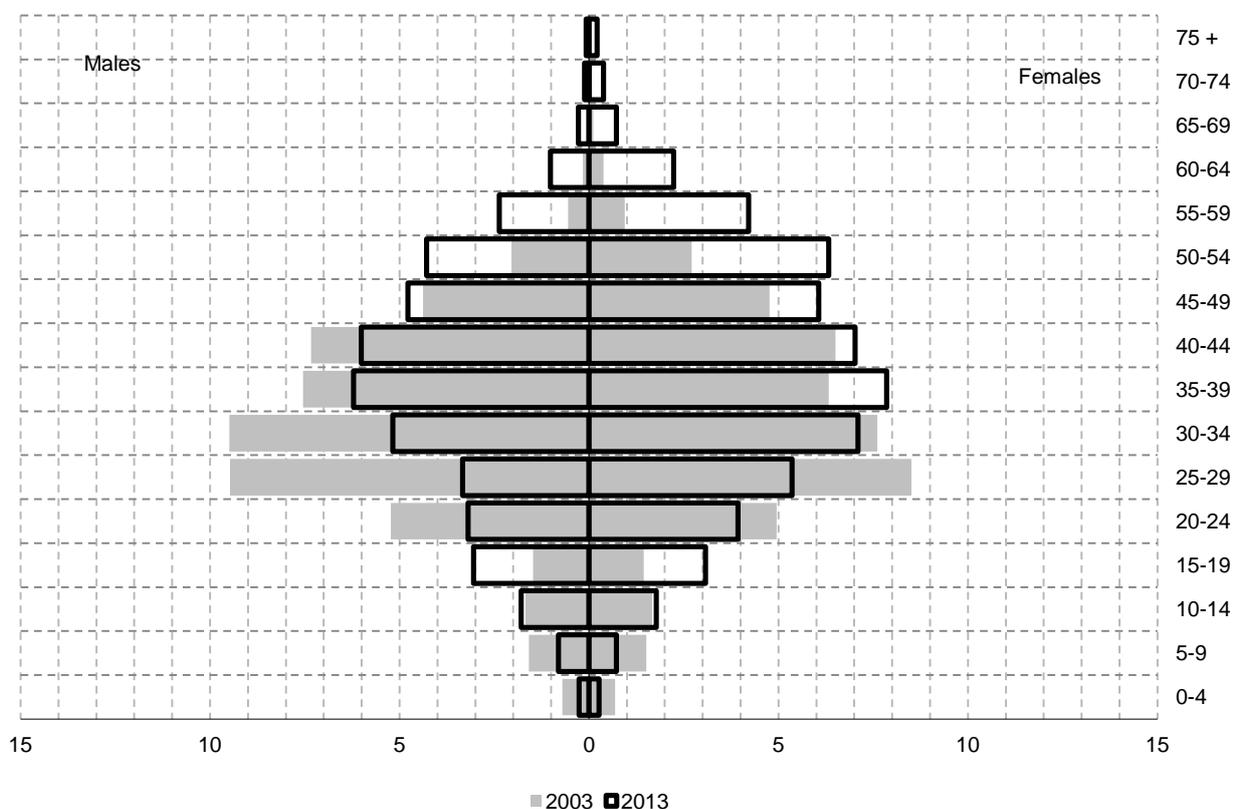


Source: Authors' own composition based on data from the Municipal Register 2001-2013, National Institute of Statistics (Spain).

According to Municipal Register statistics, in 2013 the sex ratio of Ukrainian migrants in Spain was 85 males per 100 females. The age structure reveals a clear prevalence of adult population. According to the data for 2013, most of the population falls within the age category spanning from 25 to 49 years. As shown

in Figure 2, a prominent feature is an asymmetric relation between gender categories, particularly in the case of adults where there is a clear predominance of women. At the same time, it must be highlighted that a comparative analysis of the data corresponding to the structure of the Ukrainian immigrant population by gender and age at the onset of the immigration process to Spain in 2003 and the data from 2013 reveals that the composition of the population had experienced a rapid and sharp transformation. In 2003 there was a clear concentration of immigrants in economically active age groups, with a prevalence of young adults between 25 and 29 years old, followed by the 30-34 and 35-39 cohorts. Furthermore, in 2003 a slight prevalence of young adult men can also be observed. The trends that have occurred in the structure by sex and age between 2001 and 2013 seem to indicate that during the period mentioned the migratory process was marked by the prominence of males in the initial stage, but was subsequently compensated by the arrival of women as part of the process of family reunification as well as a result of individual migratory decisions.

Figure 2. Age-gender chart of the Ukrainian immigrant population in Spain 2003 and 2013 (per cent)



Source: Authors' own composition based on data from the Municipal Register (2001 and 2007), National Institute of Statistics (Spain).

Geographic distribution

According to data from the Municipal Register, in 2007 most Ukrainian immigrants were concentrated in three particular regions: the Autonomous Region of Madrid (23.0 per cent), the Autonomous Region of Valencia (19.3 per cent) and Catalonia (19.1 per cent). There are also relatively large contingents of Ukrainian immigrants who have settled in other regions of the Mediterranean coast, like Andalusia and Murcia (Hosnedlová, Stanek 2010; Sánchez Urios 2010). Ukrainian immigrants have been attracted to Madrid and Catalonia by the offer of employment in the industry sector (especially women), in construction (basically men) and in

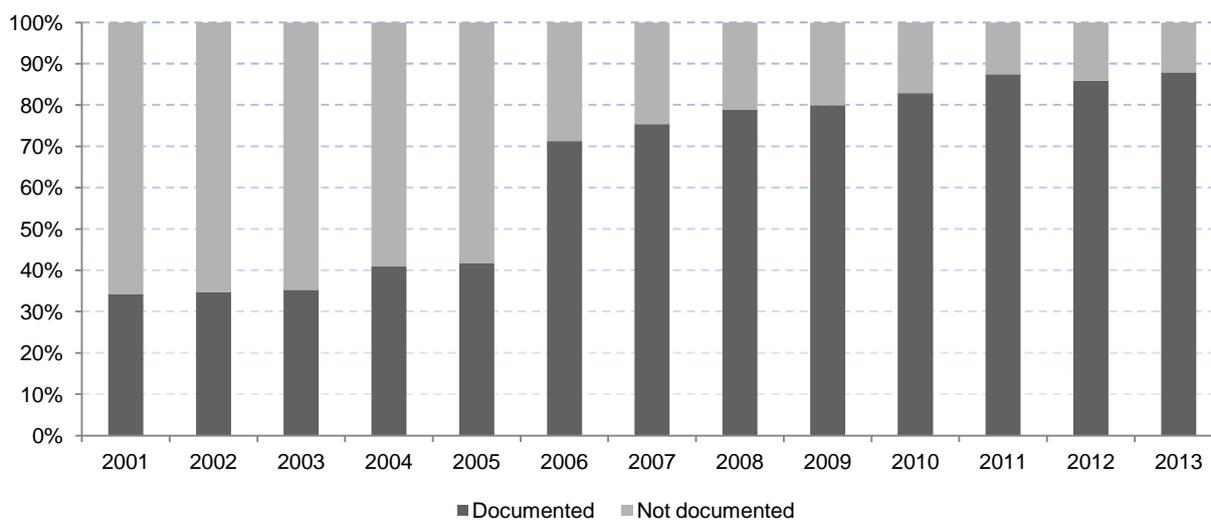
hotel and food services. In addition, Madrid is an important gateway to the rest of Spain (with its busy international airport, and its bus lines between Madrid and different Ukrainian cities). Valencia, Andalusia and Murcia are distinguished by the wide range of temporary jobs (hotel and food services, agriculture, retail and wholesale trade). As to the places of origin of the Ukrainian immigrants, according to the results of the National Immigrant Survey, over half of the Ukrainian immigrant population comes from four provinces located in the western part of the country: Lviv (23.4 per cent), Ternopil (12.7 per cent), Ivano-Frankivsk (9.5 per cent) and Chernivtsi (7.8 per cent). Many immigrants also come from the province of Kiev (14.3 per cent).

Irregularity rates

Ukrainian immigrants usually enter Spain with a tourist visa and remain in the country after it expires, becoming undocumented irregular immigrants. Within this context, it should be noted that a high rate of irregularity has been considered one of the structural characteristics of migratory processes to Spain (Arango 2004). However, there is evidence that the overall situation has been clearly improving in the last few years, mostly thanks to advances in border control systems, greater flexibility in obtaining the necessary permits by immigrants working in Spain (through special regularisations, legalisations *via* ‘rooting’ and contracting in origin).¹

In order to have an approximate idea of the irregularity rate, we compared the number of immigrants in the Municipal Register with the number of immigrants who have a residence permit and are living in a legal situation. The difference between the two figures allows us to estimate the size of the irregular immigration phenomenon (Viruela 2006). As can be seen in Figure 3, at the end of 2012 approximately 13 per cent of the Ukrainians living in Spain lacked the documents required by the Spanish government for legal residence in the country. If we take into account the trends in irregularity rates among the Ukrainian population over the last few years, we can see that the total number of undocumented Ukrainian immigrants decreased drastically between 2005 and 2006, from 62 per cent to 29 per cent, mainly as a result of the regularisation process that was carried out in 2005.² Another factor that has contributed to the significant reduction of the levels of irregularity (by half between 2007 and 2013) was a slowdown of immigration flows since the start of the economic crisis.

Figure 3. Regularity rates for Ukrainian immigrants in Spain 2001-2013



Source: Authors' own composition based on the Municipal Register (National Institute of Statistics) and the Ministry of Employment and Immigration statistics (Spain).

Ukrainian transnational families

One of the major consequences of migration is the dispersal of the family unit both abroad and in the country of origin. This new family structure links several local situations to an international setting and shapes what has been termed by some authors the multi-local family (Mendoza 2005). The incidence of multi-local transnational families (those in which at least one member of the immediate family is outside Spain in the immigrant population indicates the existence of strong ties with the places of origin (Dustmann 2003).³ In overall terms, the total number of non multi-local families exceeds the number of multi-local ones. Of the Ukrainians interviewed, 44.5 per cent declared that all the members of their families are in Spain, whereas 35.4 per cent said that at least one family member was in their country of origin or elsewhere. Focusing on the sub-categories that make up these two types of geographical distribution of families, a third of the entire population (33.7 per cent) is comprised of families in which all of the children live in Spain. There is also a high proportion of people (15.7 per cent) whose spouses are in Spain, but at least one of their children is living in the country of origin, as well as single-parent families with at least one child living in Ukraine (9.8 per cent).

Table 1. Geographical distribution of family unit members (per cent)

	Males	Females	Documented	Undocumented	Total
<i>Total: non multi-local families</i>	32.7	55.0	46.5	31.5	44.5
Spouse/partner in Spain, no offspring	5.4	4.5	5.2	2.8	4.9
Spouse/partner and all offspring in Spain	23.2	43.1	34.5	28.2	33.7
No spouse/partner and all offspring in Spain	4.2	7.4	6.7	0.5	5.9
<i>Total: multi-local families</i>	37.4	33.7	32.6	54.1	35.4
Spouse in the country of origin, no offspring	5.7	0.9	2.7	6.4	3.2
No spouse/partner and at least one of the offspring in Ukraine	4.2	14.5	11.1	0.4	9.8
Spouse/partner in Spain and at least one of the offspring in Ukraine	17.0	14.6	13.3	32.9	15.7
Spouse/partner and at least one of the offspring in Ukraine	10.1	2.6	5.0	14.5	6.1
Other situations	0.4	1.1	0.5	1.4	0.6
<i>Persons without immediate family (no spouse/partner/offspring)</i>	30.0	11.3	20.8	14.9	20.1

Source: own elaboration.

Table 1 illustrates the complex relationship between transnational families and the legal status of the immigrants. In general terms, irregular immigrants are more likely to form part of a multi-local family. Among immigrants who do not have a residence permit in Spain one out of every two belongs to families in which at least one of the members lives in Ukraine. In contrast, the proportion of documented immigrants in this situation is 33 per cent. This pattern indicates that obtaining a permit is a crucial factor in the process of family reunification. In this sense, the restrictions in obtaining legal status directly affect the creation of the transnational family model.

We can also observe significant differences in the location of family members of different genders, which in turn gives us some idea about the strategies pursued by the immigrants and the decisions made within their

households. In the first place, the existence of multi-local family bonds is more frequent among male immigrants. The proportion of males whose spouses and offspring are all living in Spain is substantially less in comparison with females who form part of this category. Among the male population 23.2 per cent are in this situation, as opposed to 43.1 per cent of females. The proportion of males whose spouses or partners and at least one of their children is living in their places of origin is four times greater than the proportion of females in the same situation. A similar pattern is observed in the case of families with no offspring whose spouses or partners are living in their countries of origin. This data indicate that the male *breadwinner* migration model is still prominent when making decisions on migration within households. In this model the male assumes the role of primary provider for the family and also the risk related to the initial immigration move. Thus, the male head of the household is the first to travel to the country of destination and, once settled, the woman and children follow at a later date.

The existence of the family migration model, in which the males play the leading role in the initial stage, is related to cultural conditioning in the place of origin. However, as some authors reveal, the inequalities in economic opportunities for males and females can also be a factor (Pajares 2007). The wages of males employed in the construction sector are considerably higher than those of females working in domestic services. In addition, until the emergence of the economic crisis in Spain, women had more possibilities of finding themselves jobless.⁴ Accordingly, the economic cost of migration was, at least in the initial stage, higher and more difficult to confront in the case of females.

The data presented in Table 1 also reveal another typical migratory pattern of the Ukrainian population. Almost one third of the male population who have immigrated to Spain (30.0 per cent) have no family responsibilities, as opposed to 11.3 per cent in the case of the female population. This data might indicate that for many Ukrainian males, emigration is part of a survival strategy or an attempt to improve their individual economic situation. The proportion of women in this situation is lower, which confirms that for most females the migratory decision is conditioned by the mobility of their spouses or partners.

Within the context that we have just outlined, single-parent families (without a spouse but with children) represent a special case. Almost 22 per cent of the Ukrainian women in Spain find themselves in this situation, as opposed to 8.4 per cent of the male population. We must remember that this gender difference is principally due to the fact that when couples split up, the women usually take care of the children. On the other hand, the high proportion of single women with offspring is due to the high occurrence of divorce in Ukraine.⁵ In this regard, it is worth noting that most women without a partner form multi-local families.

Results – transnational activities

Visits to the country of origin

We will first analyse movements between places of origin and destination. Among Ukrainians surveyed, only 5 per cent had returned to their country of origin for a period of at least three months. In general, their stays in Ukraine are infrequent and for short periods of time. As can be seen in Table 2, if we only take into account stays shorter than three months, it emerges that approximately one third of the people surveyed travel to their country of origin less than once every two years, while a similar percentage has never gone back to Ukraine. The people who visit their country more frequently (at least once a year) represent only a small group within this population – a mere 7.6 per cent. Also, no significant differences between males and females are observed in this regard.

Table 2. Frequency of short stays (under three months' duration) in the country of origin (per cent)

	Males	Females	Documented	Undocumented	Multi-local family	Non multi-local family	No immediate family	Total
At least once a year	8.7	6.7	8.9	1.3	6.6	4.5	16.3	7.6
Every two years	25.4	27.2	29.1	7.3	35.7	28.2	5.9	26.4
Less than every two years or never	65.9	66.1	62.4	91.2	57.7	67.3	77.7	66.0

Source: own elaboration.

The frequency of travel to their country of origin is significantly conditioned by the legal situation of immigrants. The great majority of undocumented immigrants (91 per cent) declared that they had not visited their country of origin since they arrived in Spain. Among documented Ukrainian immigrants the percentage is far lower. The main factor that determines this behaviour is that Ukrainian citizens are required to have a visa to enter any of the countries that comprise the free circulation area established by the Schengen Agreement. It should be added that for irregular immigrants the requirements to obtain a residence permit are important factors when it comes to devising strategies of transnational mobility. One of the main requirements for the latest regularisation that took place in the spring of 2005 was to prove that the immigrant had been living in Spain prior to August 2004 and to be in possession of a work contract for a minimum period of six months (three months in the case of the agricultural sector) (Kostova 2005). In order for an immigrant to obtain legal status through 'rooting', which is independent of the processes of extraordinary regularisation, applicants must prove that they have lived continuously in Spain for a minimum period of two years and have worked at least for one year during that time (Aguilera 2006).⁶ Therefore, the possibility of obtaining a residence permit might reduce the transnational mobility of immigrants and transform temporary migration into long-term or even permanent migration.

Finally, there is a direct relationship between the type of family and the number of visits to Ukraine. Members of multi-local families visit their places of origin more frequently than immigrants whose entire immediate family resides in Spain. This reveals that family is one of the crucial links that tie immigrants to their origins. This phenomenon is also confirmed by data collected on the reasons why immigrants visit Ukraine. Among the reasons stated for visiting Ukraine, seeing family members and friends were the highest, followed by holidays, (91.5 per cent and 71.4 per cent, respectively). Work related reasons, periodic stays in the place of origin and dealing with bureaucratic affairs only represented a limited percentage of the interviewees' replies.

Communication with the country of origin

In general, immigrants maintain relationships with their communities of origin even after settling in Spain. More than 97 per cent of the immigrants interviewed declared that they remained in contact with their relatives or friends. Compared to women, men are only slightly less prone to maintain contacts with their family and community of origin. Legal status does not affect the contacts with the community of origin. Similarly, family situation also does not have a significant impact on the frequency of transnational communication. Among immigrants with transnational families, 99 per cent communicated with their communities of origin, while 98 per cent of immigrants whose entire immediate families were in Spain did the same.

As showed in Table 3, the most widely used means to communicate with people who live in Ukraine is the telephone. Other means of communication are less common, although a considerable proportion of people rely on emails for such purposes. Approximately 68 per cent of the Ukrainians interviewed declared that they stayed in contact with close acquaintances that live in their country of origin at least once a week and 21.8 per cent did so at least once a month. Irregular immigrants in Spain tend to maintain a slightly higher frequency of contact with people close to them who remain in the country of origin, which allows us to hypothesise that they compensate for their lack of opportunities to visit their places of origin with more frequent indirect contact. Finally, as can be expected, immigrants with multi-local families tend to communicate by telephone more frequently than other categories of immigrants.

Table 3. Frequency of phone contact with family and friends at origin (per cent)

	Males	Females	Documented	Undocumented	Multi-local family	Non multi-local family	No immediate family	Total
Once a day	4.6	8.3	5.5	10.5	11.2	4.6	1.5	6.1
Once a week	19.2	12.9	69.8	76.0	75.0	70.5	60.5	70.5
At least once a month	23.9	21.2	23.6	12.8	12.0	24.3	37.9	22.4
Less than once a month	0.6	1.2	1.1	0.8	1.8	0.6	0.1	0.9

Source: own elaboration.

Remittances

Two out of every three Ukrainian immigrants interviewed declared that they sent money to their country of origin. Table 4 shows that men are most likely to send money home. Among Ukrainian men interviewed, 65 per cent declared that they sent remittances compared to 54 per cent of women. Men also send remittances more frequently, which is directly related to the persistence of the *male breadwinner* migratory model among a large percentage of Ukrainian immigrant households. The geographic dispersion of the family is a very significant factor when determining strategies related to remittances. More than half of the immigrants who belong to multi-local families send money at least once a month. This number is clearly contrasted with that of immigrants whose entire immediate family live in Spain. The enormous differences in this transnational practice between these two groups suggest that the economic dependence which exists in transnational families plays a crucial role in the creation of transnational links between countries of destination and origin.

Among both irregular immigrants and regular immigrants there are no significant differences in the proportion of people who send money and those who do not. However, it is striking that irregular immigrants send money much more frequently to Ukraine. Almost half of undocumented Ukrainians send money at least once a month. This pattern could have two explanations. In the first place, visits to the place of origin (much more frequent among documented immigrants, as mentioned earlier) allow immigrants to make economic contributions directly. In addition, our analysis suggests that because irregular immigrants are less secure in their possibilities of prolonging their stay in Spain, they feel more closely tied to their places of origin and this motivates them to invest or accumulate the money earned in the country of destination back home. However, as the analysed data source does not include information on the motives to remit, we cannot go more in-depth in understanding the mechanisms governing this process.

Table 4. Frequency of monetary remittances (per cent)

	Males	Females	Documented	Undocumented	Multi-local family	Non multi-local family	No immediate family	Total
At least once a month	26.9	19.4	19.3	48.8	52.3	8.2	4.0	22.9
At least once every smonths on average	17.2	19.6	19.8	9.0	19.2	22.1	9.0	18.5
Once a year or less	20.5	14.9	19.5	3.7	12.1	22.0	17.3	17.5
Never	35.4	46.1	41.4	38.5	16.5	47.7	69.8	41.1

Source: own elaboration.

Conclusions

The main objective of this article was to examine the issues around migratory flows from Ukraine to Spain from a transnational perspective. Using the definition of transnationalism proposed by Portes et al. (1999), we have established three empirical indicators of transnational activities: visits to the community of origin, indirect contact and remittances. In our analysis we try to establish how factors such as gender, legal status in Spain and the geographic dispersion of family units affect the intensity and scope of these transnational activities.

In the first place, slight differences have been observed between males and females regarding transnational activities. Ukrainian women in Spain maintain telephone contact with family and friends in their communities of origin with greater frequency and men, by contrast, tend to send money more frequently. Our findings resemble trends observed in studies carried out in other social and geographic contexts revealing that immigrant women are more intimately and emotionally involved with other family members and acquaintances as a part of their gender role. By contrast, men are more engaged in fulfilling their social role of the male breadwinner (Parreñas 2005). These confirm that transnational activities reflect social and power relationships determined the sexual division of social roles within households. Secondly, our study confirms that the physical separation of the family unit, both abroad and in the country of origin, plays a crucial role in the establishment and maintenance of links between places of origin and destination. Geographic dispersal and the absence of daily contacts lead members of multi-local families to redouble their efforts to maintain links through visits and long distance communication. Finally, we observed that the legal status of immigrants has a profound impact on the patterns of transnational behaviour of Ukrainian immigrants in Spain. Irregular immigrants face greater obstacles to visit their countries of origin. These limitations are compensated to a certain degree by more frequent indirect communication (telephone, email). Irregular immigrants also tend to send money to their communities of origin more frequently. In this sense, for irregular immigrants indirect transnational relationships (communication, remittances) constitute a clear alternative to 'face to face' contact with members of their family networks and communities of origin.

We can conclude that transnational activities develop in a context in which various forces and tendencies intersect and collide. For instance, the development of global capitalism, increasingly rapid means of transportation, lower travel costs and the spread of new communication technologies allow people to travel, communicate and do business more quickly and with greater frequency. In addition, domestic immigration policies and international relations on the state level are important factors that determine the ways in which transnational links are established. With this in mind, it will be crucial to carry out analyses of transnational phenomena from an institutional perspective.

Notes

¹ Mechanism based on the concept of ‘rooting’ (*regularización por arraigo*), which is aimed at regularising those immigrants who can prove to be sufficiently integrated into Spanish society.

² It should be emphasised that the approximation we propose here is merely for the purpose of orientation since it does not include people who do not figure in either register and whose numbers are difficult to estimate.

³ Immediate family is understood as spouses or partners and offspring.

⁴ It should be noted that the recent economic crisis has changed this situation, exposing the male population to greater risks of unemployment than the female population.

⁵ Ukraine has one of the highest divorce rates in the world. In 2001 there were 4 divorces per 1 000 persons (Perelli-Harris 2008).

⁶ Beyond labour-based ‘rooting’, Spanish immigration law also considers the possibility of social and family ‘rooting’. To attain regularisation *via* social ‘rooting’, immigrants must prove that they have lived in the country for a period of at least three years, had a work contract for a minimum period of one year, have family ties with other foreigners who are residents or, alternatively, present a favourable report about their insertion in society issued by the city council. Regularisation by means of family rooting is aimed at the children of people who were originally in possession of Spanish nationality.

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