Transnational migrant politics in the Netherlands: historical structures and current events
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2. **Migrant Transnational Politics**

While the literature on migrant ‘transnationalism’ and ‘diaspora’ has blossomed over the past decade, there is no agreement among scholars even on the meaning of these terms. Some view transnationalism as a new trend in a globalising world; others think it's a new word for an old phenomenon. Some argue that globalisation fuels transnational ties and activities; others claim these will diminish as migrants integrate within receiving societies. While recent literature tends to privilege the *time* factor – length of stay and generational differences – systematic studies on the relationship between migrant political transnationalism and political integration in host countries hardly exist.

This chapter outlines the relevant academic debates and the key terms used in this dissertation. Transnational politics is not simply a function of ‘transnational identity formation’ – it is *politics*, involving political institutions and opportunity structures, organisations, personal and political interests, struggles over leadership and so on. By delimiting, classifying and operationalising transnational political *activities*, actors and ties, this chapter provides an analytical framework to orient the dissertation’s empirical core.

**Transnationalism in Migration Studies**

Migrant politics relating to the homeland has been a focus of studies on diaspora (Armstrong 1976; Sheffer 1986) and long-distance nationalism (Anderson 1992a, b, 1994). Though the diaspora concept was developed around the 3rd century BC to describe Jews living in exile (Marienstras 1989), the term traditionally also referred to other groups expelled from their ‘homeland’ (Braziel & Mannur 2003). More recently, the diaspora concept has been extended to cover groups in exile as well as immigrants, expatriates, guest workers, overseas and ethnic communities (Tölöyan 1991). A new wave of literature has thus tried to redefine diaspora and classify its many instances (see among others Safran 1991; Clifford 1994; Cohen 1995, 1996; Laguerre 1999; Koser 2003b; Sheffer 2003; Van Amersfoort 2004). This has made the concept more inclusive but also analytically less useful (Vertovec & Cohen 1999, Van Amersfoort 2001). I thus use the concept in its limited, political meaning – a group which considers its ‘homeland’ occupied and which wants to ‘return’ to establish a state. In this study the concept is used to analyse the activities of Kurds from Turkey.

The concept of long-distance nationalism refers to people who have a state to identify with. It includes groups that have migrated for economic reasons, fled from war or political oppression, and (continue to) have strong feelings towards their place of origin. Such sentiment can be found among ‘Irish nationalist’ supporters of the IRA living out their lives as ‘ethnic Irish’ in the United States, as well as among Jamaicans in London, Turks in Berlin, and Jews in New York (after the establishment
of the state of Israel). Anderson argues that these groups are formed by a new type of nationalist – the ‘long-distance nationalist’ without formal opportunities to participate in homeland politics. Furthermore,

for while technically a citizen of the state in which he comfortably lives, but to which he may feel little attachment, he finds it tempting to play identity politics by participating (via propaganda, money, weapons, any way but voting) in the conflicts of his imagined Heimat – now only fax-time away. But this citizenshipless participation is inevitably non-responsible – our hero will not have to answer for, or pay the price of, the long-distance politics he undertakes. He is also easy prey for shrewd political manipulators in his Heimat (Anderson 1992b: 13).

Turkish migrants in the Netherlands who retain Turkish nationality, however, can vote in Turkey. And in the period under study, Suriname and Turkey have experienced only limited periods of conflict; at present the homelands are safely accessible and not necessarily ‘imagined’ for Surinamese and Turkish emigrants. The heimat becomes real when migrants for instance travel back and forth between home and host countries. Turks and Surinamese living in the Netherlands engage in numerous daily activities related to homeland politics – discussions with relatives over the telephone, cultural immigrant organisations inviting their hometown mayor for special occasions – that do not fall under the banner of long-distance nationalism.

Daily political activities that take place in both home and host countries are a form of ‘transnationalism’. The term transnational was coined by International Relations scholars studying the border-crossing contacts of non-state actors such as NGOs (Nye & Keohane 1971; more recently see Anderson 2002; Tarrow 2005). It was only in the 1990s that the concept ‘transnationalism’ became en vogue to explain migrants’ ties with the homeland (see for a complete overview of the development of the term Vertovec & Cohen 1999; Vertovec 2003; Levitt & Glick Schiller 2006; Khagram & Levitt 2008). Transnationalism was defined as:

the processes by which immigrants forge and sustain multi-stranded social relations that link together their societies of origin and settlement. We call these processes transnationalism to emphasize that many immigrants today build social fields that cross geographic, cultural and political borders (Basch, Glick Schiller & Szanton Blanc 1994: 7).

Transnationalism thus includes those cultural, economic and social relations with the homeland previously researched in studies on return migration (Cerase 1974; Gmelch 1980; Bovenkerk 1982) and chain migration (Price 1963 cited in Van
Amerfoort 2001; Massey & Espinosa 1997). It also encompasses economic activities such as remittances and political practices such as the mobilisation of migrants by homeland political parties.

Some scholars have argued that processes of globalisation have facilitated the emergence of transnational communities (see among others Levitt 2001; Mandaville 2001; Pries 2001; Faist 2004). A transnational community, however, is difficult to operationalise – it implies a collective transnational identity shaping migrant behaviour (Wimmer and Glick Schiller 2002) and disappears if analytically divided into its component parts (Carroll & Fennema 2002). Because of the homogeneity it assumes, focusing on transnational communities will likely overlook those activities that are more dispersed, fragmented or less institutionalised (Al-Ali et al. 2001a; Al-Ali 2002). In other words, the approach implies that transnational activities affect the whole transnational community (migrants in the country of settlement as well as those who stayed in the country of origin); it does not allow for the study of diversification within groups to see who is politically active, and why. To capture such diversification, the present study examines the activities and ties of specific ethnic, political/ideological and religious groups originating from Suriname and Turkey.

Transnationalism in migration studies thus covers a broad spectrum of border-crossing activities. Østergaard-Nielsen defines transnational political activities as ‘direct cross-border participation in the politics of their country of origin by both migrants and refugees […] as well as their indirect participation via the political institutions of the host country’ (2003d: 762). The literature, however, is unclear on what makes politics transnational.

Politics is transnational on the supranational, host country, and homeland levels under the following conditions. For the host state, migrant politics is transnational only when it has a clear homeland or diaspora component. This is the case when (1) homeland actors are directly or indirectly involved, and/or (2) the interests refer to homeland issues. For example, the appearance of a book on the ‘Grey Wolves’ (Turkish ultranationalists) in the Netherlands and their ties to the ultranationalist party MHP (Braam & Ülger 1997) raised questions in the Dutch parliament about the Dutch government’s role in facilitating these ties. Measures followed to monitor the influence of the MHP and other foreign parties on Turkish migrant organisations in the Netherlands, some of which then lost their subsidies. In this example, migrant politics became transnational because homeland actors were (assumed to be) involved. An example of a homeland issue rendering migrant politics transnational is lobbying by Armenian and Lebanese Americans to influence US foreign policy – homeland actors are not necessarily involved. Without any of these homeland components one may speak of immigrant politics.

For the sending state, transnational politics requires a host country component where (1) its (former) citizens abroad are directly or indirectly involved and/or (2) the interests refer to an issue in the host country. When Turkish organisations in
Germany mobilise support for a political party to compete in Turkish elections, (former) citizens abroad are involved in transnational politics. Issues involve the host country when for example the Turkish Prime Minister Recep Erdoğan stated in Germany that Turkish migrants should not assimilate. Without these host country components, politics is *domestic*.

Finally, migrant transnational politics on a *supranational* level comprise both host country *and* homeland components, be they actors or issues. An example is joint lobbying in Brussels by Alevi from Turkey and Turkish Alevi living in Europe to promote their rights in Turkey. If supranational politics has none of these host or homeland components, it may still be transnational in International Relations but not in Transnational Migration Studies.

**What’s new about transnationalism?**

The debate on the influence of globalisation on transnationalism raises a central question: what’s new about transnationalism? Basch et al. argue that migrants have created a ‘transnational social field’ between their countries of origin and settlement. Their continuous crossing of borders has ‘deterritorialised’ the nation-state so that a ‘nation’s people may live anywhere around the world and still not live outside the state’ (1994: 269 see also Appadurai 1991). In such a ‘deterritorialised’ setting, immigrants are the vanguard of a new era of post-national or transnational citizenship (Soyal 1994). The emergence of rights backed by supranational institutions – such as human rights by the European Union – is seen by post-nationalists like Soysal as a process limiting the role of states.

More recently, scholars have argued that transnational citizenship often entails ‘dual’ or ‘multiple’ citizenships – but citizenship still grounded in enforceable rights and clearly bounded membership(s) (Fox 2005: 194; see also Faist & Kivisto 2007; Kivisto & Faist 2007). Others have argued that while some supranational institutions do champion rights, state actors retain great influence in the international and supranational arenas (Koopmans et al. 2005: 74-106). The present study follows Kearney, who states that though ‘global processes are largely decentred from specific national territories and take place in a global space, transnational processes are anchored in and transcend one or more nation-states’ (Kearney 1995: 548). Far from being deterritorialised or global, transnational processes remain bounded by nation-states.

With the above in mind, the question arises whether processes of globalisation have increased the intensity and scope of transnational activity. Access to air travel, the internet and mobile phones allow migrants to extend and deepen their contacts not only with the ‘home country’ but with members of the community anywhere in the world (see among others Vertovec 2004b). This has produced a global imagination of ‘home’ that affects both migrants and those who stay behind. Globalisation, some scholars argue, has made today’s transnationalism substantially different from
transnationalism in the past (see among others Smith 1998; Van der Veer 2002; Vertovec 2004a). Return visits and contact with the country of origin have become routine and regular, while the incidence and scope of transnational activity will only expand because ‘immigrant transnationalism is not driven by ideological reasons but by the very logic of global capitalism’ (Portes 2001: 187; see also Guarnizo et al. 2003). Other scholars claim that while it may have been harder to sustain contacts across oceans in the past, immigrants seldom cut ties and allegiances to those left behind – the ties just became fewer and thinner (Foner 2001: 49).

*The ‘time’ factor*

The *time* factor should be central in research on transnationalism (Al-Ali et al. 2001a) if scholars want to know whether transnationalism is reproduced among second and third generation migrants (Guarnizo & Smith 1998; Levitt & Waters 2002; Smith 2006). Some have argued that the first generation’s attachments to the homeland are likely to be absorbed by their children and grandchildren due to permanent contact between generations (Itzigsohn 2000; Levitt forthcoming 2009). Fournon & Glick Schiller (2001) – who believe ties between emigrants and non-migrants construct transnational identities both at home and abroad – have called for a redefinition of ‘second generation’ to include all those in the homeland and the country of settlement who have grown up in ‘transnational social fields’ since the beginning of the migration process. Though their empirical evidence is impressive (it covers a period of 30 years in Haiti and the US), the question is whether their conclusion applies to other cases.

Another longitudinal study by Rumbaut (2002) was based on a decade-long survey comparing second generation transnational attachments among seven migrant groups in San Diego. Here less than ten per cent of the second generation made their parents’ attachments their own. Similarly, a survey (though not longitudinal) on the second generation of five migrant groups in New York found that robust transnational activities were confined to a small minority and were likely to become less significant over time (Kasinitz, Waters, Mollenkopf & Anil 2002). The impact of this minority, however, should not be underestimated:

The presence of a transnational minority among the second generation probably ensures that structural ties between the home countries and diaspora communities in New York will endure as the second generation comes to age. Such structural ties will be available to be revitalized when and if historical circumstances dictate (Kasinitz et al. 2002: 119).

To support their conclusion, the authors refer to a small minority within New York’s Irish community that continued its involvement in Irish nationalism into the fourth and fifth generations. Vague ethnic sentiment turned into material support for
the IRA when interest in Ireland among Irish Americans rose during the ‘troubles’ of the late 1960s and 1970s. A similar pattern could be observed among a small minority of New York Jews with sustained transnational connections who have played a vital role in mobilising support for Israel since the 1967 war (Kasinitz et al. 2002: 119).

While referring to the above examples of Irish and Jewish political transnationalism, the study by Kasinitz et al. (2002) – as well as those by Rumbaut (2002) and Fournon & Glick Schiller (2001) – mainly draw on data on identity formation and social, cultural and economic practices (such as visiting the homeland, homeland language skills, sending remittances and visiting the homeland). While Kasinitz et al. saw those involved in transnational politics as a small minority, their work does not tell us about the extent of broader migrant involvement in transnational political activity. The question whether social, cultural and economic ties form a basis for transnational politics remains open.

Kasinitz et al. conclude that the majority of migrants who are not or only weakly attached to the homeland ‘are clearly here to stay’ (Kasinitz et al. 2002: 117). This leads to the second discussion related to the time factor. Scholars generally argue that over time, migrants become increasingly likely to integrate or assimilate. The question is how integration affects transnational involvement – or conversely, how transnational involvement influences integration.

In studying the transnational activities of different groups in the US, Guarnizo et al. (2003: 1239) and Portes et al. (2007: 276) found migrants involved in transnational activities to be better-educated, longer-term residents of the host society active in local politics. Likewise, Snell et al. (2006) in their comparative study of individual transnational involvement in the Netherlands found no indication of transnational activity undermining integration: ‘More highly educated respondents and respondents with jobs engage in just as many transnational activities... as the poorly educated, unemployed respondents on social security’ (Snell et al. 2006: 304). Nevertheless, Koopmans et al. in a comparative study of migrants in several European countries found that on a collective level, migrant homeland-directed activism often takes violent forms. Strong homeland orientations are therefore, they argue, detrimental to their integration (2005: 142).

Although their findings differ, the above studies have one thing in common. Their understanding of integration above all emphasises migrants’ social, cultural and economic integration in countries of settlement (the general indicators being labour market participation and the acquisition of education and language skills). One of the

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6 Table 3.6 in Philip Kasinitz, Mary C. Waters, John H. Mollenkopf and Merih Anil, "Transnationalism and the Children of Immigrants in Contemporary New York", in Peggy Levitt and Mary C. Waters, eds., *The Changing Face of Home. The Transnational Lives of the Second Generation* (New York: Russell Sage Foundation, 2002): 96-122, suggests the authors included questions on transnational politics, e.g. membership in ethnic and political organisations. The answers, however, were not central to their analysis and were not discussed in terms of transnational politics.
central questions of this dissertation, however, is how transnational politics affects migrants’ political integration in countries of settlement – and vice versa. In this context, political integration encompasses:

access to political status, rights, opportunities and representation for immigrants and to an equalisation of these conditions between native and immigration populations. On the other hand, political integration is also about migrants’ activities and participation and their acceptance of the laws, institutional values that ‘integrate’ a political system. The political integration of immigrants can be broken down into four dimensions: political rights, identification, norms and values, and participation. The more rights they enjoy […] the more they participate and are represented in the political system, the better integrated they are (Bauböck, Kraler, Martinello & Perchinig 2006: 66-67).

The current study focuses on two dimensions of political integration: political rights and political participation. Both are part of the political opportunity structure consisting of laws, policies and discourses that formally include or exclude migrants from full citizenship (see the final section of this chapter). Political rights include passive and active electoral rights (voting or running for office). Political participation refers to the more active dimension of citizenship and covers activities such as protests, demonstrations, sit-ins, etc. These extra-parliamentary forms of political participation ‘generally presuppose the formation of a collective actor characterised by a shared identity and some degree of organisation through a mobilization process’ (Bauböck et al. 2006: 86).

The question is how national and transnational political participation influence one another. Some studies have shown that transnational political participation goes hand in hand with political participation – and thus political integration – in the host country. Morawska, for example, argues that incorporation in local politics in the receiving society often runs parallel to greater political involvement in the country of origin; they can be – and often are – successfully combined (2003: 161-165; see also Pantoja 2005; Levitt 2007). For example, candidates of Dominican origin running for a City Council seat in New York centred their election campaign, which took place both in New York and the Dominican Republic, on Dominican national identity (Graham 2001: 99 see also Portes, et al. 1999).

Political integration, however, is not restricted to issues relating to the country of residence. There are numerous examples of diaspora groups that in response to homeland political developments have attempted to influence foreign policy in the country of settlement (see among others Weil 1974; Garett 1978; Arthur 1991; Jusdanis 1991; Shain 1999). Not all agree this is a good thing. Huntington (1997) for
instance has argued that American foreign policy has come to be unduly dominated by minority migrant interests. More positively, Mathias (1981) argues that such interests would otherwise be overlooked. Either way, migrant groups being able to work the political system to the point of being able to influence foreign policy is in and of itself a type of political integration. Certain types of transnational political activity thus seem to facilitate political integration.

So far, we have seen that time (generation and migrants’ length of stay) is a central factor in studying the evolution and persistence of transnational politics. Furthermore, we saw that the emergence and development of transnational political involvement cannot be reduced to (subjective) feelings of belonging to a ‘transnational community’; such an approach ignores differences within groups and cannot account for who gets involved, or when. Instead, this study relies on the concepts of transnational ties and activities to capture and explain such involvement – which will enable us to gain insight into diversification within migrant groups over time.

Mapping transnational actors, activities and ties

In spite of the increasing attention transnational politics has received over the years, the object of inquiry remains disputed and vague. Different authors have focused on transnational ‘identities’, ‘fields’, ‘spaces’, migrants’ public pronouncements, networks between organisations, and a range of other indicators. Only very rarely have different facets of transnational political involvement been distinguished, let alone conceptualised in relation to one another.

This study distinguishes between transnational actors, transnational activities and transnational ties. The underlying hypothesis is that the ties between actors are crucial for channelling and structuring transnational political activity, even if they often remain invisible to the casual observer. This section makes two contributions to the theoretical field. First it clarifies the distinctions and conceptual relationships between transnational actors, their activities, and the ties that exist between the actors. The distinctions are important as an exclusive focus on any one of them generates a skewed picture. The sections that follow introduce typologies for transnational actors, activities and ties which in turn lend themselves for use in empirical research.

Transnational actors

Transnational actors may participate on the individual, collective and state levels (Penninx forthcoming). We obviously want a clear picture of who is involved. But apart from some recent comparative quantitative studies (Engbersen et al. 2003; Guarnizo et al. 2003; Koopmans & Statham 2003; Koopmans et al. 2005; Snell et al. 2006; Portes et al. 2007), most empirical research on migrant transnationalism relies on single qualitative case studies that ‘document in detail the characteristics of the immigrants involved in transnational activities but say little about those who are not’
(Portes, Guarnizo & Haller 2002: 279; see also Waldinger & Fitzgerald 2004). This creates two biases. First, such studies generally focus on activities that are highly institutionalised; second, they are likely to exaggerate the number of people involved (Mahler 1998; Itzigsohn, Cabral, Medina & Vázquez 1999).

Individual actors

Three types of individual actors are involved in transnational political activity: return migrants, migrants and non-migrants. Among return migrants, I focus on the so-called ‘returnees of innovation’ who hope to contribute to the home country’s development by making use of skills acquired during their sojourn (Cernea 1974). Not all returnees return permanently. Some re-emigrate while others return occasionally, seasonally or temporarily (see Gmelch 1980; Duval 2004). Migrants who succeed in receiving societies and do not hope to return (in the near future) may try to use their financial and social capital to contribute to the development of the home country. Non-migrants who stay in the home country can make or break transnational ties, acting as gatekeepers who determine the success or failure of transnational activities (Nell 2008).

Transnational political participation among individuals cannot be divorced from the organisation of (migrant) civil society because, as Kriesi (1993) argues, collective structures provide individuals with opportunities for participation.

At any given point in time, overt participation in political campaigns is a rare event in the lives of individual citizens. Most of the time, most of them do not get involved in politics, even if they have a considerable potential to do so…. In order to mobilize, one also needs an opportunity to do so. Without an opportunity to mobilize, one’s potential remains latent. A group of citizens may be very concerned about a given situation and they may be ready to act collectively. But if they are unaware of their mutual concern, they will not act accordingly. If there is no one taking the initiative, no collective actor organizing a campaign to articulate their concern, our citizens have no opportunity to get actively involved (Kriesi 1993: 9).

This underlines the importance of studying individuals’ embeddedness in civil society.

Collective actors

Migrant organisations, NGOs and political parties are the main actors at the collective level. They include migrant (ethnic) organisations in the country of residence, religious, socio-cultural and political organisations in the country of origin, and homeland political parties that fundraise, offer active emigrants administrative or political functions in the country of origin, and in cases of dual nationality, campaign
for votes (Glick Schiller & Fouron 1998; Graham 2001; Amiraux 2003; Argun 2003; Levitt & Dehesa 2003; Østergaard-Nielsen 2003e; Smith & Bakker 2005).

Elites in both countries are important actors at the collective level. By ‘elites’ I mean ‘corporate’ elites – those who, by their position as directors of organisations, publicly represent groups (Davis & Greve 1997). While they do not necessarily have to work in the name of the collectivity, their status can mobilise the rank and file, while involvement in transnational activities may further increase their status. For example, emigrant leaders who have successfully managed community projects in the country of origin may find their leadership credentials reinforced (Goldring 1998: 190).

State actors

The main actors at the state level are governments and state institutions. Sending states are increasingly aware of the economic importance of transnationally active migrants while receiving states are also beginning to appreciate the value of relations with migrants’ countries of origin.

States may react positively or negatively to transnational political activities and thereby shape them. The Turkish state, for example, uses transnational media to promote Turkish interests and nationalism; the TRT (Turkish broadcasting) aims to project a positive image abroad and to reach the population of Turkish migrants in Europe to draw them back to the Turkish nation (Aksoy & Robins 2000). Local governments of receiving states may provide specific programmes to solve common problems that result from circular migration, emigration or return migration (Nell 2007). Governments in the receiving country and the country of settlement may even implement special policies to encourage or hinder transnational activities.

Transnational activities

Scholars have attempted to classify transnational activities by differentiating between economic, social-cultural and political activities, and whether these take place in the home or host country (Portes, Guarnizo & Landholt 1999: 222; Al-Ali et al. 2001b: 618-626; Portes 2001: 187). Economic transnational activities include remittances to and investments in the homeland as well as donations to migrant organisations with a homeland focus. Transnational social activities may entail visiting friends and family or participating in online discussions. Transnational cultural activities include exchanges of theatre groups and exhibitions, whereas an example of a transnational political activity is participation in homeland elections (see Al-Ali et al. 2001b: 619).

The distinction between economic, socio-cultural and political activities is an analytical one: in reality they overlap and interact (see Van Amersfoort 2001). Likewise, scholars have shown that transnational religious networks play an important role in political mobilisation (Schiffauer 1999; Levitt 2001; Mandaville 2001; see also
Thus migrants may use existing cultural, social and religious resources and institutionalised channels to achieve political goals.

To examine the durability of transnational activities, we need to assess their degree of institutionalisation. Activities are institutionalised when they become predictable, expected, constant and structured (see Beerling 1978 cited by Penninx 1988). Activities are highly institutionalised when they are held on an organised, regular and constant basis – annual festivals and congresses, weekly discussion groups with written or unwritten rules and norms of attendance. Activities can further be distinguished by whether they are initiated and institutionalised from ‘above’ or ‘below’. Institutionalised political initiatives from ‘above’ include governments allowing migrants to be elected to home country legislatures; initiatives from below include fundraising for hometown civic committees among migrants (see table 2.1).

Table 2.1 Transnational activities and their degree of institutionalisation

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Low institutionalisation</th>
<th>Economic</th>
<th>Political</th>
<th>Socio-cultural</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Informal trade between home and host country</td>
<td>Home town civic communities created by migrants</td>
<td>Amateur sports matches between home and host country</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Small businesses created by returned migrants</td>
<td>Alliances of immigrant committees with home country political associations</td>
<td>Homeland folk music groups giving presentations in immigrant centres</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Circular international labour migration</td>
<td>Fundraisers for home country electoral candidates</td>
<td>Priests from hometown visit and organise parishioners abroad</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Investments by multinationals in the homeland mediated by migrants</td>
<td>Consular officials and representatives of national political parties abroad</td>
<td>Imams sent by homeland institutions to visit and preach in migrant mosques</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Development of tourist locations in the homeland by migrants</td>
<td>Dual nationality granted by home country governments</td>
<td>Home country major artists perform in countries where their (former) co-citizens live</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Home country banks in immigrant centres</td>
<td>Migrants elected to home country legislatures</td>
<td>Regular cultural events organised by home country embassies</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: adapted version of ‘different spheres of transnationalism’ in Portes et al. (1999).

Transnational activities can take five general and one specific direction (see table 2.2).
Table 2.2 Typology of transnational political activities

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>General type</th>
<th>Example</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Transplanted homeland politics</td>
<td>Homeland political conflicts are transplanted to the host country</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Transplanted immigrant politics</td>
<td>Organisations set up in the host country are transplanted to the</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>country of origin</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Homeland directed politics</td>
<td>Host country based groups support or oppose groups or institutions in</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>the homeland</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Diaspora politics</td>
<td>Homeland directed politics among groups without a homeland or</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>who consider their homeland occupied</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Country of residence directed</td>
<td>Homeland based actors set up institutions for their (former)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>transnational politics</td>
<td>nationals in the host country</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Subset</td>
<td>Example</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Locally specific</td>
<td>When any of the above are directed to a specific locality, e.g. district,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>town, village</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The first type is *transplanted homeland politics*, where conflicts between ethnic or political groups in the homeland are transplanted to the immigrant community (Koopmans et al. 2005: 126-127). This happened in the Netherlands in the 1980s when members of left and rightwing Turkish movements violently opposed one another – in the same way and for similar reasons as their compatriots in Turkey (Penninx 1980). We witness transplanted homeland politics when specific views held by homeland political parties or states enter politics in the country of settlement. The 2006 national elections in the Netherlands provided a clear example: during the campaign, a Labour Party (PvdA) candidate of Turkish origin claimed that the ‘Armenian genocide’ had never taken place. The official viewpoint of the Turkish state conflicted with the official view of the PvdA; the candidate was eventually forced to withdraw his candidacy but was praised by Turkish officials.

The second type is *transplanted immigrant politics*, likely to emerge when migrants return to the homeland with skills and ideas acquired in the host country (Nell 2008). For instance, Ivorian elites who had been involved in French student movements used their political experience to create opposition political parties after returning to the Ivory Coast (Ammassari 2004: 147).

The third type is *homeland directed transnational politics*. Here migrants in the country of settlement direct their activities towards the home country. Homeland directed politics generally consists of attempts to improve the legal, economic, and political status of particular groups in the homeland. Such support may take place in either the host country or the country of origin. Migrant organisations may petition the host country government to intervene directly on behalf of group interests in the homeland (Koopmans et al. 2005: 127), or try to influence homeland foreign and domestic policy via the foreign policy of the host country (see Danforth 1994; Østergaard-
Nielsen 2001; Adamson 2002). A subset of homeland directed transnational politics for groups that do not have a homeland is diaspora politics.

A fifth category is country of residence directed transnational politics when homeland-based groups mobilise to intervene on behalf of the group’s interests in the country of settlement (Koopmans et al. 2005: 127). When the Turkish Presidency of Religious Affairs Diyanet sets up Islamic centres in Europe, it does so to strengthen its position in the migrant community; its goal, however, relates to the homeland as it aims to attract support and to prevent opposition from abroad. Homeland based actors can also engage in country of residence directed activities to contribute to migrants’ position in the country residence, for instance by subsidising mosques. Country of residence directed politics is not confined to homeland-based actors. In the ‘cartoon controversies’ of 2006, the Danish government ignored complaints about the publication of a satirical cartoon of the prophet Mohammed in a national newspaper; activists then took their campaign to countries of origin in the Middle East and Asia. In this case the goal of the transnational activity was to improve the position of migrants in the country of residence.

One further type of transnational activity can be distinguished, a subset of the five types already mentioned. Authors have labelled activities targeting local places trans-local politics (see Portes 1999; Itzigsohn 2000; Levitt 2001). The term, however, does not suggest transnational activity. I therefore use the term locally specific transnational politics (Nell 2007).7 Homeland directed transnational politics becomes locally specific when initiatives in a city in the host country target a local community in the country of origin. A clear example involved cooperation between Amsterdam Turks and the Municipality of Amsterdam to help victims of the earthquake in Izmit, Turkey in 1999 (Gölpinar & Demirbas 2001).

Transnational ties

Both the emergence and institutionalisation of transnational activities are expected to depend on the ties between actors. Alevi lobbying the European Parliament for the recognition of Alevism in Turkey may culminate in a one-day political event, but the decade-old ties between Alevi organisations in the Netherlands and their counterparts in Turkey can be used for other purposes. Transnational ties are expected to be more durable than activities. Whereas activities reveal the process of transnational politics, transnational ties constitute its collective structure. Ties are manifest in the impact of social relations on behaviour and institutions (see Granovetter 1985).

The existence of transnational ties is expected to be a condition for transnational activities to take place. But not all transnational political activities require ties with homeland actors (e.g. lobbying within the host country to influence foreign policy). In such cases, ties between migrant organisations and the host country or supranational

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7 I owe this term to Rinus Penninx.
institutions are deemed a condition for *indirect* transnational activities. As outlined in table 2.3, ties vary enormously in content, type, strength and hierarchy. The content of a tie here refers to the type of transnational activity it channels: social, cultural, economic or political. As ties may channel different types of overlapping activities simultaneously, the challenge is to establish which kinds of ties channel institutionalised transnational political activities.

Ties may evolve through kinship, friendship or professional cooperation. Personal ties are usually informal; professional ties develop through (voluntary) work relations, for instance when the leaders of migrant organisations pursue joint activities. Ties can also be based on interlocking directorates (when one person is on the administrative board of two or more migrant organisations) and on formal memberships (when an individual is a member of a political party or when local migrant organisations are members of a national federation).

According to Granovetter, the *strength* of these ties derive from a combination of the amount of time, the emotional intensity, the intimacy (mutual confiding), and the reciprocal services, which characterize the tie. Each of these is somewhat independent of the other, though the set is obviously highly intracorrelated (1973: 1361).

Many observers assume ties based on kinship are strongest. Being related by blood, however, is no condition for frequent contact. Friendships also have different levels of intimacy (see for types of friendship ties Boissevain 1974). Assuming there to be little emotional intensity between voluntary organisations and governments, Granovetter would classify such ties as ‘weak’. But for our purposes, we need to determine the strength not only of ‘interpersonal’ ties, but ties involving actors on collective and state levels. Since it is difficult to measure emotional intensity, reciprocity and intimacy between for example states and migrant organisations, I consider factors such as frequency of contact and length of relationship.

To see whether activities are institutionalised from above or below, it is necessary to examine the ties between actors. Who directs and who follows? In Putnam’s words, a tie may be ‘horizontal’ (based on reciprocity and cooperation) or vertical (based on authority and dependence) (Putnam 1993: 88). Relations between an individual or organisation and government institutions are often vertical ‘patron-client’ relations institutionalised from above.

A further distinction can be drawn between institutionalised and uninstitutionalised ties. The former are written in statutes, and include official individual memberships, the official branches of homeland political parties and representatives of a homeland government institution; their official character makes institutionalised ties ‘visible’ to the public eye. Uninstitutionalised ties on the other hand rely on informal or unspoken agreements and are less visible.
Table 2.3 Differentiation between ties

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Level of institutionalisation</th>
<th>Basis</th>
<th>Hierarchy</th>
<th>Agreement</th>
<th>Networks made up of these ties are</th>
<th>Strength</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Low</td>
<td>Kinship</td>
<td>From below</td>
<td>Personal Advising Sporadic cooperation Structural cooperation Formal membership Interlocking directorates</td>
<td>Fragmented</td>
<td>Weak</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High</td>
<td>Professional</td>
<td>From above</td>
<td></td>
<td>Dense</td>
<td>Strong</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Finally, ties are the building blocks of dense or fragmented networks. Davis and Greve state that practices will spread more rapidly within dense networks than in thin ones, ‘just as viruses spread faster in urban areas than in rural ones’ (1997: 7). Although the current project is not designed to study the density or fragmentation of transnational networks, it does shed light on the embeddedness of transnational ties in dense or fragmented national migrant organisational networks. Albeit on a small level, this may generate insight into the mobilisation capacity and thus the speed in which transnational activities spread.

The existence of transnational actors on various levels in both the home and host country generates many possible combinations of ties between them. Table 2.4 lists those studied in this dissertation.

Table 2.4 Types of transnational ties studied

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Actors in the country of settlement</th>
<th>Actors in the country of origin</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Individuals X</td>
<td>Individuals</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Individuals X</td>
<td>Political parties</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Individuals X</td>
<td>State actors</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Migrant organisations X</td>
<td>NGOs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Migrant organisations X</td>
<td>Political parties</td>
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<tr>
<td>Migrant organisations X</td>
<td>State actors</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>State actors X</td>
<td>NGOs</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Central in table 2.4 are ties between migrants in the Netherlands and actors in their (former) homeland. While the above ties do not go beyond Dutch, Surinamese and Turkish borders, transnational ties may also exist between actors originating from
the same country spread across several countries. For example, Turkish and Kurdish labour migrants and refugees are dispersed across Europe and are most numerous in Germany; academics even speak of ‘Euro-Turks’ (Kaya 2004). Østergaard-Nielsen argues that German-based federations serve as bridges between political parties in Turkey and organisations in other European countries (2003e: 81), while Kurdish political lobbying often relies on cooperation between actors and organisations in different countries (Østergaard-Nielsen 2002). Such ties can be called ‘third country transnational ties’.

Studies show that ethnicity often forms the basis of transnational cooperation. Kurdish organisations in Europe have cooperated with Iraqi and Syrian Kurdish organisations to establish a united ‘Kurdish Parliament in Exile’ (Van Bruinessen 2000) while some scholars argue that East Indian Surinamese in the Netherlands identify more with India than with Suriname (Gowricharn 2003; see also Desai 2004). Such ethnic and third country transnational ties will only be studied when the activities channelled through these ties clearly refer to Turkey or Suriname and contain a political element.

**Determinant factors for transnational political ties and activities**

Drawing on the existing literature, this section discusses the factors expected to determine the evolution of transnational political ties and activities. Despite their diverging conceptual schemes, most scholars distinguish between factors related to home and host countries. When addressing the political dimension of transnationalism, many also underline the importance of ‘political opportunity structures’ – again in both home and host countries. The concept refers to:

- institutional opportunities in the form of chances of access and influence of citizens in the decision-making process (institutional openness versus closure) and material reactions of authorities to challengers (repression or facilitation of mobilization) (Koopmans et al. 2005: 17).

For many social movement scholars, changing ‘political opportunity structures’ best explain the dynamics of transnational collective action (Tarrow 1994; Kriesi, Koopmans, Duyvendak & Giugni 1995). The political opportunity structure includes:

- dimensions of the political environment which either encourage or discourage people from using collective action. The concept… emphasizes resources external to the group – unlike money or power – that can be taken advantage of even by weak or disorganized challengers (Tarrow 1994: 18).
These dimensions of the political environment are not necessarily formal, permanent or national. It is, indeed, changes within them that provide openings for resource-poor actors to engage in collective action.

Three critiques of the political opportunity structure approach are relevant for this study. Koopmans et al. (2005) argue that there is a tendency to specify political opportunity structures at a too general level, as if they could be defined irrespective of particular issue fields. Such a one-size-fits-all approach is particularly untenable for migration studies, where we expect migrants’ access to political resources in the country of settlement to be influenced by migration history – for example, whether they are ‘guest workers’ or ‘postcolonial’ migrants. Focusing on field-specific opportunities, as Koopmans et al. (2005: 20) call them, allows for differentiation between the political/ideological, ethnic and religious groups covered in this study, both in the Netherlands and in the homeland.

A second critique argues that the institutional political opportunity approach ignores alternative perspectives (Bauböck et al. 2006: 91). Scholars who see political opportunities as an ‘independent’ variable often ignore their changes over time and variation across countries. Approaches that focus on the latter, Bauböck et al. argue, take into account normative political theory and the analysis of political discourses and policy-making. Combining institutional analyses with these approaches will help to understand feedback loops and the effect migrants’ political choices and actions have on opportunity structures. In other words, it allows us to study the interaction of structure and agency. The current study particularly focuses on how political opportunity structures change over time.

A third critique, related to the previous one, is that the model assumes political action is largely determined by external resources and events. Østergaard-Nielsen (2003e) argues that although political opportunity structures are an important variable in the analysis of migrant political involvement, ascribing to them functions derived from their structural position is a ‘reductionist exercise'; to understand specific instances of mobilisation, we need to examine actors’ motivation and agency (Østergaard-Nielsen 2003e: 32). One of the central aims of the empirical chapters that follow is to lay bare the motivations of the actors engaged in various types of transnational political activity.

Political opportunity structures are thus expected to be an important – but not the only – determining factor for transnational political activity. In order to explain actors’ motivations, we need to take into account other factors. Those related to the country of residence that most often receive attention in the literature include length of stay, migration motives (pull) and integration policies. Factors related to the country of origin include policies geared to emigrants and settled migrants abroad, migration motives (push) and the overall political climate. The diplomatic relations between sending and receiving states is also often seen as significant. In addition to the above factors emphasised in the literature, I expect political climate in the country
of residence and civil society structures in both the homeland and host country to be significant.

These factors are conceptualised in figure 2.1. Below I explain in more detail how each of these may influence transnational political ties and activities on the individual, collective and state levels.

**Figure 2.1  Transnational political ties and activities: a heuristic model**

![Diagram of transnational political ties and activities]

*Political opportunities in the host country* include its integration policies, in particular the extent to which they encourage or discourage migrants’ full participation in the political arena. It includes:

- national asylum regimes; provisos around visas, citizenship, voting, residency, naturalization, and other aspects of legal status;
- sources of and access to bodies of information of migrant incorporation […] ; access to legal representation;
- labor union membership and activity and the organisation of local ethnic or hometown associations for migrant assistance (Vertovec 2003: 654).

The political opportunity structure in the country of residence may or may not allow migrants equal opportunities to participate in local politics. There are different levels of institutionalised consultation with migrant groups; governments also influence community organising by providing or withholding resources, for example by subsidising specific activities or supporting certain models of community organisation. The more political rights and access to political gatekeepers such as labour unions, political parties and NGOs migrants have, the more they will channel their activities into the political system of the receiving country (see Soysal 1994;
Doomernik 1995). The basic issue here is the type of citizenship a country bestows its migrants (Koopmans & Statham 2003) – citizenship being that set of practices (juridical, political, economic and cultural) that define a person as a competent member of society and thus shape the flow of resources to persons and social groups (Turner 1993). Citizenship acquisition, free movement, and rights for non-citizens (Vink 2002) are thus central issues for migrant transnational politics.

Where there are sufficient opportunities, the extent to which migrants and their offspring seize them depends on variables such as

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, the vision they have of their presence in the country of residence as permanent or temporary […] their knowledge of the political system and institutions, the social capital and density of immigrant associational networks… (Bauböck et al. 2006: 89).

Some scholars argue that more open political opportunities in receiving countries will lead to more transnational activity (Faist 2000: 214). Others predict the opposite, that with a political opportunity structure relatively open to migrant political participation, there will be fewer occasions for it (see Koopmans & Statham 2003). For the latter, strong transnational orientations are ‘responses to traditional, exclusionary citizenship regimes that put high barriers to migrants’ access to the political community’ (Koopmans, et al. 2005: 143 see also Goldring 1998: 170; Khagram, Riker & Sikkink 2002: 19). The question is which analysis applies for immigrant groups in the Netherlands.

Political opportunities in the country of origin refer to political rights that enable the political participation of settled migrants, emigrants and circular and return migrants. Political rights can exist in the form of dual nationality, the right to vote from overseas, and the right to run for public office (see also Nyberg Sørensen 1998: 263; Levitt & Dehesa 2003: 589-598). In some cases homeland governments have institutionalised attempts to stimulate or weaken emigrants’ economic, social or political input (Freeman & Ögelman 1998; Laguerre 1999; Itzigsohn 2000; Mahler 2000; Howard 2003; Koser 2003b; Martínez-Saldaña 2003; Østergaard-Nielsen 2003f; Smith 2008). Institutional provisions may include assistance to migrant communities through ministries and consulates, as well as programmes which go beyond traditional consular services such as literacy training and primary and secondary schooling for adults. Transnational activities, however, can also be perceived as a threat in the country of origin (see Guarnizo 1997; Bauböck 2003). Turkey for example passed a law prohibiting organisations in Europe from financing Turkish political parties (Amiraux 2003). Nor do attempts to broaden political opportunity structures for
(former) citizens abroad always have the intended effect: the prevalence of dual citizenship and overseas voting appear to be universally low (Östergaard-Nielsen 2003a: 223; Rubio-Marin 2006: 146).

Sending countries’ policies towards emigrants and migrant communities in destination countries can span a wide range of policy areas varying from political relations and national security to bilateral agreements on pension schemes for retired migrants (Östergaard-Nielsen 2003a). Levitt and Dehasa have distinguished the types of policies states can implement (2003: 589-598), ranging from those that aim to channel remittances (see also Koser 2003a; Kearney & Besserer 2004; Fitzgerald 2005) to symbolic policies designed to reinforce the sense of enduring national membership. While these measures are directed towards individual emigrants or the migrant community in the country of residence, there are also policies targeting emigrants visiting the homeland and returnees, not least policies that try to stimulate a ‘brain gain’ (Baldwin 1963; Zweig 1996; Thomas-Hope 1999; Arowolo 2000; Ley & Kobayashi 2005). Not all instances of the sending state reaching out to the emigrant community, however, are captured in policy. In a less structured way, Turkey encouraged migrants in Europe to lobby in favour of Turkish EU membership (Östergaard-Nielsen 2003f). Not all measures by sending countries to shape emigrants’ behaviour, however, have had the intended effect (Guarnizo, Sánchez & Roach 1999: 390; Östergaard-Nielsen 2003a: 223; Margheritis 2007) – a notable example being Mexico’s attempts to regulate emigration to the U.S. and return migration to Mexico (Goldring 1998).

Based on the political opportunities they allow emigrants, Levitt & Glick Schiller (2004: 1023-1024) have identified three broad categories of sending states. The first, transnational nation-states, treat their emigrants as long-term, long-distance members. States such as El Salvador and the Dominican Republic have become so dependent on remittances that emigrant contributions and participation have become an integral part of national policy. The second and more common type are strategically selective states that encourage certain forms of transnational participation but aim to selectively manage what migrants can and cannot do. On the one hand they want to maintain homeland involvement among emigrants, whom they recognise are unlikely to return. On the other hand, they want to maintain some level of control over emigrants’ homeland ties. Such states, Levitt and Glick Schiller argue, offer partial and changing packages of privileges to migrants, encouraging long-distance membership but never granting the legal rights of citizenship or nationality. Haiti, India and Turkey have all tried to obtain support from populations abroad without granting full participation in internal political activities (Levitt & Glick Schiller 2004: 1024). The third type of state is the disinterested and denouncing state. Such states (such as Cuba) treat migrants as if they no longer belong to the homeland. ‘Any overtures migrants make vis-a-vis their ancestral home are viewed as suspect because migrants are seen as having abandoned the homeland or even as traitors to its cause’ (Levitt & Glick Schiller 2004: 1024).
Diplomatic relations relevant for our study are those between labour exporting and labour importing countries and those between former imperial powers and their ex-colonies. When two states share an interest in retaining migrants’ ties to their homelands, they may institutionally sponsor the activities of sending-country organisations in the country of settlement (Koopmans et al. 2005: 111-113). In this way diplomatic relations may have an impact on at least the political opportunity structure of the country of residence. Continued peaceful relations between countries is obviously expected to be important.

Diplomatic relations on a broader level may offer migrants an additional venue – an international political opportunity structure – for collective action. Whereas national political opportunity structures refer to states, the international political opportunity structure is a ‘composite of a number of International Governmental Organisations… like the UN, the EU… establishing a number of formal treaties, international regimes… as well as sometimes, structures of norms and values’ (Van der Heijden 2006: 32). One of the main reasons transnational actors turn to the international arena is to influence domestic regimes (Hawkins 2002: 47). Migrants’ claims may be more specific than ‘universal rights’ and may appeal directly to particular paragraphs in UN or EU human rights chapters, for example Kurdish organisations when appealing for minority rights.

The organisation of (migrant) civil society in both the homeland and country of settlement facilitates transnational activity. As outlined in former sections, the density or fragmentation of organisational networks are expected to determine the success of collective action. Excellent studies have been conducted in the Netherlands on the network structures of the most important migrant groups, including Turks and Surinamese (Van Heelsum et al. 1999; Van Heelsum & Voorthuysen 2002). Combined with secondary literature on civil society structures in countries of origin, they enable us to study the impact of such national network structures on the evolution of transnational ties (see chapter 4).

In addition to the political opportunity structure and (migrant) civil society, the overall political climate is expected to play a role. In homelands in conflict, independence movements mobilise support among settled emigrants and refugees in diaspora (Ostergaard-Nielsen 2003b: 6-8). Intra-ethnic conflicts, foreign occupation, civil war and dictatorships all motivate homeland-directed activities among migrants (see Al-Ali et al. 2001a: 595; Koopmans et al. 2005: 111-113; Collyer 2008; Turner 2008).

The political climate within home and host countries affects ‘push’ and ‘pull’ migration motives. Migration motives may have an economic or political basis – economic malaise and armed conflicts in the homeland, labour shortages and the political will to accept refugees in the receiving country. Whereas labour migrants more often transfer money back home, political refugees are more often involved in transnational politics (Snell et al. 2006). Many of these exiles are in a continuous struggle to bring about the
conditions which will allow their eventual return (Shain 2005 [1989]: xix). Push migration motives thus have a great influence on transnational activities; Al-Ali et al. (2001b) state that forced migration can lead to ‘forced transnationalism’.

Finally, much has already been said about length of stay in the first section of this chapter – whether transnational practices will grow in the future due to globalisation or diminish once the migrant group is firmly rooted in the country of settlement and has opted for political integration (see also Al-Ali et al. 2001a: 597). In some cases, however, generation and length of stay are not chronological within the same migrant group (see also Eckstein 2002; Eckstein & Barberia 2002). As indicated in chapter 1, migration from both Turkey and Suriname are ongoing processes; we can nevertheless follow Vermeulen (2005) in distinguishing three general phases of settlement. The first is a period of adjustment and orientation when migrants are often confident of returning home. The second is that of ‘increased adaptation’ – migrants still hope to return one day but their lives are increasingly entangled in the host society; a second generation has been born and raised. In the third phase, adaptation becomes more permanent: the first generation grows older and the second generation reaches maturity. In this phase, Vermeulen argues, migrant organisations focus more on issues related to their stay in the Netherlands while links with the homeland loosen (2005: 177).

The model in figure 2.1 is a heuristic device that will lead our data collection and analysis; the factors presented there are not to be seen in isolation. Diplomatic relations may shape migration motives, migration motives are influenced by the political opportunity structure, transnational activities will change with the political climate in host and home countries. All factors are expected to be dynamic and interactive in reality; their relative importance will vary from case to case and over time. By studying the evolution of transnational ties (structure), engagement in transnational activities will be examined as a process rather than a ‘state of being’ (see also Al-Ali et al. 2001b: 632). By comparing between and within groups over time, it will become possible to draw conclusions on which part of a migrant group (who), in which phase of settlement (when), is involved in which (what) type of transnational activity.

This chapter has delimited transnational politics, mapped transnational ties, activities and actors, and presented a heuristic model based on the existing literature. Empirical evidence on the evolution of transnational political ties and activities, and how this affects political integration in the country of residence, however, is thin on the ground. The following empirical chapters aim to address this gap. In the next chapter, the factors presented in figure 2.1 are validated for political transnationalism among individual migrants.