Migrants and their Families in the Home Country:

A Bi-Directional Influence on Voting Behavior

Marius Grad, Sergiu Gherghina and Adrian Ivan

The voting behavior of migrants has been studied extensively but limited attention has been paid to how discussion with families in the home country can be important. This article analyzes under what circumstances migrants influence or are influenced by their families in voting decisions. The analysis uses individual level data from a survey conducted in 2018 on a sample of 1,839 Romanian migrants. The results indicate that most migrants are not engaged in acts of persuasion about voting. Those who influence their families have a direct interest in the election results, are informed about what happens in the country and are politically active. The migrants who are influenced by their families have limited experience in the countries of residence and strong ties to their home country.

Introduction

The political participation of migrants in their home country has been approached from the perspectives of diaspora mobilization, post-territorial citizenship or the importance of culture (Kilduff and Corley 1999; Lyons and Mandaville 2010; Walker 2016; Koinova 2018). Migrants' voting behavior in their home country has been usually analyzed through the lenses of various types of determinants (Lafleur and Sánchez-Domínguez 2015; Gherghina and Tseng 2016). So far, little attention has been paid to the interactions between migrants and their families at home around elections. There is limited effort to explain the extent to which migrants and their families at home seek to influence each other about voting.

To address this gap in the literature, our article analyzes whether migrants influence or are influenced by their families in the home country in their voting decisions. It argues and tests the explanatory power of five potential determinants: property ownership in the home country, the consumption of media from the home country, political activism, the willingness to return to the home country and the existence of a strong relationship with the come country. In addition to these, we also control for the length of stay in the host country,

1

corruption as a reason to leave the home country, how often migrants go to the home country, gender and age. The analysis uses individual level data from a survey conducted in 2018 on a sample of 1,839 Romanian migrants in Western Europe who had the right to vote in the 2012 and 2016 national legislative elections and in the 2014 presidential elections. The methodology consists of ordinal logistic regression with the same models created for migrants who seek to influence or who are influenced.

The following section reviews the literature on political participation of migrants and formulates several arguments according to which migrants are likely to be active in influencing families at home during elections. The third section presents the research design and provides details about the case selection, data and variable measurement. Next, the results of the quantitative analysis will be presented and interpreted. The conclusion discusses the main findings and presents directions for further research.

Theoretical framework

Migrants tend to become external agents of democratization if the regime in their home country is oppressive or the level of democracy is low (Jaulin 2016). In their host societies, migrants often interact with political, social and cultural norms and attitudes that are different from those in their home countries. Consequently, the attitude of migrants towards homeland politics can take two forms: the communities abroad can be politically re-socialized with the new environment while detaching from the previous political context or they can develop dual loyalty by remaining committed to politics in the homeland (Chaudhary 2016, 6). In the first case, it is likely that diaspora will be influenced by those at home. The latter will push to translate their political views into the votes from migrants, by suggesting how to vote. In the second case, there are higher chances that diaspora will try to influence the families in the home country to vote in a certain way and to push for political change.

This section identifies the determinants of migrants' desire to influence their families in the voting process. The following theoretical arguments are formulated for both migrants who willing to influence the voting decision of their families and for migrants who are influenced by their families in the home countries how to vote. We expect the same determinants to play a role but in the opposite direction, as we explain in detail below.

Our first argument is that migrants are likely to influence their families in the home country about voting when there is an economic stake. If migrants have property in their home country, they are likely to be interested in politics – which can influence the fate of their investments – and thus actively involved in persuading others about voting. The following lines provide a few details about how this argument is derived from the literature. The economic interests of migrants are good predictors for their connection with the home country. Some migrants invest in their country of residence or send remittances to their families because they intend to return (Cohen 1997; Gherghina and Plopeanu 2020). The investment in property in the home country can be determined by the familiarity with the local economic context or having relevant information about the evolution of the economic context (Liang and Weisbenner 2002). There is also an ethnic advantage that ensures a close relation with the home country (Gillespie et al. 1999). The strong sense of duty (Hudson 2005) can be a motivator of investing at home, while the desire for social recognition and the sense of satisfaction can be decisive for the economic interest in the home country (Arrow 1972).

Owning property in the home country involves a high degree of contact with that society. This contact can take place either along economic – as illustrated above or political lines. One can argue that migrants have an interest related to the political development of their home countries to make sure that their investment is protected. The migrants have a direct interest in keeping the assets at home safe, and politics is directly linked to this. For example, political instability in the home country can easily translate into financial loss for their investment. This is one key driver for the influence that migrants exert on the social and cultural norms in the home country. Families in Bulgaria and Romania with close contacts with those abroad have higher level of civic engagement (Nikolova, Roman, and Zimmermann 2017).

There are informal remittances directed to household consumption (Williams 2017). The interaction with a new political and economic context, the experience in more political settings and the perception of greater expertise can determine migrants to influence their families in the home country. If their properties in the home country are used or administered by relatives, the possibility of migrants' influence on voting is even higher. Such situations make it easier for migrants to convey the message about their political preferences. They can provide concrete examples to their family about how specific election

outcomes, i.e. a party that they do not favor, can endanger the economic situation of the country. In addition, migrants who own properties used by their families may find themselves in a stronger position of persuasion. They can seek to influence the family members knowing that the latter may fear the consequence of defection, i.e. no longer being allowed to use the property.

Conversely, we would expect that those migrants who do not own property in their home countries to have a lower stake in the national elections. They are likely to care less about who gets elected and what sort of policies are implemented in the home country because they do not have a direct financial interest. This low level of interest and political involvement can determine this category of migrants to follow the advice of their families in the home country. Following these arguments, we hypothesize that:

H1a: Migrants owning property in their home country are likely to influence their families at home regarding voting.

H1b: Migrants not owning property in their home country are likely to be influenced by their families at home regarding voting.

The rupture produced by migration and the need for cultural continuity have been closely studied. Earlier studies emphasize the use of transnational media, the sequel of cultural connections and symbols, and the existence of ceremonies as important elements to preserve collective memories and identities (Aksoy and Robins 2000; Kuah-Pearce and Davidson 2008). The migrants' consumption of media from the home country reflects willingness to stay connected with that socio-political environment at home. There are two main reasons for homeland media consumption: entertainment and information (Shi 2005; Gherghina 2016). If used for information purposes, the media correlates with the migrants' determination to influence government, private sectors and other prominent groups at home (Newland 2010). It also indicates a higher probability for the diaspora to exert pressure over the families in the home country about political, economic or social matters.

New technologies provide dispersed communities the opportunity to engage in local politics in real time. Media use has become increasingly significant in forming public opinion, and when talking about migrants their interaction with new political and moral values will foster change in thoughts about state, cultural heritage, political visions and citizenship

(Ekwo 2011). The new political values and the brain networking (Ciumasu 2010) between migrants and their families at home can lead to a switch from discussion to action. The migrants who follow the media from their home country are likely to be aware about the political, economic and social reality, and stay up to date with recent developments. Under these circumstances, they can see themselves as being informed and in a position to suggest the members in their families in the home country about how to vote. It is likely that migrants who follow the media on a regular basis will engage in the sharing of political views and will also aim to influence the voting options of other members of family.

We expect those migrants who do not follow the media in their home country to display none of these features and thus to follow the advice of family members when reaching voting decisions. These migrants are unlikely to stay connected with the social and political realities in the home country. This distancing is likely to make them more passive about elections and voting decisions to be more prone to be influenced by others. Consequently, we hypothesize that:

H2a: Migrants who follow media from their home country are likely to influence the families at home regarding voting.
H2b: Migrants who do not follow media from their home country are likely to be influenced by their families at home regarding voting.

Migrants often get involved in the politics of their home country. The external involvement is not always homogenous and socially untrammeled (Guarnizo, Portes, and Haller 2003, 1211), but there are many ways in which migrants mobilize and participate politically (Vertovec 2005; Gherghina 2016). The political and social remittances are avenues through which migrants get involved in the politics of their home countries and social activities (Levitt 2001; Goldring 2004; Burgess 2014). Along these lines, the migrants are considered 'transnational agents of social change' (Itzigsohn and Villacrés 2008; Levitt 2001). Those living in a complex transnational social field with multiple location might have different affiliations and understandings of home (Henry and Mohan 2003). Other works stress that different diaspora groups have different interest, connections and interactions with their home country (Weingrod and Levy 2004). The integration in the host country significantly reduces electoral engagement with the homeland, while deeper integration into

migrants` networks do not affect the electoral interest but increase the non-electoral engagement (Ahmadov and Sasse 2016).

Our key argument in this sub-section is that the migrants' level of political activism drives their desire to influence the voting behavior of their families. The logical mechanism unfolds as follows: the politically active individuals are usually well informed and interested about what happens in a particular setting (Dalton 2013; Quintelier and van Deth 2014). If that setting is their home country, migrants who possess these features can try to actively persuade others in their families to act the same way they do. Political activism makes migrants less likely to be influenced by the opinions of others. Moreover, the possibility to compare and contrast the political realities in their country of residence and of origin, provides migrants further motivation to share their political preferences with families. For example, in Moldova, the communist parties got their lowest share of votes in those localities with the highest percentage of emigrants to West European countries (Barsbai et al. 2017).

On the contrary, the migrants who are not politically engaged are likely to be subjected to influence from their families in the home countries for two reasons. First, they are unlikely to be interested by political developments in their home country. Their families can see them as a supplementary vote that can be shaped according to their political views. Second, migrants without much experience in political participation are unlikely to hold strong views over candidates. As such, advice received from relatives about how to vote can be taken on board without debate. Following these arguments, we hypothesize that:

H3a: Politically active migrants are likely to influence the families at home regarding voting.
H3b: Migrants who are not politically active are likely to be influenced by their families at home regarding voting.

The intention to return is driven by a series of macro-determinants such as difficulties of integration in the host country, emotional ties with to home country, the period of stay in the host country as only planned for a temporary period etc. Among these, the context in the home country is a relevant element for those who have a desire to return. This makes the idea of migrant return to be directly linked with a specific interest towards homeland politics (Demmers 2007). More precisely, those migrants who are open to the idea of

returning to their home country are likely to stay in touch with what happens there, to be familiar with the recent developments and also to be interested about the political future of their home country. The latter can be one reason for which the migrants who are willing to return wish to influence the way in which their families in the home countries vote.

Earlier research refers to migrants' influence on their home country prior to return. This focuses on political remittances (Piper 2009), voting and the 'grassroots transnationalism' (Lafleur 2013), which are considered as sources of change in national politics. The willingness to return can change the behavior of the migrant. The individual might become more focused and oriented towards the local context in the home country, while closing ties to the ones at home. The quest for a better political and economic climate at home might rise the interest for the elections and for the voting preferences of their families. Combined with other factors, this might lead to radical attitudes such as suspending the remittances for the family unless its members vote for a specific political party (Sheriff and Darboe 2017).

We can expect migrants who are not willing to return to their home country to care less about what happens in the elections organized there, to have a lower stake and to avoid getting too involved in those elections. Under these circumstances, they are more likely to be influenced in their voting by what their families in Romania tell them to do. In a way, their voting does not reflect a direct interest in the topic but can be seen more like a gesture of help provided to those at home. The latter live the daily reality of the home country and their preferences are grounded in those realities that migrants without the desire to return do not have. Following these arguments, we expect that:

H4a: Migrants who are willing to return to their home country are likely to influence the families at home regarding voting.

H4b: Migrants who are not willing to return to their home country are likely to be influenced by their families at home regarding voting.

The migrants' regular contacts with the homeland and the back and forth movements related to transnational mobility (Anghel 2008) have a consistent impact on what happens in the home country. The emergence and consolidation of transnational identities affect the social, economic and political attitudes of migrants. When the migrants maintain the ties to

their home country, they can develop an own understanding of the socio-political context. This understanding sometimes conflicts with the understanding of their families about the political realities in the home country and leads to debates and discussions. The active contact or link with the homeland can be explained through shared consciousness and solidarity with the community at home (Safran 1991; Gillespie et al. 1999).

Some migrants maintain a certain level of attachment with the home country and associate a symbolic importance to it (Lyons 2007). This attachment can be rooted in a large array of feelings and attitude. We argue that such an attachment can lead to a desire to influence the voting behavior of family members. The migrants who maintain close ties to their home country want to ensure that it has a good future. Since election outcomes are linked to the idea of future, migrants can actively engage in persuading their families how to vote. On the contrary, those migrants who do not maintain ties with the home country are less concerned about what happens with political decisions. To them, elections can be remotely relevant because they do not have a direct interest in the domestic developments (at social, political or economic levels). Consequently, we hypothesize that:

H5a: Migrants who maintain close ties to their home country are likely to influence the families at home regarding voting

H5b: Migrants who do not maintain close ties to their home country are likely to be influenced by their families at home regarding voting

In addition to these main effects, the analysis also includes several controls: the length of stay in the country of residence, corruption as a reason to migrate, the number of visits to the home country, gender and age. There are no clear theoretical expectations regarding the effects of these controls although some of them are fairly intuitive. For example, those migrants who spent little time in their country of residence are more likely to seek an influence on their family members at home since they have recently departed. Similarly, those who left because of corruption – which is an important element in many East European societies – are likely to strive for an influence, in the hope that elections will change something. We also test for other socio-demographics such as the medium of residence, education, and income, but since their effects are very small, we do not report them in the analysis.

Research design

To test these hypotheses, we use original data from a survey conducted in January 2018 among first-generation migrants from Romania. The dataset includes 1,839 respondents who were selected based on a maximum variation sampling. There is no official statistics about the number of Romanian migrants (only estimates, see below) and their profile. The characteristics of the entire population of Romanian migrants is unknown and, as such, a probability representative sample cannot be drawn. Non-probability sampling is often used to study populations where formal access to complete lists of members is not possible. The Romanian migrants fit in this category because the migration within the EU requires no formal cross-border controls or procedures of registration to authorities. In addition, there are also irregular migrants who are not included in any list; some of the respondents in our sample are irregular migrants.

The maximum variation sampling used for this survey aimed to increase the variation in terms of migrants' country of residence, experience with migration, age, education, gender and occupation. Some of these variables are includes in the analysis and Appendix 1 is illustrative for their variation. To provide an illustration of this variation, the age of respondents is distributed as follows: 18-30 years (21%), 31-40 years (34%), 41-50 years (31%) and over 50 years (14%). This age distribution of the respondents in our sample matches the OECD statistics according to which many Romanian migrants are between 25 and 55 years old; there are relatively few respondents who are either very young or very old (OECD 2016). Overall, the sample is quite close to the reality of Romanian migrants along the socio-demographic variables. Another example is education, which is not reported in this article. The vast majority of respondents in our sample are medium or highly educated, which correspondents to the official data (OECD 2016).

This sampling strategy confines the findings presented in this article to our respondents. However, due to the different profile of the migrants included in the analysis, they are informative and with important implications for the study of perceived discrimination. The respondents were neither pre-selected nor part of a pool of available individuals. The survey was conducted online and was distributed through messages on Facebook groups or discussion forums of Romanians living abroad, and by e-mails sent to representatives of Romanian associations and organizations. The use of social media to collect data has several advantages such as the examination of people's attitudes and

behaviors in a setting that is part of their everyday lives, and their availability. The main disadvantage can be the bias towards those who have Internet access. The fielding of the survey was preceded by a one-week pilot study. The latter was sent to 40 Romanian migrants to check response rates and if specific questions triggered their decision to quit the survey. After receiving the answers, we used random cognitive testing (respondents filled in their e-mail addresses when answering the survey and agreed to being contacted further) to see whether questions made sense to respondents; we had their e-mail addresses. The pilot survey revealed no particular problems. To increase the number of responses, several reminders were sent. This article reports only the total number of complete answers received to the questionnaire.

The Romanian migrants were selected as subject of this study due to two reasons: their high number in Europe and their high levels of political activity in the last several years. According to the OECD estimates, in 2016 there were more than 3.7 million Romanians living abroad (OECD 2016). This means that it is the fourth largest diaspora in Europe after the UK, Poland and Germany – all countries with much larger population. The OECD statistics indicates that most Romanian migrate to OECD countries in Europe (OECD 2016). Earlier studies indicate that the preferred destinations of migration for Romanians are Italy, Spain, UK, Germany, France and the United States (Gherghina 2016). This is reflected also in our sample of respondents where almost 70% of those who filled in the online survey live in one of these six countries. At the same time, more than 90% of our respondents come from OECD countries, which matches the statistics provided by the OECD in 2016. The second feature is the extensive involvement in the home country elections of the Romanian migrants. In 2009 and 2014 the votes and political action (protests) of the Romanian diaspora were important in deciding the winner of elections.

Variable measurement

This study compares and contrasts two groups of Romanian migrants: those who influence their families regarding the vote and those who are influenced by their families. The dependent variable is the degree of influence exercised by or upon these two groups. It is built on the answers to the following question: 'Thinking about the three most recent elections in Romania, which of the following statements reflects your behavior towards your family and friends in Romania?' The three elections are the 2012 and 2016 national

legislative elections, and the 2014 presidential elections; they were all explicitly stated in the questionnaire. For each of these the respondents could choose between 'I told them how to vote' or 'they told me how to vote'; they could have skipped any of the two as well if they do not apply. For the group of migrants influencing their families, we coded 1 every time respondents indicate that they 'told them how to vote' in any of the three elections. When a different option was chosen, we coded 0.

The degree of influence that migrants could have ranges from 0 (not at all in none of the elections) to 3 (influence in each of the three elections). We proceeded similarly with the group of migrants that were influenced and in their case the option 'they told me how to vote' was the point of reference. We are aware about the existence of a possible memory bias especially for the 2012 and 2014 elections since respondents may not remember how things happened in reality. We checked for a potential influence of their answers about 2016 on the other two elections and there is no evidence for this in our sample. We excluded from the analysis the respondents who did not have the right to vote in an election or who were not migrants at the time of that election.

The first independent variable of this study is the ownership of properties in the home country (H1). It is a cumulative index ranging with values between 0 (none) and 5 (five items), measured as the answer to the following question: 'Do you currently own any of the following in Romania: car, house, terrain, own business, savings account on your name? The respondents indicating any of these items were coded 1 (0 for not having it) and thus the index take a maximum value of 5. The consumption of media from the home country (H2) is also a cumulative index calculated from the answers to the question 'How often do you read / watch on average the Romanian newspapers (including online) and Romanian TV stations (including online).' Possible answers range from 'never' (coded 0) to 'daily or almost daily' (coded 5). By putting together the two items – newspapers and TV – we get an index with values ranging from 0 to 10.

Political participation (H3) is a cumulative index with values between 3 and 15 based on the answers to the following question: 'During your stay in the current country of residence, how often did you: vote in European elections, joined a protest or demonstration, signed a petition?' These items are meant to capture participation outside voting in national elections, which is already covered by the dependent variable. The available answers range from 'never' (coded 1) to 'always' (coded 5), the resulting index is the sum of these codes for

each item. The willingness to return to Romania (H4) is measured on an 11-point ordinal scale as the answer to the following question: 'How likely is it for you to return to live in Romania in the following two years?' The respondents were asked to choose between different values on a scale ranging between 0 (very low likelihood) and 10 (very high likelihood). The ties to the home country (H5) are measured as the answer to the question 'How often are you in touch with your family and friends in Romania?' The possible answers were recorded on a five-point ordinal scale between not at all (1) to very much (5).

Controls

The first control variable, the length of residency, is measured through the answers to the following question 'For how long do you live in this country (please mention the total period, not the one of interrupted stay)?' The possible answers were 'less than six months' (coded 1), 'six months to one year' (2), 'one to three years' (3), 'three to six years' (4) and 'more than six years' (5). Corruption as a reason to leave the country is operationalized through the answers provided to the question: 'To what extent the level of corruption in Romania influenced your decision to leave the country?' The answers range from not at all (1) to very much (5). For trips to the home country respondents were asked to recall how often they went to Romania in the last 12 months prior to the survey. The answers were coded on a five-point ordinal scale having as extremes 'never' (1) and 'more than 6 times' (5). Gender is a dichotomous variable (1 for women and 2 for men), while age is measured though the year of birth. For all the variables, the 'DK/NA' answers are treated as missing values and excluded from the analysis.

The empirical analysis section starts with a general discussion about the distribution of respondents in the two groups: migrants who influence and who are influenced. It is followed by inferential statistics that includes the results of ordered logistic regression. Before running the regression, we tested for multi-co-linearity and the results indicate no highly correlated predictors, i.e. the highest value for the non-parametric correlations is below 0.40. We ran non-parametric correlations because some of the variables are ordinal. The following section provides an overview of the Romanian diaspora and political participation, to better understand the context of this analysis.

Romanian migrants and political participation: An overview

Romanian migration is a large-scale process especially after the end of the Cold War. According to a migration report published by United Nations in 2018, around 3.4 million Romanians emigrated between 2007 and 2015, values that place the country on the second place regarding the emigration growth rate (United Nations 2018). The literature identifies several emigration phases: one during the communist era, a second between 1990 and 2002 due to the hardships of economic and political transition in Romania, a third after 2002 due to the visa-free entry to the EU (Vintila and Soare 2018) and a final one after the financial crisis in Europe. The political activity of the Romanian diaspora was low in intensity until the 2007 EU accession. The need for legislative adaptation to European provisions generated a favorable context, while the interest of the politicians for the voting power of diaspora increased. In 2008, external constituencies were created and the right of extra-territorial citizens to vote was used first in the 2009 presidential election. Moreover, the new electoral law of 2008 established four designated electoral seats in the lower Chamber of the Romanian Parliament and two in the Senate, while the new modifications represented and important move to recognize the political rights of Romanian diaspora.

Since then, the political interest of the diaspora was translated in higher participation rates and more intense civic engagement for democracy (Ioan 2019). For example, in 2012, for the parliamentary elections the overall turnout was close to 100%, from 61,014 registered voters, 60,878 voted (data provided by The Central Electoral Bureau 2012). But these numbers are far from being connected with the reality if we consider the larger number of Romanian migrants. Still, there is an increase compared with the 2008 parliamentary elections when only 20,500 migrants voted (data provided by the Central Electoral Bureau 2008).

The low number of registered voters might be determined by the required administrative procedures, the lack of alternative voting methods or the uncertain status of the migrants within the country of residence. Moreover, there are no reliable data regarding the number of Romanians living abroad and so, the decision makers tend to underestimate the real size. An immediate effect is represented by the low number of voting stations organized abroad that might reduce the interest for voting. Also, if we compare the voting turnout with the results registered in 2014 presidential elections, the national political context could have reduced the interest of diaspora. In 2012, the two major parties, PSD and

PNL run together as Social Liberal Union, a coalition between the left and right political wings.

In 2014, the national political context mobilized more Romanians. In the first round, 160,065 votes were counted, while in the second run the number was higher than double: 378,811 votes (Central Electoral Bureau 2014). The diaspora also voted predominantly for one candidate, contributing to the final result (Gherghina 2015). Moreover, the political mobilization was different and social media amplified the political activism. Also, the context was different: during the first run the pooling stations were insufficient to deal with large number of voters and many of them were left outside, fact that was perceived as a political trick planned by the running PM Victor Ponta`s team. The following protests were largely mediatized across Europe and social media was used as a mobilizing tool for convincing the diaspora to vote (Goudenhooft 2016). In 2016, the Romanian diaspora was not as involved and mobilized as in 2014. Only 106,038 expats voted in the parliamentary elections (data provided by the Central Electoral Bureau 2016). The right-wing political orientation and the shift towards newly emerged parties were translated into strong support for the Save Romania Union (28%). Although it was not sufficient to prevent the leftist from winning, this supported a significant opposition party in the Romanian Parliament.

Even if the Romanian diaspora is spread across many countries, the recent developments proved that it presents a certain mobilization capacity. Also, there is a willingness to participate in homeland politics and civic engagement for democracy is relatively strong. Moreover, the remittances are a crucial contribution to the national GDP and prove a strong engagement with the homeland, especially from financial perspective. On the other hand, strong transnational networks are formed (Potot 2008) and the Romanian diaspora has strong social capital and remittances (Markley 2011). Usually, the Romanian diaspora divide its time between the periods at home and the ones abroad, proving a close connection between the migrants and the relatives and friends at home. By this, the social links are maintained and there is a certain level of participation in the socio-economic life (Potot 2008).

**Explaining Influence on voting behavior**

This section aims to understand when Romanian migrants influence their families during elections and when those families influenced them. The distribution in Figure 1 illustrates

the percentages of migrants who belong to each of these two categories and the degree of influence. The bars reflect percentages from the total population of respondents. The categories on the vertical axis (influence in no election to three elections) are constructed according to the details provided in the research design section of the article. These are cumulated indices for the 2012, 2014 and 2016 elections in Romania. The distribution in Figure 1 indicates that the large majority of Romanian migrants who answered our survey neither influence nor are influenced when it comes to elections in their home country. Two thirds of the respondents do not seek to influence their families at home about elections. At the same time, more than three of our respondents are not influenced by their families. Among those respondents where persuasion is involved, there are more active migrants / those exerting influence than passive migrants / those being influenced.

The correlation of these two attitudes (influencer versus influenced) is 0.37, which indicates two things. First, not all the Romanian migrants are in one of these two categories but rather engaged in a dynamic act of persuasion in which they try to influence their families and their families try to influence them. Second, those who are active in influencing their families are also exposed to influence or the other way around. The positive sign of the correlation indicates that the more influence is sought by one of the sides (migrants or their families), the more influence will be pushed forward by the other side. These two empirical observations undermine to a certain extent the theoretical expectations according to which migrants fall into one of the two categories. Consequently, the hypothesized effects cannot be in opposite directions for these two categories of migrants since some of them are part of both.

Figure 1: The distribution of influence among respondents (%)
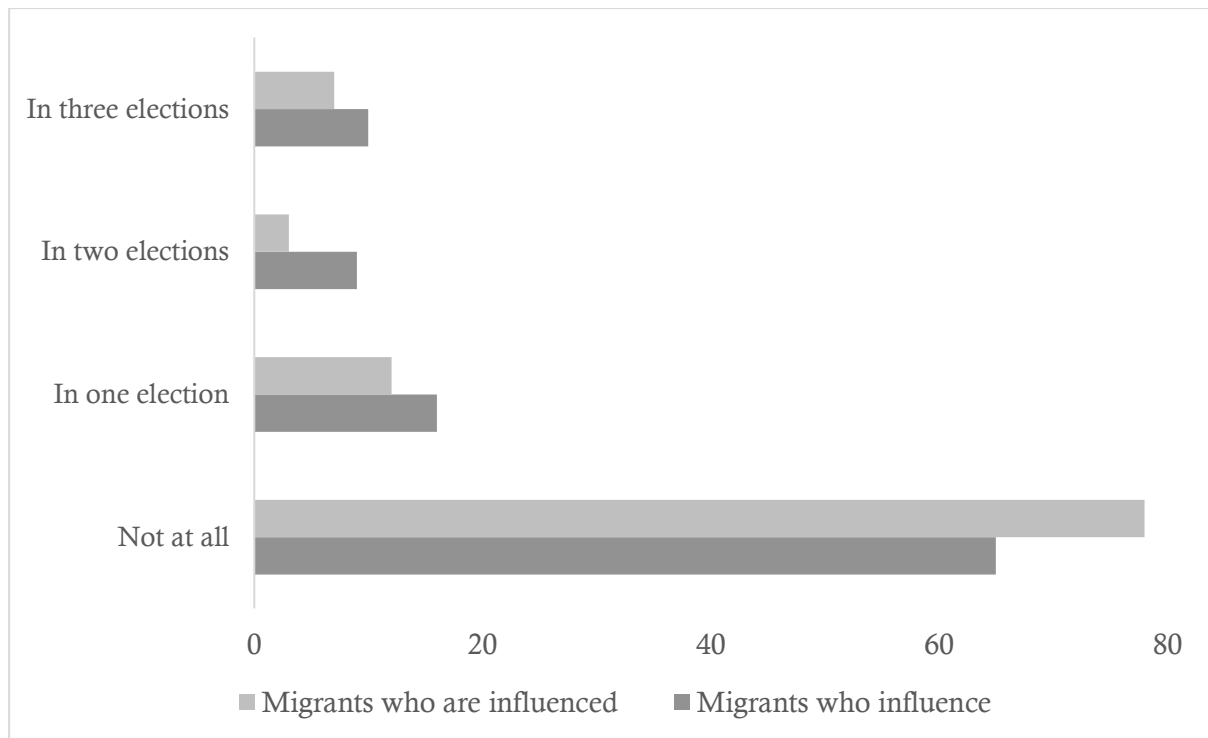
The multivariate statistical explains how some of this variation occurs. Table 1 presents the results of ordinal logistic regression for each of the two groups of migrants. There are two models, one without the control variables (Model 1) and the other one with those variables included (Model 2). The goodness-of-fit is slightly better for the statistical model referring to influencers with a somewhat higher value of the pseudo R^2 compared to the models of those who are influenced. We structure the presentation and interpretation of results as follows. We present first the hypothesized relationships for influencers (H1a-H5a) and then we reflect upon the findings for the hypotheses about the migrants who are influenced (H1b-H5b).

Starting with the influencers, the regression results indicate empirical support for all hypotheses. They confirm the theoretical expectations. While the effect size is fairly comparable across the five hypothesized effects, the strongest predictors are political participation (H3a) and owning properties (H1a). Almost all regression coefficients are statistically significant at the 0.01 level; the exception is ties to the home country, which is statistically significant at the 0.05 level. Respondents who own properties in Romania (H1a) are 1.13 times more likely to influence compared to those who do not own anything. Those who read Romanian newspapers and follow TV stations (H2a) on a regular basis are 1.10 times more likely to influence their families in the home country compared to their co-nationals who do not follow them at all. The migrants who are politically active (H3a) and

those who have stronger ties to the homeland (H4a) are also inclined to influence the voting behavior of their families. The weakest effect size is among those who are willing to return (H4a): they are 1.05 times more likely to influence the voting of their families compared to those migrants who are not willing to return. The size of the hypothesized effects is fairly similar in model 2, when controls are introduced. The noticeable difference between the two models is that the ties to home country lose statistical significance. One possible explanation for this result is a potential overlap with visits to the home country, which is one of the controls.

Table 1: The results of the ordinal logistic regression

	Influencers		Influenced	
	Model 1	Model 2	Model 1	Model 2
Owning properties	1.13**	1.11*	1.13**	1.16**
Media consumption	1.10**	1.09**	1.03	1.03
Political participation	1.15**	1.16**	1.04*	1.05*
Willingness to return	1.05**	1.05**	1.04*	1.03
Ties to home country	1.12*	1.07	1.15*	1.09
Length of stay		0.82**		0.85**
Corruption triggering migration		1.21**		1.07
Visits to the home country		1.01		1.03
Gender		1.48**		0.96
Age		1.01*		1.02**
N	1683	1588	1681	1586
Pseudo R^2	0.06	0.07	0.02	0.03
Log likelihood	-1627.79	-1512.49	-1198.05	-1138.7869

Note: The presented coefficients are odds-ratios. *$p<0.05$; **$p<0.01$.

Among the controls, those with a shorter period of stay in the country of residence are more likely to influence their families. One of the explanations behind this result is that Romanians who have arrived for a short period of time in a country of residence may still have their mind oriented to what happens in their home country. They are not integrated into the host society and they pay more attention to the Romanian society and thus their desire to influence voting of their families. Those respondents who identify corruption as an important reason for leaving the country are 1.21 times more likely than those without this

reason to tell their families how to vote. This can come from a desire to change things, hoping that the result of elections could alter the problems with corruption faced by their country. Men are roughly 1.5 times more likely to influence their families compared to the women migrants included in our sample. The visits to the home country and age do not appear to make an impact on influencers.

Let us now turn to the migrants who are influenced in their voting behavior by their families in the home country. Our theoretical expectation is that the effects for each of the five independent variables would go in the opposite direction than for influencers. However, the empirical results provide support for none of the hypotheses H1b-H5b. The statistical models tell a similar story to what observed for the migrants who influence. The strongest predictors for the migrants who are influenced by their families are ties to the home country and owning properties. The results indicate that the migrants who have strong ties to their home country (H5b) are 1.15 times more likely to be influenced by their families compared to the migrants who have no ties at all. One possible explanation for this result is that those migrants can follow the advice of family members on voting because they may consider these members as better rooted in the political reality. Although they have strong ties with the home country, these migrants can feel that they are not sufficiently informed and thus can be influenced. This explanation can be valid also for those migrants who own properties in Romania (H1b): our results show that they are 1.13 times more likely to be influenced compared to those who do not own anything.

The migrants who are politically active (H3b) and those who wish to return to Romania (H4b) have a positive but quite small effect on being influenced by the family. One possible explanation for the impact of political participation is that those migrants who vote participate in protest or sign petitions on a regular basis can do so on their own in the country of residence. However, when it comes to voting in the home country, they may resort to the opinions of family members, to have a clearer idea about how to vote. One possible explanation for H5b is that those migrants with greater willingness to return to Romania may be more in touch with their families in the home country and more susceptible to their influence. They may be more preoccupied by earning money n the country of residence and preparing their return rather than informing about elections. Consequently, the suggestions arrived from family members can be useful in shaping their voting behavior.

Finally, there is no effect of the media use (H2b) on the migrants' likelihood of being influenced by their families. We have noticed that for those who influence the use of media (H2a) from the home country has a positive effect: the more migrants watch, the more likely they are to influence their families. This is explained through a higher sense of political efficacy among migrants – the belief that they understand and influence politics – that can be translated into persuasive arguments oriented towards family members. In the case of migrants who are influenced, the media consumption plays no role. One possible explanation for this observation is the content of media and not the frequency. For example, some migrants use the media extensively but they do it only for entertainment purposes. These can be influenced by their families because they have limited information about elections. At the same time, some migrants use the media extensively but for information purposes and in their case the likelihood of being influenced is quite limited. If these two categories are fairly equal, they cancel a potential effect of media use.

Among the control variables, the length of stay has a strong and statistically significant effect on the likelihood of being influenced. This is similar to what observed for the migrants who influence. One possible explanation is that the migrants who spend longer periods of stay in the country of residence are more inclined to disregard the political competition in their home country. The other variables either have a very weak effect (age) or the effects are not statistically significant. Gender is a strong predictor for influencers – with male migrants seeking to influence – but his is not valid for the migrants who are influenced: male and female migrants are influenced to a similar extent by their families.

Conclusions

This article analyzed what determines migrants to influence or to be influenced by their families when casting a vote in elections organized in their home country. The analysis focuses on three elections in 2012, 2014 and 2016 and allows us to draw several conclusions. First, the Romanian migrants are not very engaged in the acts of persuasion when it comes to elections in their home country. Two-thirds have not sought to suggest someone in their family how to vote and more than three quarters declare that they have not been targeted by similar suggestions from their families. This level of inactivity is somewhat contrasting to the image portrayed by some politicians and media about the political activism in the Romanian diaspora. Second, the Romanian migrants are not clearly

divided between those who influence their families at home and those who are influenced by their families. Instead, the dynamic is more complex and involves bi-directional messages about elections and suggestions about how to vote. A relatively high number of migrants is in both categories, both as sender and receiver of messages related to elections.

Third, we understand that migrants are likely to influence their families at home when they have a direct interest about the result of the elections, when they are informed about what happens in the country and when they are politically active in general. Their activism translates into a desire to shape the result of elections in the home country especially if they do not spend a lot of time in the host country. Fourth, we could not predict very well who belongs to the group of migrants who are influenced by their families during elections. Only three determinants – out of which one is a control variable – helps explaining this outcome but none of them goes in the direction expected in theory. Instead, all effects are in the same direction as those from the other group and this contributed to the idea of complexity around the issue.

The implications of our analysis reach beyond the case study investigated here. It brings an important empirical contribution to the study of migrants' political participation by revealing that a few of them are actively involved in elections organized in their home country. Apart from the actual act of voting, they also seek to persuade their families to support specific candidates or political parties. Another empirical implication of our study is that the acts of persuasion are often bi-directional and migrants who seek to persuade their families at home are also the target of persuasion from their families. This dynamic process reveals the complexity of migrants' involvement in the national politics of their home country and brings arguments against those voices claiming that the diaspora is instrumentalized by particular political actors.

Further research could delve deeper into this bi-directional influence in terms of voting in national elections. Our quantitative analysis revealed some interesting patterns, but explanations can be better provided with the help of interviews conducted with migrants and families at home. The qualitative approach could help identifying the reasons for which this influence takes place and how it develops between elections. Also, future research could aim to understand the motivations between migrants' actions to influence their families at home. Our results show that there are quite a few factors that can determine such a behavior. And yet, none of them appears to have a dominant role. A closer

look at determinants may reveal a clearer picture, which could help building explanatory models applicable to a broad range of migrants.

List of references:

Ahmadov, A.K., and G. Sasse. 2016. Empowering to Engage with the Homeland: Do Migration Experience and Environment Foster Political Remittances? *Comparative Migration Studies* 4, no. 1: 1–25.

Aksoy, A., and K. Robins. 2000. Thinking Across Spaces. Transnational Television from Turkey. *European Journal of Cultural Studies* 3, no. 3: 343–365.

Anghel, R.G. 2008. Changing Statuses: Freedom of Movement, Locality and Transnationality of Irregular Romanian Migrants in Milan. *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies* 34, no. 5: 787–802.

Arrow, K.J. 1972. Gifts and Exchanges. *Philosophy & Public Affairs* 1, no. 4: 343–362.

Barsbai, T., H. Rapoport, A. Steinmayr, and C. Trebesch. 2017. The Effect of Labor Migration on the Diffusion of Democracy: Evidence from a Former Soviet Republic. *American Economic Journal: Applied Economics* 9, no. 3: 36–69.

Burgess, K. 2014. Unpacking the Diaspora Channel in New Democracies: When Do Migrants Act Politically Back Home? *Studies in Comparative International Development* 49, no. 1: 13–43.

Chaudhary, A. 2016. *Transnational Politics and Immigrant Political Participation in Europe*. IMI Working Papers Series. Oxford.

Ciumasu, I. 2010. Turning Brain Drain into Brain Networking. *Science and Public Policy* 37, no. 2: 135–146.

Cohen, R. 1997. *Global Diasporas: An Introduction*. London: UCL Press.

Dalton, R.J. 2013. *Citizen Politics. Public Opinion and Political Parties in Advanced Industrial Democracies*. 6th ed. Thousand Oaks: CQ Press.

Demmers, J. 2007. New Wars and Diasporas: Suggestions for Research and Policy. *Journal of Peace, Conflict and Development* 11: 1–26.

Ekwo, U. 2011. Diaspora Media and Citizen Engagement in the Digital Age: Analyzing the Impact of Transnational Journalism on Democratization. In *Diaspora Strategies [Conference]: Encouragement, Evolution, and Engagement*, 9–11. Dublin: The Clinton Institute of American Studies.

Gherghina, S. 2015. The Romanian Presidential Election, November 2014. *Electoral Studies* 38: 109–114.

———. 2016. Making Voices Count: The Political Participation of Romanian Immigrants in Western Europe. *East European Politics* 32, no. 2: 258–276.

Gherghina, S., and A. Plopeanu. 2020. Who Wishes to Return? Ties to Home Country among the Romanian Migrants. *Nationalities Papers* no. online first.

Gherghina, S., and H.-K. Tseng. 2016. Voting Home or Abroad? Comparing Migrants' Electoral Participation in Countries of Origin and of Residence. *Nationalities Papers* 44, no. 3: 456–472.

Gillespie, K., L. Riddle, E. Sayre, and D. Sturges. 1999. Diaspora Interest in Homeland Investment. *Journal of International Business Studies* 30, no. 3: 623–634.

Goldring, L. 2004. Family and Collective Remittances to Mexico: A Multi-Dimensional Typology. *Development and Change* 35, no. 4: 799–840.

Goudenhooft, G. 2016. *Going Back Home through One`s Language: Romanian Diaspora in Germany*. Baden-Baden: Nomos Verlagsgesellschaft.

Guarnizo, L., A. Portes, and W. Haller. 2003. Assimilation and Transnationalism: Determinants of Transnational Political Action among Contemporary Migrants. *American Journal of Sociology* 108, no. 6: 1211–1248.

Henry, L., and G. Mohan. 2003. Making Homes: The Ghanaian Diaspora, Institutions and Development. *Journal of International Development* 15, no. 5: 611–622.

Hudson, R. 2005. Ethical Investing: Ethical Investors and Managers. *Business Ethics Quarterly* 15, no. 4: 641–657.

Ioan, A. 2019. *Civic Engagement for Democracy From Abroad: Hungarian, Polish and Romanian Diasporas*. Policy Paper. Washington.

Itzigsohn, J., and D. Villacrés. 2008. Migrant Political Transnationalism and the Practice of Democracy: Dominican External Voting Rights and Salvadoran Home Town Associations. *Ethnic and Racial Studies* 31, no. 4: 664–686.

Jaulin, T. 2016. Geographies of External Voting: The Tunisian Elections Abroad since the 2011 Uprising. *Comparative Migration Studies* 4, no. 1: 14.

Kilduff, M., and K. Corley. 1999. The Diaspora Effect: The Influence of Exiles on Their Cultures of Origin. *Management* 2, no. 1: 1–12.

Koinova, M. 2018. Diaspora Mobilisation for Conflict and Post-Conflict Reconstruction: Contextual and Comparative Dimensions. *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies* 44, no. 8: 1251–1269.

Kuah-Pearce, K. E., and A.P. Davidson, eds. 2008. *At Home in the Chinese Diaspora: Memories, Identities and Belongings*. Houndmills: Palgrave Macmillan.

Lafleur, J.-M. 2013. *Transnational Politics and the State: The External Voting Rights of Diasporas*. New York: Routledge.

Lafleur, J.-M., and M. Sánchez-Domínguez. 2015. The Political Choices of Emigrants Voting in Home Country Elections: A Socio-Political Analysis of the Electoral Behaviour of Bolivian External Voters. *Migration Studies* 3, no. 2: 155–181.

Levitt, P. 2001. *The Transnational Villagers*. Berkeley: University of California Press.

Liang, N., and S. Weisbenner. 2002. *Investor Behavior and the Purchase of Company Stock in 401(k) Plans - The Importance of Plan Design*. *National Bureau of Economic Research Working Paper Series*. Vol. 9131.

Lyons, T. 2007. Conflict-Generated Diasporas and Transnational Politics in Ethiopia. *Conflict, Security & Development* 7, no. 4: 529–549.

Lyons, T., and P. Mandaville. 2010. Think Locally, Act Globally: Toward a Transnational Comparative Politics. *International Political Sociology* 4, no. 2: 124–141.

Markley, E. 2011. Social Remittances and Social Capital Values and Practices of Transnational Social Space. *Quality of Life* 22: 365–378.

Newland, K. 2010. *Voice After Exit: Diaspora Advocacy*. Chicago: Migration Policy Institutte.

Nikolova, M., M. Roman, and K.F. Zimmermann. 2017. Left behind but Doing Good? Civic Engagement in Two Post-Socialist Countries. *Journal of Comparative Economics* 45, no. 3: 658–684.

OECD. 2016. Database on Immigrants in OECD and Non-OECD Countries (DIOC). http://www.oecd.org/els/mig/dioc.htm.

Piper, N. 2009. Temporary Migration and Political Remittances: The Role of Organisational Networks in the Transnationalisation of Human Rights. *European Journal of East Asian Studies* 8, no. 2: 215–243.

Potot, S. 2008. Romanian Migration Movements: In *International Migration in Europe*, ed. C. Bonifazi, M. Okólski, J. Schoorl, and P. Simon, 87–104. Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press.

Quintelier, E., and J.W. van Deth. 2014. Supporting Democracy: Political Participation and Political Attitudes. *Political Studies* 62, no. 1: 153–171.

Safran, W. 1991. Diasporas in Modern Societies: Myths of Homeland and Return. *Diaspora: A*

Journal of Transnational Studies 1, no. 1: 83–99.

Sheriff, K., and M. Darboe. 2017. The Gambia's Electoral Earthquake. *Journal of Democracy* 28, no. 2: 147–156.

Shi, Y. 2005. Identity Construction of the Chinese Diaspora, Ethnic Media Use, Community Formation, and the Possibility of Social Activism. *Continuum* 19, no. 1: 55–72.

United Nations. 2018. *World Migration Report 2018*. Grand-Saconnex.

Vertovec, S. 2005. *The Political Importance of Diasporas*. Migration Fundamentals Series. Oxford.

Vintila, C.D., and S. Soare. 2018. *Report on Political Participation of Mobile EU Citizens: Romania*. Florence.

Walker, N. 2016. The Place of Territory in Citizenship. In *The Oxford Handbook of Citizenship*, ed. A. Shachar, R. Bauboec, I. Bloemraad, and M. Vink, 612–649. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Weingrod, A., and A. Levy. 2004. *Homelands and Diasporas: Holy Lands and Other Places*. Ed. Alex Weingrod and André Levy. Stanford: Stanford University Press.

Williams, N. 2017. Diaspora Communities and Economic Impact in the Balkans. Leeds University Business School.

Appendix 1: Descriptive statistics of the variables included in the analysis

	Mean	Std. dev.	Min.	Max.	N
Migrants who influence	0.63	0.99	0	3	1778
Migrants who are influenced	0.36	0.80	0	3	1776
Owning properties	1.15	1.26	0	5	1839
Media consumption	5.36	3.42	0	10	1821
Political participation	6.20	3.17	3	15	1823
Willingness to return	2.21	2.95	0	10	1765
Ties to home country	3.39	0.99	1	5	1836
Length of stay	4.22	1.08	1	5	1839
Corruption triggering migration	4.25	1.17	1	5	1785
Visits to the home country	2.14	0.90	1	5	1835
Gender	1.44	0.50	1	2	1828
Age (year of birth)	1979	11	1937	1999	1785