The two faces of transnational citizenship

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Abstract
This article situates the findings of three of my multi-sited ethnographic studies of political transnationalism on both sides of the US-Mexican border within a wider discourse positing a tension between dual loyalty and national identity formation. My studies contradict nationalist representations of Mexican migrants as culturally isolated and politically disengaged threats to US civic republicanism. They also challenge certain post-nationalist expectations that global media flows will impede migrants’ loyalty to their nation of settlement. My studies show: (a) that social and political capital accumulated in one country can be transferred to another over time; (b) that transnational electoral coalitions are forged by the interplay of transnational candidates, state-centered actors, non-migrating activists in the sending locales, and actors situated elsewhere on both sides of the border who become more than passive spectators of transnational politics; and (c) that key leaders of a Federation of Zacatecan Hometown Associations in Southern California have become active at all levels of US politics and society. The article extensively illustrates this second face of transnational citizenship – political engagement in the receiving context.

Keywords: Political transnationalism; citizenship; multi-positional subjects; dual loyalty; double ambivalence.

In our current epoch of ever increasing transnational interconnectivity and heightened global mobility, what is the future of national identity formation and engaged citizenship? How does the growing prevalence of dual citizenship arrangements inform the discourse on patriotism and its futures? Some of the most influential theoretical writings addressing questions of the future of national identity formation under globalizing conditions have posited a world in which the transnational or post-national identities assumed by migrants to advanced post-industrial societies are diminishing the capacity of the latter to
assimilate the former, both culturally and politically (see for example Appadurai 1996; Anderson 1998; and Huntington 2004a; 2004b). These writings have often been deployed at an abstract, if not polemical, level disconnected from empirical research into the actual political practices of international migrants and their experiences with dual citizenship.

In the face of this ungrounded theoretical speculation on immigrant non-assimilation, a growing number of anthropological and sociological case studies of global migration have begun to document the political practices of dual citizens. This approach has been both ethnographically grounded and grassroots agency-oriented. Important studies in this literature have focused on the politics of translocal community development (Goldring 1998; R. Smith 1998; Moctezuma 2003; M.P. Smith 2003), the politics of transnational voting rights and dual citizenship (Guarnizo 1998; Martinez Saldana 2003), and the extraterritorial extension of homeland political parties (Levitt 2001; Østergaard-Nielsen 2003). Yet, ironically, because these studies have been concerned largely with the political (re)engagement of migrants with their sending states and societies, which might be called the first face of transnational citizenship, their very documentation of homeland, home-state, and home-town political engagement by migrants can be too readily (mis)read as providing additional grist for the mill of arguments predicting the decline of affiliation by immigrants with their receiving nation-states. For this reason it is necessary to address the discourse on dual-loyalty and national identity formation by focusing our analytical lens more precisely on the second face of transnational citizenship – migrant political practices in the receiving context.

My aim in the present article is to cast greater light on this second face of transnational political engagement while identifying the analytical and methodological tools needed to decipher the complex, multi-scalar interactions that I have found to constitute Mexican migrants’ political practices and modes of identity formation. The article draws upon theoretical and methodological reflections I have developed over the past five years while conducting three separate, but interrelated, ethnographic research projects that seek to link micro-level observations and interview data to larger questions of US-Mexican political transnationalism. As these studies developed in real time, I found it necessary to ever increasingly expand the space of community-based ethnography to encompass the multiple spaces across borders in which my ethnographic subjects are orchestrating their transnational lives. I learnt from this research experience that the leading discussions of political identity formation and loyalty in the age of globalization are excessively nation-state centric, focusing, as they do, almost exclusively on one or the other nation-state poles of
what leading transnational researchers (e.g., Guarnizo 1998; Levitt and Glick Schiller 2004) have correctly conceptualized as transnational social formations.

In this article I deploy the following writing strategy. I first summarize the arguments of Samuel Huntington and Arjun Appadurai, two leading writers on dual loyalty and identity formation in an age of global migration, to highlight their one-sided character. I next show how my first two field research projects on transnational community development and electoral politics, respectively, have helped me to develop the methodological and analytical tools needed to comprehend the multifaceted simultaneity of transnational political lives. I then draw extensively on ethnographic data from my most recent bi-national study to move the field of migrant transnationalism forward by pushing its focus into the under-explored domain of US political life.

The cultural politics of identity and citizenship

Arguments advanced in the work of political scientist Samuel Huntington and anthropologist Arjun Appadurai constitute useful starting points for assessing the second face of transnational citizenship. Huntington is an unapologetic nationalist, Appadurai, a celebratory ‘post-nationalist’. The former decries what he calls a growing trend towards the non-assimilation of US immigrants, particularly migrants from Mexico. The latter celebrates what he posits as a similar trend, underlining the putatively liberating experience of ‘post-nationalism’ by third-world migrants. Let us consider the core premises of each of their arguments, and their validity, in turn.

In the most controversial part of his recent book *Who Are We?* (2004b), derived from his polemical essay ‘The Hispanic Challenge’ (2004a), Huntington represents Mexican migration as a special case of non-assimilation to the American Creed, a series of civic virtues derived, in his view, from America’s Anglo-Protestant cultural heritage. The story arc of *Who Are We?* is punctuated by numerous lists of causes and effects of the decline of American national identity, ranging from the perverse effects of the cosmopolitan identities and globalizing vision promoted by American elite groups to the ‘other-nationalism’ exhibited by a group of Mexican migrants who waved Mexican flags while watching a Gold Cup soccer match between the US and Mexico in Los Angeles in 1998 (2004b, p. 5).

In both works Huntington (2004a, pp. 33–36; 2004b, pp. 221–230) posits a list of six attributes of what he calls ‘the Mexican problem’ of cultural isolation and non-assimilation. These are: 1) the contiguity of the 2000 mile land border between Mexico and the US; 2) the spatial
concentration of Mexican migrants in the Southwest, particularly Southern California; 3) the large scale of Mexican migration; 4) a ‘persistent’ Mexican migration uninterrupted by war, economic change, or restrictive legislation; 5) their ‘historical presence’, a shorthand marker for his unsupported claim that today’s Mexican migrants ‘can and do make ... a historical claim to American territory’ in the Southwest because of their deep-seated memories of the US annexation of this region following the Mexican-American War (2004b, p. 229); and 6) the ‘illegality’ of contemporary Mexican migrants.

Out of these attributes Huntington constructs a narrative in which Mexican migration poses unique challenges to US national identity. He claims that culturally, America is under siege by a massive ‘illegal demographic invasion’ by Mexicans comparable to a military invasion (2004b, p. 318). He calls upon his fellow Americans to react against the ‘cultural bifurcation’ posed by this ‘invasion’ with vigour. He even claims that the bilingualism and biculturalism of Mexican immigrants, which many see as signs of successful integration into a multicultural society, are themselves indicators of the retention of the Spanish language across immigrant generations and thus barriers to socialization into the Anglo-Protestant creed. The bedrock creed, in turn, is defined in terms of mastery of the English language, Protestant religiosity, and commitment to the rule of law and to dissenting Protestant values of ‘individualism and the work ethic’. (2004b, pp. 62–69)

Huntington is critical of contemporary immigrants in general, whom he labels ‘ampersands’, who maintain ‘dual loyalties and dual citizenships’. (2004b, pp. 204–213) But he reserves his special wrath for Mexicans. He constructs today’s Mexican migrants as unitary, undifferentiated subjects who have failed to assimilate because of ‘their’ low educational and economic ‘activity’, their ‘creeping bilingualism’ (2004b, p. 319), and their spatial concentration and cultural isolation in Southwestern and Southern California ethnic enclaves that he views, again without evidence, as constituting endogenous cultural communities. (see 2004b, pp. 230–247)

Many of the key assumptions on which Huntington’s thesis rests have been vigorously contested by social scientists and public intellectuals (see, e.g., Kakutani 2004; Massey 2004; Menand 2004; Wolfe 2004). These works and other studies documented in my forthcoming book (Smith and Bakker 2008) challenge his assumptions concerning the narrow geographic location, class composition, non-exclusion, lack of a work ethic, and reasons for the ‘illegality’ of Mexican migrants. As for Huntington’s fear concerning dual loyalty and dual citizenship, abundant research on the relationship between transnationalism and assimilation in migration studies makes clear
that the two are not mutually contradictory social processes (See Bakker and Smith 2003; Guarnizo, Portes, and Haller 2003; M.P. Smith, 2003; Levitt and Glick Schiller 2004, M.P. Smith 2005a and b).

If Samuel Huntington’s voice from the nationalist right were the only voice predicting the declining significance of US national identity formation in an increasingly transnational world, perhaps there would be less need to confront the discourse on bifurcated loyalties with additional empirical evidence. But other voices, inflected with a post-colonial sensibility, have also entered this debate. Perhaps the most prominent of these is Arjun Appadurai. In his book Modernity at Large, particularly in the chapter ‘Patriotism and its Futures’, Appadurai argues that because of their continuing connections to their homelands by means of transnational media images produced by cultural voices in their countries of origin, international migrants to the US and other core countries are unlikely to acquire a sense of loyalty to their new abode.

Appadurai uses the concept ‘trans-locality’ as part of this larger argument, conceiving it as a potentially constitutive element of ‘locality’, understood as the grounded ‘neighbourhood’ sites of traditional ethnographic inquiry (1996, p. 192). For Appadurai, trans-localities are ‘virtual’ neighbourhoods that emerge at the articulation of media and mobility. They are ‘imagined’ communities of ethno-national identity formation that ‘implode’ as non-corporeal (mediated) forms of cultural agency into real (i.e., corporeal) immigrant ethnic enclaves, becoming agents in the production of new felt sense of locality un-moored from the pull of the nation-state in which the real enclaves are located.

Appadurai interchangeably uses expressions such as ‘virtual neighborhoods’, ‘displaced public spheres’, ‘counter-hegemonic imagined world’s, and ‘translocal communities’, investing these imaginings of identity with the capacity to generate new ‘postnational identities’ and ‘diasporic communities’ that have become freed from ‘the linguistic imaginary of the nation state (1996, p.166)’. His understanding of post-nationalism tends to apply only to the waning power of ‘receiving’ states like the US to incorporate migrants into loyalty to the host society. He characterizes translocal communities in the US as being ‘doubly loyal to their nations of origin and thus ambivalent about their loyalties to America’ (1996, p. 172, emphasis added).

Appadurai’s work focuses on the role of global mass media in shaping identities. He presents a curiously one-way representation of media flows rather than considering the actual political practices of global migrants. Huntington ignores empirical evidence on the political participation of Mexican migrants altogether, concocting his argument for their supposed lack of patriotism and civic engagement by offering a handful of anecdotes and stacking abstract
assumption after assumption into a dubious house of cards. Key findings of my current multi-sited fieldwork on political transnationalism on both sides of the US–Mexican border directly contradict both Appadurai’s claims of double loyalty to homelands and Huntington’s assertion of non-engagement by Mexican migrants in the political life of their adopted country.

Thinking through transnational citizenship

For the last five years I have been engaged in three separate, yet interrelated, research projects that are slowly beginning to reveal the complex emergence of Mexican migrants as cross-border political subjects and transnational citizens. The first of these ethnographic projects has studied the politics of transnational community development linking migrants from the city of Napa, California to their Mexican village of El Timbinal, Guanajuato. One key finding of this study is that successful engagement by migrants in community politics in their village of origin actually increased their sense of political efficacy and prompted their active involvement in urban politics in Napa (M.P. Smith 2003) The protagonist of this story, Angel Calderon, and his network of Mexican migrants have become actively networked into local political life at the US pole of the ‘translocality’ of Napa-El Timbinal (For a view of this cross-border space differing from Appadurai’s, see M.P. Smith 2001, 2003, 2005a,b and c).

How has this other face of transnational politics come about? Initially, Angel Calderon and his fellow Timbinalenses were involved in self-organized community improvement projects in El Timbinal like rebuilding the town plaza and improving the local school facilities. In the mid-1990s they were persuaded to join a ‘public-private’ partnership with state officials from Guanajuato in which the migrants financed the building of a textile factory (maquiladora) in their hometown. Over time, these wider connections, forged during the gubernatorial administration of Vicente Fox in Guanajuato, gave the migrants access to local political circles in Napa. Using his transnational connections, Angel coordinated several cultural events including an exhibition of Guanajuato art treasures at the Napa Valley Museum in early 2000, accompanied by performances by musicians and appearances by political elites from Guanajuato, including the state’s new governor. Local politicians and community leaders from Napa also participated in the events, which received extensive favourable local press coverage. These events gave Angel and his migrant network legitimacy in Napa that they had previously lacked. Members of the network then began to take full advantage of their newly acquired access and legitimacy. They began to interact with leaders of political
and civic affairs in Napa, political candidates in local elections, and local activists from both major US parties.

In a recent local election in Napa the migrants joined in a campaign to pass a local ballot initiative to rezone donated farmland in Napa County to enable the County to build badly needed migrant farm-worker housing. The initiative passed with 70 per cent support. Through this activity, and numerous other forms of political engagement on the US side of the border that I detail elsewhere (M.P. Smith 2003), Angel Calderon has become positioned to play an ongoing role in ethnic and issue oriented politics in Napa and in California. Angel and his fellow Timbinalenses have become far more active citizens of local political life in California and also in Mexico than nationalists like Huntington or post-nationalists like Apparudai could imagine.

Through this research experience I learnt that when studying translocal politics, to understand the full dynamics of transnational political interconnectivity it was necessary to go beyond the local to local connections that constitute translocality, by considering the practices of state-centred actors in Guanajuato and national political figures like Vicente Fox, who sought to shape the trans-local politics I was studying. Accordingly, I fully agree with the epistemological view recently expressed by Peggy Levitt (2004, p. 3) that:

It is critical to examine how [transnational] connections are integrated into vertical and horizontal systems of connection that cross borders. Rather than privileging one level [e.g. the local] over another, a transnational perspective holds these sites equally and simultaneously in conversation with each other and tries to grapple with the tension between them.

My second study tries to do precisely this: to map the complex cartography of the vertical and horizontal systems of connection entailed in the successful transnational electoral coalition politics in Jerez, Zacatecas of a California tomato grower named Andrés Bermúdez, who has come to be known throughout the world as the “Tomato King.” (Bakker and Smith 2003; Smith and Bakker, 2005; M.P. Smith 2005a; 2005b) The main purpose of this second study has been to explain the representation of ‘the migrant’ as a political subject in transnational electoral campaigns. The study is situated in a much wider array of places in California and in Zacatecas than was my study of Napa-El Timbinal. To make sense of how a transnational electoral coalition connects diverse venues of power on both sides of the border, both the number of places and types of actors interviewed were significantly expanded.

Bermúdez ‘temporarily sutured’ (on this process see Mouffe 1988; M.P. Smith 2001) a multidimensional coalition in the course of two
electoral campaigns, the second of which was necessary because his initial electoral victory in 2001 was nullified by a Federal electoral court on the basis of non-residency. The networks that Bermúdez brought together in these campaigns span local, regional, and transnational geographic scales. The key players had different class experiences, ideological orientations, and subject positions. To win the first election Bermúdez allied himself with local and regional actors in Zacatecas who had been working, often within the left-of-centre PRD party, to incorporate migrants into a social movement to democratize the Mexican state by bringing migrants ‘back in’. These included militants eventually mobilizing a populist, cross-party ‘Bermudista’ faction in Jerez and public intellectuals from the Universidad Autónoma de Zacatecas, who both study and participate in the transnationalization of Zacatecan politics. One of these scholar-activists produced the major campaign brochure successfully used by Bermúdez in his second campaign.

Bermúdez also sought allies in the US among members of migrant HTAs from Zacatecas active in Southern California. In fact, the only debate of the major candidates for mayor of Jerez during the first campaign was held in Montebello, California, a suburb of Los Angeles, under the auspices of the Federation of Zacatecan Hometown Associations of Southern California (hereafter FCZSC). Bermúdez also sought support and contributions from prosperous transnational Mexican migrants from other Mexican states in other US states and localities like Texas and Chicago, who wished to open up political spaces for migrants in other parts of the Mexican political system. Following the reversal of his first electoral victory by the courts, Bermúdez also forged an alliance with the Los Angeles based Frente Cívico Zacatecano [FCZ], a political offshoot of the non-profit Zacatecan Federation. This alliance successfully won state-level constitutional reforms that recognized ‘bi-national residency’ and facilitated Bermúdez’s and other candidacies by US migrants in the state.

Much of the Tomato King’s political activity, even that undertaken in the United States, can be read as oriented towards the Mexican pole of the transnational political arena. The extended interviews we carried out with him made clear, however, that he envisioned the wider set of political networks and relations he was ensconced in as focused equally on both sides of the US–Mexican border. For example, even after he had taken office in Jerez, Bermúdez told us of his efforts to get other transnational migrant activists to intensify their activities. Characterizing the Mexican diaspora as ‘the largest mass that doesn’t have any representation – neither in the United States, nor here’, Bermúdez railed that it was ‘time for them to give us some on both sides, on both sides of the border, someone to represent
us'. While concerned about the need to make the struggles of other return migrant politicians ‘more intense’ on the Mexican side, Bermúdez expressed confidence that he and his allies in the Frente Cívico Zacatecano in Los Angeles were engaged in the struggle for migrant recognition and representation in the United States as well (Interview with Andrés Bermúdez, August 2005).

In the following section I shall address the political practices of the leaders of the FCZSC and FCZ, particularly their activities in US politics. First let me discuss how the research experience of my first two studies has informed my third ethnographic project. A key aspect of all three studies has been a phenomenological quest to discern the different ways by which Mexican migrants understand, experience, and try to act upon their feelings and beliefs about ‘dual loyalty’, being ‘here and there’, and becoming, or not becoming, ‘transnational citizens’. For example, my work with Matt Bakker on Bermúdez involved extended ethnographic interviews with Bermúdez over a three-year period that revealed far more ambivalence concerning his hopes, fears, and dreams than the public persona we observed on the campaign trail. Between the two elections, when Bermúdez had returned to Winters, California to continue running his businesses, and before the electoral rules had been changed, he discussed at length what might happen if he were to give up his political persona and focus instead on getting migrants to stop sending remittances back to Mexico and channel their resources instead into improving Mexican-American neighbourhoods and educational opportunities in California. In all our interviews, he regularly distinguished between ‘Andrés Bermúdez’s’ personal views and the constructed mythological narrative of the ‘Tomato King’. After serving a year in office in Jerez, Bermúdez began to express this contradictory sense of selfhood and bi-national identity publicly. For example, he delivered the public address on the anniversary of his inauguration in a white dress suit instead of his usual black cowboy hat and ranchero outfit. He announced that he might well return to California after his term is up, where he could still benefit his native community without having to deal directly with local party politics and a political culture he has consistently represented as corrupt and lacking in transparency (Rodriguez 2005). Not unlike Bermúdez, the protagonist of my earlier story, Angel Calderon, has also enunciated a ‘Plan B’, if things don’t work out to his satisfaction in Guanajuato and El Timbinal. The theme of his imagined political agenda in Napa and California is ethnic empowerment of Mexican migrants, particularly farm workers, in the state that depends so much on their labour. As we have seen, Angel has already begun to act on the basis of this hoped for political agenda in modes of political engagement that underline the simultaneity of transnational life.
Thinking through these two instances of transnational politics theoretically, I have come to the conclusion that when acting political subjects are emplaced both ‘here’ and ‘there’ in transnational networks and projects, the identities they experience and facets of selfhood they orchestrate, depend considerably on the contingencies of time and circumstances. Identities and social actions change over time, as human agents interpret timing and circumstances differently in the multiple venues and political spaces in which they are capable of acting. Transnational migrants, like everyone else, occupy multiple social locations, and are subject to the inner tensions and conflicts derived from their multi-positionality. Their lived experience engenders capacities and repertoires for social practice in geographic and social locations that cross borders, but how they will act, and when, are products of historical contingency.

The second face of transnational citizenship: Politics in the receiving context

This theoretical point is vividly illustrated in several exchanges drawn from my third field research project on the political practices of the leaders of the FCZSC and its political offshoots on both sides of the border. Consider the following example. As part of this research, on 25 June, 2004, Matt Bakker and I interviewed the migrant leader Manuel de la Cruz, a past President of the FCZSC, who was named a migrant candidate for the Zacatecan Congress by the PRD following the recent electoral reforms. The interview took place in the city of Zacatecas a week before he was elected the first migrant deputy to the Congress. Uncertain about victory, de la Cruz enunciated his own Plan B:

Manuel de la Cruz: Yeah, because the next step, in the worst case scenario, if in the worst of all cases, Manuel de la Cruz – pay attention here – weren’t to make it to the Congress – you haven’t asked me that, but maybe you have it written down there to ask me, “what’s going to happen with Manuel de la Cruz if he doesn’t make it?” (laughs). . . So, I still have my doubts, I will always have that doubt. . . And if that were to happen . . . I have a plan B – agreed upon with the organization . . . I am a member of the OME, of the IME, of a number of organizations across the whole US. And of a number of Chambers of Commerce, of business people, and they’ve said to me, “Come on back already, Manuel, it’s not worth continuing to fight. They don’t want us migrants.” So, I want to continue to struggle on until the last step.

Matt Bakker: So, then, has the OME given up the battle for Mexico already and dedicated itself to issues facing Mexican immigrants in the US, or what?
Manuel de la Cruz: Organización de Mexicanos en el Extranjero, no. Today it’s part of [pause] many of them are currently members of the PRI. But they’re still working and I am the treasurer of the OME ... and they are waiting, they’re in standby, just waiting to see what happens. Because our plan B, of us migrants in the US, if we don’t get this, if they don’t provide us this opening in Mexico. ... I would be going back to the United States where we already have a Chamber of Commerce and Zacatecan business people to provide the resources and for us to build alliances with the young people. Taking them to the best universities in the US and look for political positions for them. So that Mexicans can take their position ... [in] the United States, because we will have seen that Mexico doesn’t believe in its migrants, and we will focus ourselves 100 per cent on the United States. That’s the other step.

A central purpose of this third research project is to move the study of Mexican hometown associations back across the border, in order to shed light on the second face of transnational citizenship. The FCZSC project is the most complex of the three. It requires envisioning the multi-layered connections linking sites and actors at different spatial scales, thereby also linking individual and group-based local, regional, and national political agendas within and across borders. Our net has had to be cast ever wider socio-spatially to comprehend the scope of the FCZSC and the political practices and multi-layered identities of its key leaders. We have found that in some instances the effective engagement of the leaders of the FCZSC in state and local politics in Zacatecas has had spillover effects, contributing to their active political engagement in many aspects of US political life. These have included urban electoral politics in Los Angeles and other cities in Southern California; ethnic and issue-oriented state politics in Sacramento; and even national congressional and presidential politics in the United States. In other instances (e.g., an HTA leader who is a trade union activist in L.A. and one of the few female FCZSC leaders) participation in grassroots politics in Los Angeles preceded their involvement in hometown and home-state politics in Mexico. In still other instances such as de la Cruz, Mexican and US political engagement have been pursued simultaneously.

Not surprisingly, therefore, when our questions concerning their personal sense of national and transnational identity and belonging were put to leaders of the FCZSC, the answers elicited have been all over the map, including responses like: ‘I am a Mexican’. – ‘I am truly bi-national. In both countries I experience the presence of absence’. – ‘I am a feminist activist from East L.A. who loves my home village and will do all that I can to ensure its survival’. As these politically engaged migrants begin to tell us their life stories, the undifferentiated
view of ‘the’ Mexican migrant proffered by Samuel Huntington disappears altogether, replaced by a wide range of voices in which altogether other modes of identity formation than either ‘Mexican’ or ‘American’ begin to be heard. Many of those we have interviewed love their region and naturalistic representations of it far more than they express love either for their country of origin or destination. Others identify with the extended family that is part of their childhood memories, even as migration and transnational living have transformed the very structure of extended family life. Others forge a political identity by deplored the corruption they attribute to all of Mexico’s major political parties, while investing their energies in efforts to change the Mexican political system. Still others insist they are both Mexican and American and see no need to choose between either before engaging in political life on either side of the border.

Questions of identity politics among leaders of the FCZSC are complex and varied. We thus chose to start our search for more patterned regularities by asking the migrants to talk about their actual political practices rather than immediately homing in on the identities these may or may not express. Issues of identity nonetheless emerged organically in the course of our conversations. We found that the leaders of the FCZSC and its spin-off organization, the Frente Cívico Zacatecano, have been active at all levels of US society and politics. The following excerpts from our ethnographies provide a sense of these different modes of political engagement in US politics often missing from the study of HTAs, whose leaders are most often studied in terms of their involvement in homeland, home state, and home-town politics in Mexico. In the chorus of voices that follow, transnational politics begins to reveal its Janus face.

The first voice we hear is that of Francisco Javier González, President of the Frente Cívico Zacatecano [FCZ], an explicitly bi-national political organization of Zacatecan migrants in Southern California. Francisco speaks as the official spokesperson for his organization rather than as an individual US citizen. This contrasts to some degree with the FCZSC because the latter is an officially chartered non-profit organization under US law, and is thus legally precluded from taking partisan positions in US politics. Some FCZSC leaders have interpreted this limitation rather strictly, insisting that in talking about their political activities in US politics, they are speaking as individual citizen activists, rather than as official representatives of the Federation. This sense of constraint by US law is one of the reasons some leaders of the Federation told us they sought to create the FCZ as an explicitly bi-national political organization in the first place.

The FCZ, while active in state politics in Zacatecas also plays an active role in many aspects of US politics. Francisco González succinctly described this other face of political engagement. He noted
that the *Frente* is regularly engaged in electoral politics in America, describing at length their support for the victorious Democrats Jesse Loaera, the Mayor of Norwalk, Congresspersons Loretta Sanchez and Grace Napolitano, state assemblyman Lou Correa, and Republican Lee Vaca for county sheriff. He told us the FCZ also had supported Democratic Lieutenant Governor Cruz Bustamante, who ran unsuccessfully against Arnold Schwarzenegger in the 2004 recall election.

Francisco then turned to the *Frente’s* involvement in US presidential politics:

I’m going to tell you about what happened with Al Gore. When we went to receive him at the airport. . . . And we had a big banner. *Frente Cívico Zacatecano*. . . . All right and we go through and we were right in front. With our *Frente Cívico Zacatecano* [banner], you know, and then when he got off the airplane he started shaking hands and he goes back and forth, back and forth . . . And so he stopped and he said, “I know about you guys already. I know you guys are *Frente Cívico Zacatecano*.” And he started speaking Spanish. He said, “me da mucho gusto muchachos y gracias por apoyarme.” He shakes my hand and he gave me a hug. Al Gore. I carry that experience with me.

(Interview with Francisco Javier González, Los Angeles, 13 November, 2003)

Other parts of our interview with Manuel de la Cruz provide a more extensive take on migrant involvement in US presidential politics and also reveal some of the multilayered feelings of political identification experienced by an actor simultaneously engaged in political life in two countries.

**Manuel de la Cruz:** But I have always been very well accepted in the entire [US] government. I was with Bill Clinton a couple of times when he went, when he came to Los Angeles. We supported Al Gore. We didn’t support Bush! . . . And, well, everyone in my family is an American citizen. My wife voted for the first time in the election between Al Gore and Bush. She cried, and cried and I saw her there crying when Bush won. Because it was the first time that she voted and she would say, “how is it possible that he beat us?” . . . And in these days we’re realizing that all of that money that Bill Clinton had put aside in reserves, Bush spends it in a single damn month. And he puts us back in the hole. So, well, my interests are over there [in the US] and the only thing that is here is my wish that Mexico progress.

**Matt Bakker:** So, now we have entered into one of the areas that most interests us, which is transnational citizenship. I think that you, I see that you actively exercise citizenship in both countries, right?
Manuel de la Cruz: Of course. Sure. My children are there, my houses are there, everything is there and here is where my heart is at (laughs), What can you do? What can I do?

When asked if he had ever thought about participating as a candidate in US politics, de la Cruz replied:

No. A lot of people invited me. I participate in a lot of organizations, but no. I never considered it. Many people would say to me – I am from the city of Norwalk – they would invite me to the [City] Council to be a part of it and begin. I pushed, I helped Grace Napolitano a lot, I even supported Lee Vaca who is a Republican because he was a Latino and I thought that he could be a good Sheriff.

(Interview with Manuel de la Cruz, 25 June, 2004, Zacatecas)

Another migrant leader and past president of the FCZSC, Guadalupe Gómez, has been very active on both sides of the border. He described himself to us as ‘a truly bi-national’ person. Each year it is customary for the Federation President to write an open letter to Club members at the beginning of a booklet distributed at the organizations’ annual convention celebrating the Day of the Zacatecano in Los Angeles. Gómez wrote his 2002 open letter in English and underlined his political efforts in the US:

I was also invited by the White House to be in an event with our President of the United States, George W. Bush in Washington DC on October 11th 2002. In this trip I also visited the US Congress. I met with our beloved Congresswoman, Grace Napolitano and Nancy Pelosi, the highest ranking Democrat in the House of Representatives... We discussed issues such as legalization, health and education, which are very important to our people. But most importantly, we opened up a line of communication that will enable us to work together to solve the problems we are facing in our society.

In the same letter Gómez tied his political activities in California to his concern for community development in Mexico, noting that: ‘Thanks to Assemblyman Marco Antonio Firebaugh, from the 5th District, the Program 3 X 1 was presented in our California State Legislature and the Senate with the objective of getting the California Government to participate in the development of the Mexican communities with the most migration to the north.’ The photographs included in Federation’s 2002 publication included images of members wearing Federation T-Shirts while participating in a protest demonstration.
calling attention to large number of Mexican border crossers who have died in the Arizona desert while trying to enter the United States and carrying an FCZSC banner while participating in a street march in Central Los Angeles demanding social justice for immigrants. In another photograph Gómez stands in front of an America flag, surrounded by two US marines, while participating in the event at the White House.

In his letter to paisanos the following year (15 November, 2003) Gómez noted that since he had become president ‘we divided our focus on both sides of the border’ and ‘began participating in civic activities’ in the United States. Among the activities he mentions are the establishment of a scholarship fund for Mexican-American youth, participation in an initiative to obtain California driver’s licences for undocumented Mexican migrants, a get-out-the-vote drive, a drive to expand citizenship among migrants, and lobbying the federal government for a legalization programme for undocumented migrants.

In an interview with Gómez conducted shortly after he ended his term as President, we asked him to reflect on his personal sense of identity as a political leader who had achieved visibility and success on both sides of the US-Mexican border. Here is how he described his gradual transformation into a transnational citizen.

Guadalupe Gómez: ... I can tell you when I first came here, I used to ask myself when I used to go back, I didn’t know where I was from! I said, “What am I doing?” I used to ask myself, “What am I doing here? What am I doing here in the United States, this is not where I’m from? ... “Why? Why am I here?” ... And when I went back, I also felt strange over there, “What am I doing here?” you know, “Where am I from?” That’s, that’s ... you struggle to find your identity. But as you grow older, you see things and you realize that “Hey, wait a minute. I know where I am from, but I know that I am here that I set roots here and I feel comfortable here.” Now I’m thinking, “I am transnational! I am a binational person.” ... And truly a binational one, because I can, I have, I am one of the luckiest persons in the world that can live two cultures. I do!

Michael Peter Smith: Do you think that that takes time, just like it did in your case?

Guadalupe Gómez: I don’t know, but when I was sitting, last year when I went to Congress and I had a meeting with Nancy Pelosi and I was like this. I ... a lot of things went through my mind. I couldn’t believe I had Congresswoman, the top Democratic leader in the House. And we were talking about issues! (laughs). You know, I was thinking about when I was milking cows in Zacatecas. I was thinking about those moments ... and I was showing my people’s concerns, “We’re concerned about education. We’re concerned about
healthcare. We’re concerned about the clinics that are closing in Los Angeles. I was the voice of my people there in Congress! (Interview with Guadalupe Gómez, Santa Ana, CA., 14 May 2004)

The final FCZSC leader I shall discuss is Martha Jiménez. Martha is simultaneously the Public Relations officer of the FCZSC, the president of her hometown club, and a Program Coordinator for the Los Angeles office of the Mexican American Legal Defense and Education Fund [MALDEF], a major Latino interest group in the United States. Martha is a longtime community activist in L.A. who played a key role in the 2005 mayoral campaign of Antonio Villaraigosa, the first Mexican-American elected mayor of Los Angeles. Martha has extensive experience in the non-profit sector, community organizing, and voter registration activities among Mexican-Americans. Her c.v. emphasizes her English and Spanish language proficiency and her seven years of grassroots experience in the FCZSC. She also mentions her ‘proven ability to fundraise at the local and transnational level’.

Martha was recently hired by MALDEF to coordinate efforts by that organization to channel the social capital of the leaders of migrant HTAs from eight Mexican States (Jalisco, Michoacan, Nayarit, Sinaloa, Colima, Guanajuato, Yucatan, and Zacatecas) more systematically into the building of broad coalitions to advance the interests of Mexican-American communities. MALDEF’s national project, which Martha heads in Southern California, is supported by several philanthropic foundations including the North American Global Department of the Rockefeller Foundation, the California Community Foundation, the Hass Fund, and Western Union/First Data Fund. It constitutes a far-reaching effort by this alliance to broaden the local and regional focus of the HTAs and to reconstitute HTA leaders’ political vision, creating new political subjects capable of acting, and willing to act politically, both ‘here’ and ‘there’. To achieve this goal MALDEF recently launched a leadership development programme known as the Immigrant Leadership Program for Responsible Educational Development. This programme seeks to enhance the leadership, ‘capacity building’, advocacy, legal, technical, financial, and public policy skills of 180 selected HTA leaders. These leaders will participate in a 14 week series of workshops and lectures ‘presented by top presenters ranging from elected officials, attorneys, professors, community organizers, US/Mexican government representatives, hometown association leaders, philanthropy representatives, etc’. (Hometown Association Leadership Program Overview 2005)

As envisioned by MALDEF and the donor community: ‘participants will learn about their rights’ in the US – particularly the processes of gaining citizenship, working with community organizations, and
otherwise participating in US democratic political life. As Martha Jiménez explained to us (Interview, Los Angeles, 24 March 2005), it is also hoped that through these efforts a broader kind of transnational political consciousness will come to replace the narrower local and regional diaspora consciousness still characterizing many HTA leaders in Southern California and throughout the United States.

Conclusions

What generalizations about the two faces of transnational citizenship can be drawn from the ethnographic encounters presented in this study? First, all three of my studies underline the simultaneity of transnational political experience, a finding consistent with a growing body of ethnographic scholarship revealing the capacities of transnational migrants to simultaneously become politically engaged citizens of their new countries and maintain enduring transnational socio-economic and political ties. (See, for example, Østergaard-Nielsen 2003; Smith 2003; Levitt 2004; Levitt and Glick Schiller 2004) Second, and relatedly, the experiences presented from the translocality of Napa-El Timbinal illustrate that social and political capital accumulated in the sending country can be transferred to the receiving society over time, even while migrants continue their transnational civic engagement in their communities of origin.

Third both this case, and to a greater extent, the case of Andrés Bermúdez, illustrate that when studying political transnationalism one must move beyond the practices of trans-local migrant networks that have been the main focal point of much of the early research on migrant political transnationalism (see, e.g. the translocal research of R. Smith 1998 and Goldring 1998). At a minimum, the study of migrant political transnationalism requires us to take into account: (a) state-centred actors and their policies in sending and receiving states, regions, and localities; (b) non-migrating actors like the public intellectuals, social movement activists and members of the existing political class in Bermúdez’s story; (c) actors from other Mexican and US cities and states, who become more than passive spectators of the political network of networks being forged. These two cases show that when acting subjects are emplaced both ‘here’ and ‘there’ the identities they experience and the practices they orchestrate depend on contingent circumstances in the different social spaces in which they are capable of acting.

Fourth, the political practices and identities of the leaders of the Zacatecan Federation and Frente Ci`vico from my third study nicely illustrate why it is crucial to focus more attention on the second face of transnational citizenship if we are to gain purchase for addressing wider questions of national and transnational identity formation.
under globalizing conditions. We have found that the key Zacatecan HTA leaders have become active in multi-scalar politics at all levels of US society and politics. This finding moves us beyond previous research on HTAs in Los Angeles (Zabin and Rabadan 1998), which found substantial involvement by Mexican HTAs in statewide campaigns in California against Proposition 187 and a ballot initiative limiting state and local government affirmative action programmes, but which concluded that the activities of these HTAs were still largely focused on the Mexican sphere. In my study of the Zacatecan Federation this appears no longer to be the case, as Federation activists increasingly engage in practices and form coalitions designed to institutionalize migrant engagement in US political life. As we have seen, one of the FCZSC’s key leaders, Guadalupe Gómez, has successfully expanded the Federation’s engagement with the US face of transnational citizenship. An alliance of private philanthropic foundations and MALDEF is currently seeking to broaden, deepen, and institutionalize this sort of political engagement even further. The alliance hopes to transform these activists into skilled advocates for Mexican immigrants in US cities. The goal is to take people who have a proven track record of community improvement in their Mexican places of origin and equip them with the legal, technical, and political knowledge to become effective voices for Mexican-Americans at the grassroots level in the United States, while maintaining the power they have acquired at the transnational level. Time will tell whether this more comprehensive vision of dual identity and dual citizenship will fully materialize.

Germane to this question is my final general finding, which stands in stark contrast to Appadurai’s expectations concerning double loyalty to nations of origin. In all three of my studies I have found that rather than being doubly loyal to their nation of origin, the politically engaged migrants I have interviewed express a kind of dual allegiance to both countries. Yet, this sort of dual loyalty is conditional and contingent. At times the migrants are doubly ambivalent about each nation and about the modes of political participation on both sides of the border in which they have chosen to engage. The complex, multi-positional situatedness of these transnational subjects tends to provoke mixed feelings, depending on the circumstances at hand – for instance, when they become actively involved in state and local political campaigns in the US and express satisfaction with the economic opportunities afforded by their adopted country, while decrying the continuing cultural and political significance of racial and ethnic discrimination in America. Alternatively, when participating in diaspora politics in Mexico, my interview subjects have become embedded in economic and community development ‘partnerships’ with Mexican state and local
government officials, while continuing to decry an overall political culture they see as dominated by a corrupt political class. ‘Loyalty’, in short, is never unalloyed and always contingent. It is expressed or withheld by acting subjects, depending on historically specific circumstances. Depending on the questions posed, the migrants express ambivalence about life in each nation and the modes of political participation in which they are engaged. On balance, however, because they tend to act politically on the basis of what they don’t like in each country, they continue to act politically, both ‘here’ and ‘there’, and do so with a growing sense of transnational political efficacy.

In the final analysis, Arjun Appadurai’s romantic imagining of a ‘post-national’ moment of emancipation occasioned by the disjunction of nation and state by migration and media flows has nowhere emerged in the complex political identities and practices that are coming into being today across the Rio Grande. Samuel Huntington’s notion of cultural capital as a historical legacy of socialization to the values of Anglo-Protestantism is far removed from the actual processes by which cultural, social, and political capital are being acquired, deployed, invested, and spent by Mexican migrants in Southern California. Huntington’s undifferentiated view of national identity formation is ideologically driven. It abstracts the notion of ‘citizenship’ from the actual contemporary practices of transnational citizens. His understanding of how the world works is simply mistaken. His grand narrative ignores the actual practices by which various modes of citizenship on both sides of the US–Mexican border are being constructed within and across national borders.

Acknowledgements

The field research reported in this article was supported by two grants from UCMEXUS, which I hereby gratefully acknowledge. I thank the organizers of the COMPAS/ISCA Seminar Series at the University of Oxford in Spring 2005 for providing the occasion for me to start thinking through the second face of transnational citizenship. My thanks are also extended to Matt Bakker and Fred Block for their helpful comments on earlier drafts of this article and Davide Peró of COMPAS for our many thought-provoking conversations on transnational politics in the receiving context.

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