ORGANIZED MIGRANTS AND ACCOUNTABILITY FROM AFAR

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Abstract: *This article contributes to a growing literature on the ways in which migrants are shaping democracy back home. Its empirical lens is Mexico's "Three-for-One" (3×1) Program, in which each level of the Mexican government provides matching grants for community projects solicited and financed by migrant hometown associations (HTAs), primarily in the United States. Based on an original data set constructed from key informant interviews and household surveys in sixty Mexican communities, it uses descriptive statistics, multivariate regressions, and qualitative case narratives to explore the relationship between migrant involvement in the 3×1 Program and accountable governance at the local level. Its central finding is that migrants are most likely to act as effective agents of accountability when they are embedded in translocal networks with local residents.*

One of the major shortcomings of democracies in the developing world is a lack of effective means of holding public officials accountable. Whether because of weak links between voters and politicians (vertical accountability) or underdeveloped systems of checks and balances (horizontal accountability), many developing countries find themselves caught in self-sustaining "low-accountability traps" (Fox 2007, 337), whereby public officials engage in corrupt, inequitable, or inefficient practices with relative impunity (Diamond and Morlino 2005; O'Donnell 1998). Frustrated by this outcome, several countries have begun to experiment with mechanisms of "societal accountability" that empower civil society organizations to hold public officials accountable through institutionalized participation in the policy process (Ackerman 2004; Cunhill Grau 2003; Montambeault 2011; Olvera 2003; Peruzzotti and Smulovitz 2006). These innovations, which are especially prevalent at the local level and in the area of social policy, promise to extend civil society's access to direct mechanisms of accountability beyond the electoral arena and complement the state's authority to exercise oversight.

Thus far, the literature on societal accountability has overlooked an actor that is becoming increasingly influential in developing countries: organized migrants

who intervene directly in the affairs of their communities of origin. Besides send-ing billions of dollars to their families each year, migrants also join together to raise "collective remittances" for charity, disaster relief, and community projects back home. Often, these collective remittances are channeled through hometown associations (HTAs) composed of people from the same community of origin (Fox and Bada 2008, 443). Although these funds are a small fraction of individual re-mittances, they may represent a sizable share of the local public works budget and have substantial multiplier effects.[1] In addition to financing public goods in poor communities, they give migrants political leverage and increase the likelihood that they will come into direct contact with public officials (Guarnizo, Portes, and Haller 2003, 1223).

Echoing the mixed results of quantitative studies of the relationship between individual remittances and accountability on a national scale (see, e.g., Abdih et al. 2012; Ahmed 2012, 2013; Batista and Vicente 2011; Escribà-Folch, Meseguer, and Wright 2015; Tyburski 2012), a growing body of qualitative research suggests that collective remittances have an ambiguous impact on accountability at the lo-cal level. Studies conducted in Mexico (Bada 2014; Duquette 2011; Goldring 2002; Orozco 2003; Smith and Bakker 2008; Smith 2003; Williams 2012), El Salvador (Pop-kin 2003; Villacres 2011; Waldinger, Popkin, and Magana 2008), the Dominican Republic (Lamba-Nieves 2014; Levitt 2001; Levitt and Lamba-Nieves 2010), Ghana (Mazzucato and Kabki 2009), Mali (Galatowitsch 2009), and the Philippines (Asis and Roma 2010; Liamzon 2010) have uncovered evidence of organized migrants pressuring public officials to deliver public goods and/or manage resources more transparently and efficiently. But they also reveal limits on their ability or will-ingness to act as agents of accountability. In particular, they warn of the dangers of asymmetrical power relationships and weak collaboration between the HTAs and local residents (Duquette 2011; Mazzucato and Kabki 2009; Villacres 2011; Waldinger 2015; Waldinger, Popkin, and Magana 2008).

My research builds on these studies by providing a more systematic test of the conditions under which migrants are likely to hold public officials account-able in their communities of origin. It does so through a micro-level analysis of ninety-eight projects in Mexico's 3×1 program, which provides matching grants for community projects solicited and financed by HTAs. Drawing on an origi-nal data set constructed from key informant interviews and household surveys in sixty communities, I use a combination of descriptive statistics, multivariate regressions, and qualitative case narratives to explore the relationship between migrant involvement and accountable governance. My findings largely confirm that migrants are most likely to act as effective agents of accountability when they are embedded in translocal networks with local residents. I conclude with a brief discussion of the limits to cross-border accountability and the implications for migrant engagement in politics back home.

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1. In Mexico, Orozco and Rouse (2007, 5) find that HTA donations are equal to more than 50 percent of municipal public works budgets in towns with fewer than three thousand people and up to 700 percent in towns with fewer than one thousand people.

CONCEPTUALIZING ACCOUNTABILITY

Before turning to the empirical analysis, we need a precise understanding of accountability. Axworthy (2005, 5) defines it as "who reports to whom for what." It is a relational concept that entails responsibility *to* someone, not just responsibility *for* something (Fox 2007, 7–8). Political accountability, which can be defined as "the ability of citizens to hold decision-makers to account for the power that has been delegated to them" (Axworthy 2005, 5), has two core features: "answerability, the obligation of public officials to inform about and explain what they are doing; and enforcement, the capacity of accounting agencies to impose sanctions on power-holders who have violated their public duties" (Schedler 1999, 14). Enforcement can be exercised either directly through legally ascribed sanctioning authority or indirectly through the provision of information that empowers others with such authority (Mainwaring 2003). Both features often entail the monitoring of public officials to ensure that they are not shirking their duties.

Missing from this view, however, is the substance of accountability, that is, the "for what" in Axworthy's (2005) definition. Not only must public officials answer for their actions; they are also expected to act in certain ways. Political accountability is therefore meaningless without reference to some standard of behavior to which public officials should adhere. I believe we need to go beyond instances in which actors are bound by "some formally stipulated contract" (Goetz and Jenkins 2005, 13) to include standards set by the implicit social contract between state and society. These standards can be derived from the concept of good governance as understood by development practitioners such as the World Bank, the United Nations, and bilateral aid agencies. In contrast to versions of governance that "connote a complex set of structures and processes" (Weiss 2000, 795) and highlight the role of nonstate actors (see, e.g., Kahler and Lake 2004; Rosenau and Czempiel 1992; Smouts 2002), this narrower usage focuses explicitly on the state and has a clear normative component ("good" as opposed to "bad" governance).

Drawing on the list of attributes provided by development institutions (see, e.g., Kapur and Webb 2000; UN Secretariat 2006; UN Development Programme 1997), I define good governance as the legal, equitable, and effective exercise of political authority to manage resources for the public good. This definition is closely related to "governmental performance," whereby public officials are expected to deliver "political goods" that "collectively give substance to the social contract between ruler and ruled that is at the core of interactions between states and their citizenries" (Rotberg 2004, 75). These political goods—which set the standards by which citizens judge the performance of public officials—include both processes (e.g., responsiveness, transparency, efficiency) and outcomes (e.g., rule of law, political freedoms, economic well-being, equitable access to public resources).[2]

Once we adopt this more substantive view of accountability, the next step is to differentiate between *ex ante* and *ex post* accountability. Most political scientists focus on *ex post* accountability, which involves exposing and punishing devia-

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2. For an interesting discussion of the distinction between process-oriented and outcome-oriented definitions of accountability, see Bardhan and Mookherjee (2006, 5–6).

tions from good governance. Although effective mechanisms of *ex post* accountability are critical to a well-functioning democracy, their activation should be the exception rather than the rule. It is preferable that mechanisms of control and/or the threat of sanctions induce public officials to adhere to the standards of good governance, thereby generating *ex ante* accountability.[3]

TRANSLOCAL NETWORKS AND *EX ANTE* ACCOUNTABILITY IN MEXICO

The 3×1 program, which grew out of a state-level program created in Zacatecas in 1986, was established at the national level under the jurisdiction of the Social Development Ministry (Sedesol) in 2002. Adopted in the context of Mexico's protracted transition to democracy, the program was part of a broader initiative by the Mexican state to strengthen its ties with the millions of Mexicans living abroad, mostly in the United States. The program matches each peso allocated by an HTA to an approved project with another peso from each level of government (municipal, state, and federal). Initially open to any civil society organization from a high-migration community, Sedesol changed the program's rules in 2004 to require that all projects be solicited by registered migrant associations. By 2010, more than a thousand HTAs based in forty US states had contributed more than $175 million to 14,636 projects in 570 municipalities (Sedesol 2011).

My research covers ninety-eight projects carried out under the 3×1 program between 2002 and 2005 in sixty communities (*localidades*) in seventeen municipalities in the states of Michoacán and Zacatecas. Both states have a long history of migration, are among the top three recipients of 3×1 funding, and were governed by the Party of the Democratic Revolution (PRD) during the period of study. The selected municipalities within each state had fewer than thirty thousand people, a low share of indigenous residents, high levels of migration and remittances, and at least one registered HTA. They varied, however, by which party won the municipal elections in 2001 and 2004. In both states, the PRD's greatest rival at the municipal level was the Institutional Revolutionary Party (PRI), which ruled Mexico as a hegemonic party from 1929 to 2000. The third major party, the National Action Party (PAN), increased its presence after taking control of the national executive in 2000, particularly in Michoacán, but continued to trail both the PRI and the PRD through the mid-2000s.

Within these municipalities, each of the selected communities had fewer than four thousand households, high levels of migration compared to the national average, and at least one 3×1 project between 2002 and 2005. They varied quite significantly, however, with regard to population size, poverty, electoral competitiveness, and partisan preferences. Nine are the municipal seat (*cabecera municipal*), and the rest are outlying villages. In addition, some communities had longstanding ties with a well-established HTA, and others received sponsorship from

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3. Goetz and Jenkins (2005, 12) also distinguish between *ex post* and *ex ante* accountability, but they limit the latter to instances in which accountability holders have the opportunity to block or amend policy decisions before they are taken.

an HTA from another community or created "ghost clubs" for the purpose of accessing 3×1 funds.[4]

The ninety-eight projects selected from these communities represent a range of types and sizes. The majority were either basic infrastructure (e.g., roads, bridges, water, sewage, electrification) or recreational or cultural (e.g., churches, plazas, parks, sports facilities). Forty-six percent were constructed under municipal governments elected in 2001, 41 percent in an election year (2004), and 13 percent under a new administration in 2005. Just over 60 percent of the projects were located in communities whose voters had favored the municipal president's party in the most recent legislative elections. Twenty-five percent had no real HTA involvement, thereby providing a control group in which local residents served as the only agents of societal accountability.

Research teams conducted three rounds of fieldwork: (1) more than three hundred semistructured interviews in 2005 with key informants such as government officials, local works committee members, HTA representatives, and beneficiaries involved in the selected projects; (2) semistructured interviews between 2005 and 2008 with 30 HTA leaders from the Chicago and Los Angeles areas; and (3) household surveys in 2008 with twenty-five randomly selected households from each of the sixty communities, for a total of 1,500 surveys. Given the lack of direct involvement in the projects by most members of the community, the project-level indicators are based primarily on the semistructured interviews, but I include data from the household surveys whenever possible in an effort to correct for key informant bias. In addition, I rely on socioeconomic, electoral, and project data at the municipal and locality levels provided by the Social Development Ministry (Sedesol), the Population Statistics Bureau (CONAPO), and the Federal Electoral Institute (IFE).

PROJECT GOVERNANCE AND TRANSLOCAL NETWORKS

The main outcome I explain is variation in *ex ante* accountability, which I operationalize as the degree to which public officials adhere to the standards of good governance. With regard to the 3×1 projects, I argue that governance can be broken down into four components: (1) the transparency with which the project was managed, as measured by the degree to which HTA members and/or local residents could access information regarding project financing and implementation; (2) the efficiency of project implementation, as measured by the timely and predictable realization of project goals, budgets, and deadlines; (3) the quality of the project, as measured by workmanship, functioning, and maintenance; and (4) the degree to which the project promoted socioeconomic *equity*, as measured by the project's developmental impact relative to the needs of the community.

Table 1 provides a summary of the indicators and coding strategies for each

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4. Some communities without their own HTA would ask an HTA from another community to "sponsor" the project in order to satisfy program requirements. Others would create ghost clubs, or HTAs that exist on paper for the purposes of submitting a 3×1 project application but do not have any actual members, activities, or finances.

Table 1 Indicators and basic statistics for project governance (1.00 = highest score)

	Indicators	Average	Maximum	Minimum	Standard deviation
Transparency	Key informant and survey responses regarding (1) availability of written records on project finances, selection of contractor, and project's technical specifications, and (2) municipal government's attitude toward sharing information with public, including but not limited to local works committee and/or HTA	0.46	0.81	0.08	0.22
Efficiency	Subtractive index based on (1) cost overruns; (2) delays in financing; (3) failure to meet financial commitments; (4) problems with contractor; or (5) unanticipated changes in plans, project management, or technical requirements (adjusted upward for issues that got resolved and downward for projects that were never completed)	0.77	1.00	0.20	0.22
Quality	Key informant and survey responses regarding the appearance, functioning, and maintenance of the projects	0.69	0.91	0.11	0.19
Equity	Project's developmental impact (by project type), number of project beneficiaries, and socioeconomic marginalization of locality	0.49	0.79	0.30	0.10
IPG	Unweighted average of four components	0.60	0.79	0.29	0.12

Note: To measure developmental impact, I ranked project type in the following order (from high to low): productive activities (e.g., irrigation wells, corrals, scholarships), health and education infrastructure (e.g., clinics, schools), basic infrastructure (e.g., electrification, roads, potable water), or recreation or culture (e.g., parks, churches, plazas). To measure marginalization, I used an index created by CONAPO that includes nine indicators of education, household conditions, and income in 2000 at the locality level.

component, along with some basic statistics on the actual scores across the ninety-eight projects, which I combine to create a single index of project governance (IPG).[5] The scores are on a scale of 0 to 1, with 1 being the highest.

My working hypothesis is that a critical determinant of the variation in these scores is the strength of translocal networks that incorporate both organized migrants and local residents. Like other public-private partnerships in developing countries, the 3×1 program involves civil society in the design, selection, financing, and construction of the projects. A major difference, however, is that civil society consists (at least in theory) of two organizationally and territorially distinct actors: local residents, several of whom form a local works committee (LWC), and a translocal HTA. This design promises to capitalize on the complementary strengths of organized migrants and local residents. Local residents have the advantage of being able to keep a close watch on the project, as well as the right to vote against the party in municipal government, but they are often vulnerable to manipulation by local authorities. By contrast, the HTAs have a weaker presence in the community and lack municipal voting rights, but they tend to have greater access to financial resources and/or reformist allies at other levels of government, as well as more autonomy from local power structures. Thus, as Waldinger, Popkin, and Magana (2008) find in their study of Salvadoran HTAs, a strong partnership between local residents and organized migrants translates into multiple "eyes" with complementary points of access and leverage by which to hold public officials accountable.

Although federal and state agencies play a critical role in the 3×1 program, particularly during the selection and financing phases, the municipal government is the most heavily involved public actor. In addition to contributing its share of 25 percent of the financing (in most cases), it is often actively involved with the solicitation, planning, execution, and monitoring of the projects. Upon receipt of a project application, it is responsible for putting together the technical plan and delivering it to the relevant state agency. A few municipalities are also selected each year to participate on the state-level Project Evaluation and Migrant Affairs Committee (COVAM) that determines which projects to approve at the state level. Finally, once a project is approved, the municipal government is often involved in managing the project budget, monitoring the project's progress, selecting the contractor, and/or executing the project. The most active departments tend to be economic development or public works, although in some cases the municipal comptroller also plays a role in monitoring the project's implementation.

Local residents and the HTAs also perform most of these functions, although to varying degrees. While community members often request the projects, make a financial contribution, and/or contribute their labor, the LWC is usually the most engaged actor within the local community. Typically chosen by the local beneficiaries or elected in a community-wide assembly, the responsibilities of the LWCs can include collecting the contributions of the migrants and/or local community, managing the project budget, selecting the contractor, hiring local labor,

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5. Lacking any theoretical justification for privileging some aspects of project governance over others, I chose to weight the four components equally when creating the Index of Project Governance.

and monitoring project expenditures and implementation. The two most impor-
tant members of the committee tend to be the president and the treasurer. In some
cases, the committee acts as the representative of the HTA in the community and
reports back to the HTA regarding the project's progress. In most cases, the LWC
disbands once the project has been completed.

The HTAs are usually less involved in the day-to-day implementation and
monitoring of the projects but play a greater role in their selection and financ-
ing. Migrant representatives sit on the state-level COVAM in most states, and as
mentioned already, the program's rules changed in 2004 to require that projects
be proposed and cofinanced by "groups or organizations of migrants" (Sedesol
2004), thereby institutionalizing the participation of the HTAs—although in prac-
tice, local residents continued to initiate many project requests and provide part
or all of the HTA's share of the financing. The HTAs also perform functions such
as recommending (and sometimes appointing) the members of the LWC, select-
ing the contractor, and/or monitoring the project's progress through visits and/or
contact with local residents or the municipal government. Although most HTAs
from Michoacán and Zacatecas work with the LWC to carry out the 3×1 projects,
the vast majority lack a formal counterpart in the community. Instead, their main
interlocutor tends to be an individual representative who interacts with commu-
nity members, monitors the project, and reports back to the HTA.

I developed two sets of indicators to quantify the extent and nature of trans-
local networks at the project level.[6] The participation indicators measure the de-
gree of project involvement by each civil society actor (HTA and local residents)
independently of what the other actor was doing. Each actor's score is based on
whether they participated at four stages of the project: (1) requesting the project;
(2) committing resources to cofinance the project; (3) implementing the project by
selecting the contractor, providing the labor, and/or managing the project budget;
and (4) monitoring the project's progress and quality.[7] The translocal collabora-
tion indicator measures the degree of communication and shared responsibil-
ity between the HTA and local residents. It consists of three components. First,
I ranked the density of translocal ties on the basis of whether the HTA's local
counterpart was a formal organization, a few individuals in the community, or
nobody. Second, I scored the channels of translocal communication on the basis
of whether the HTA interacted regularly with its local counterpart and/or the
local works committee (which was often a separate entity) over the course of the
project. Finally, I measured the gap between each actor's participation scores
to capture the extent to which actors shared responsibility for the project. The
higher the gap (e.g., between an active HTA and passive local residents), the lower
the score, regardless of each actor's absolute level of participation. Although this
technique may end up giving two apathetic actors the same subcomponent score

6. Each indicator is constructed as an additive index with a value between 0 and 1.

7. For the HTA, I created a weighted average of three types of monitoring activities: (1) project visits,
(2) long-distance communications (by phone or Internet) to discuss the project with either local resi-
dents or municipal officials, and (3) receipt of project photos or videos. For local residents, I created an
ordinal scale (weekly, monthly, quarterly, or never) to measure the frequency of project visits and/or
requests for information from municipal officials by the local works committee.

as two highly involved actors, it has the advantage of providing a measure of collaboration that is independent of the participation score.[8]

In the following three sections, I test the impact of these networks on project governance. First, I use descriptive statistics to look for patterns in the relationship between HTA involvement and project governance. Second, I subject these findings to more rigorous testing in the form of multivariate regressions that include control variables that might also be expected to have an impact on project governance. Finally, I explore these patterns further through qualitative narratives about a few illustrative cases.

IDENTIFYING PATTERNS AND CORRELATIONS

As a first cut at understanding the relationship between translocal civil society networks and project governance, I divide the scores for HTA participation and translocal collaboration into terciles (high, medium, and low) and then calculate the average IPG score for each level across the two variables.[9] Table 2 shows that these scores vary positively and consistently with the levels of HTA participation and translocal collaboration, which suggests that HTAs make a meaningful contribution to *ex ante* accountability. The story becomes more complex, however, when we explore the interaction between participation and collaboration. Table 3 shows that a low level of collaboration between the HTA and local residents corresponds to consistently below-average outcomes regardless of the level of HTA participation. Thus, merely having an active HTA does not appear sufficient to generate *ex ante* accountability. In fact, as we will see in the multivariate regressions and case narratives, a highly involved but disconnected or uncooperative HTA can be quite bad for project governance.

The importance of translocal civil society networks in generating *ex ante* accountability is demonstrated further when we explore the impact of monitoring by HTAs and/or local residents on transparency, efficiency, and quality.[10] Table 4 shows that higher levels of monitoring correspond to higher average governance scores in nearly every category. Monitoring appears to have an especially strong relationship with transparency, which registers large scoring gaps between high and low levels of monitoring regardless of which actor is involved.

These findings lend preliminary support to my hypothesis that having "multiple eyes" with complementary points of access and leverage enhances *ex ante* accountability. But further analysis is needed to uncover the independent effect of translocal networks and to examine whether the patterns I have identified still hold when controlling for other social, political, and economic factors that might shape governance outcomes, including the role of the municipal government. I therefore turn to multivariate regressions to provide a more rigorous test of my working hypothesis.

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8. In practice, the small minority of projects with low levels of participation by both actors end up with low collaboration scores because of weak to nonexistent counterparts or communication channels.

9. I have excluded two projects with missing equity data from these calculations.

10. I leave aside equity because it is determined at an earlier stage of the project cycle.

Table 2 Average IPG by HTA participation and translocal civic collaboration

	HTA participation		HTA collaboration with community	
	Number of cases	Average IPG	Number of cases	Average IPG
High	21	0.68	11	0.72
Medium	43	0.59	40	0.63
Low	32	0.57	45	0.54

Table 3 Matrix of average IPG by translocal network type and class

	HTA collaboration with community		
HTA participation	High	Medium	Low
High	0.72 (7)	0.67 (12)	0.56 (2)
Medium	0.72 (4)	0.62 (28)	0.47 (11)
Low	—	—	0.57 (32)

Note: Number of cases in parentheses.

Table 4 Average IPG by type and level of monitoring

	Number of cases	Transparency	Efficiency	Quality
HTA monitoring				
High	13	0.60	0.85	0.83
Medium	35	0.51	0.76	0.69
Low	50	0.39	0.75	0.67
Community monitoring				
High	80	0.51	0.81	0.72
Medium	11	0.24	0.54	0.57
Low	7	0.21	0.66	0.56
Joint monitoring				
High	11	0.63	0.86	0.84
Medium	27	0.57	0.84	0.72
Low	60	0.38	0.72	0.66

Note: Joint monitoring is calculated by multiplying monitoring scores for HTA and community.

Table 5 shows ordinary least squares (OLS) regression results for the relationship between translocal networks and project governance. My dependent variables are the index of project governance (IPG) and its four components (transparency, efficiency, quality, and equity) at the project level, and my independent variables are participation, collaboration, and monitoring by local residents and organized migrants, also at the project level.[11] I also control for a wide range of

11. Because outcomes for multiple projects in the same municipality are likely to be correlated due to shared characteristics, I use clustering at the municipal level to account for these unobserved effects. As an additional check, I ran the same models with clustering at the locality level, which produced the same coefficients but slightly greater significance for my variables of interest.

Table 5 OLS regression results for relationship between translocal networks and project governance

Variables	Model 1 IPG	Model 2 Transparency	Model 3 Efficiency	Model 4 Quality	Model 5 Equity	Model 6 Transparency	Model 7 Efficiency	Model 8 Quality
HTA participation	−0.0828 (0.0594)	−0.0952 (0.1206)	−0.2511** (0.1168)	0.2264** (0.0995)	−0.0936 (0.0559)			
Community participation	0.1197** (0.0465)	0.1642* (0.0838)	0.1564* (0.0764)	0.1930*** (0.0463)	−0.0166 (0.0628)			
Translocal civic collaboration	0.1479** (0.0698)	0.3540* (0.1799)	0.2414* (0.1271)	−0.0962 (0.0927)	0.0747 (0.0607)			
HTA monitoring						0.1453 (0.2690)	−0.5649*** (0.1548)	−0.0954 (0.2096)
Community monitoring						0.3229*** (0.0871)	0.1494** (0.0705)	0.1476* (0.0800)
HTA × community						0.0682 (0.3162)	0.6570*** (0.1783)	0.1867 (0.2360)
Municipal participation	0.1193** (0.0482)		0.2605** (0.1180)	0.2120** (0.0783)			0.2573* (0.1285)	0.2028** (0.0755)
Community trust	0.1832* (0.0907)	0.4509** (0.1999)						
Project cost (logged)			−0.0518** (0.0183)				−0.0538*** (0.0181)	−0.0383** (0.0171)
Population (logged)					−0.0282** (0.0107)			
Electoral concentration							0.0087** (0.0033)	
Other controls								
Constant	0.4090** (0.1731)	−0.5380 (0.4634)	0.8269*** (0.2835)	0.8640*** (0.2604)	0.5866*** (0.1486)	−0.6582 (0.4096)	1.0016*** (0.3119)	0.9934*** (0.2654)
Observations	96	98	98	98	96	98	98	98
R^2	0.4026	0.3738	0.3702	0.3036	0.2177	0.4638	0.4436	0.2763

Note: Standard errors in parentheses: For the control variables, I am only reporting coefficients that are statistically significant. Models 1–5 exclude the monitoring variables, and Models 6–8 exclude the translocal network variables. The marginalization and project type controls are excluded from Models 1 and 5 because they are components of the equity index.

***$p < .01$; **$p < .05$; *$p < .1$.

other factors that might be expected to affect project governance.[12] In recognition of the critical role of municipal officials, I include (1) municipal participation, which utilizes a modified version of the additive index I constructed for local residents and the HTA, and (2) municipal-HTA collaboration, which adapts the translocal civic collaboration index to measure the degree of communication and shared responsibility between the HTA and municipal officials.

I also include community-wide characteristics that might be expected to affect governance: (1) the population of the locality; (2) the locality's level of socioeconomic marginalization (see table 1); (3) the rate of organizational membership, as measured by the share of surveyed households in each locality with at least one member of a civic organization; and (4) the level of generalized trust, as measured by the share of survey respondents in the locality who believe they can trust most people rather than needing to be cautious around them. Whereas the first two indicators control for socioeconomic conditions likely to pose challenges to project governance, the second two control for the community's stock of social capital, which has been shown elsewhere to have a positive correlation with governance (see, e.g., Grootaert and Van Bastelaer 2002; Putnam 1993).

I also include two controls related to the projects themselves: project cost, which controls for effects likely to be associated with variations in project size or technical requirements, and project type, which controls for effects associated with whether the project is oriented toward basic infrastructure, health and education infrastructure, productive activities, or recreation and culture.[13] Finally, I include three political variables that might be expected to affect project governance. Two are at the municipal level: electoral concentration controls for weak vertical accountability as a result of noncompetitive elections, and partisan shift is a dummy variable that controls for the election of a municipal president from a different party during the project year, which could disrupt established relationships and/or cause logistical problems.[14] The third political control is a dummy variable that controls for a partisan divide between the majority of voters in the locality and the municipal president, which could alter the latter's incentives to deliver good governance.[15]

Echoing the descriptive statistics, table 5 shows that translocal civic collaboration is positively correlated with project governance (except for quality) even when controlling for other factors that might be expected to affect the outcome. Models 1 through 3 show that this relationship is statistically significant for IPG, transparency, and efficiency. Holding all other independent variables constant, IPG is expected to improve by 1.5 percent for every 10 percent increase in trans-

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12. I do not include a separate control for the absence of an HTA because it is already captured in the HTA participation scores (0 = no HTA).

13. Because project type is also a component of equity, I do not include it in the IPG and equity models.

14. Electoral concentration is measured as the average difference in the share of votes for the first-place and second-place parties in the 2001 and 2004 municipal elections.

15. Because of missing locality-level data for the 2001 municipal elections in Zacatecas, I measure locality-level partisanship with IFE data from the most recent legislative elections prior to the project year.

local civic collaboration.[16] Though not as statistically significant, the coefficients for transparency and efficiency are even higher, with an expected increase of 3.5 percent and 2.4 percent, respectively, for every 10 percent increase in translocal civic collaboration. These results are consistent with the argument that a close alliance between the HTA and local residents elicits a more open and responsible style of governance by municipal authorities. Considering the much weaker results for quality and equity, they also suggest that translocal civic collaboration is more important to processes than to outcomes.

Translocal civic collaboration remains important when we turn to the monitoring variables in Models 6–8. Here, I use an interaction term (HTA × community) to capture the independent effect of joint monitoring by the HTA and local residents. The regressions show that joint monitoring is positive and highly significant for efficiency, which is expected to improve by 6.6 percent for every 10 percent increase in joint monitoring. But it is not significant (although still positive) for transparency, which suggests that the relationship between translocal civic collaboration and transparency in Model 2 may reflect some other advantage of close ties between the HTA and local residents in eliciting information from municipal officials.

Table 5 also reinforces the descriptive statistics regarding the ambiguous impact of HTA participation, which is positive and statistically significant for quality but negative for all the other governance indicators.[17] Reflecting the challenges of coordinating a project from afar, it is particularly problematic for efficiency (Model 3), which is expected to decline by 2.5 percent for every 10 percent increase in HTA participation. The pattern is even stronger when disaggregating HTA participation to focus exclusively on monitoring (Model 7). For every 10 percent increase in HTA monitoring, the efficiency score is expected to fall by 5.6 percent, in stark contrast to the positive relationship between efficiency and joint monitoring by the HTA and local residents. Both results are significant at the 1 percent level.

Table 5 also tests for the relationship between community participation and project governance. Models 1 through 5 show that it is positive and statistically significant for every indicator except equity, thereby reinforcing the argument that local participation is qualitatively different from long-distance involvement by organized migrants. I find similar results when disaggregating community participation to focus on community monitoring (Models 6–8). Of particular note is the relationship between community monitoring and transparency, which is much stronger than for HTAs and suggests that monitoring may be a key mecha-

16. To put this effect in perspective, if we were to start with the average values for each indicator, an increase in translocal civic collaboration from 0.35 to 0.65 (one standard deviation) should be associated with an improvement in IPG from 0.60 to 0.68, or a shift from the sixth to the third decile of projects ranked by their governance scores. Throughout this section, the reported results assume that all other independent variables are being held constant.

17. The simultaneous inclusion of HTA participation and translocal civic collaboration introduces some degree of collinearity (corr. = 0.77; R^2 = 0.59). However, because both estimates are significantly different than zero, one's exclusion leads to a biased estimate of the other, so both are included with acceptance of a higher variance. The variance inflation factors are less than 3.20.

nism by which local residents elicit a more transparent style of governance by municipal authorities.

Turning to the control variables, only a few have a statistically significant relationship with project governance. Municipal participation is positively correlated with efficiency and quality in both sets of models, as well as with IPG in Model 1. The effect is particularly strong with regard to efficiency, which makes sense given the key role of municipal officials in carrying out the projects. Perhaps more surprising is the absence of a statistically significant relationship between municipal participation and transparency, which might be expected to decline as municipal officials become more involved in project management.[18] Taken together, this evidence suggests that projects in which the municipal government is heavily invested are more likely, on balance, to be well governed, although there is a thin line between involvement and capture that becomes very apparent in the case narratives.[19]

Among the community characteristics, only population and generalized trust have any meaningful relationship with project governance. The negative correlation between population and equity in Model 5 is not surprising given that larger communities, especially municipal centers, are often wealthier and more developed. The correlation between generalized trust and transparency in Model 2 is more intriguing. For every 10 percent increase in the locality's share of trusting households, the transparency score is expected to increase by 4.5 percent. Although we cannot be sure whether there is any causal connection (or, if so, in which direction), this finding suggests that municipal officials are more forthcoming in communities with lower levels of suspicion and mistrust. Even controlling for this component of social capital, however, translocal civic collaboration still seems to have an independent effect on project governance.

Turning to project characteristics, project type does not appear to matter, but project cost has a statistically significant but negative correlation with efficiency (in Models 3 and 7) and quality (in Model 8). This finding makes sense given the greater challenges of managing large projects, which often are technically complex and rely on third-party contractors, thereby imposing additional monitoring costs.[20] Finally, the only political control with any statistical significance is electoral concentration, which is positively correlated with efficiency in Model 7. Although this result challenges the assumption that more competitive elections are likely to deliver better governance, it is consistent with Merilee Grindle's (2007) finding that Mexican municipalities with higher levels of contestation often suffer from less efficient planning and implementation.

These results offer compelling evidence of a positive relationship between translocal civic collaboration and project governance in the 3×1 program even

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18. The correlation between municipal participation and transparency is negative but not significant in Models 2 and 6. There is also a negative but not statistically significant correlation between municipal participation and community participation.

19. For an excellent discussion of the partisan manipulation of 3×1 projects, see Aparicio and Meseguer (2012) and Meseguer and Aparicio (2012).

20. The program requires that contractors for large projects be selected through a public bidding process.

when controlling for a host of other factors. But they still leave some critical questions unanswered. First, my data are cross-sectional and therefore ill equipped to establish causality. Second, the results suggest that a full understanding of project governance requires greater attention to the role of the municipal government. Finally, because of data limitations, my coding strategy treats all HTAs and local residents as roughly equivalent when, in fact, there are likely to be significant differences regarding their organizational strength, leadership quality, and representativeness. To provide some insight into these questions, I turn to a few illustrative cases.

UNPACKING THE IMPACT OF TRANSLOCAL NETWORKS

Earlier in the article, I suggested two mechanisms by which translocal networks should enhance accountability: (1) by facilitating coordination, thereby alleviating the pitfalls of long-distance participation and ensuring that community members feel invested in the project, and (2) by enabling local residents to draw on the bargaining power of the HTAs, which not only bring money to the table but also tend to have greater access to key officials at the state and national levels (Bada 2011; Fox and Bada 2008). The case narratives offer support for both mechanisms. With regard to coordination, we find examples of the negative consequences of either inadequate or dysfunctional interaction between the HTA and local residents. A striking case is a plaza in the locality of La Purísima in Alvaro Obregón, Michoacán, which received a very low IPG score of 0.43 despite the involvement of a well-established HTA with a long history of supporting local projects. Rather than collaborating with the community, the HTA selected, cofinanced, and monitored the plaza without any community input, and the local works committee was largely dormant. The LWC president, who acted primarily as the HTA's local representative, was not well connected in the community, nor did he exercise much oversight. In the absence of local stakeholders, the project was plagued by a lack of transparency, incomplete construction, and mediocre quality.[21]

We can glean further insight from cases in which translocal interaction was present but dysfunctional. A notorious example is a chapel in Las Fuentes in the municipality of Ecuandureo, Michoacán, which received an IPG score of 0.29. Conflict erupted between the LWC, which was supported by a Texas-based HTA loyal to the PRI, and Club Ecuandureo, a Chicago-based HTA in charge of collecting the migrant donations. Not only was Club Ecuandureo financing the campaign of the PRD candidate for municipal president; its members were from the municipal center rather than Las Fuentes. Club Ecuandureo accused the project engineer and the LWC of stealing money, which prompted intervention by state and national authorities. Although these authorities found no evidence of corrup-

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21. A similar lack of local support doomed an outdoor sports facility in the locality of Tupátaro in Huandacareo, Michoacán, which received an IPG score of 0.52. Besides experiencing financial difficulties and personnel turnover in the LWC, the project was never used or maintained and had been overtaken by weeds by the time my research team arrived a few years later. For more detail on this case, see Bada (2014, 133).

tion, they determined that poor planning had resulted in insufficient funds to complete the project, which remained unfinished years later.

We find less dramatic but nonetheless instructive examples in the locality of El Remolino in Juchipila, Zacatecas. El Remolino had two HTAs, each with different shortcomings in its relationship with the community. Club Remolino was one of only two HTAs in my sample to have a formal counterpart, which should have facilitated translocal collaboration. But the local organization, Grupo Remolino, was unable to act as an effective interlocutor because of apathy, disorganization, and weak capacity. Thus, despite the institutionalization of translocal ties, all three projects in the study (school, soccer field, and health clinic) suffered from minimal HTA interaction with the local works committee and a sizable gap between their levels of participation. The projects received slightly above-average IPG scores (between 0.61 and 0.65), but they all experienced delays and technical problems related to a lack of coordinated support from local residents.

The locality's other HTA, Campesinos Remolino, had a different problem. Known for investing in projects that primarily benefited family members, the HTA was unable to avoid a dismal IPG score of 0.37 for an irrigation dam. The cost overruns, delays, and faulty construction that plagued the project were largely due to technical incompetence, but the repeated failure to correct them was exacerbated by the HTA's narrow ties with the community, as well as its antagonistic relationship with Grupo Remolino. Not all of the HTA's projects were as poorly managed, as evidenced by the above-average IPG score received by a street-refinishing project (0.64), but these shortcomings hampered the HTA's ability to hold the municipality accountable when the project went wrong.[22]

My second argument for why translocal networks should have a positive effect on project governance is that HTAs are often better equipped than local residents to pressure municipal officials. In some cases, this leverage can promote *ex ante* accountability by creating incentives for municipal officials to adhere to the standards of good governance. An excellent example is the locality of La Villita in Nochistlán, Zacatecas, whose four projects in the study (community center, electrical grid, computers, and drainage system) received IPG scores between 0.75 and 0.77. Not only did the HTA, Club Villita, work closely with the local works committee during the implementation of the projects; its founder and leader, Efraín Jiménez, capitalized on the resources available to him as a leader in the Federation of Zacatecan Clubs of Southern California (FCZSC), which represented around seventy HTAs in the Los Angeles area and played a key role in mediating between HTAs, state officials, and municipal governments.[23]

Besides closely monitoring the projects in his own community of La Villita, Jiménez used his leverage to improve project governance elsewhere. Most significant, he convinced the municipal president to establish joint checking accounts

22. For a more detailed account of the dam project, see Lanly and Hamann (2004, 156–164).
23. Although Club Villita did not have a local representative apart from the LWC, and some municipal officials complained that Jiménez imposed his priorities on the community, other key informants insisted that the projects were selected on the basis of informal conversations with community members during regular visits by Jiménez (Tinajero 2008, 55).

(*cuentas mancomunadas*) to manage project budgets, a practice that was subsequently adopted for the entire municipality in 2005. Because a check cannot be issued unless it is signed by a representative of the municipal government and the LWC, this mechanism significantly enhanced *ex ante* accountability, not just in La Villita but also throughout Nochistlán. Jiménez also regularly negotiated municipal support for projects in communities in outlying areas or with different partisan preferences in return for the FCZSC's support for the municipal president's pet projects.[24]

Most HTA leaders do not enjoy Jiménez's degree of influence, but they still have greater access to public officials than nonmigrants. Often, they have opportunities to meet directly with prominent politicians visiting the United States and/or state-level offices of migrant affairs. They may also have indirect access to resources and allies through their HTA federations. The advantages of being able to mobilize the support of public officials become clear when we compare outcomes in the face of an uncooperative municipal government. A positive example occurred in the municipal center of Indaparapeo, Michoacán, where HTA leaders were able to use their access to state-level allies to block a hostile takeover of a scholarship program by a newly elected municipal president. Initially created and financed by Club Indaparapeo (the HTA) and its local partner, Grupo Indaparapeo, the program subsequently became part of the 3×1 program at the suggestion of the municipal president, who agreed to provide the municipality's share of the financing while leaving the selection of beneficiaries to the two civic organizations.[25] In its first year as a 3×1 project, forty students received funding to attend the University of Morelia on the condition that they maintain good grades and participate in community service, often through internships with the municipal government. The project received a high IPG score of 0.72.

The situation changed, however, after the 2004 elections, when the new municipal president tried to seize control of scholarship distribution. He initially won support for his position from Sedesol, which granted fiscal authority to the municipality. Protesting that they were never consulted about the change, Club Indaparapeo and Grupo Indaparapeo appealed to the state-level Office of Migrant Affairs (COGAMIM), which brokered an agreement whereby Grupo Indaparapeo would continue to distribute the scholarships with municipal oversight. The conflict caused some delays in distribution of the funds and problems with the internship program, resulting in a lower IPG score of 0.65, but the allied organizations were able to thwart the municipal president's attempt to seize control of the program largely because of their access to higher-level authorities.

Indaparapeo's experience contrasts with several cases in which local residents were unable to resist manipulation by the municipal government in the absence of HTA support, often with negative implications for project governance. An ex-

24. Key informant interview, Los Angeles, CA, May 11, 2006.
25. Besides Club El Remolino, Club Indaparapeo was the only other HTA in my sample to have a counterpart organization with a permanent presence in the migrants' hometown. Unlike Grupo Remolino, however, Grupo Indaparapeo was very engaged and well equipped to manage the scholarship program. For more detail on this case, see Shannon (2010).

treme example is the case of a highway project in the locality of Miguel Hidalgo in Saín Alto, Zacatecas, which received a below-average IPG score of 0.54 and is a classic example of how the 3×1 program can be manipulated by municipal governments in the absence of strong translocal networks. Not only was there no evidence of any HTA, but a project beneficiary and LWC member remarked, "Look, I'll be frank, the municipality was the one that requested the project, and they went to the community and told them who would be candidates for the committee. . . . [Once we had collected enough money from the community] the municipal president told us not to worry anymore and implemented the project without us."[26] Of the five communities in Saín Alto covered by this study, the only one in which local residents had the support of an HTA was Nicolás Bravo, where they initiated and cofinanced a church project that received an IPG score of 0.69.[27] Rather than challenging a well-respected migrant leader, the municipal government played a supporting role and left space for civil society to shape and monitor the project.

Although we cannot know for sure whether the residents of Nicolás Bravo could have achieved the same results without the HTA's support, two other projects in Monte Escobedo, Zacatecas, highlight the limited options enjoyed by local residents when faced with an intransigent municipal government. One is a classroom project in the locality of Laguna Grande, which received a very low IPG score of 0.40. Lacking any relationship with an HTA, the local PTA requested and cofinanced the project on its own but received minimal support from the municipal government, which was closely allied with a group of cowboys (*charros*) who wanted to build a rodeo stadium. Although the quality of the classrooms was acceptable, the cost was very high, and the management of resources was not at all transparent. In addition, the municipal government refused to provide the additional resources necessary to make the classrooms operational.

Another example is a nursing home in the municipal center, which received an IPG score of 0.56. The construction went well largely because of the commitment of a local leader, who collected donations from the community, managed the project's budget, and ensured that the work was completed. Nonetheless, the building remained nearly empty because the community lacked the money to provide the necessary services, and the municipal government had other priorities. Although there was some migrant involvement during the project's implementation, including a visit by one of the HTA leaders, the HTA was not strongly committed to either the project or the local leader, which left her without a translocal ally to demand more support from the municipal government.

Taken together, these examples provide us with a better understanding of the causal pathways linking translocal networks to project governance. As exemplified by La Villita and Indaparapeo, it is the combination of local ownership and HTA influence that enables the members of translocal networks to be effective agents of accountability. But the narratives also suggest the critical importance of

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26. Key informant interview, Miguel Hidalgo, Saín Alto, Zacatecas, July 27, 2005.
27. The projects in the other four communities in Saín Alto received an average IPG score of 0.58 and an average transparency score of 0.33.

other factors, particularly the attitude of municipal officials and the nature of civil society participation. Although more research is needed, the optimal arrangement may be a municipal government that is neither overbearing nor disengaged. The cases also hint at the critical role played by leadership, organizational capacity, and social inclusiveness in enabling translocal networks to realize their potential as agents of accountability.

CONCLUSION

The findings presented in this article support the argument that migrants can act as agents of accountability as long as they work closely with local residents. Nonetheless, there are limits to what these civil society actors can accomplish on their own even when embedded in translocal networks. The struggle for control in Indaparapeo reveals that even the strongest translocal networks are susceptible to shifts in the political winds. More important, neither HTA leaders nor local residents have much recourse in the event of a breakdown in *ex ante* accountability (Bada 2014; Waldinger, Popkin, and Magana 2008), especially when translocal networks are exclusionary or conflictual. As illustrated starkly in the case of the dam in El Remolino, once a project goes wrong, it is difficult to force the responsible parties to fix their mistakes, never mind face penalties for corruption or mismanagement. Even in the rare event that mechanisms of *ex post* accountability are activated, as in the case of Las Fuentes, the community is often left with an unfinished or poorly constructed project. These examples point to a broader problem of weak institutionalization, which is quite common among accountability mechanisms in developing countries. In the case of the 3×1 program, neither the HTAs nor local residents have much information about or access to formal options of redress (Bada 2014), and the resolution of disputes is highly dependent on individual leadership and personal relationships.

Both the 3×1 program and migrant-state relations in Mexico have undergone important changes since the mid-2000s. First, Sedesol has introduced new accountability mechanisms into the 3×1 program's rules of operation, most notably explicit reference to joint checking accounts as an option available to all COVAMs, support for the formation of "mirror clubs" by beneficiaries to monitor the projects in collaboration with the HTAs, and recognition of the local works committees (*comités comunitarios*) as key actors at all stages of the project (Sedesol 2010, 2013).[28] Second, Mexican migrants have gained new political rights at the national and state levels, enabling them to vote from abroad and, in the case of Zacatecas, run for office as migrant representatives in the state legislature. But neither change has fundamentally altered the story on the ground. Few COVAMs have adopted

28. These changes reflect broader innovations in transparency and societal accountability in Mexico, including the passage of freedom of information laws at the national and state levels and the imposition of new reporting and monitoring requirements for all social programs. In April 2015, the Mexican Senate finally approved legislation to create a National Anti-Corruption System to take effect upon ratification by the states, although it remained unclear whether the 3×1 program's accountability mechanisms would be affected (see, e.g., "Senado aprueba el Sistema Nacional Anticorrupción, va a los estados," *CNN México,* April 21, 2015).

a requirement for joint checking accounts; Sedesol lacks sufficient resources to organize and train social monitors for every 3×1 project; and HTA leaders are very skeptical of the mirror clubs, which they view as a thinly disguised attempt to wrest control away from them.[29] Nor have expatriate voting rights translated into real leverage for migrants back home. Besides lacking the right to vote in municipal elections, migrant votes accounted for less than 1 percent of the national total in the 2006 and 2012 presidential elections.[30]

Even had these reforms lived up to their potential, it is unlikely they would have altered my core findings that organized migrants are most likely to hold public officials accountable when they work closely with local residents, and absent such collaboration, they are not equally equipped to act as agents of societal accountability. Migrant participation without local support is likely to be bad for governance because of the unique challenges that migrants face in holding public officials accountable from afar. In contrast, local participation is likely to be good for governance even without migrant support, although less so than in collaboration with an HTA. Thus, organized migrants can add significant value to local mechanisms of *ex ante* accountability, but they cannot (and should not) replace them. Moreover, any efforts to improve such mechanisms, even in translocal initiatives such as the 3×1 program, should include measures to empower local residents and strengthen their capacity to act as equal partners with the migrants.

The differential impact of organized migrants and local residents on *ex ante* accountability in the absence of translocal civic collaboration raises deeper concerns about societal accountability from afar. Should migrants, who are of but not in the community (Fox 2005, 10), have the right to demand accountability from the municipal government? And should they be able to exercise this right based on their access to financial resources? The answer to both questions, in my view, is a conditional yes. As long as the migrants are embedded in translocal networks and working in partnership with local residents, they should be viewed as legitimate actors in local affairs. Likewise, as long as they are using their financial leverage to demand good governance rather than special favors, they should be viewed as strengthening local democracy. Unfortunately, both of these outcomes are in danger of being compromised by the escalating levels of violence and criminality in high-migration communities, particularly in Michoacán. More research is necessary to determine the extent to which this deterioration in public security has weakened translocal networks and undermined the fragile mechanisms of societal accountability that began to develop in the early years of the 3×1 program.

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29. Migrant leaders have also expressed concern that changes to the program's rules of operation by the Peña Nieto administration have downplayed the importance of strengthening ties between migrants and their communities of origin in favor of directing resources to the neediest communities, which they view as further evidence of a power grab by Sedesol and municipal presidents. See, e.g., "Condicionan programa 3×1 para apoyar proyecto de Peña Nieto," *La Opinión*, March 18, 2014.

30. Turnout has been even more dismal at the state level in Michoacán, where fewer than 350 overseas voters participated in the 2007 and 2011 gubernatorial elections, respectively ("En Michoacán costó 50 mil pesos cada voto foráneo," *El Universal*, November 20, 2011).

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