Partners in Organizing:
Engagement between Migrants and the State in the Production of
Mexican Hometown Associations*

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* This project was funded by New York University – Wagner School of Public Service. Special thanks go to Breana George for her outstanding research support, without which this paper would not have been possible.

The massive historic protests in 2006 against anti-immigrant legislation in the United States have sparked renewed interest in immigrant community mobilization. Analysts have turned to Mexican immigrants in particular, not in the least because Mexicans represent the largest immigrant group in the United States by far. In this focus, many scholars and policy makers both have trained their attention on one form of Mexican civic organization that played an important, yet somewhat unanticipated role in the pro-immigrant marches of the mid-2000s: hometown associations, often called HTAs (Bada, Fox, and Selee 2006; García-Acevedo 2008; Portes, Escobar, and Radford 2007). Broadly defined as organizations formed by migrants from a same community of origin (Fox and Bada 2009), they have been roundly lauded as structures that provide migrants with a wide array of support (Ramakrishnan and Viramontes 2010). HTAs have been characterized as organizations through which migrants not only maintain their cultural identity and sustain their affective connection to their hometowns, but also as structures through which compatriots from the same community or region of origin can provide one another with social and material backing in the US (Bada 2011; Orozco 2004).

This recent interest in HTAs has dovetailed with the enthusiasm that economic development practitioners have displayed toward this organizational form (Aparicio and Meseguer 2008; Burgess 2008; Rodolfo García Zamora 2005). For over a decade, development proponents of HTAs have described them as vehicles that enable migrants to participate in the economic development trajectories of their communities of origin, and perhaps more pointedly, they have identified them as effective funnels that direct remittances – the monies that migrants send home – toward public goods and business investment (Orozco 2004). Despite their differing concern with HTAs, scholars of migrant civic engagement and economic development concur that HTAs are organizational structures that embody significant transnational expressions of migrant identity and engagement.

This essay enters this research terrain and looks specifically at the Mexican HTAs that have become a central object of investigation in both migration and development studies. For the most part, the Mexican HTAs examined represent very specific constructs: with most founded over the last decade, they tend to be registered with Mexican government as formal civic organizations brought together by their affective ties to a community of origin. In a sense, the emphasis on this brand of HTAs is understandable; registration with state authorities makes them visible as objects of analysis, differentiating

from other types of community mobilization, especially community drives that may be contingent and ephemeral, like the mounting of a cultural event or fair, or those that are organized under the umbrella of other institutions, like a church or workers center (Vertovec 2004). By the same token, however, these HTAs, registered officially, are very particular organizational models. They can appear, and are actively represented in the literature, as civic organizations with clearly demarcated boundaries. They are viewed as autonomous and freestanding, even if they have extensive interactions with government authorities. Indeed, it is this supposed organizational independence even in the context of intense deliberations with the Mexican state, and for a time, with United States government authorities as well, that observers have identified as critical to the political sway that HTAs have been able to exercise (Smith and Bakker 2008; Waldinger, Popkin, and Magana 2008).

My goal with this essay is to offer a cautionary note, and to suggest that the emphasis on HTAs as organizational structures may be incomplete. This attention to HTAs as a specific kind of civic form with functional organizational boundaries leads to an inaccurate gloss of HTAs as separate from the state institutions with which they interact. I argue instead that a more useful, and more accurate, way of considering Mexican HTAs is as social fields in which multiple actors negotiate both new expressions of transnational political identity and the possibilities for actions those identities allow. In other words, HTAs, rather than being freestanding civic organizations, are in fact well-trodden arenas of contestation, where migrants, state officials, and local communities on both sides of the United States-Mexico border wrestle over questions of identity, belonging, political power, and resources. Even more pointedly, the HTAs that have featured so centrally in migration and development analyses have emerged as spaces where migrants and state actors together elaborate Mexican policy toward its emigrants. In this respect, HTAs act as incubators for new migration and development policy approaches that are then extended well past the limited sphere of existing organized and registered HTAs to Mexican emigrants more broadly.

Considering HTAs as social fields where transnational identity and policy are contested and elaborated reveals just how variegated the practices that occur within the spaces they open still remain. This perspective highlights HTAs as theaters that host a flow of transnational political practices and identities that are contingent – that change depending on time and place (Abbott 1997; Landolt 2008). The negotiations between migrants and the state, as well as the products of those contexts, are informed by the

specific political opportunities and constraints of the moment. Historical factors as broad as shifts in migration policy or changes in national leadership inform the way that migrants and state actors engage in the arenas that HTAs provide, but so too do more localized events such as the outcome of municipal elections, a poor crop, or a dispute over land ownership. In addition to external historical events, however, contests within HTAs spaces are also shaped by the previous exchanges they hosted. The very local history of interactions within specific spaces offered by HTA supports but also constrains the possible identities and political strategies that they can spark (Sewell 2008). Tending to the diversity and the historical specificity of the negotiations that occur in the context of HTAs is important, I argue, because these exchanges determine the significance and impact of the migration and development policies that HTAs help produce and enact. The same policy interventions can – and do – have vastly different meanings and outcomes depending on the contexts in which they are enacted, and the HTAs that they involve.

To illustrate the role of HTAs as fields of social contest that shape migration and development policy, this essay relies on a layered research strategy. It focuses squarely on contemporary HTAs, formed within the last five years. It draws first on interviews with presidents of 38 Mexican HTAs primarily constituted in 2007 or later, with the lion's share registered in the last two years, and listed on a public registry maintained by the Mexican federal government; the sample included HTAs that were located in a wide array of US states, both traditional and newer areas of Mexican immigration, and that were based on affiliation to communities of origin in diverse municipalities throughout Mexicoⁱ. Interviews explored how the HTAs were formed, their current projects, and their interactions with various levels of the Mexican government (please see appendix 1 for summary statistics on the HTAs interviewed). These discussions were supported with interviews with current officials in instances of state and federal Mexican government, as well as a review of policy documents. In the second layer of research, the focus turns to HTAs from Zacatecas and Guanajuato, two Mexican states where exchanges between migrants and state actors have evolved in two very distinctive and emblematic ways: HTAs anchored in Zacatecas have tended to coalesce into large and politically powerful federations, whereas those from Guanajuatan communities have engaged with state government on a more individual basis. The governments of these two states have some of the longest traditions of crafting policies to engage with migrants in United States, and their efforts are also some of the most robustly documented (Fernandez de Castro, García Zamora, and Ana 2006; Rodolfo García

Zamora 2005; Ramírez 2012; Smith and Bakker 2008). The state-level analysis for this essay includes interviews with representatives of HTAs or federations and with government officials. It also reviews the local Mexican press of exchanges between migrants and government officials. The third layer of research situates the cases of Zacatecan and Guanajuatan HTAs in their historical contexts, and draws on interviews with migrant activists and current and former government officials that participated in the creation of models of engagement between migrants and government characteristic of both states from the late 1980s through the late 2000s.

After opening with an overview of the analytic and policy treatments of contemporary HTAs, this essay offers a discussion of the range of exchanges between migrants and the Mexican government that are contained in the spaces that are opened when new HTAs are founded. It follows with a review of the historical evolution of HTAs in Zacatecas and Guanajuato to illustrate the ways in which HTAs are situated, in place and in time. It then concludes with a discussion of what the two models of exchange between migrants and the Mexican government in these two states suggest for how we might interpret HTAs as social fields where new practices of transnational identity, activism, and policy emerge.

1. A New Brand of Hometown Association?

By and large, analysts of Mexican hometown associations have billed them as new, sometimes path-breaking, expressions of transnational migrant political identity and as novel vehicles for engaging with the Mexican government. Other scholars, however, have cautioned that contemporary Mexican hometown associations have historical roots in the mutual aid societies that were so prevalent among Mexican immigrants in the early 1900s (Gonzalez 1990), as well as in the community associations the internal migrants formed in the Mexican cities to which they moved (Fitzgerald 2008). And they note, too, that the mutual aid societies and internal hometown associations had ties to government and other authorities (Smith 2003): *mutualistas* registered and otherwise coordinated with Mexican consular officials to provide material assistance and cultural support to their members (Gonzalez 1990). Associations made of internal migrants collaborated with the church and

local government in their hometowns to donate money for projects both in the municipalities from which they came and the cities to which they moved.

But in a technical sense, observers of contemporary Mexican HTAs are correct. This is because they are, for the most part, considering migrant associations formed under the rubric of a matching funds program for local development projects that went into effect as national policy in 2002. The program, officially titled the “Three-for-One for Migrants” (henceforth 3x1) matches funds raised by groups of migrants for community projects in their towns and villages of origin. The schema is as the program name suggests: the federal, state, and municipal governments all contribute one dollar for each dollar that migrants raise. In order to participate in the program, migrants must form a hometown association and register their group with the Mexican federal government, either through consular offices or indirectly under the umbrella of existing federations of HTAs.

On its face, the initiative is modest. In 2010ⁱⁱ, the federal budgetary allocation for the 3x1 program was approximately 50 million USDⁱⁱⁱ. The projects funded under the initiative were relatively small overall, with 2,438 projects completed that year, at an average budget per project of about 20,000 USD. As in previous years, the projects included basic infrastructure projects such as paving roads or laying down water pipes, the beautification or restoration of cultural spaces like churches and plazas, the construction of sporting arenas, clinics, or other community venues, and, in an emergent trend, investment in facilities to support local industry. In 2010, 881 HTAs, formed around toponymic identities to towns and villages in 664 municipalities spread across 28 Mexican states, participated in the program. Interpreting what close to 900 HTAs means however is complicated. Some were quite small, with no more than 10 members, whereas others were somewhat larger and belonged to federations of HTAs from the same Mexican state, some with membership bases that were quite strong. The HTAs that participated in 3x1 made up close to half of the 2,000 HTAs registered with the Mexican government over the life of the program. Nevertheless, in absolute numbers and, more saliently, relative to the total population of Mexican migrants in the United States, the adherents to the HTAs that have received so much attention represent a miniscule sliver of the Mexican migrant population^{iv} (Instituto de los Mexicanos en el Exterior 2011).

However, as the voluminous literature on the 3x1 program has documented, the Mexican government’s matching funds program and the civic mobilization it has supported has had an outsized impact (R. García Zamora 2005; García Zamora 2007; Goldring 2004;

Kijima and Gonzalez-Ramirez 2012; Lopez 2009; Orozco 2004; Orozco and Garcia-Zanello 2009). The program, primarily through the HTAs it has instated, has been credited with improving the delivery of public goods in municipalities throughout Mexico (Bada 2008; Duquette 2011). Tethering development projects to groups with strong interests and ties in specific communities has channeled public monies to some marginalized areas of the country that otherwise have had difficulty attracting public investment (Aparicio and Meseguer 2008). Through their involvement in project design and in the supervision of implementation, HTAs have been identified as catalysts for the emergence of new forms of administration, most pointedly new mechanisms of accountability in local governance (Burgess 2008, forthcoming). The most provocative outcome of the program noted by its observers is the increase in political influence that migrants have been able to exercise in their communities and in the states of origin (Smith and Bakker 2008). Using the HTAs, and especially federations of HTAs, as their ballast, migrants have created increasingly sophisticated and powerful political lobbies; they have exercised electoral sway, among friends and relatives, but more significantly, in wider political debates; and they have wrested new rights of suffrage and political representation from both state and federal legislatures (Iskander 2010; Williams 2008). So substantial has been their influence that many scholars, invoking Hirshman's triptych of avenues for political participation (Hirshman 1970), have noted that HTAs have come to embody the vehicle through migrants exercise "voice" *after* "exit" (Duquette 2011; Fox and Bada 2008).

HTAs created through the framework of the 3x1 program have been equally credited with supporting immigrant integration, advancement, and mobilization in the United States (Somerville, Durana, and Terrazas 2008). Accounts of 3x1 HTA members informally providing one another with employment leads, donations for emergencies, and other kinds of material support are numerous, as are those of more formalized efforts to raise funds for scholarships and other awards (Bada 2008). More compelling to analysts, however, has been the role that 3x1 HTAs have played in bolstering immigrant social movements. Mexican 3x1 HTAs in Los Angeles and Chicago have received particular attention because of success in connecting to broader pan-immigrant activism and to electoral campaigns (Cano 2009; Fox and Bada 2009; Shannon 2006; Smith 2007).

Most of these analyses have been attentive to the exchanges between 3x1 HTAs and the Mexican government, as they have occurred on both sides of the border. These interactions have been described as so intensive that they have supported forms of co-

production (Ostrom 1996) between HTAs and government actors– co-production in the provision of public goods in Mexico, but also co-production of the political influence that HTAs have exercised (Cano and Délano 2007; Délano 2010; Duquette 2011). Moreover, scholars have pointed out that there has been notable cross-over between migrant leadership and state officials, with migrant leaders of HTAs and federations of HTAs taking elected and nominated positions in diverse instances of the Mexican government (Iskander 2010; Ramírez 2012; Smith and Bakker 2008).

Despite their sensitive observation of the quantity of interaction between HTAs and the Mexican government, however, these perspectives still maintain a separateness between the migrant organizations and state actors. HTAs and government may interact, they may collaborate, they may tussle, but they still remain conceptually and actually distinct in this view. The organizational structures that encapsulate the HTAs and their federations are represented as marking the boundary between government and migrant civil society. An examination of the processes through which HTAs are and have been created calls this characterization into question. It reveals that state actors engage assertively in mobilizing and formalizing HTAs, and do so in an on-going way, proactively and deliberately cultivating organizational strength and forms of political action among these migrant civic groups. Is it still accurate, then, to describe exchanges between HTAs and government actors as co-production when what is often produced is the migrant organization itself?

2. Co-Producing Hometown Associations

The interactions that have produced hometown associations are rich, fraught, and variegated. They have occurred between migrants and actors at various levels of government, and they have centered on myriad policy tools. Likewise, the exchanges have also displayed an array of strategies for social mobilization, as well as more than a few attempts at co-optation and control. It is this multivocal and intricate interplay that has given rise to Mexican HTAs as they are currently understood. An examination of these varied exchanges illuminates the important role they have played in creating the organizational forms that are credited with much social change, but that are themselves rarely considered as sites of contested political transformation.

In a 2008 presentation of the 3x1 program in Mexico City, directed at migrant leaders and various offices of government, the Mexican federal government describes it as an initiative set up in response to migrant desires to carry out community development projects in their hometowns, but also stresses that its scope stretches far beyond this mandate to advance additional government priorities. Central among these is the organization and mobilization of migrant communities in the United States. In this vein, the 3x1 initiative was represented as providing an important platform “to motivate migrants to identify with their communities in Mexico and with their country,” and to draw on that identity to “foster and strengthen the formation of HTAs in the United States” and “to strengthen the organizational capacity of HTAs and migrant organizations in their dealings with the Mexican government and with the government of the country in which they reside” (SEDESOL 2008).

As part of its effort to further the goals it has around community mobilization, the Mexican federal government has refined the 3x1 program procedures to support the formation of HTAs. It has taken proactive steps to use the program as a means of outreach to Mexican immigrants. According to program guidelines finalized in 2008, any group of migrants interested in participating in the 3x1 program must formally register with consular authorities and secure a “*toma de nota*,” a document that certifies their existence and their compliance with certain minimal requirements established by the Mexican federal government. These include an active membership of at least 10 persons, “with common interests, living abroad, who, among other activities, carry out initiatives in favor of their communities of origin in Mexico.” Members must provide formal identification, preferably a consular identification card (*matrícula consular*), and its board of directors must provide contact information that will be verified for accuracy. The *toma de nota* must be renewed every two years, both to ensure that the club continues to have at least 10 active members and that the contact information for its leaders remains correct. The program regulations also lay out procedures for creating a federation of HTAs: groups of HTAs can register as federations if they can demonstrate the association of 5 migrant clubs, and must commit to remaining a non-profit, autonomous organization, without political affiliation of any kind (Sedesol and Instituto de los Mexicanos en el Exterior 2012). HTAs that obtain a *toma de nota* are encouraged to list themselves in the public registry maintained by the Institute for Mexicans Abroad. Some HTAs have been more amenable to this suggestion than others, with

HTAs that join a federation preferring to be listed under the larger organization's umbrella, rather than as individual groups.

According to officials in the federal government, the requirement for a *toma de nota* was put in place in response to migrant demands for greater transparency in the 3x1 program. Numerous migrant groups complained to the federal government that municipal presidents throughout Mexico, but especially from states where migrant HTAs and their federations were not well established, were submitting community development projects to the 3x1 on behalf of migrant HTAs that did not exist. These were "phantom clubs," as one official termed them (Interview, April 2012), created as an administrative fiction to claim additional state and federal resources under the rubric of the matching funds program. By all accounts, the safeguards provided by the new guidelines have curtailed the most egregious abuses of this type. Said a director of the program, "previously, the practice of municipal presidents 'inventing' clubs was a problem. It has been effectively curbed" (Interview, April 2012).

Municipal authorities have long played a role in organizing HTAs, often traveling to locations across the border to convene and establish the migrant organizations. But migrant complaints to federal officials in this case represent a forceful statement of their view of what this new form of civic organization – a 3x1 HTA – should represent. Tellingly, their demand was not for full independence from government, but rather was a call on government to participate far more actively in safeguarding their organizational space. Migrants' petition was that, at the very least, they be the main protagonists in the creation of their own HTAs, and that their membership be robust enough to qualify as a vibrant civic group. They demanded that their identity not be co-opted by a shell organization, headed by a migrant figurehead but deployed cynically by municipal governments to pad their budgets. In this sense, these government regulations were the product of exchanges between migrants and the Mexican state over what an HTA should be in practice. They were a reflection of migrants' rejection of the somewhat romanticized notions of HTAs as groups that formed organically and independently around altruistic, if also nostalgic, goals for their communities – notions that even the Institute for Mexicans Abroad embraced in their early consideration of HTAs, portraying them, in early project memos, as "effective social networks" that "provided an excellent vehicle to strengthen the ethical, moral, and civic values of the community" (Instituto de los Mexicanos en el Exterior 2004). Migrants' complaint was also a "realpolitik" reminder to the federal authorities that HTAs were small

groups that needed protection from the instrumental appropriation of their identities by government actors.

In addition to limiting the misuse of the 3x1 program, the guidelines have had two important implications for HTA organizing, and have shaped them as arenas when migrants and government interlocutors elaborate new forms of transnational civic identity and action. First, the regulations have provided migrant groups with a solid springboard for organizing and for pushing past inertia or ambivalence among their adherents and potential adherents for mobilizing. One HTA anchored in a community in Durango observed, for example, “our group was formally established in 2011 after working informally for six years. We were just a few people and then grew to ten so that we could meet the requirement for participating in the 3x1” (Interview, March 2012). This experience was echoed by a majority of the HTAs interviewed; indeed, 6 out of 38 organizations sampled reported that they registered with the consulate in the hopes of putting together a 3x1 project, but had not yet identified the project that they wanted to complete or were still finalizing its design (Interviews, March-April 2012). One leader of an HTA representing a community in Puebla located in the wider New York metropolitan area noted that he had worked with Mexican community organizations in the city for close to a decade but had found them “very disappointing...lacking a true community base and lacking leadership, without a true representation from the community,” and it was this frustration, rather than a targeted ambition to complete defined 3x1 projects, that motivated him with others to start a formal HTA. As he explained, “if you don’t get people to come together here, even as they integrate into this society, you cannot achieve development [in our communities of origin]” (Interview, March 2012).

The formal registration of an HTA or a federation of HTAs provides a critical point of contact between consular officials and migrants who might otherwise remain unknown to them. While interviews reveal that there is considerable variation among consular offices in the ways they respond to this connection, with several HTA leaders noting that interactions with consular staff were largely transactional, numerous HTAs reported receiving substantial and ongoing mentorship in organizing capacity. Descriptors that were articulated repeatedly in response to questions about consular offices were that the staff was “very helpful”; HTA presidents reported that their groups were “well-received” and they benefited from “good orientation” about how to set up and maintain an HTA (Interviews, March-April 2012). One leader of an HTA rooted in Hidalgo recounted, for

example, that she had started an HTA in 2005, but that it was through interactions with staff from the Institute of Mexicans Abroad (IME), a government agency that coordinates policy toward emigrants, and staff at the consulate that she learned her HTA could form a federation with other groups from the same state. “The consular office gave us a lot of support with meetings on a monthly basis to guide our experience, to register, to learn the rules...to prepare project paperwork and demonstrate the viability of our projects so that they could be approved... The support we received as a federation was really very good” (Interview, March 2012).

Based on the limited interview sample used for this essay, it is difficult to determine conclusively how widespread is the consular practice of using HTAs registration as the beginning of capacity building efforts. Nevertheless, federal government officials report that this is an important thrust of their activities. As explained by a 3x1 official at the federal level, the directory acts as a foundation for consular outreach activities: “The function of the *toma de nota* is first and foremost to give the consulates an opportunity to be familiar with the work of the clubs” (Interview, April 2012). “Each consulate uses the directory in its own way, depending on its respective approach and work with HTAs,” confirmed an official at the IME. “Some might use it to identify which clubs are in existence in their areas and invite them to come to a training at the consulate” (Interview, April 2012). In this respect, the *toma de nota* process provides the Mexican government with a crucial optic onto migrant civic organization; it makes the extent and location of migrant organizing efforts visible and legible. The IME does not have a census or complete database of migrant groups; indeed, by their own report, they only know how many and which groups have acquired the *toma de nota* under 3x1 regulations (Personal communication, April 2012).

The outreach use of the registry of the *tomas de nota* mandated by the 3x1 program points to the second function the matching funds program plays in creating spaces for the development of transnational political identities. It is no accident that the IME views HTAs as “our reason for being” (Interview, April 2012). For the Mexican federal government, HTAs are doorways to the broader migrant population, but they are also spaces where migrant rights and activism around other issue areas beyond imperatives of the 3x1 program are explored. As one staff member explained, HTAs “provide us with a structure through which we can reach the community. HTAs are like ‘arms’ that extend our outreach capacity.” And that outreach that HTA networks support engages with numerous issue

areas, such as “financial education, health programming, empowerment, and the protection of migrants’ rights” (Interview, April 2012).

Moreover, in much the same way that the issue areas the Mexican federal government has addressed with HTAs have expanded past the prerogatives of the 3x1, the organizational capacity building efforts have as well. The IME has worked with HTAs and held leadership seminars in Chicago, Houston, New York, Washington D.C. and San Francisco in collaboration with the American Jewish Committee to draw on the experience of Israel and its engagement with Jewish communities in the United States. It has also offered leadership training in partnership with local universities, most recently with the City University of New York. As a staff member at the IME clarified, the goal of these training sessions is much broader than to support the functioning of a single government program. Rather, “the aim of these workshops is to develop capacity among Mexican community leaders to create opinion leaders, local functionaries, entrepreneurs, and more skilled community leaders in general, to promote a better understanding of the contribution of the Mexican community in the US, and to advance the image of Mexico. Also, [these workshops] give those who participate the tools to carry out more effective actions to better defend [Mexican] communities and their integration into the society that receives them” (Personal communication, March-April 2012).

While the Mexican government has strengthened its efforts to provide a broader platform for migrant organizing and integration in the host society, the focus for migrants who have formed HTAs more recently, however, has remained the 3x1 program. Many of the HTA leaders interviewed acknowledged that their organizations provided forms of support to its members that were ancillary to the task of carrying out a matching funds project, and they also noted the services provided by consular offices were helpful in this respect, as well as in its general support of “*el movimiento migratorio*” – the immigrant movement (Interviews, March 2012). Nevertheless, the main goal of their HTAs was funding and completing a development project, however conceived, in their community of origin. Likewise, their primary expression of transnational civic identity was anchored in the towns and villages from which they heralded. This hometown affiliation has been central to civic participation even in arenas that are not defined by actions related to their communities of origin. Migrant participation in larger federation of HTAs, for example, which are built around a state-wide political identity, began with identities that were rooted in hometowns. Although federation activists came to embrace a political identity that was

centered on their state of origin, migrants' entry into federations has been through topophilic actions and identities located in their hometown, structured to a great extent by the 3x1 program. This trend can be observed even relation to activism in the United States. Migrant social mobilization against anti-immigrant legislation in the late 2000s, as well as more formal political participation in electoral campaigns, was nurtured in spaces, both physical and symbolic, that were created around expressions of hometown solidarity that had coalesced into larger state-based identities. In Chicago, for example, the Casa Michoacán, a physical space (a house in Pilsen) grounded in a Mexican state identity, emerged as one of the most important meeting sites for mobilization against the restrictive Sensenbrenner bill (Bada 2008). Similarly, in Los Angeles, the Frente Civico Zacatecano, a political group that grew out of the Federación de Clubes Zacatecanos del Sur de California, was active in numerous electoral contests, including those for mayor, state representatives, and county sheriff (Smith and Bakker 2008).

As a reflection of their interest in the 3x1 program as a vehicle to express their topophilic identities, newer HTAs have been proactive in connecting with state-level government officials. Whereas their involvement with federal-level consular authorities is mandated by program design through the *toma de nota*, HTAs have actively sought out state authorities to assist them in submitting projects and securing their approval. While HTAs have had some success in connecting with Mexican state-level government authorities in the United States, their initial contact tends to be in Mexico, and their ongoing exchange with state government takes place in the halls of state government buildings. The physical location of HTAs' engagement with state government officials has had important implications for the leadership structure – both formal and informal – of HTAs. Traveling back to Mexico is more feasible for migrants that have the legal status and the financial means to do so. This creates a selection bias toward more established migrants, who tend to have been in the US for a longer period of time; it also tends to favor men, for reasons that are not yet well documented. Older HTAs, and especially those that have coalesced into federations, tend to display this membership profile, with the leadership dominated by male long-term migrants with legal status (Ramakrishnan and Viramontes 2010). Newer HTAs, such as those sampled for this essay, are more likely to have members that are recent and undocumented migrants, with less organizational capacity and less ability to travel to Mexico to follow up on their 3x1 projects with state authorities.

For the most part, state government authorities have been responsive to migrant outreach around the 3x1 and have met it with their own efforts to connect with HTAs under the rubric of this program. However, there has been a notable distinction between state-level instances of federal offices, especially the Secretariat of Social Development (SEDESOL), the federal office responsible for the 3x1 program, and the governments of specific states. SEDESOL has three satellites north of the border, one in Los Angeles, one in Chicago, and a recently established one in New York, but runs training programs around the United States, with most outreach efforts targeting migrants from single hometowns or municipalities. Its exchanges with migrants have hewn closely to program mandates, and addressed how to establish and run an HTA within the context of the matching funds program. Recent outreach by state government officials, in contrast, has tended to rely on the 3x1 program as a means of establishing contact with migrant constituents. In a manner similar to consular authorities, state officials have expanded discussions about 3x1 projects to include larger political considerations. This has been especially true of representatives from traditional migrant-sending states in northwest and central Mexico: state governments – and political parties in or out of office – have sent representatives to campaign during election years or to push legislative agendas.

Partly as a response to these political overtures, newer HTAs have joined or consolidated into federations. As several interviewees pointed out, HTAs in a group are more effective at resisting political influence, and pressing for the funding and implementation of the projects they propose. “We established a federation,” said one president of a federation of HTAs from a traditional migrant sending state, “because it gives us the opportunity to have a more official relationship and work directly with our state government, and to have more impact....All of the federations from our state send a secretary [representative] that travels back to Mexico to secure funds for our projects through a meeting with the [state] government. This process is like an open negotiation between secretaries and the state government: “this is how much we bring to the table. So now, how much are you going put down?” (Interview, March 2012). And in this endeavor, HTAs have often received tutelage and support from SEDESOL and consular officials. Indeed, HTAs presidents reported connecting with other HTAs from their state at trainings provided by their local consulate (Interviews, March 2012). Not infrequently, state government officials have also played an important role in bringing HTAs into federations, in order – analysts and migrants have argued (Ramírez 2012; Rivera-Salgado, Bada, and

Escala-Rabadán 2005; Williams 2008) – to access or strengthen the political constituency that supra-HTA organization can represent.

In a reflection of the negotiating power that this arrangement affords, federations from numerous states, particularly those with well-established federations like Zacatecas, Michoacán, and Jalisco, among others, have instituted regulations that are informal but binding in practice that all HTAs must join a federation in order to participate in the 3x1 program. With tacit agreement with state officials, only projects sponsored by a federation are considered for funding. But as federations have expanded and their political heft has grown, they too have expanded exchanges with state government past the narrow confines of the 3x1 program. They have pressed for legislative changes, including suffrage in national and state elections, and the allotment of state delegates. They have also wrested financial commitments from state government to increase funding for various projects spearheaded by migrants, but that fall outside of the parameters of the 3x1 program. Newer HTAs, while maintaining their keen interest in the 3x1, have joined these political efforts. As one HTAs president interviewed commented, “migrants advance through struggle and demands – *a través de luchas y exigencias*. It is a matter of how motivated we migrants are to improve our lives and how we learn how to do achieve this” (Interview, March 2012).

Unlike the ongoing exchanges and political negotiations between HTAs and state government, interactions at the municipal level appear far more mercurial and tense. In interviews, a common complaint regarding municipal authorities was that they were nakedly partisan in their selection of projects and were obstructionist with projects that did not improve their political party’s political standing. “HTAs receive much more outreach from municipal presidents during an election year. It is a political exchange,” said one HTA president. “Our relationship with the municipal government has been antagonistic. It has been really hard to get the mayor [municipal president] to give political support to the project, but a new mayor took office in January so it might get better,” reported another.

Because municipal authorities implement the actual project, handling construction and coordination, HTA presidents observed that local authorities often have influence that is greater than the proportion of funds they contribute to any given project. “The municipal president determines the project we do....In our view, the [municipal] government is charging us for what each project costs, and we as the HTA are ‘contracting’ the project with them....When a project does not fit the within the 3x1 program, our HTA pays the cost of the

project in full, depending on what the municipal government asks for,” said an HTA president representing a Guanajuatan HTA (Interview, March 2012). Similarly, an HTA president from Michoacán reported that 3x1 projects were “controlled” by municipal government and complained about price inflation. “The companies who are hired are affiliated with the local government political party” (Interview, March 2012). Other interviewees echoed this concern about corruption, voicing frustration that municipal governments were playing fast and loose in 3x1 project budgets. In an account of a paving project, one HTA president explained that the migrant group contributed their portion “in full, but only part of the paving was actually accomplished and the municipal government kept the difference” (Interview, March 2012).

In order to exercise greater control over the project budgets and project implementation, many HTAs now work with “mirror committees”—*comités de espejo*—made up of residents in the community of origin. HTAs and federations in states that have a longer and more intensive history with the 3x1 program, like Zacatecas, Jalisco and Michoacán, formed citizen supervisory committees to monitor 3x1 projects, often taking the protective measure of creating an account for 3x1 funds that was separate from any municipal accounts. In 2005, the federal government took up this innovation and sponsored the formation “mirror committees” as a means to address the problem of “phantom HTAs” created on paper by municipal authorities (Shannon 2006). As a result, their embeddedness in the local community was mixed, with some “mirror committees” emerging as significantly more representative of local community interests than others, which functioned more as extensions of the municipal government (Burgess 2008). This initiative continued nevertheless, and was institutionalized as part of the 3x1 program in 2009. The HTAs sampled had a favorable view of these committees, considering them essential to effective project implementation. Indeed, for some HTAs, the “mirror committees” did more than increase accountability: they served as an indispensable bridge for migrants to their communities of origin, especially when travel back to Mexico was complicated by migrants’ lack of legal immigration status, and facilitated deliberation with local residents about project choice: “We now have a mirror committee,” explained one president from HTA rooted in Hidalgo, “The community, together with the rotating membership of the committee, helps select the projects. The committee has been indispensable and without it, it would not be possible to do the projects” (Interview, March 2012). Some also observed that the mirror committees have taken on their own initiatives

to push for improved government service and to author social change, a claim echoed by scholars who have analyzed the effect of the 3x1 on local mobilization in Mexico (Bada 2008; Duquette 2011).

Overall, presidents of the newer HTAs interviewed saw the 3x1 program as a work in progress. According to them, it has provided migrants with a springboard from which to organize, and has opened up channels for them to engage with the various instances and levels of the Mexican government. “Though there are problem with the program, it is really important because it is the only thing we have,” summed up one HTA president. “The concept is excellent, but the structure is deficient” (Interview, March 2012). The HTAs, along with the federations that some have joined, have provided a space for the elaboration and strengthening of program structures. In an iterative fashion, the programs -- the 3x1 chief among them -- that have been refined have also shaped HTAs and the form and actions they take. But today’s HTAs enter an existing flow of HTA forms and actions, with histories, in some cases, that are now decades long. As the cases of newer HTAs in Zacatecas and Guanajuato show, the trajectories with which they merge inform the meaning of their activism. This history shapes the significance of their activism as an expression of transnational political identities, and modulates the impact that their involvement in their communities can have on local development.

3. Hometown Associations and History-in-the-Making

In early 2012, the opinion pages of the main local newspaper in Zacatecas were bursting with commentary about political maneuvering by the Institutional Revolutionary Party (PRI) to dominate the influential organization that migrants had created. Editorials decried “the attacks against migrant organizations in an effort to maintain and consolidate control over the migrant community – and their leaders – to harvest electoral votes for contests over position in the federal government now and for contests at the state level later” (Columna Reloj de Sol 2012). At issue was the fracture of the Federación de Clubes Zacatecanos del Sur de California, the largest and longest standing federation of Zacatecan hometown associations in the United States, into two rival federations, one of which displayed a stronger affinity with PRI, which had swept into power at the state level once again with the election of the Miguel Alonso Reyes as governor in 2010. This was the

second instance of a well-established federation breaking apart in as many months: the Federación de Clubes Zacatecanos de Fort Worth split into two factions for similar reasons at the end of 2011. The sense of alarm in the editorial pages of the local daily was bolstered with accusations of vote-buying “left and right” in elections by PRI-affiliated migrant groups to determine the governance of these federations and others, blatant bias by the state agency that vetted potential 3x1 projects in favor of those in municipalities governed by the PRI, and widespread corruption by politicians who were awarding 3x1 construction contracts to weave a clientelistic web. By contrast, coverage in Guanajuatan dailies of the 3x1 program and of migrant organizations was sparse, and whatever was on offer was staid. The main story during this same time period on the 3x1 program, buried in the back of local section of the primary state newspaper, concerned financial support the matching funds scheme had provided for the restoration of the stained-glass windows of the state capital’s cathedral (Flores 2011).^v

The contrasting press coverage reflects the difference in place and significance that migrant hometown associations and the 3x1 program have in both states. In Zacatecas, federations of HTAs have become powerful political actors, shaping the outcome of electoral contests, at the local and state-wide level, on both sides of the border, and the 3x1 program, initiated in Zacatecas, now represents fully half of the state’s budget for public works (Interviews, April 2012). In Guanajuato, on the other hand, HTAs remain largely unaffiliated with federations, and the few federations that exist are nascent and weak. The 3x1 program represents a smaller fraction of the state’s budget for public goods, and, in an indication of how marginal the program is to state concerns, state-level government officials were hard pressed to provide even a rough estimate of the contribution the matching funds program made to the state’s budget (Interviews, April 2012). The new HTAs that are created under the rubric of the 3x1 program enter these two contrasting political and organizational landscapes. As a result, they are formed and supported by two very different kinds of exchanges between migrants and state government, and thus, the shape they take when they are founded and the ways in which they connect to the flow of ongoing migrant interactions with local government reflect this reality. HTAs are “co-produced” differently depending on the state in which they are anchored.

When Zacatecan HTAs form, they also simultaneously join a federation. Existing federations have deliberately merged these two actions. Federations have effectively enforced this fusion by insisting that HTAs can only participate in the 3x1 program through

federations, a stipulation by which all levels of government abide, even though it contravenes federal guidelines: in an environment where competition for 3x1 program funds is fierce and only 40 percent of all projects submitted are approved, projects that are not vetted, submitted, and actively pitched by federations receive no consideration whatsoever. When an HTA wants to form, the first point of contact is the local federation, defined by geographic location in the United States. The federation files a *toma de nota* with the relevant consulate, and if the federation has non-profit status in the United States, which all the major Zacatecan federations do, it extends this to the newly created and absorbed HTA. It then acts as a liaison between municipal authorities and the new HTA, mediating the process of defining a viable 3x1 project that the new migrant group can sponsor. It also offers the HTA ongoing mentorship around tasks as diverse fundraising, increasing membership and motivating existing participants, and planning for future projects. Federations also provide a platform for knowledge sharing among HTAs, holding yearly plenary meetings where insights about strategy are exchanged. Furthermore, in recognition of the fact that the membership of newer HTAs is more likely to include undocumented migrants, and that thus travel represents risking deportation, federations are increasingly fostering knowledge exchange through telephone calls and email. Thus, for Zacatecan HTAs, their primary contact with any instance of Mexican government is through the federations. As one federation president summed it up, “the federation is really their universe of operation” (Interview, April 2012).

To support these activities, it has been common practice among federations to charge member HTAs an annual fee, which appears to be proportional to the political clout that the charging federation possesses in Zacatecas; the Federación de Clubes Zacatecanos de la Costa Oeste, which was created in 2003 and thus is among the most recently founded and which “specializes” in HTAs in places like Utah and the Carolinas that are geographically isolated from major federations, charges 150 USD, whereas the Federación de Clubes Zacatecanos del Sur de California, which was, until early 2012, the most powerful federation, levied a fee of no less than 2,000 USD. But the argument articulated by federations is that this fee and the mandated membership for HTAs is a means to enhance migrant influence. “What this rule is really enforcing is the affiliation of clubs with federations in order to make federations more politically powerful,” explained one federation president interviewed. “This is a lever of power that the state government can rely upon when they need something... for example, a humanitarian visa or repatriation of

remains. The federations are the mediators -- *vínculo* – between the US government and the Zacatecan government. They serve to strengthen the political power of the Zacatecan and the Mexican [national] state vis-à-vis the US government” (Interview, April 2012).

In Guanajuato, HTAs and their emergent federations carry little political weight on their either side of the border, and the process through which HTAs are formed both reflects and cements this reality. Groups of migrants from Guanajuato who have been keen on participating in the 3x1 program have tended to organize on their own initiative, relying on the same kinds of assistance from the consulate and occasionally from municipal authorities from which HTAs rooted in communities all around Mexico have benefited. Interestingly, Guanajuatan migrants have been exceptionally active in the formation of individual HTAs: of the 1,512 HTAs currently listed in the IME’s public registry, 453 claim affiliation to a community in Guanajuato. This growth reflects in part the proactive stance of the state government in promoting the registration of new Guanajuatan HTAs, designed to create the appearance of collective migrant strength. As part of this effort, the state actively distributes information about registering in IME’s public list of HTAs, publishing on their website of contact information of peer advisors in different regions of the United States who provide one-on-one assistance to new HTAs on how to register (Lauret 2006; Interviews, April 2012). Beyond this initial encouragement, however the state government has offered little additional support and no guidance to HTAs in launching a 3x1 project. It has instead opted to deploy a state-focused outreach strategy, historically technocratic and top-down, through its Dirección de Atención a Comunidades Guanajuatenses en el Extranjero (DACGE). The centerpiece of this strategy has been creation of Casas Guanajuato, groups of migrants with which the state government works to secure non-profit status in the United States. The Casas program was designed to create topophilic identities among migrants that were fixed on their state of origin rather than on the town and villages from which they came. As the governor who initiated the program in 1994, Carlos Medina, explained, “We wanted [migrants] to look toward Guanajuato and its government for their future. And that’s why we decided that the Casas Guanajuato should have a larger state identity, rather than be identified with a given municipality. And anyway, how much can a municipality really do for migrants in any case?” (Interview, July 2003).

The Casas program has a mixed track record, with many of the Casas collapsing into shell organizations with minimal or no membership, covered by a migrant figurehead (Faret 2006; Iskander 2010). Of late, however, the Casas program has seen the increased

migrant participation; 3x1 HTAs have appropriated it to tap into the organizational support that the state government offers and, most especially, to take advantage of the privileged access to government authorities that being a “Casa” can afford an HTA. Similarly, there has been an incipient movement to forge federations of Guanajuatan HTAs, and new federations report working in conjunction with the Casas program. As one federation president explained, several HTAs can come together under the banner of a single Casa (Interview, April 2012). However, Guanajuatan federations and supra-Casas still remain organizationally weak, especially when compared with their Zacatecan counterparts. They have displayed disappointing uptake, with HTAs in the same geographic area – indeed the same city – preferring to remain independent HTAs rather than joining forces with a larger network of hometown organizations. In this sense, migrant groups, even though they have drawn on the Casa program resources to create organizations rooted in their hometowns, remain resistant to the project of embracing a state-wide -- and, more importantly, state government-defined -- civic identity.

The difference in organizational strength between Zacatecan and Guanajuatan migrant groups and the intensity of exchanges with state actors that have produced them is the product of distinct historical trajectories – trajectories which continue to inform how HTAs are produced in each state. In Zacatecas, HTAs along with their federations and the 3x1 program developed together. Both the migrant groups and the program around which they organized emerged out of exchanges between migrants and state officials, and both continued to evolve as that engagement matured and refashioned them. The origin of the 3x1 program was an informal 1x1 matching funds agreement, sketched out on a piece of notebook paper, when the newly elected governor Borrego traveled to Los Angeles in 1986 to meet Zacatecan migrants there. Said the then-governor of the ad-hoc program, “if they contributed a dollar...well, it just seemed fundamental to me in terms of equity that I contribute a dollar [as well]” (Interview, May 2003). In anticipation of the governor’s visit, Zacatecan clubs formed their first federation of HTAs by actually *breaking away* from the longstanding Federation of Mexican Clubs. The governor anointed the new state-based federation as a privileged interlocutor and representative of Zacatecan migrants on both sides of the border. He did this in part through various symbolic gestures which migrants found enormously validating, including publicly honoring each of the existing Zacatecan HTAs with a Mexican flag at a large sporting event that the governor attended as the mayor of Los Angeles’ personal guest. (Iskander 2010)

This reciprocal recognition, exchange and collaboration between state government and federations of migrant HTAs continued over the next 25 years, peaking in intensity at each state electoral contest. During the electoral campaign of Borrego's successor, Arturo Romo, a pledge was made – and kept – to ratchet up and institutionalize the informal 1x1 agreement to a 2x1 program, drawing in an additional dollar from federal government. The following gubernatorial candidate, Ricardo Monreal, likewise made a promise in 1998 to increase the matching funds ratio from 2x1 to 3x1, drawing municipal funds into the equation, and this trend has continued in subsequent campaigns, with new partnerships and new funds pulled into the program. As the program expanded, so too did migrant organizational activity, and both federations and their membership increased in number and in strength. At times, this growth in migrant mobilization occurred through the direct involvement of state bureaucrats: under the Romo administration, for example, staff from the state planning office traveled to US cities precisely to create one or more HTAs, bringing shovel-ready projects in a briefcase. According to some of the staff members who carried out this organizing north of the border in the mid- 1990s, this was done strategically to provide the new HTA with a task around which its members could mobilize, and thus reinforce the group's nascent structure (Interviews, March-May 2003). In addition to working together around the matching funds program and its evolution, migrants and the state government formed common cause in protecting the program from repeated federal attempts to co-opt it or fold it into larger national initiatives that were not migrant-specific. Irrespective of whether state officials or migrant federations were at the forefront, these political battles were always joint efforts: indeed, federations and state officials caucused about who should be the face of their resistance to the proposed policy changes. These efforts cultivated the ability of federations and state government to coordinate politically, but more importantly, they sharpened the skill of Zacatecan federations to mobilize and lobby in varied political arenas. And mobilize they did: they soon wrested from the state and national legislatures new rights of suffrage and political representation, and secured unprecedented access to presidential administrations in both countries. Until migration reform became an issue too volatile for the presidents of both the United States and Mexico to touch, Zacatecan migrants – émigrés from a poor state in Mexico of a little over 1 million inhabitants out of a national 100 million – had audiences with Presidents Fox and Bush. Indeed, some of the political issues at stake were too explosive even for federations themselves to manage. Political party affinities and electoral battles produced the first

major fracture of the most influential federation of Zacatecan HTAs in 1998. (Iskander 2010)

That the 3x1 program that originated in Zacatecas became national policy in 2002 illustrates another aspect of this interaction between migrants and the state into which new HTAs perforce enter. The rich and intensive exchanges between migrant and state actors – and their active and ongoing co-production of migrant organizations – has turned Zacatecas into an incubator for new programs directed at Mexican migrants. They allow for negotiation and incremental refinement and expansion of the program strictures, such that, once polished, they can be easily extended to other states or to the nation as a whole. There is no more compelling an example of this today than the Comité de Validación y Atención a Migrantes (COVAM). According to the Rules of Operation of the 3x1 program, the COVAM is the committee responsible for the prioritization, allocation and validation of projects for each state. Moreover, the committee should be comprised of an equal number of representatives, with voice and vote, of each of the counterparts contributing funds to the 3x1 program (Sedesol and Instituto de los Mexicanos en el Exterior 2012). Mandated in 2005, COVAMs have been convening regularly in practice only since 2009 (Interview, April 2012). In Zacatecas, however, some version of this oversight committee has been meeting since 1995, and the COVAM itself is largely patterned on the plenary meetings where municipal, state, and federal bureaucrats quarreled openly and vociferously with Zacatecan federations over the allocation of 3x1 monies (Interview, April 2012).

Moreover, in Zacatecas, the COVAM, on its face a bureaucratic instrument to ensure accountability in program implementation, continues to be adapted by migrant and state actors for uses that exceed its technical mandate even while strengthening it. Several idiosyncratic practices have been put in place in Zacatecas to ensure that the COVAM acts fairly: for example, one of the four municipal seats on the committee is given to each of the four parties that are most active in Zacatecas, regardless of the number of municipalities they govern, in order to prevent party capture. Likewise, the four seats granted to the federations rotate among the federations (currently 17) that are registered with the federal government. But the COVAM meetings, held quarterly either in the United States or Mexico, also act as critical convenings for the federations, regardless of whether they have a seat on the committee that year. Over the two days or so involved in the COVAM approval process, federations hold a series of side meetings, during which they caucus, identify their priorities, and plan out their mobilization strategies. At moments of political tension with

the state government, federations view a show of strength at the COVAM meetings as particularly important: of the April 21, 2012 COVAM meetings, a federation president commented that all the federations were going, “as a block, to defend everyone’s projects” and “to defend the autonomy of the federations [from the government] and from the designs of its [political] party” (Interview, April 2012). The COVAM meetings, then, become a setting where the political significance of the 3x1 program as an expression of state-migrant relationship is fiercely contested, four times a year. Newer HTAs, too, enter this raucous political tussle, and entrust the federations that they join to fight for their projects and for what their paved roads, beautified plazas, and new clinics represent in the context of exchanges between migrants and their state.

The COVAM in Guanajuato could not be more different in structure and in process than the 3x1 committee meetings for Zacatecas. In Guanajuato, the COVAM hews very closely to its technical function, as dictated by the 3x1 program guidelines, and its proceedings, which are more perfunctory and occur seven times a year, are administrative in tone. Moreover, participation on the committee is assigned, with little contestation. Federal and state functionaries responsible for the implementation of the 3x1 program sit on the COVAM, and municipal presidents are selected based on their level of emigration, with those municipalities seeing the highest rates winning a seat on the committee. This representation changes from year-to-year as out-migration rates fluctuate. HTA and, more recently, federation representatives are selected based on the “level of productivity” that each candidate organization displayed in fundraising over the previous year. “If they become less productive,” explained a state official, “they are asked to step down” (Interview, April 2012).

This emphasis on productivity in Guanajuato’s policy toward its migrants has historical roots, and new HTAs anchored in the state enter a logic to which migrant groups have long been subject. Like Zacatecas, Guanajuato has some of the longest standing state-level outreach efforts to emigrants in Mexico. Alongside its outreach efforts to migrants through the provision of services and the support for the Casas program, the state government has strived to make remittances more “productive.” Rather than having them spent on uses that the government viewed as consumption, including, in this definition, expenditures on housing, food, and schooling, the state wanted to direct a larger proportion of the monies migrant sent home to business investment. To that end, the state created its own version of a matching funds arrangement for small firms. The scheme, called Mi

Comunidad, was launched in 1996 and functioned as follows: the state government encouraged migrants, individually and in groups, to raise start-up funds for small firms in their hometown – chiefly clothing maquilas on the forceful suggestion of government bureaucrats– which one or more of them would return to manage. In return, the state promised to match their investment with in-kind contributions of installations, machinery, training, and wage subsidies. Thirteen firms were established under the program, and as the governor of Guanajuato at the time – Vicente Fox – ascended to the presidency in 2000, he pledged the start-up 100 Comunidades firms in his first 100 days in office. (Iskander 2010)

The program was a spectacular bust. Firms were located in isolated communities, far from industry supply chains, and hampered by deficient road and communication infrastructure, with landline telephones that worked sporadically. Within five years, all but one firm had failed, with the owner of the remaining firm contemplating migrating back to the United States to raise capital for his failing enterprise (Iskander 2005). Not only did the state inventions that were so trained on productivity goals fail to provide adequate business support to migrant investors in its flagship program, the state government failed then, and continues to fail now, to provide support for organizing. The case of Guanajuato illustrates well that without state participation in the development of migrant organizations – without its co-production of HTAs and their federations – the mobilization efforts of migrants are likely to stay underdeveloped. HTAs remain small, atomized organizations that pose little political threat to the state government and its neo-liberal vision of development. But by the same token, the HTAs that emerge today through the 3x1 program are less likely to gather the required political strength and exercise the necessary sway to compel innovations in policy, as migrants did so effectively in Zacatecas.

4. The Road from Guanajuato to Zacatecas

In Zacatecas, in Guanajuato, and indeed, in all Mexican states, the hometown associations rooted there have not been simply groups of migrants who had come together around topophilic ties. Rather, they have been, and continue to be, produced by intensive exchanges between migrants and government interlocutors. It is this interplay between migrants and government actors that gives HTAs their organizational structure, and opens

them as spaces for collaboration and contest over the articulation of transnational civic identity and political engagement. As this essay has demonstrated, an attention to the way that HTAs have been produced – and indeed, co-produced – shows how variegated the practices are that define their contours and their influence, differing by level of government, by geographic location in the United States and in Mexico, by the political controversies in Mexican states, and by the history, local and national, of Mexican government engagement with migrants. This focus is important because it reveals how the process of producing HTAs can in turn affect policy, and most saliently, how it can promote new – and possibly better – approaches to engaging with migrants and to fostering the development in their communities of origin.

The evolution of so-called “migrant productive projects,” supported through matching funds schemes, captures this analytic urgency. In Guanajuato, an early adopter of this kind of project through the Mi Comunidad project, the experiment not only failed, but also caused financial harm to the migrants that participated. Zacatecas nevertheless borrowed the underlying idea of supporting small businesses through a 3x1 style initiative, and began experimenting with various models in 2005. A first attempt was a 4+1 program, sponsored by Western Union, where the company would top-off 3x1 funding with an additional matching portion for small business investments by groups of migrants (Orozco and Diaz 2011). The effort displayed mixed results, suffering from the same issues of value-chain integration and technical capacity that were the downfall of the Comunidades program. Nevertheless, the program was expanded nationally, and soon was adopted and adapted by the federal government as a 1x1 program for business investment, officially called *Proyectos Productivos para el Fortalecimiento Patrimonial*, in 2009. The federal program matches – in a one-for-one ratio – the investment that a single migrant family makes in a business initiative. The program essentially acts as a vehicle and a subsidy for microcredit, in a credit market that is tight for small and rural entrepreneurs. Ironically, the 1x1 program is favored by migrants from Guanajuato, the state that supplied the conceptual framework for this policy, precisely because it allows them to bypass municipal and state levels of government, and deal instead directly and solely with the federal government. In Zacatecas, however, the program has taken a new shape: as of the last electoral contest in 2010, it has become the 2x1 program, with additional contribution from the state government. Projects are vetted by the federations, which, in most cases, extend ongoing technical support to the new entrepreneurs. Moreover, through the involvement of the state

government, the projects – mezcal factories, cyber cafes, hair salons, pig farms, and dehydration of specialized chilies, among others – have entered the development planning discussions at the state level, infusing considerations about how to upgrade the production of niche agricultural goods for export with new energy. These exchanges between HTA federations and the state planning office may not be sufficient to resolve the shortcomings that have hamstrung initiatives of this type in the past, but they will certainly contribute to policy reflection about how to better support microenterprises in Zacatecas and beyond.

In this instance again, diminutive Zacatecas emerges as a dynamic incubator for innovative policy. This effervescent creativity is the product of the same exchanges that produce HTAs and their federations. In other words, not only do interactions between government actors (armed with their policy tools) and migrants co-produce HTAs, but they also co-produce new development trajectories at the local and national levels. Consequently, attention to the quality of those exchanges is vital: they can support the elaboration of new development approaches even as they support migrant mobilization on both sides of the border, or they can hobble, sometimes definitively, migrant efforts at organizing and collaborating with one another and with their governments. As Mexico now faces a situation where migration has crested and is currently at a steady state with net migration at zero (Passel, Cohn, and Gonzalez-Barrera 2012), it also enters an era where the benefits of emigration to the country will come less in the form of remittances and more through the ingenuity of its migrants. Looking within the organizational boundaries of HTAs to identify which amongst the many varied and contested interactions that occur within these topophilic organizations support creativity, and which have caused migrants instead to retreat from exchanges with government and from top-down clientilistic interactions, is arguably more important now than ever.

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ⁱ Interviews for the essay were all conducted in Spanish. Interviews in 2012 were conducted over the telephone, but earlier interviews were conducted in person. While some information is provided about the affiliation of the interviewees, identifying information is withheld in order to maintain the confidentiality of the interviewee's identity.

ⁱⁱ The latest officially released program data for the full calendar year at the time of writing was 2010.

ⁱⁱⁱ The federal budgetary allocation is the most reliable figure to determine the size of the 3x1 program because both federal and state authorities will occasionally cover the shortfall in the contribution of migrants or of municipal governments.

^{iv} According to a survey conducted by the Pew Hispanic Center, no more than 14 percent of Mexicans in the US participate in civic organizations, sports teams, or social clubs that bring together migrants from the same community of origin. While HTAs subject to analysis fall in this category, the vast majority is more formalized than this loose description would suggest and likely only represent a tiny fraction of the organizations to which this survey refers. (Suro 2005).

^v Newspapers surveyed for this essay include: El Sol de Zacatecas; El Mirador; El Sol de Leon, Guanajuato; and Reforma.

Appendix 1: Summary Statistics of HTAs Interviewed

Table 1: HTAs interviewed by Mexican State

Mexican State	HTAs
Chiapas	1
Colima	1
Durango	2
Guanajuato	13
Guerrero	1
Hidalgo	2
Jalisco	2
Michoacán	3
Morelos	1
Oaxaca	4
Puebla	2
San Luis Potosí	1
Sinaloa	1
Tlaxcala	1
Zacatecas	3
Total	
	38

Table 2: HTAs interviewed by US state

US State	HTAs
Alaska	1
Arizona	1
California	17
Illinois	4
Minnesota	2
Nebraska	1
Nevada	1
New York	1
North Carolina	1
Texas	8
Virginia	1
Total	
	38

Table 3: HTAs interviewed by year established

Year Established	HTAs
2000	1
2002	1
2004	1
2007	5
2008	10
2009	2
2010	9
2011	9

Total	
	38

Table 4: HTAs in IME Public Registry by Mexican State
(source: ime.gob.mx – accessed May3, 2012)

Mexican State	HTAs in registry
Aguascalientes	13
Baja California	12
Campeche	16
Chiapas	22
Chihuahua	26
Coahuila	6
Colima	8
Distrito Federal	13
Durango	76
Estado de México	15
Guanajuato	453
Guerrero	64
Hidalgo	136
Jalisco	93
Michoacán	125
Morelos	17
Nayarit	10
Nuevo León	16
Oaxaca	84
Puebla	63
Querétaro	29
Quintana Roo	1
San Luis Potosí	66
Sinaloa	15
Sonora	7
Tamaulipas	13
Tlaxcala	14
Veracruz	12

Yucatán	65
Zacatecas	22
Total	
	1512