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Collective Remittances and the State: The 3x1 Program in Mexican Municipalities

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Abstract

The Mexican 3x1 Program for Migrants is a matching fund scheme that seeks to direct the money sent by hometown associations abroad (collective remittances) to productive uses. The federal, state and municipal governments contribute to the Program multiplying by three the contributions sent by migrants abroad. Using municipal level data on program participation for the period 2002-2006, we evaluate the program's capacity to target the poorest municipalities. We find that, since migration is not a random phenomenon —in fact, there is a nonlinear relationship between poverty and migration— a program that unconditionally responds to project initiatives from migrant associations is bound to be regressive. Indeed, whereas poorer municipalities are more likely to participate, they also receive lower amounts and fewer projects than richer municipalities. Moreover, we find evidence of a partisan bias in project funding: states and municipalities ruled by the PAN were significantly more likely to participate in the program, and to receive more projects. With these results in mind, we argue that substantial changes should be implemented for the Program to be a truly progressive poverty reduction tool.

Resumen

El Programa 3x1 para migrantes mexicanos es un plan que busca dirigir el dinero enviado por asociaciones de su lugar de origen al extranjero (envío de dinero colectivo) para fines productivos. Los gobiernos federal, estatal y municipal contribuyen al programa multiplicando por tres las contribuciones enviadas por los migrantes extranjeros. Usando la información municipal del pograma de participación para el periodo 2002-2006, evaluamos su capacidad en los municipios más pobres. Encontramos que la migración no es un fenomeno al azar —de hecho, la pobreza no necesariamente se traduce en migración— un programa que responde incondicionalmente a las iniciativas del proyecto para migrantes está ligado a ser regresivo. Los municipios más pobres son más participativos pero reciben menos dinero y menos proyectos que los municipios más ricos. Además, encontramos evidencia de una tendencia partidista en el financiamiento del proyecto, encontrando que los estados y municipios gobernados por el PAN están signficativamente más participativos en este programa y con mayor posibilidad de recibir más proyectos. Con estos resultados en mente, argumentamos que los cambios substanciales deben ser implementados en el programa para que verdaderamente sea una herramieta progresiva para la reducción de la pobreza.

Introduction

Remittance sending is a crucial aspect of the migratory phenomenon. In a large number of countries, they are a substantial proportion of countries' wealth and are located among the most important sources of countries' foreign exchange. For instance, in Mexico, remittances are the second source of revenues after oil exports. They surpass the revenues from tourism and foreign direct investment. Whereas Mexico is the third largest remittance recipient in the world in absolute flows (behind India and China) remittances only amount to some 2.5% of GDP. On the contrary, in other countries, remittances are just a vital source of income: they amount to 27% of Moldova GDP, 16% of El Salvador GDP and 13% of Philippines wealth. The top 19 remittance world recipients receive more than 10% of their GDP in remittances (World Bank, 2006).

Given the enormous importance of these capital flows and their potential to contribute to development, governments of sending and receiving countries and international organizations (IOs) are designing public policies to encourage remittance sending. States are also encouraging the so-called productive use of remittances, so that remittances are not only devoted to current consumption but are also directed to the improvement of living conditions in sending countries. As opposed to individual remittances, whose private character makes them difficult to monitor and influence, collective remittances are in principle apt to be used as a tool to improve the provision of social and productive infrastructure in backward communities.

The Mexican Program *3x1 for Migrants* is one such policy. Indeed, it is taken to be an international reference in the area of collaborative development between *diasporas* abroad and their communities of origin (World Bank, 2006; De Castro, García and Vila, 2006). The municipal, state and federal governments enter into the picture by tripling the amount of money sent by hometown associations (HTAs) to finance local development projects (electrification, water, road paving and maintenance, housing infrastructure, educational and health projects, and town beautification among others). Since 2002, the Program is implemented at the federal level and today it involves 27 Mexican states and over 1,000 hometown associations abroad. In these years, it has financed more than 6,000 projects with an average annual federal investment of 15 million US$ (García Zamora, 2007). In 2007, its federal budget was about 22 million US$ and it is expected to increase in 2008.

We evaluate municipal participation in the *3x1 Program for Migrants* and try to asses whether program participation is progressive or not, that is, whether the program is able to target relatively poor municipalities and/or devote more resources or projects to those localities. Given the current

design of the program, which gives migrants the initiative in proposing the projects, we argue that the program tends to favor municipalities with high migration and long standing migration tradition, in which migrant associations are both numerous and well organized. However, since poverty imposes an important constraint on the ability to migrate and to send collective remittances (Hatton and Williamson, 2002), the municipalities that are most likely to benefit from the program need not be the poorest ones.

Also, we are interested in exploring some aspects of the political economy of the program, specifically, if there is any partisan use of it. The involvement of the three levels of government (municipal, state and federal) plus the migrants raises coordination and red tape problems. Also, the program design pose obvious concerns about the collusion or opposition among the different administrations: does having a common party label at the three levels of government increase the likelihood to be selected into the program, regardless of the degree of poverty?

Using a unique dataset on municipal participation in the *3x1 Program for Migrants* during the 2002 to 2006 period, we study three different measures of program participation: whether any projects were funded in the municipality in a given year, the monetary amount awarded from all projects, and the number of projects funded in the municipality. We find that, after controlling for state and municipal characteristics, poorer municipalities and high migration municipalities are more likely to participate. However, whereas high migration municipalities receive larger amounts and more projects, increased poverty levels are negatively correlated with the monetary amounts and the number of projects awarded to a municipality. Indeed, we find that very poor municipalities receive lower amounts and fewer projects than wealthier localities with similar levels of migration. This result is robust to different estimation methods and to different operationalizations of our dependent and independent variables. All in all, we find evidence that the Program design has regressive consequences.

Concerning the political economy of the program, our empirical analysis reveals that municipalities and states ruled by the conservative Partido Acción Nacional (PAN) were more likely to participate in the Program, and received more funds and projects awarded than their PRI (Partido Revolucionario Institucional) and PRD (Partido de la Revolución Democrática) counterparts. This result holds after controlling for migration and poverty levels. To make sense of this finding, it is important to keep in mind that this Program was launched as a federal policy as an initiative of the PAN under the administration of Vicente Fox (2000-2006), building upon the alleged success of similar programs in some high migration states such as Zacatecas. Also, PAN held power at the federal level for the entire sample period of our study. We find some support for the hypothesis that shared partisanship between state

and municipal authorities increase the probability of being "selected" into the program, but the impact of this variable on program participation was weak.

All together, these results seriously question the design of this public policy, as it stands now, in its ability to improve the conditions of the poorest localities. There is also a real concern that the Program may largely benefit those states where migrants are better organized, to the disadvantage of poor communities of recent but intense migration, and with lower organizational skills. Thus, before engaging in the international promotion of this sort of programs —and El Salvador, Somalia, Ecuador, Colombia and Peru have already adopted it with variants (García Zamora, 2007)— a sober reflection is needed about the consequences of policy intervention in the management and allocation of collective remittances.

The paper proceeds as follows. In the next section, we provide an overview of the policy debate about remittances, their impact on development, and common practices on remittance management. In section 2, we explain the precedents of the *3x1 Program for Migrants*, we describe its current format, and hypothesize about the expected relationship between poverty and program participation. In section 3 we present the data and the empirical methodology. Section 4 discusses our main empirical findings and its policy implications. Finally, since this research cast doubts about the alleged promise of the program to reduce poverty, in our concluding section we propose several amendments and reflect on government intervention in the management of collective remittances.

1. Remittances, Development and Public Policy

Parallel to the surge of international migration, international remittances have become a crucial capital flow. According to World Bank estimates, remittances amounted to 58 US$ billions in 1995. In 2004, the figure had increased to 160 US$ billions, surpassing by far the international flows of Official Development Assistance (ODA, 79US$ billions), and Private Debt and Portfolio Equity (136 US$ billions). By 2004, remittance flows were as large as Foreign Direct Investment flows (FDI, 160 US$ billions) (World Bank, 2006). Moreover, according to World Bank estimates, 50% of remittance flows remain unrecorded due to the use of informal channels for transferring currency. In other words, the official remittance figures may seriously underestimate their actual magnitude.[1]

Increased awareness and improved accounting methods of these flows have driven the attention of researchers and practitioners to the multiple effects that remittances may have on migrants' countries of origin. In turn,

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[1] Interestingly, a high percentage of remittance flows that LDCs receive (30%-45%) originate in South-South migration. China, Malaysia and the Russian federation are among the top 20 sources of remittances (World Bank, 2006).

both host and home countries have put in place a panoply of public policies with two main objectives: to encourage the use of formal channels for remittance sending (bank-to-bank transfers, electronic transfers, personal checks, money transfers and money orders) and to promote the so-called "productive" use of remittances back home (using remittances to finance projects with an eye on employment creation and growth). Notably, these interventions cast doubt on views of remittances as capital flows with a key feature: that they avoid government intervention or intermediation because they are person-to-person transfers (no "governmental middleman"). On the contrary, state intervention in the management of remittances is pervasive (Spector and de Graauw, 2006) and it is only expected to increase along with remittances.

Most research on the impact of remittances is based on country, regional, or community level studies from which it is hard to derive general insights. However, some patterns seem to emerge in the study of the multifaceted impact of remittances. It is common to distinguish between the macro and the microeconomic effects of these flows on sending countries. At the macroeconomic level, scholars have analyzed the impact of remittances on economic development, isolating the mechanisms that may affect economic growth positively and negatively. At the micro-level, a surge of studies based on household surveys in receiving countries have explored the effect of remittances on household decisions to consume, as opposed to save and invest, remittance income. Also, these studies have explored the effect of remittances on poverty and inequality reduction in sending countries, and on household spending in education and health, which are regarded as welfare enhancing.[2]

At the macroeconomic level, research points at the stable character of remittances and to their seemingly countercyclical function: remittances have a clear insurance effect in the face of economic crises, natural disasters, bad crops, or bad luck. For instance, remittances as a share of personal consumption rose in response to the financial crisis in Mexico in 1995 as well as in Indonesia and Thailand during their financial crises of the late 1990s. To the extent that remittances smooth personal consumption by responding positively to adverse shocks, they may help to counter economic recessions. Also, remittances may have a positive aggregate impact on economic growth if they ease credit constraints of poor households, making them more creditworthy in the eyes of formal financial institutions. This, in turn, may encourage remittance-recipient households to undertake productive

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[2] The World Bank 2006 Report "Global Economic Prospects. Economic Implications of Remittances and Migration" is a very comprehensive literature review on the economic aspects of international migration.

investments with potential positive outcomes for local employment and growth (World Bank, 2006; OECD, 2007).[3]

On the negative side, scholars have surveyed to what extent large remittance flows resemble natural resource windfalls and other cyclical flows. Dutch disease effects caused by remittances (that is, the appreciation of the real exchange rate following large and sustained inflows of foreign exchange) may be of concern in countries with sensitive tradable sectors. Under this scenario, the export sector and therefore economic growth may suffer as a result of sustained remittance inflows. For instance, a recent study on the impact of remittances in Latin America does report an appreciation of the real exchange rate due to large inflows of remittances (Fajnzylber and López, 2007). Another potential negative outcome of remittances may have to do with individual choices between labor and leisure in remittance-recipient households. Whereas international migration may result in a reduction of unemployment and underemployment in sending countries, remittances may change the incentives to work of those who stay behind: once they receive remittances, people may reduce their working hours, reducing labor supply, which in turn results in an aggregate economic slow down (OECD, 2007).

Other than the potential positive or negative effects of remittances on overall macroeconomic performance, there is an extensive yet inconclusive research at the micro-level that explores the impact of remittances on poverty and inequality, as well as on households' decisions to consume or to invest in education or health. According to the World Bank (2006) remittances seem to have a positive impact on poverty reduction yet a very modest effect on income inequality. Remittances are believed to have reduced the poverty headcount ratio between 5 and 11 percentage points in countries like Uganda, Bangladesh or Ghana. Research on Mexico shows that in Guerrero and Oaxaca, remittances lowered the share of population living in poverty by 2 percentage points. Also, Mexican children in households with migrants completed more years of schooling (Hanson and Woodruff, 2003). Remittances are associated with lower infant mortality and higher birth weights of children left behind (Hildebrandt and McKenzie, 2005). Yet, less optimistic views report that these decisions are restricted to the households located in the middle and upper middle segments of the income distribution, thus perpetuating if not increasing income inequality (Fajnzylber and López, 2007). Also, data on household spending reveals that a very high percentage of remittances are devoted to current consumption. This is the obvious consequence of the fact that remittances are the main or only source of income in a large share of

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[3] However, it is acknowledged that these decisions are endogenous to the initial investment conditions in recipient countries: remittances will be more likely to translate into productive projects in those communities and localities where the necessary conditions for investing exist in the first place, notably, a relatively developed and trusted financial sector.

remittance-recipient households. According to the Inter-American Development Bank (2004), the share of remittances spent on household consumption are 78% in Mexico, 77% in Central America and 61% in Ecuador, while spending in real state and education is low. On the other hand, Durand, Parrado and Massey (1996) contend that increased consumption does have a multiplier effect on aggregate demand and growth.

It is clear that governments have several reasons to try to influence both the amount of remittances that are sent back home and their uses. On the negative side, remittances may affect economic growth if they damage the export sector via exchange rate appreciation and/or if remittances change the propensity to work. On the positive side, remittances at least help to alleviate the living conditions of families with members abroad.[4] And at best, remittances may be successfully channeled to enhance the development of communities of origin. The potential effect on sending localities is known as the meso dimension of remittances as opposed to the macroeconomic and microeconomic dimensions described above (OECD, 2007: 80).

Spector and de Graauw (2006) provide a description of public policy interventions during the so-called life cycle of remittances (before, during, and after remittance sending). Obviously, public policies that regulate migration do have an impact on the amount of remittances that go back home. Thus, policies that facilitate the emigration, legal recognition, and job placement abroad increase the flow of money sent back home. One oft-cited example is the Philippines, where the government played a crucial role in the recruitment and placement of workers overseas (Spector and de Graauw, 2006).

Once migrants are away, policymakers have intervened to regulate transfer services and to encourage the use of formal remittance channels, particularly the official banking sector. For instance, in the Philippines, repatriable foreign currency accounts not subject to foreign currency regulations were allowed. And Morocco and Turkey established branches in France and Germany respectively to facilitate the sending of remittances through the banking sector. In a few isolated cases, remittance sending has been made mandatory, albeit with little success.[5] Other policies directed at preserving the political and social attachments of migrants abroad (such as providing voting rights, dual citizenship, and providing cultural and educational programs) aim at keeping migrants' loyalties alive in the event of family reunification and the permanent settlement of migrants in receiving countries.

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[4] However, it should be noted that there is an important normative debate concerning the legitimacy of states to intervene in the handling of remittances: they are a private flow of capital and the way in which they are ultimately employed is indeed a prerogative of the recipient families.

[5] The oft-quoted example of success if South Korea. Migrants were forced to send 80% of their earnings to the Korean banking system. However, it is considered that this case was successful due to the high concentration of migrants in a single sector, namely, the construction sector.

Finally, once remittances are in the sending countries, governments have offered incentives to save and to invest, mostly via tax breaks. Governments have also encouraged the participation of migrants in the development of community projects. In particular, sending states around the world have courted organizations of migrants abroad, encouraging their organization and activism building upon their spontaneous initiatives to finance community projects and engage in philanthropic activities. Overall, these public interventions in the management of collective remittances challenge the view of these capital flows as alien to political influence.

Mexico has been an active country in all these fronts. Since the 1990s, consular activity and official programs to assist migrants abroad have multiplied (see below). Starting in 1997, Mexico allowed for dual nationality. In 2006, Mexicans abroad were allowed to vote in the presidential election for the first time in history. From 2002, under the US-Mexico Partnership for Prosperity Program, Mexicans could use the so called *matrícula consular* to open bank accounts in the United States and transfer money, and this regardless of their legal migration status. Since 1999, the cost of remittance sending in the US-Mexico corridor has been reduced by about 60%. And administrations of different colors at the gubernatorial and federal levels have courted the Mexican *diaspora* with the purpose of inducing them to help improve the living conditions of their communities of origin (Burguess, 2005; Canales, 2005; Alarcón, 2006; Spector and De Grauw, 2006; World Bank, 2006; Fernández, García and Vila, 2006).

The *3x1 Program for Migrants* is one such policy. Whereas the Program has been publicized in policy circles as an example of a transnational policy, "a careful evaluation of support to HTAs through matching grant schemes and other means is yet to be undertaken." (World Bank, 2006: 94). Indeed, numerous discussions of the program exist (Moctezuma, 2002; Goldring, 2004; García, 2006, 2007; Iskander, 2005; Moctezuma and Pérez, 2006; Burguess, 2005), but they are mostly based on anecdotal evidence or in case studies whose selection is not theoretically justified. Since most of these studies focus in high migration states or in localities with well organized migrants, they cannot offer any counterfactual comparison between communities that participate in the program and otherwise similar ones that do not participate. Nonetheless, it is remarkable that these evaluations point out to a relatively poor impact of the program in community development, while placing its virtues somewhere else, such as in strengthening the linkages between migrants and their communities, improving governance and accountability at the local level. The studies by Burguess (2005, 2006) and De Graauw (2005) anticipate in different ways the hypothesis that we systematically test below: because the Program is based on migrants' demands, organized migrants have an advantage in project allocation, which does not necessarily coincide with the objective of reaching the poorest areas. Indeed, it does not.

Our evaluation is based on a database on Program participation of more than 2,400 municipalities over the period 2002-2006. We show that the program is not a good development tool in its current incarnation. This is due to the non-random character of migration, and thus, the non-random selection of participants. Political bias in resource allocation also raises concerns about Program design and about its ability to target the poorest communities.

2. Mexican migration, poverty and the 3x1 Program for Migrants

As a Mexican scholar reports, the international migration of Mexicans to the US at the start of the 21st century can be summarized by three factors: a common border of more than 3,000 Km, a long-lasting tradition of more than 100 years, and a diversity of origins in Mexico and of destinations in the US (Durand, 2003). Today, 96.2% of Mexican municipalities register international migration. Approximately 450,000 mostly young and male Mexicans migrate each year. In parallel, remittances have increased by 100%.[6] Over 1 million households benefit from this flow. For 40% of them, remittances represent their only income (García Zamora, 2005; Soto and Velázquez, 2006); in recent years, migration intensified, became more permanent in destiny and more urban and diversified in origin (CONAPO, 2006).

The precedents of the *3x1 Program for Migrants* are found in the state of Zacatecas, which is the state with the strongest and oldest migratory tradition in Mexico. The Federation of Zacatecans Clubs, which comprises over 70 HTAs located in Southern California, started to raise funds to help expatriates abroad (mostly in the event of illness or death) and to fund social and recreational projects back home already in the early 1960s.

Building upon these initiatives, in 1986 the 1x1 Program was born under the auspices of PRI governor Genaro Borrego. In its initial design, the program contemplated only the state support to double the amount of money sent by migrants associations. Although just 28 projects were carried out under the program between 1986 and 1992, the initiative encouraged the Federation of Zacatecan Clubs to undertake more and more philanthropic activities. Parallel to Carlos Salinas' (1988-1994) interest in courting migration, the Zacatecan initiative received further support under Borrego's successor, Arturo Romo, to create the program of International Solidarity among Mexicans, also known as the 2x1 Program. Under this scheme, not only the state but also the federation matched the contributions of HTAs. Despite a temporary backlash in the support of the program under Ernesto Zedillo's term (1994-2000), the program continued to operate without the support of the federation but

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[6] Between 2000 and 2003, the Mexican population residing in the US grew by 14% and it represents 30% of total US immigration today.

instead with the support of the municipalities. Under PRD governor Ricardo Monreal, the program gathered momentum, in part as recognition of the crucial support of migrants to Monreal's platform. By 2002, in the state of Zacatecas, a total of 868 projects had been funded and 464 million pesos had been invested (Burguess, 2005). In the meantime, the initiative had been replicated by the state governments of Jalisco, Durango and Guanajuato.

Under Carlos Salinas' term, the initiatives to encourage the formation of HTAs abroad multiplied. In 1989, Salinas created the *Paisano Program*. In 1990, he launched the Program for Mexican Communities Abroad, which was based in the Foreign Ministry and operated through a network of Mexican consulates, institutes and cultural centers.The Program for Mexican Communities Abroad promoted in turn the formation of State Offices for Mexicans Abroad. Among other things, these offices promoted the formation of HTAs and publicized schemes of collaborative partnership among HTAs and their communities of origin. It is not coincidental that during this period, the number of migrant clubs abroad surged (Orozco, 2003; Orozco and Welle, 2004). Between 1995 and 2002, the total number of registered clubs grew from 263 to 580 and they federated at an increasing pace (Burguess, 2005). Alarcón reports that there are 2,000 Mexican HTAs in the US of which some 700 are formally registered (in Spector and de Graauw, 2006).

When Vicente Fox reached power in 2000, he renewed his commitment to work with HTAs and restored the federal support to collaborative programs that Ernesto Zedillo had suppressed. Fox created the *Instituto para los Mexicanos en el Exterior* and resurrected the matching grant program with federal support. The 3x1 Program–Citizen Initiative started in 2002, and later on became the *3x1 Program for Migrants.*

The purpose of the Program is to increase the coverage and the quality of basic social infrastructure in localities with a high proportion of population living in poverty, social backwardness or high migration, following the investment initiatives of migrants living abroad (Soto and Velázquez, 2006). This is not the only objective of the Program. It also aims to strengthen the links between migrants and its communities through collaborative development projects and the organization of migrants abroad (Ministry of Social Development).

In its current design, the *3x1 Program for Migrants* is administered by the Mexican Ministry of Social Development (SEDESOL) following an initiative of a hometown association. A Committee of Validation and Attention to Migrants (COVAM), which includes representatives of the four parties involved (migrants, municipal, state and federal government via SEDESOL), prioritizes and decides on the technical viability of the projects. Each of these parties contributes 25% of the total cost of the approved project. Different participation shares from different government levels is possible: for instance, the federation through SEDESOL can cover up to 50% of the project if its social

impact justifies it.[7] However, this is rarely observed in practice. Since the maximum federal participation is about 72,000 US$, the total cost of projects funded can be as high as 290,000 US$.

According to our data, all Mexican states except Baja California Sur, Coahuila, Quintana Roo and Tabasco have already participated in this initiative. However, the percentage of municipalities benefiting from the program has ranged from just 10% in 2002 (239 municipalities out of 2,435) up to 18% in 2005 (446 municipalities out of 2,438).

We evaluate the program from the perspective of its ability to target communities living in poverty and social backwardness as opposed to reaching only communities of high migration. Given that the Program design gives the initiative to HTAs, it certainly prioritizes the areas of highest migration tradition. However, the Program objective of targeting the poorest communities will only be achieved as long as the areas of highest migration are also among the poorest. It turns out that this is not the case. As a result, in 2007, 68% of the federal money was invested in municipalities of low and medium poverty and only 24% was invested in poor and very poor municipalities (Aparicio *et al.*, 2007). Moreover, 70% of all migrants' clubs are affiliated with the states of Guerrero, Guanajuato, Jalisco and Zacatecas (Zárate, 2005). As a result, in 2007, Zacatecas, Jalisco and Michoacán concentrated 59% of the projects and 54% of the total federal resources allocated to the Program (Aparicio *et al.*, 2007).

To the extent that matching grant programs reflect the income distribution of the parties involved, it is expected that wealthier communities will be more likely to participate than poorer ones. Therefore, a program that *unconditionally* supports migrant and HTA initiatives will not be progressive if poverty and migration are not directly correlated. If this is the case, the Program will be biased against poor and very poor communities. On the other hand, to the extent that HTAs require time to emerge and a certain level of organizational skills, HTAs will be more likely to succeed in relatively well off communities . Based on this reasoning, we propose the following hypothesis:

> **H1–self selection bias:** Given that migrants self-select into the Program, and that migration in Mexico is not evenly distributed relative to poverty, the Program disproportionably benefits relatively well off municipalities to the detriment of poor and very poor ones.

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[7] www.sedesol.mx

Systematic research on the politics of collective remittance management is practically non existent.[8] However, anecdotal case studies suggest that clientelistic uses may not have been rare. This seems to be especially true in municipal politics, where migrants' money can certainly alleviate the meager finances of the municipalities (Valenzuela, 2006). Thus, migrants have been actively courted by local political parties.

For instance, in their study of the 3x1 Program in the Ciénaga region of Jalisco, Hernández and Contreras (2006) report its use by local politicians to increase their popularity and buy votes. In her study of the municipality of Jala, in the state of Nayarit, Imaz (2003: 396) asserts that "migrants always took position and in each election they were requested to give their monetary support and exert their influence in favor of a particular candidate... They [migrants] were actively sought because they could 'mobilize people', that is, influence...the direction of the vote." In turn, migrants declared that local politicians *"los politiquean"* (Imaz, 2003: 400). As mentioned above, in her account of *3x1 Program* evolution, Iskander (2005) explains that the momentum given to the Program in Zacatecas after Monreal's election —which included cabinet-level positions for migrants— was part of Monreal's acknowledgment to HTAs in return for the support to his candidacy. All this suggests that the Program has empowered migrants as strategic municipal political allies. Indeed, knowing this, migrants have been able to shape the rules of the Program to secure their monopoly: Burguess reports that in Zacatecas, migrants pressed to have the rules changed so that only migrants belonging to a registered HTA —as opposed to any interested group or individual— could finance projects under the Program. In the same vein, Spencer and Cooper (2006) alert that HTAs may create barriers for broader political participation.

The combination of empowered migrants and clientelistic politics may have fomented the use of the Program as a rewarding tool. This casts doubts on a somewhat optimistic vision of migrants clubs and international migration in general as an engine of democratic change in their communities, via the import of practices and values to which they are exposed while abroad. In her study, Imaz concludes (p. 416) "we cannot assume a priori that these organizations have an impact on the Mexican democratic process; it is hard to distinguish in theory when these groups support democratic processes and when they do not."[9]

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[8] There is incipient research on the political consequences of remittances at the local level, but they refer to private, not collective, remittances. For instance, Puftze (2007) reports that remittances may weaken the power of clientelistic arrangements as vote buying tools at the local level. This is remittance recipient households have an extra income that makes them less prone to surrender to political blackmailing. In his study of Mexican municipalities, the author reports a greater likelihood of opposition winning in municipalities where a high proportion of households receives remittances.

[9] Bravo (2007) also reaches a similar conclusion although, again, his study focuses on private (household) remittances and not collective remittances. According to Bravo, out-migration seems to depress political engagement in Mexico. Individuals who have relatives in the US are less politically informed, talk about politics less

For now, we lack the necessary information to systematically test to what extent the Program is being used as a tool of clientelistic politics and to what extent the Program is empowering migrants in local politics. Still, we are able to explore the politics of the Program by testing for a partisan bias in fund allocation. A cursory look at the tripartite involvement of the federal, state, and municipal administrations provides the ground to hypothesize that shared partisanship is likely to bias resource allocation. We see two aspects to the influence of partisanship. On the one hand, a PAN administration ruled the federation over the entire sample period we survey. Thus, SEDESOL, the federal counterpart of the Program, could bias funds and project allocation in favor of PAN-ruled states and PAN municipalities. On the other hand, states are likely to be more supportive of projects proposed by municipalities with a similar party label. Thus, we hypothesize that sharing partisanship at the municipal and state level will increase the chances that a municipality participates in the Program, and that it is awarded more funds and more projects under this scheme. Therefore, we expect that:

> **H2-partisan bias:** All else equal, states and municipalities ruled by the PAN are more likely to participate, receive more funds and projects, than those ruled by other political parties. Moreover, shared partisanship between municipal and the state governments increases the probability of being selected into the program.

3. Data and empirical methods

To test our hypotheses, we collected data from the *3x1 Program for Migrants* for all Mexican municipalities that participated during the 2002 to 2006 period (SEDESOL). The dataset includes whether or not the municipality participated in the program in a given year, the total amount invested, and the number of projects awarded per year. We also compiled municipal level data on migratory intensity, degree of poverty (or marginality), provision of public goods, municipal finances, and political partisanship (CONAPO, INEGI, CIDAC).[10] On average, we have data for more than 2,400 municipalities and five years of program operation, which amounts to over 12,000 municipality-year observations.

To assess the effect of migration, poverty and political covariates on participation in the 3x1 Program in Mexican municipalities, we estimate a series of regression models of the following form:

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often both inside and outside the house. Individuals who receive remittances or expect to migrate are significantly less likely to turn to vote than individuals who do not receive remittances.

[10] We have data for each project awarded in the sample period. Since sociodemographic, economic and political covariates are available at the municipal level, we consolidated the data at the municipal level.

$$Pr(\text{PARTICIP}_{ijt} = 1 \mid X) = F(\beta\text{MIGRATION}_{ijt} + \chi\text{POVERTY}_{ijt} + \delta\text{POLITICS}_{ijt} + \quad (1)$$
$$\phi\text{SOCIODEMOG}_{ijt} + \mu_j + \nu_t)$$

$$\text{PARTICIP}_{ijt} = \alpha + \beta\text{MIGRATION}_{ijt} + \chi\text{POVERTY}_{ijt} + \delta\text{POLITICS}_{ijt} + \quad (2)$$
$$\phi\text{SOCIODEMOG}_{ijt} + \mu_j + \nu_t + \varepsilon_{ijt}$$

Where the subscript *i* refers to the *i*-th municipality, *j* to the *j*-th state, and *t* refers to a given year. The dependent variable, program participation, is measured in three different ways. First, PARTICIPATION is a dichotomous variable that reflects whether a particular municipality in given year had any project funded by the Program. Second, the variable AMOUNT measures the total amount of funds (from all four sources, in 2006 constant pesos) invested in a particular municipality-year as a result of program participation. Finally, PROJECTS measures the number of projects that were awarded to a particular municipality in a given year. For example, in 2003, Tanhuanto, a municipality located in the state of Michoacán, participated in the *3x1 Program* with six projects and a total investment of approximately 95,000 US$.

Our main independent variables are measures of migratory intensity, poverty, and political partisanship.[11] Measures of migration and poverty are taken from CONAPO and INEGI, respectively. The variable MIGRATION is an ordinal variable that classifies municipalities in high, very high, medium, low, very low and no migration municipalities. This variable is a categorization of the continuous MIGRATION INDEX, which we used in some of our statistical specifications.[12] The MIGRATION INDEX is based on census data regarding the number of family members that live abroad, circulatory migration, and return migration in the household. The measure of POVERTY is a categorical variable that classifies Mexican municipalities in high, very high, medium, low and very low poverty. It was constructed from the continuous POVERTY INDEX, which summarizes information on literacy rates, income levels, and social infrastructure. For instance, according to our data, Tanhuanto is reported as a high migration and low poverty municipality in 2003.

SOCIODEMOG is a vector of variables that control for population size as well as other measures of backwardness, which account for the municipality coverage of water, sewage, and electricity. This is measured as the percentage of households with provision of those public utilities (INEGI). In Tanhuanto, 92%, 81% and 97% of households in the municipality had water, sewage and electricity coverage respectively.[13]

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[11] Note that we consider migration to be a good proxy of the number of HTAs (about which we do not have information). However, the capacity for collective action of HTAs and their organizational skills are an important unobservable variable.

[12] Given the non-linearity of most of our models, too many dummy variables created problems for models to converge. In those cases, we decided in favor of the continuous specifications of poverty and migration.

[13] These variables turned out to exhibit reasonable correlations specifically with poverty indexes.

To test our second hypotheses, the POLITICS vector includes dummy variables that capture the political partisanship of municipal and state governments. These variables were set to control for PAN and PRI governments, leaving PRD as the comparison group. SHARED PARTISANSHIP is a dummy variable that equals one when the municipality and the state are ruled by the same political party. For instance, in 2003, Tanhuanto was ruled by the PRD. So was the state of Michoacán. Thus, SHARED PARTISANSHIP takes the value of one for Tanhuanto in 2003. Finally, $_j$ and v_t represent state and year fixed effects, respectively, which we use in our models to capture the time invariant heterogeneity of the Mexican states as well as any systematic year by year changes in the size of the Program or its operation rules.[14]

Our estimation techniques vary according to the nature of the dependent variables. Thus, for the binary dependent variable, PARTICIPATION, we estimate maximum likelihood logistic models as indicated by equation (1). For the AMOUNT variable, we estimate OLS models following equation (2). To verify the robustness of our estimates for the AMOUNT variable, we estimated both a two-way fixed effects OLS model and a Heckman sample selection model. The selection equation of the Heckman model estimates the likelihood of Program participation using a probit model, which is used in a second stage to estimate the amount awarded while adjusting for the program selection process.[15] As we stressed before, program participation depends on migrants' initiatives, which creates a bias in favor of municipalities of high and long lasting migration tradition. Thus, we use the MIGRATION INDEX as the selecting variable in the Heckman model.

Since the PROJECTS dependent variable is a count measure, we estimate another maximum likelihood model, in this case assuming a negative binomial distribution. Over dispersion tests suggested that negative binomial was preferred to a Poisson distribution. Furthermore, since only a fraction of all municipalities participate in the program, we estimated a zero inflated negative binomial model (ZINB) for the number of projects that a particular municipality was awarded in a given year.[16] As done with the Heckman specification, we used the MIGRATION INDEX to predict the cases with zero projects awarded.

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[14] We included state instead of municipal fixed effects for several reasons: first, because we had a few time invariant variables, which prevented us from using municipal effects. More substantively, states also have a strong influence in program participation because they have to commit resources ex ante via agreements with SEDESOL. Moreover, given the concentration of migration in a few states, four states have historically concentrated almost half of the funds and projects.

[15] The inverse of the Mill's Ratio —estimate of the probability of non participation in the first stage— is used as a regressor in the second stage to estimate the amount awarded.

[16] The number of projects awarded had a clear inflation of zeros. This is due to the fact that only a few municipalities participate in the Program. A Voung test to decide between a standard negative binomial and a zero inflated negative binomial favored the latter. The ZINB model only includes time effects because it did not converge when we included two way fixed effects.

Figure 1 below presents two box plots that illustrate the relationship between migration and poverty in the year 2002. We measure migration using CONAPO's index of migration intensity (left panel) and the percentage of households that receive remittances (right panel). As the figure reveals, median migration is greater in the municipalities of medium and low poverty. Municipalities of low poverty and of very high poverty have the lowest migration intensity. In fact, the *lowest migration* intensity is found in *very poor* municipalities. In the same vein, the highest percentage of remittance recipient households is located in municipalities of low and medium poverty. And again, the poorest municipalities have the lowest percentage of remittance recipient households. Taken together, these descriptive data point at a nonlinear relationship (inverse U shaped) between migration and poverty: very affluent and very poor municipalities have the lowest migration intensity and the lowest percentage of remittance recipient families.

FIGURE 1. MIGRATION AND POVERTY IN MEXICAN MUNICIPALITIES, 2002-2006.
POVERTY IS A CATEGORICAL VARIABLE RANGING FROM VERY LOW TO VERY HIGH POVERTY
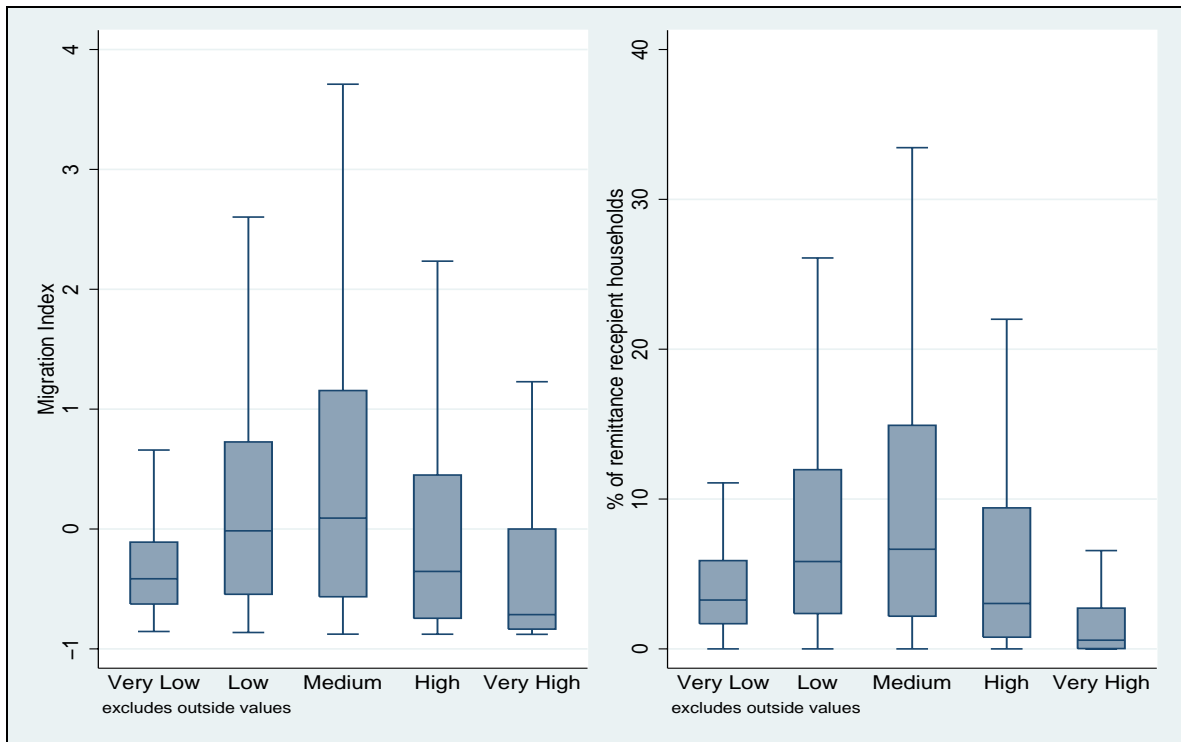

Recall that the initiative to participate in the *3x1 Program* correspond to migrants' HTAs. But HTAs take time to emerge and acquire the necessary organizational skills. As a result, HTAs are likely to concentrate in areas not only of high migration but also of long standing migration tradition. Given this premise, it is not surprising to find preliminary evidence suggesting that high

migration municipalities, *i.e.*, municipalities of low and medium poverty, have been the ones most often benefited by the program.

Figure 2 below shows these relationships. The box plot graphs the number of projects and the total amount of resources invested by the program to municipalities of different poverty levels during the 2002 to 2006 period. As expected, municipalities of low and medium poverty were awarded more projects and higher funding. Thus, the way the Program is designed produces a perverse outcome: the Program gives the initiative to organized migrant organizations abroad; but organized migrants do not come from the poorest Mexican municipalities; as a result, the Program is biased against poor and very poor communities and this despite the explicit Program objective of targeting poor communities. Figures 1 and 2 lend support to our first hypothesis regarding self selection bias of the *3x1 program*. However, since these box plot figures do not control for other factors that may determine successful program participation, we now turn to multiple regression estimates.

FIGURE 2. POVERTY *VS.* NUMBER OF PROJECTS AWARDED AND TOTAL FUNDS RECEIVED BY THE 3X1 PROGRAM IN MEXICAN MUNICIPALITIES, 2002-2006. POVERTY IS MEASURED AS A CATEGORICAL VARIABLE RANGING FROM VERY LOW TO VERY HIGH POVERTY
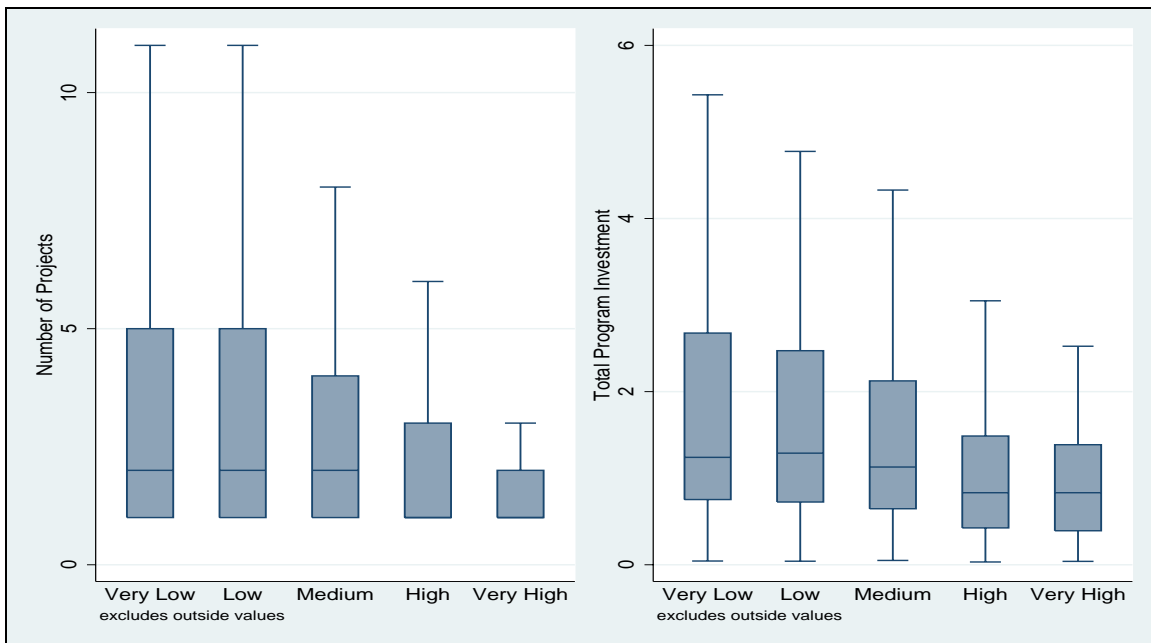
4. Results

To estimate the conditional effect of migration, poverty and political covariates on participation in the 3x1 Program in Mexican municipalities, we estimate equations (1) and (2) with a series of multiple regression models using a panel dataset that comprises data from more than 2,400 municipalities over the 2002 to 2006 period. Table 1 summarizes the results from six different model specifications for our three different measures of program participation: whether the municipality participated in the program or not, the amount received, and number of projects awarded to a municipality in a given year.

MODEL 1 in Table 1 presents a baseline logit estimation of program participation, a binary outcome. Controlling for state and year effects, the model indicates that the likelihood of participating in the program significantly increases with migration intensity. On the other hand, high and very high poverty municipalities are also more likely to participate than localities with low or very low poverty levels. In principle, the finding that program participation is increasing with poverty levels goes against our hypothesis concerning the regressive character of the *3x1 Program*. These results still hold in MODEL 2, in which we add population size, public services, and political covariates. As MODEL 2 indicates, program participation increases with population size, a variable that is strongly correlated with municipal income —a result that will prove to be robust in all other models. Moreover, states and municipalities ruled by the PAN are more likely to participate in the program than those under the PRI or PRD, which are about as likely to participate.

Focusing on program participation as a binary outcome may obscure the fact that some municipalities receive more funds and projects than others. Thus, MODEL 3 and 4 turn the attention to the total amount devoted by the program to a given municipality. MODEL 3 presents OLS estimates for program amounts with two-way fixed effects. As expected, the model indicates that municipalities with high or very high migration receive significantly larger amounts (between 15,000 and 25,000 US$ more) than those with lower migration. However, this model also indicates that municipalities with higher poverty levels receive significantly less funds (about 15,000 US$ less) than those with low or very low poverty levels —a result that supports our self selection bias hypothesis. In Model 4, we find that poverty levels have no impact on amounts received once we control for population and political covariates. Also, according to MODEL 4, municipalities in PAN ruled states as well as those with the same party affiliation of their state governors receive significantly larger amounts.

Given that migration intensity is not randomly or evenly distributed in Mexican municipalities, it may be the case that our previous OLS results have a sample selection problem: if some municipal or state features influence both program participation and the amounts received, OLS estimates may be biased. Moreover, since we only observe the amount of money awarded to municipalities that do participate, we need to correct for incidental truncation. MODEL 5 in Table 1 addresses this issue with a Heckman sample selection estimation where we use MIGRATION INDEX as the key selection variable. Once we control for the selection process before estimating the amount regression, we find that indeed the POVERTY INDEX is positively correlated with program selection (significant at 1% level) but that, at the same time, it is negatively correlated with amounts received (significant at the 10% level). We also find that the partisan PAN effects previously found are related with the selection stage but have no significant effect on the amounts awarded.

To assess whether these results hold if we focus on the number of projects awarded (a count variable) instead of the amounts, MODEL 6 in Table 1 presents estimates from a zero inflated negative binomial regression. As in our previous model, we use MIGRATION INDEX to predict program participation before estimating the count model. MODEL 6 indicates that increasing poverty levels led to significantly fewer projects awarded, controlling for population size, public services, and year effects. Regarding partisan bias, this model indicates that PAN ruled municipalities as well as those with shared partisanship with state governments receive more projects.

To sum up, our regression estimates indicate that migration intensity and population size are very good predictors of program participation in every one of our three measures. Poverty levels, measured as a categorical or an index variable are positively correlated with the likelihood of program participation (as a binary outcome), but negatively correlated with amounts received or the number of projects awarded to municipalities —a result that lends support to our self selection hypothesis. Regarding the partisan bias hypothesis, we find that PAN ruled states or municipalities are indeed more likely to participate than those under the PRI or PRD, but they do not seem to receive larger amounts. We find weak support for the shared partisanship hypothesis. Having the same party label than a state governor does not seem to affect program selection or amounts awarded in a robust way, whereas it leads to more projects being awarded.

TABLE 1.

Participation in the 3x1 Program for Migrants in Mexican Municipalities, 2002 - 2006

	MODEL 1	MODEL 2	MODEL 3	MODEL 4	MODEL 5		MODEL 6	
	Program Participation *Logit*	Program Participation *Logit*	Amount *FE OLS*	Amount *FE OLS*	Program Participation *Heckman selection model*	Amount	Number of projects *Zero inflated negative binomial*	Program Participation
MIGRATION								
VERY LOW	1.326 [0.592]**	1.211 [0.593]**	-0.006 [0.044]	-0.037 [0.044]				
LOW	2.029 [0.597]***	1.912 [0.598]***	0.018 [0.046]	-0.016 [0.047]				
MEDIUM	2.423 [0.599]***	2.379 [0.599]***	0.008 [0.049]	-0.01 [0.049]				
HIGH	2.949 [0.600]***	2.951 [0.600]***	0.249 [0.051]***	0.24 [0.051]***				
VERY HIGH	3.103 [0.603]***	3.173 [0.604]***	0.149 [0.056]***	0.154 [0.056]***				
POVERTY								
LOW	0.179 [0.129]	0.48 [0.140]***	-0.054 [0.033]*	0.019 [0.035]				
MEDIUM	0.093 [0.141]	0.514 [0.158]***	-0.152 [0.036]***	-0.051 [0.038]				
HIGH	0.675 [0.160]***	1.204 [0.182]***	-0.153 [0.039]***	-0.031 [0.043]				
VERY HIGH	0.835 [0.225]***	1.397 [0.245]***	-0.155 [0.050]***	-0.03 [0.053]				
MIGRATION INDEX					0.27 [0.020]***		0.285 [0.037]***	-2.232 [0.144]***
POVERTY INDEX					0.175 [0.040]***	-0.208 [0.123]*	-0.286 [0.064]***	
WATER	0.473 [0.188]**	0.576 [0.191]***	0.006 [0.042]	0.042 [0.042]	0.249 [0.103]**	-0.321 [0.303]	0.036 [0.186]	
SEWAGE	0.358 [0.190]*	0.337 [0.191]*	-0.007 [0.043]	-0.02 [0.043]	0.174 [0.106]	-0.033 [0.297]	0.208 [0.172]	
ELECTRICITY	-0.065 [0.196]	-0.037 [0.196]	-0.104 [0.051]**	-0.078 [0.051]	-0.01 [0.108]	-0.364 [0.268]	-0.526 [0.189]***	
LOG POPULATION		0.231 [0.037]***		0.054 [0.008]***	0.101 [0.019]***	0.373 [0.054]***	0.333 [0.030]***	
POLITICS								
PAN STATE		0.557 [0.211]***		0.162 [0.055]***	0.304 [0.112]***	0.234 [0.320]	0.025 [0.086]	
PRI STATE		-0.234 [0.218]		-0.026 [0.068]	-0.124 [0.121]	0.164 [0.339]	-1.502 [0.085]***	
PAN MUNICIPALITY		0.281 [0.103]***		0.036 [0.026]	0.127 [0.056]**	-0.088 [0.145]	0.153 [0.089]*	
PRI MUNICIPALITY		-0.051 [0.089]		-0.045 [0.023]*	-0.057 [0.048]	0.005 [0.132]	0.069 [0.075]	
SHARED PARTISANSHIP		0.046 [0.070]		0.058 [0.018]***	0.049 [0.038]	0.047 [0.104]	0.106 [0.063]*	
LAMBDA						-0.556 [0.160]***		
Constant			0.355 [0.083]***	0.454 [0.100]***	-0.32 [0.246]	3.038 [0.626]***	1.543 [0.259]***	-0.063 [0.124]
Observations	11786	11779	12118	12103	12103	12103	12103	12103
No. of states / years	27 / 5	27 / 5	31 / 5	31 / 5	31 / 5	31 / 5	31 / 5	31 / 5

Standard errors in brackets. * significant at 10%; ** significant at 5%; *** significant at 1%.
All models include state and year effects, except model 6, which only includes year effects.
Model 5: LR test of independence rho=0 chi(2)=6.73 (p-value < 0.01). Model 6: Vuong test of zinb vs. standard negative binomial: z = 8.91 (p-value < 0.01).

4.1. Predicted outcomes

Plotting predicted probabilities and the predicted number of projects may help clarify the relative impact of poverty and migration on the probability of participation, the amount of funds received, and the number of projects awarded. In order to do this, we rely on the Heckman selection model (MODEL 5) rather than the logit estimations of participation (MODEL 2) and the OLS estimates for the amounts awarded (MODEL 4). The Heckman model shows that both migration and poverty are positively and significantly related to the probability of participation. So are PAN states and PAN municipalities, whose predicted probability of participating is significantly greater than that of PRI states and municipalities. However, the model reveals that increasing the degree of poverty by one unit *decreases* the amount of money received by 20,000 US$.

FIGURE **3**. PREDICTED PROBABILITY OF PARTICIPATION IN THE **3X1** PROGRAM IN MEXICAN MUNICIPALITIES **(2002-2006)** *VS.* POVERTY INDEX. ESTIMATES BASED ON THE FIRST STAGE OF MODEL **5** IN TABLE **1,** HOLDING ALL OTHER COVARIATES AT THEIR MEAN VALUES
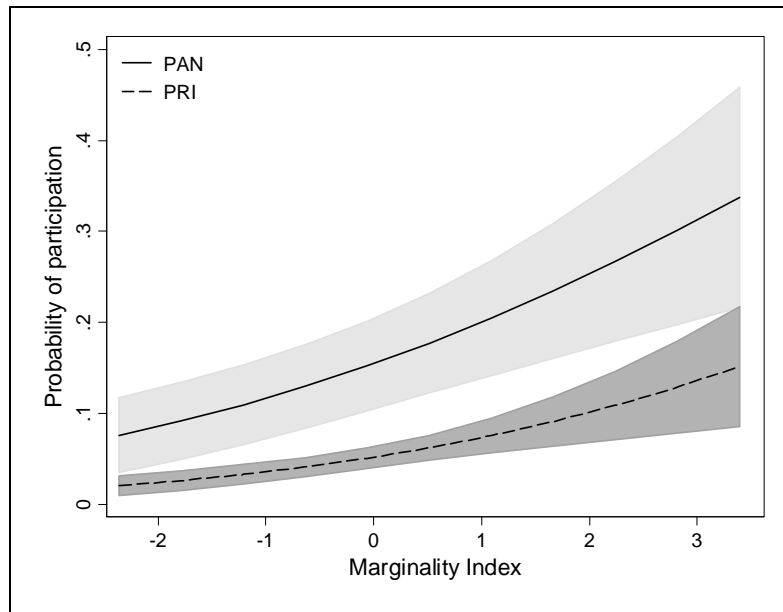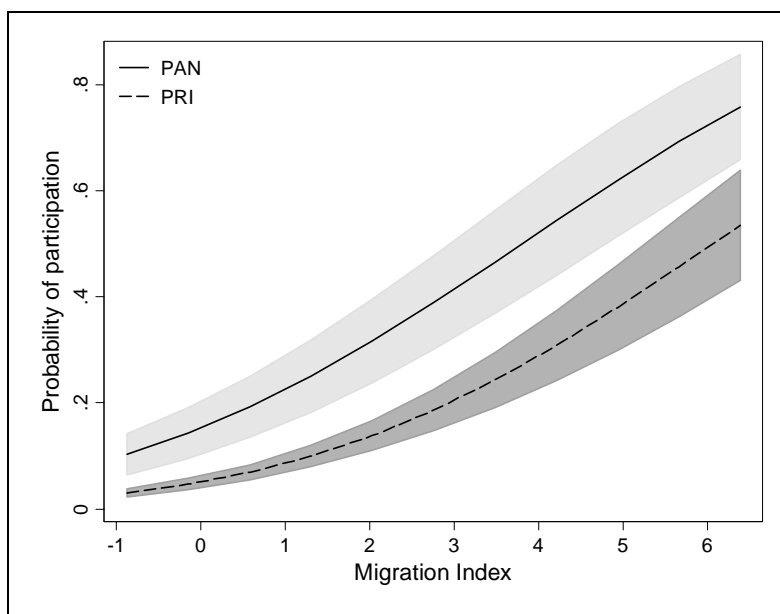
FIGURE 4. PREDICTED PROBABILITY OF PARTICIPATION IN THE 3X1 PROGRAM IN MEXICAN MUNICIPALITIES (2002-2006) *VS.* **MIGRATION INDEX. ESTIMATES BASED ON THE FIRST STAGE OF MODEL 5 IN TABLE 1, HOLDING ALL OTHER COVARIATES AT THEIR MEAN VALUES**

The count model provides extra evidence that the program has regressive features. Based on MODEL 6, a one standard deviation in the intensity of migration increases the expected number of projects awarded by a factor or 1.32, whereas a one standard deviation in the intensity of poverty *reduces* the expected number of projects awarded by a factor of 0.75. Notably, moving migration from its minimum to its maximum intensity in a PAN municipality located in a PAN state increases the expected number of projects by 6. However, increasing poverty from its minimum to its maximum in a municipality of the same characteristics *reduces* the expected number of projects by 1.

Finally, being a PAN municipality increases the expected number of projects by a factor of 1.16 (MODEL 6). Indeed a PAN municipality in a PAN state is expected to have 0.5 more projects than a PRI municipality located in a PRI state. A shared partisanship in the state and the municipality (regardless of party) increased the funds received by some 5,500 US$ (MODEL 3), although this effect does not show in the Heckman selection model. Shared partisanship also increased the expected number of projects awarded by a factor of 1.11. The increase in the expected number of projects is nonetheless very small.

FIGURE 5. PREDICTED PROBABILITY OF THE NUMBER OF PROJECTS AWARDED IN THE 3X1 PROGRAM IN MEXICAN MUNICIPALITIES (2002-2006). ESTIMATES BASED ON MODEL 6 IN TABLE 1, HOLDING ALL OTHER COVARIATES AT THEIR MEAN VALUES
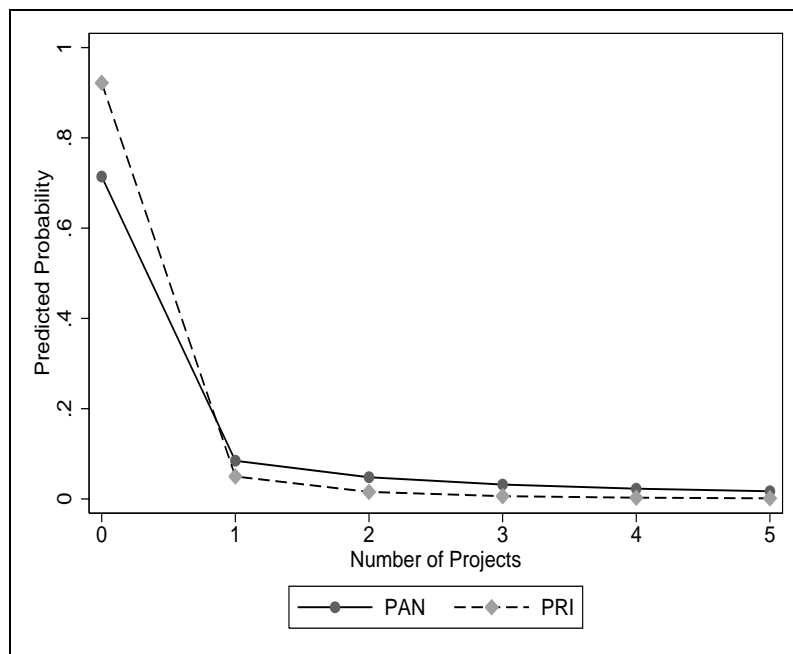
Conclusions

Remittances have become a crucial source of revenue in many developing countries. Whereas some analysts (Durand, Parrado and Massey, 1996) regard them as flows that can circumvent state intervention —which is regarded an advantage in poorly institutionalized and often corrupted political settings— the fact is that governments do intervene to influence the amount of remittances that arrive in sending countries, the channels by which they arrive, and their uses once at home. These interventions are likely to increase as governments become more and more aware of their developmental potential.

Precisely due to this characterization of remittances as alien to political intervention, political economy research on remittances has been rare (see Bravo, 2007; Pfutze, 2007). In this paper, we explored a well publicized public policy program directed at channeling collective remittances to so-called "productive uses" in migrants' communities of origin.

We raised two points: because the program gives the initiative to migrants, its capacity to hit poor municipalities crucially depends on the relationship between poverty and migration. If, as is the case in Mexico, the municipalities of highest and longest migration tradition are not the poorest ones, the program will be unlikely to serve the purpose of reducing poverty due to self-selection into the program. Moreover, the involvement of three different levels of government plus the migrants raises concerns about collusion or opposition among the different parties.

Indeed, we found that whereas poorer municipalities were more likely to participate in the program, poverty was either inconsequential or negatively related to the amount of money received and to the number of projects awarded. We also found a clear partisan bias in the selection of municipalities: those that shared the label of the ruling party at the federal level were more likely to be selected and more likely to be awarded more projects. All together, these results cast doubt on the ability of this kind of policies to hit the communities where the program resources are most needed.

Two simple amendments to the rules of the operation of the Program might help to increase the chances that the poorest communities —where migrants are less in numbers and worse organized— are not excluded from its benefits: first, only communities beyond a particular poverty threshold might be eligible to participate; and second, the mix of contributions to the projects should reflect that fact that the poorest communities may be able to contribute with little amounts. In that case, the federation and the states should increase its participation so that important public works for poor communities are indeed undertaken. Yet, changing the rules of the Program is

bound to raise all sorts of political resistance between relatively well-off migrants whose political power has been on the rise and local politicians eager to court them.

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