

**Furthering the Discussions on the Migration-Development Nexus: A Closer Look at Dominican Hometown Associations and Their Development Impacts**

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**Introduction**

In 2007, the International Organization for Migration (IOM) estimated remittance flows at \$337 billion worldwide, of which \$251 billion was destined for developing countries. For many nations these funds constitute an important source of foreign exchange and, in some cases, represent more than what can be obtained through foreign aid. These oft cited facts and figures have been central to the discussion of how migration affects development and, for decades, have captured the attention of policy makers and heads of state in developing regions who are eager to take advantage of the resources produced by a growing number of mobile citizens. Whether these vast flows contribute to positive or negative developmental effects is a question that has been at the center of the migration-development debate but still remains unresolved (de Haas 2006, Ellerman 2003).

Scholars from varying disciplines have made arguments both supporting and challenging the notion that the massive flows of people within nations and across the globe provide opportunities for increased social and political participation and equitable economic growth, especially in developing regions. Arguments in favor center on the effects that worker remittances have on increasing household incomes and the benefits that arise from the knowledge networks, human capital circulation and social remittances that are exchanged between the home and host contexts. Those with a less optimistic perspective claim that the relationship between increased migration, rising worker remittances and developmental

impacts in places of origin are not well established. Their position is bolstered by studies that point to the significant risks, costs and the growing inequities that result from increasing flows of people and money across borders. According to de Haan (2006, 18) “the problem, perhaps, is not so much in what is known about migration, but that dominant debates do not fully appreciate the importance of insights from different disciplines and traditions, and different policy implications.” Furthermore, because much of what we can learn about migration's impact on development is context-specific, the search for a definite answer is an elusive and perhaps futile goal.

Today, as contemporary scholarship recognizes migration as a transnational phenomenon—where those who leave and those who stay behind engage in a multidirectional dialogue that helps establish multi-stranded linkages between home and host contexts (Basch, Schiller, and Blanc 1994)—other types of developmental practices, like collective remittance sending, human capital transfers and the rise of migrant knowledge networks are gaining prominence in the discussions. Focusing on the complex multi-local relationships that arise in the migration process, the transnational perspective stresses the idea that “the flow of people, money and ‘social remittances’ (ideas, norms, practices and identities) within these spaces is so dense, thick and widespread that non-migrants’ lives are also transformed, even if they do not move” (Levitt and Jaworsky 2007). This approach provides an opportunity to examine development as a multi-local and multi-dimensional process that is carried out collaboratively by those who leave and those who stay behind, and leads to new relationships between state and societal actors.

From a primary focus on worker remittances to a growing concern with transnationalism and collective migrant activity, the discussions on the migration-development nexus have matured in several stages. According to Faist (2008), three main phases can be identified. Initially, South-North migration was considered a balancing mechanism that helped fill labor gaps in the North and development needs in the South through remittances, return migration and knowledge spillovers. This view gave way to a more pessimistic outlook that equated migration with underdevelopment and dependency, and placed a greater attention on the issue of “brain drain”, or the loss of highly-skilled populations in the global periphery to the core countries of the industrialized world. More recently, a renewed interest amongst major global actors, like the World Bank, the IOM and several NGOs, on issues of participatory development and civil society, have led to a celebratory attitude that sees international migration as a conduit to development via collective practices that highlight the role of “community” and “transnational cliques”. Although this current phase can be interpreted as a revival of earlier views, Faist argues that today’s “celebration of circulation” places a larger emphasis on knowledge flows and social remittances as the crucial elements to unlocking migrant’s development potential. Yet, despite this persuasion, “little is actually understood about the role that transnational groups and organizations play vis-a-vis states and other agents when it comes to the transfer of financial capital such as remittances and investments, knowledge and political ideas” (Faist 2008, 23).

As more attention is placed on the development practices of migrant collectives or groups, a series of studies have focused on collective remittances and the organizations that sponsor them. Labeled as clubs or hometown associations (HTAs) these transnational migrant organizations are broadly defined as “entities formed by immigrants who seek to support

their places of origin, maintain relationships with local communities, and retain a sense of community as they adjust to life in their new country of residence” (Orozco 2007, 215). Although HTAs have existed for decades, very few studies focused on their efforts had surfaced before the 2000s (Orozco and Welle 2004). Now there is a growing body of work that analyzes the role that HTAs play as agents for development and as civil society groups that mobilize around collective agendas and pursue small-scale development goals (Levitt 1997; Fox and Bada 2008; Itzigsohn and Villacrés 2008; Orozco and Welle 2004). Nonetheless, scholars have noted the dearth of systematic studies that analyze the origins and effects of HTAs and migrant organizations (Portes, Escobar, and Radford 2007). The only systematic framework developed to date has been developed by Orozco (2003; 2007) and Orozco and Welle (2004), who have studied Central American and Mexican HTAs and established a series of criteria to measure the development impact of migrant associations and their projects.

Interestingly, most of the literature on HTAs that have ties to the United States has focused on Central American and Mexican associations. This is partly due to the visibility and volume of migration from these regions and partly to policy initiatives recently established by sending countries which actively seek to partner and engage in collaborative ventures with these groups. Although other Latin American and Caribbean migrant groups to the United States have established migrant associations and HTAs, their experience has been subject to little analysis. In order to analyze the experience of one of those hitherto generally ignored migrant groups, this paper turns its attention to the Caribbean and examines the organizational structure, transnational practices and the development and local governance impacts of two Dominican HTAs. The analysis relies on previous work on Dominican

migration and transnationalism (Pessar 1991; Levitt 2001; Itzigsohn et.al. 1999) and the framework developed by Orozco (2007), but places closer attention on how these associations (1) contribute to the emergence of new governance structures, (2) enable new state-society relations and (3) generate synergies with local bureaucracies as a result of their increased involvement in local development projects. Thus, part of the analysis draws on Evans' work on “state-society synergy” (1996).

### **Hometown Associations and Development Opportunities**

Although migrant associations have a long and deep history<sup>1</sup>, studies on HTAs appear on the academic scene as debates over migrant transnationalism and collective remittances begin to gain prominence in the migration studies literature. Early discussions on the topic served to highlight the transnational ties and collective efforts that bound migrants with their home communities—mostly between the United States and Latin American and Caribbean countries—and stressed how these linkages helped spur important political and economic impacts in their home communities, (Zabin and Escala-Rabadán 1998; Levitt 2001; Alarcón 2000; Orozco 2000). As debates on migration and development have moved forward, scholars have sought to gain a better understanding of how collective migrant efforts are structured, and how they are promoting social change and development through the ideation and financing of important community projects, such as parks, plazas, health clinics and schools in their hometowns. These inquiries have led scholars like Orozco and Welle (n.d, 1) to propose the following:

In considering the relationship between HTA donations and development, it is important to keep four premises in mind. First, these financial flows are significant in volume and have broad economic effects. Second, although remittances to families and donations to communities are channeled primarily to the poor, these

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<sup>1</sup> See Moya (2005) for a global and historical analysis of migrant associations.

resources alone do not constitute a solution to the structural constraints of poverty, and they often fail to create financial security for households or sustainable development in a community. Third, to strengthen the ways in which remittances and community donations can promote sustainable development, concrete donor policies and assessments are needed. Fourth, any approach to this issue demands a transnational perspective because this is precisely the context in which HTAs operate.

Despite the proliferation of studies that examine HTAs and their home country impacts, questions still arise regarding the overall development potential of these community-oriented organizations. Authors like Delgado-Wise and Rodríguez (2001) argue that investments made by migrants in their hometowns present the best opportunity to spur development, while Alarcón (2000), believes that contributions by HTAs rarely lead to sustainable development except when infrastructure or education-oriented projects are carried out. Much like in the migration-development debate, there are opposing camps with pessimist and optimist perspectives regarding HTAs. Yet, as Orozco and Welle (n.d) argue, most authors generally support the idea that these migrant organizations have made considerable investments that have helped improve the quality of life of the hometowns.

#### *Governance impacts and relationships with the state*

Because many HTAs take on projects that have significant impact at the community level—that ranging from emergency aid disbursement to the building of public infrastructure and the management of public works—governments at the local, state and national level have begun to take necessary steps to establish partnerships to support their efforts. The most widely known effort is Mexico's 3-for-1 program, which provides matching funds from federal, state and municipal governments for projects proposed and endorsed by organized migrant groups.

As the number of Mexicans living abroad soared throughout the 1980s and 1990s, the state began to pay closer attention to the migrant phenomenon. In the 1990s, under Salinas de Gortari's government, several initiatives were born to deal with the phenomenon from inside Mexico's border—most notably the *Paisano* and *Grupo Beta* programs and the creation of an office that provided attention to Mexicans abroad (see Ortíz and Sánchez 2004). The growth of clubs or associations abroad that dealt with hometown community needs gradually forced the state to craft policies that addressed the transnational nature of Mexican migration and recognize the potential of collective remittances. Starting in the state of Zacatecas, partnerships between HTAs and state authorities led to the creation of 1-for-1 schemes and as federal and local authorities placed greater attention on migrant-led development and secured funding for project development, the 3-for-1 program came to exist. As Goldring (2004, 809) argues, the consolidation of the 3-for-1 program can be traced to a moment in the first half of Vicente Fox's administration (in 2002) when a series of policy proposals were devised to reach out to organized migrant populations in the hopes of breaking the impasse in the debates regarding the development potential of worker-family remittances, and as a way of consolidating an economic strategy that prioritized the market and public-private partnerships.

Several scholars have argued that beyond the specific projects that the 3-for-1 has made possible, the program has led to a transformation in local governance that has transferred funds and decision-making power to localities and promoted the involvement of municipal governments and civil society groups in important community ventures (Burgess 2006; Fox

and Bada 2008). Furthermore, evidence from the states of Jalisco and Michoacán (Fox and Bada 2008) shows that the 3-for-1 program has made possible the disbursement of government funds to lower-income outlying communities, in large part due to the opportunities that have been generated for HTAs to mobilize and lobby in favor of these areas. As Fox and Bada (2008) explain, “The most important tool that HTAs have to improve the allocation of funds for undeserved communities turned out to be their capacity to negotiate directly with the *state* government, and to a lesser degree with the federal Social Development Ministry, and thereby pressure unresponsive municipal authorities” (452). What these results point to is the emergence of new channels of dialogue and accountability structures between the state and transnational civil society groups. It must be noted that similar experiences, have been documented for countries like El Salvador (Itzigsohn and Villacrés 2008; Orozco 2007) where growing HTA activity has spurred the creation of matching programs such as *Unidos por la Solidaridad* and opened spaces for increased state-HTA interaction.

The aforementioned experiences call attention to the role that HTAs are playing in the generation of state-society synergies (Evans 1996) and opportunities for state learning (Iskander 2005). As Evans argues, “state-society synergy can be a catalyst for development” (1996, 1119). These opportunities arise when public-private relations are characterized by (1) complementarity—which stresses that the interaction between public officials and communities enhances the capabilities of, rather than substituting for, each other—and (2) embeddedness—which means that public-private boundaries are permeable. That said, examinations of state-society synergy demonstrate that not all public-private alliances lead to



effective cooperation efforts. Synergy depends on context-specific inputs and the application of imaginative organizational arrangements and institutional “soft technologies”. Identifying how synergy is brokered through HTA-state alliances is an important issue that the existing literature has not examined in detail. The empirical evidence presented in this study will help fill this void.

Furthermore, as Iskander argues in her study on the migration-development experience in the Moroccan Souss (2005), in order to better understand how these partnerships produce innovative development practices, we must revisit the notion that the state and society are distinct units and question the long-standing logic that local transformations arise as the state, through its policies and rules, acts *on* society. This is consonant with Migdal's approach regarding state-society relations (1994; 2001). According to Migdal (1994, 12),

As the state organization comes into contact with various social groups, it clashes with and accommodates to different moral orders. These engagements, which occur at numerous junctures, change the social bases and the aims of the state. The state is not a fixed ideological entity. Rather, it embodies an ongoing dynamic, a changing set of goals, as it engages other social groups.

Approaching the idea of synergy through a more complex view of state-society interaction provides an opportunity to assess how “social actors, including the state, learn and innovate as they plait migration and development together in new ways, often in ways that the actors themselves could not have imagined at the outset” (Iskander 2005, 3). This is another important dimension that the literature on HTAs has not examined in greater detail and will be addressed in subsequent sections.

*Towards a systematic analysis of HTA development potential*

The growth of studies focused on HTA activity, especially outside Latin America and the Caribbean, has inspired the establishment of criteria or benchmarks to analyze HTA activity and assess their development impact (Orozco 2003; Orozco and Welle n.d.; Orozco 2007). The primary goal is to arrive at a set of metrics that leads to a systematic analysis of collective migrant efforts and to more precise conclusions regarding HTA impact. Although the criteria and definitions used have varied according to the emphasis of each study, those related to the organizations' development promotion capabilities focus on 5 key elements: (1) their ability to identify priorities and implement projects; (2) how they operate and are organized; (3) their ability to carry out projects in conjunction with other institutions; (4) their long-term durability and (5) the ability to raise enough funds to deliver the adequate projects (Orozco 2007). These metrics are derived from previous research projects that sought to identify best practices and positive impacts of HTA activities and projects. As the knowledge base has expanded, and more insights are gathered, changes and refinements have been made to these analytical tools. Nevertheless, they serve as a useful starting point for the following sections that examine the history, structure, activities, projects, impacts and the relationships with the state of two HTAs that, through the combined efforts of hometown and US-based chapters, have orchestrated numerous development ventures in rural villages in the Dominican Republic.

## Transnational Community Development: An Examination of Two Dominican HTAs<sup>2</sup>

Both the *Sociedad Progresista de Villa Sombrero* (Soprovis) and the *Movimiento para el desarrollo de Boca Canasta* (Modebo) were founded in the Dominican Republic in 1970s as voluntary community-based organizations that sought to address local needs at a time of great political and economic instability in the Dominican Republic. Relying mostly on local organizing efforts and the financial support of members who had migrated to the capital, Santo Domingo, in the late 1960s, these groups quickly became important community actors in the development of Boca Canasta and Villa Sombrero. At a time when the Dominican Republic was slowly recovering from the brutal dictatorship of Rafael Leonidas Trujillo<sup>3</sup> but was caught in Joaquín Balaguer's repressive and sinister regime, these organizations took on important developmental ventures and leveraged their organizational capacity, and limited monetary resources, to pressure the Dominican state to pay closer attention to their social and economic needs.

Soprovis and Modebo were not the only groups of their kind that sprung up in the Peravia Province in the 1970s. Historical accounts call attention to the fact that neighboring towns like Matanzas, El Llano, Cañafistol and Villa Fundación relied on similar organized groups to undertake community projects and make important claims to the local authorities (Díaz

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2 The data presented in the following sections relied mostly on a case study approach where a series of semi-structured interviews (37) and ethnographic observations were conducted in towns of Boca Canasta and Villa Sombrero—located in the Peravia Province, a southern, semi-arid, agricultural region of the Dominican Republic—and in important Dominican migrant destinations in the United States, such as New York City and Boston, Massachusetts. The majority of the subjects interviewed were current and past members of the *Movimiento para el Desarrollo de Boca Canasta* (Modebo) and the *Sociedad Progresista de Villa Sombrero* (Soprovis). Local governmental officers and state officials, who could provide key insights regarding the work and impacts of the organizations being examined—in both countries—were also interviewed. Ethnographic observations provided an opportunity to learn about the processes, activities and practices of the HTAs and also led to the discovery of other organized groups and cultural practices of both migrants and hometown residents.

3 Trujillo's dictatorship was notoriously known for its savagery, oppression and severe mishandling of economic affairs, which crippled the country's development for several decades, even after his death.

Melo n.d., 116). Many of them are still in operation today. Local community leaders are quick to mention that the strong associational activity has its roots in the region's agricultural activity, which in the past relied on the *convites*, an informal self-help network of local agriculturalists and community members that facilitated the harvesting and sowing of farm lands. Those involved in the *convites* would lend their work in exchange for food and the promise that when the time to work their fields came around, participants would do the same for them. Apart from the local economic benefits that the *convites* made possible, they were seen as opportunities for social interaction and the creation of social capital. Although *convites* are no longer common due to the changes in labor and agricultural practices in the Dominican Republic, the self-help, volunteering and cooperation dynamics have been carried over to the present, and are observed in the organizational structures of the modern-day associations.

*From youth clubs to community development organizations*

The story of how these associations came to exist, at a moment when the Dominican Republic was still ruled by a repressive regime that violently persecuted and murdered members of leftist and other opposition groups, is an interesting one that can be interpreted as the unforeseen result of guileful attempts by the government to stave off the spreading of “communist” ideals throughout the countryside. Afraid that the political instability that ruled over the country after Trujillo's death and the United States invasion would lead to a Cuban-style revolution, the Dominican state, under Balaguer's command, attempted to eradicate all possible threats to the existing regime.

Starting in 1966, through the auspices of the Office for Community Development (OCD)—with the financial backing of international entities and the support of the Catholic Church—the Balaguer regime crafted a national plan to organize youth clubs, known as *clubes 5-D*<sup>4</sup>, predominantly in the rural areas. Originally, these all-female clubs were organized to teach arts and crafts and other domestic chores to the young villagers. Eventually, males were incorporated in the clubs and their activities and projects expanded. According to Radamés Peña, an ex-club member from Villa Sombrero, “the work that was being done with the clubs was geared towards maintaining the youth in a vicious circle, filling their heads with historic phrases...forming individuals with a philosophy of life that would keep them tame, calm, deterrent with regards to the demands of their towns, so that they would not unlock their youthful verve...the revolutionary spirit of the youth”. However, as the political environment in the country became more heated, the youth began questioning the idea behind the effort and started to advocate for the liberty of thought and democratic values. In a matter of years, the *clubes 5-D* were transformed into cultural and sporting clubs (*clubes deportivos y culturales*) which were more political groups that manifested their opposition to the repressive and violent state practices through protest songs, lyrical poetry and political theater. As these groups became more radicalized and grew in numbers, the authorities began to persecute and harass club members throughout the country (Hoffnung-Garskof 2008, 86-89).

Both Villa Sombrero and Boca Canasta hosted youth clubs, which became important breeding grounds for young community leaders who longed to see positive changes in the

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4 The five “D’s” stood for: *Dios, Deber, Derechos, Dignidad* and *Dominicano* (God, Duty, Rights, Dignity and Dominican)

socioeconomic environment of their communities. The clubs opened spaces for discussion and debate, but they were also entities that took on important local projects and initiatives like the building of community centers and campaigns against crime and vices. Nevertheless, these were not the only manifestations of associational life. In Boca Canasta, a series of organizations were established to address community needs, including educational and cultural groups and a savings and loan co-op. Although some of these efforts were short lived, they provided the seeds for the formation of Modebo, which was founded on April 12, 1975.

In the case of Villa Sombrero, some of the young club members eventually left their villages for the capital, Santo Domingo, in search of economic opportunities. Some left to pursue university studies while others opted to work in *colmados* (grocery shops akin to bodegas). Those who worked in the *colmados* eventually saved sufficient funds to open their own stores and recruited family and friends from the community to work for them. Carrying with them the positive experiences of collective community work and seeing their economic situation improve, they decided to create an organization that would develop specific community projects aimed at improving their hometown's quality of life. On August 5, 1973, Soprovís was born.

The emergence of Soprovís and Modebo did not quell club activity in Boca Canasta and Villa Sombrero. A new generation of community-minded and politically-engaged youth carried on the club tradition and took over where their elders had left off. The names of these groups changed, and so did their activities and goals, as associational life thickened and the political environment evolved. At one point, more than one club emerged in Villa

Sombrero and there is still one organized today. Their efforts are aimed at organizing the patron saint festivities, an important community event, and their members are mostly adults who have carried on the club tradition.

### *First steps and connections with the US-based diaspora*

The first projects undertaken by Modebo and Soprovís were geared towards important community needs in the areas of education and health. Modebo's first effort was the construction of a local health clinic and the provision of medicines and doctors for the community. In order to raise the needed funds, they organized a series of fundraising activities including a community festival, known as a *kermesse*, where locals provided food and drinks that could be sold to those in attendance. Support also came from merchants from Santo Domingo who had migrated from Boca Canasta in the late 1960s and had become successful business owners. Understanding the importance of leveraging the financial and logistical support from Santo Domingo, a sister chapter was opened in the capital shortly after Modebo's start in Boca Canasta. The combined efforts of both chapters made possible the health clinic project and the purchase of some lands that were destined for the building of a primary school that would substitute the decrepit one built in the Trujillo era.<sup>5</sup>

Although the idea of starting Soprovís came from community leaders in Santo Domingo, soon after the organization was founded in the capital, a second chapter was started in Villa

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<sup>5</sup> Eventually, Modebo's Santo Domingo chapter ceased to exist due, in part, to the death of many of the older leaders and the eventual migration of many of its members to the United States. While some merchants in the capital still support Modebo's projects and activities, their level of involvement is not what it used to be in years past.

Sombrero. The joint work of both groups led to their first major project, which involved renting a property in the community to house a commercial school where the young residents could learn valuable skills like machine sewing, arts and craft production and typewriting. Their plans also included the building of a health clinic, making improvements to their cemetery, and the building of basketball courts and other community amenities. Similarly to Modebo, the funding came mostly from community fundraising activities that provided opportunities for those in the capital and the hometown locals to socialize and rally support for the organizations.

In the early days of Soprovis and Modebo, financial support was also attained from the US-based diaspora. Nevertheless, these were personal donations made by concerned community members whenever possible. These trends would soon change as more residents found themselves migrating to the United States.

Throughout the 1970s and 1980s a substantial amount of Dominicans began flocking to major urban enclaves in the eastern seaboard of the United States. Major cities like New York and Boston began to absorb some of the Caribbean newcomers who came looking for better economic and life opportunities. These migratory waves brought some of the younger leaders of Modebo and Soprovis who had experience on how to structure and run a community organization, understood the importance of developing a sense of community and strengthening community ties, and knew how to raise money. In the late 1970s and early 1980s, when residents from Boca Canasta and Villa Sombrero had a significant representation in Boston and New York, respectively, the transplanted leaders took the first steps to start the first stateside chapters. Although considered as independent entities, the



administrative structures of the new chapters mirrored those of the organizations operating in the Dominican Republic and they adopted the same mission and goals. The stateside leaders' prior knowledge of community organizing and the needs of the community, their close ties with home country leaders, and the fact that many of those who had migrated from the hometowns knew of the impact that these organizations had on the lives of those who stayed behind, were important factors that contributed to the initial success of the stateside groups.

Due to the changing monetary policies crafted by the Dominican state in the early 1980s, that placed the exchange rate at around three Dominican pesos per dollar, and the employment opportunities being reaped by the vast majority of the adult migrants, the stateside chapters quickly amassed sizable donations that served to finance larger community projects<sup>6</sup>. Thus, the fundraising capacity of the stateside groups proved to be a crucial component of Modebo's and Soprovís' ability to carry out successful community development projects. As the groups' reliance on the funding streams provided by the US-based groups intensified, new organizational mechanisms were needed to effectively broker the relationship between those working at home and the chapters operating from afar.

#### *The challenges (and opportunities) of operating transnationally*

As stateside groups have grown in importance, due primarily to their sizable donations, the internal dynamics of both Modebo and Soprovís have been transformed. Initially, those who migrated to the United States saw themselves as supporting the efforts of the hometown

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<sup>6</sup> Today, the exchange rate stands around 35 pesos per dollar. This favorable rate, coupled with the differences in cost of living, have made migrant donations an indispensable source of funds for the organizations' work.

groups and contributing the needed funds to projects that were selected and identified by the hometown chapters, since it was generally understood that locals had first-hand knowledge of the community's needs and were responsible for their implementation. But as the US-based chapters became the main benefactors, they articulated a different vision of what development meant and what projects should be pursued, which at times was not necessarily aligned with what the locals had in mind. These dynamics are explained by Levitt (2001, Ch. 7) in her account of the transnational community development efforts of the Miraflores Development Committee (MDC), an HTA whose trajectory closely resembles that of Soprovís and Modebo.

The way in which power was distributed between these two groups [the migrants and the locals] and the extent to which each took the other's interests into account, was constantly renegotiated. Different visions of the "future Miraflores" and how to create it were proposed. Nonmigrants wanted jobs, youth programs and a better baseball facility. Migrants wanted a Miraflores where they could be comfortable vacationing or retiring to (193).

Disagreements over what projects should be pursued and how finances are managed have led to divisions between migrants and locals. In the case of Modebo, a young migrant's desire to upgrade the hometown's baseball park was met with resistance from the leaders in Boca Canasta who were interested in taking on other projects. Not wanting to postpone their desires, a separate committee, with representatives in both Boston and Boca Canasta, was created to take on the park project. This small group worked for years to build the park's walls and cement stands. They relied on donations from migrants in Boston and the aid of the hometown faction to make sure that the project moved forward. When the project was coming to an end, disagreements between Modebo's hometown leadership and the park committee grew deeper, as allegations over misuse of funds were raised by Modebo's

president. Although the allegations were never confirmed, they served to create divisions between some migrants and hometown leaders that last to this day.

Internal disputes have also led to periods of inactivity or “dormant periods” for the organizations. Such was the case when Soprovis purchased a big piece of land in the center of the town and built the central plaza, one of their biggest projects to date. An effort carried out between the New York, Santo Domingo and hometown chapter, the project required vast amounts of funding and some borrowing to complete. Bolivar Dumé, who presided over the New York chapter at the time, recalls that the project was a complicated one where lots of energies and time were spent coordinating and facilitating the purchasing of the land, the design of the structure and the construction of the project. The venture also led some community members to question how the money was being handled and vocalize other unfounded critiques that were not well received by hometown leaders who were donating their time and efforts to make sure that the project was carried out. Fed up with the criticism and claiming to being fatigued after completing a long project, in 1989, the local chapter went into a long “recess” that spilled over to the Santo Domingo and New York chapters. Although some community activities associated with Soprovis (like the long-standing baseball leagues) continued in the hometown, and the New York chapter still held meetings and organized social activities, it was not until 1999, when the opportunity arose to build a new funeral home, that the chapters joined forces once more to take on a large project.

Apart from the less than positive results of these experiences, they have served as learning opportunities and led to the transformation of the organizations' practices and internal structures.

Modebo, like Soprovis, has gone through “dormant periods” that have resulted from internal tensions, lack of strong leadership or because the Boston chapter’s Board of Directors isn't actively engaged nor meeting regularly (this is the situation I encountered at the outset of the project). To ensure that the hometown infrastructure does not fall into disrepair, especially when the Boston group is not active, and to be able to upkeep the structures they have built and manage—such as a community center, a baseball field and a funeral home—the Boca Canasta chapter has developed fee-for-service mechanisms that help cover maintenance costs.

In order to curb criticisms regarding the handling of community properties and certify that stateside donations are well accounted for, Modebo's hometown chapter prepares monthly reports that detail all the incomes and expenditures. They also prepare yearly reports that include an inventory of materials and equipment that the organization owns, detailed records of incomes and expenditures incurred in community activities, and a breakdown of income related to the fee-for-service system. These reports are signed and certified by three board members. Copies are available for the community to inspect and are sent to the Boston chapter.

In 2001, once the baseball park project was inaugurated, the Boca Canasta chapter decided to reorganize its Board of Directors to include representatives from all of the organized

community groups and the different church congregations. This approach served to strengthen the organization's standing as the principal community group—especially when dealing with politicians and state agencies—and helped ensure that most of the projects and activities carried out in the community were channeled and managed through Modebo. This strategy has also helped improve the coordination of community improvement projects, especially those that have been pursued through the auspices of the municipality under the new participatory budgeting process<sup>7</sup>.

The organizational structure and internal dynamics of Soprovis were also revamped as the organization awoke from its long recess, in 1999. Once the funeral home project got underway, the 3 existing chapters (Villa Sombrero, Santo Domingo and New York) came together to rally behind the effort. Organization leaders understood that the lull was tied to fractures in the leadership structure that resulted from the migration of key members to the United States or Santo Domingo or to the selection of directors that were not fully committed to the organization. With the advent of a new project, the opportunity arose to incorporate new leaders who were capable of keeping the organization running smoothly. As the organization gathered steam, donations started to trickle in from migrants in Boston who had grown in numbers, had organized a softball team, and were making important donations on an individual basis. This demonstration of support led the leaders of Santo Domingo and Villa Sombrero to support and encourage the birth of Soprovis-Boston, the organization's fourth chapter, in 2000.

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<sup>7</sup> Like many countries in Latin America, the Dominican Republic has enacted legislation that requires municipalities to earmark a percentage of their state allocations towards participatory budget processes. Since 2005 the Municipality of Baní has been conducting such processes, and they have relied on Modebo to orchestrate the effort in Boca Canasta.

The emergence of a new chapter meant that the organization would have a stronger financial backing to undertake community projects. It also indicated that the organization would need to redefine their project selection process since there were now four different groups bringing proposals to the table. From the outset, the coordinating responsibility fell on the shoulders of the Santo Domingo chapter, who were the founders and considered the main leaders of the organization. Procedurally, if the stateside groups had a proposal in mind, they would start talks with the President of the Santo Domingo chapter, who would discuss the issue with the hometown leaders and arrive at a joint decision. As the stateside leaders explained, each chapter operates independently, with their own rules and by-laws, and pursues small projects independently (such as donations to the school and clinics, organizing health drives and the like) but always in concert with the local chapter. Bigger projects that require larger amounts of funding and more coordination are worked collectively. Constant communication between board members, mostly through phone calls but also through e-mails and the community's webpages, facilitates the flow of information and the ability to engage in collaborative efforts.

But the growing involvement and financial support of Soprovis' stateside chapters has led to a revision of the decision-making process and the role they assume in hometown affairs. Since 2006, the New York and Boston chapters have had formal representation in the hometown chapter through two representatives that have effective participation rights (they can voice their opinions and vote). The stateside chapters rely on their representatives to voice their ideas and concerns and also to get the most recent information regarding the organization. Representatives are also expected to provide detailed reports on on-going projects and conduct inquiries when needed. The inclusion of representatives has evolved

into a reformulation of how decisions are made and projects are selected. In a summit organized around Soprovis' 35<sup>th</sup> anniversary—held in Villa Sombrero, in 2008—members of all four chapters decided on a 10-point plan of action that detailed the projects that they would undertake in the following years. Each chapter had the opportunity of making a case for their proposals and a consensus-based agreement was reached on the nature and timing of the projects. The summit opened a space for dialogue that has facilitated project coordination and their ability to work transnationally. These dialogues now take place more frequently, primarily through telephone conference calls, and have served to strengthen collaborative ties amongst chapters.

*Pursuing community projects and managing relationships with the state*

Over a period of more than 30 years, Soprovis and Modebo have been able to endow their communities with important installations and programs that have served to address important local needs. The list of accomplishments is quite long and reflects their problem-solving capacity, their ability to work transnationally and leverage important state resources in their favor. From parks, plazas, schools and clinics to computers, scholarships and ambulances, these voluntary organizations have been responsible for the physical and socioeconomic transformation of Boca Canasta and Villa Sombrero, and in the process, they have also established a different way of pursuing local development and working with the state.

Leaders from both organizations explain that their general approach to community development is to not wait for the state to attend to their needs, but to take the initiative and utilize their organizational resources and capabilities to address problems. While there are

some small-scale projects—like the purchase of an ambulance, remodeling a baseball field or establishing a school computer lab—that they have been able to carry out without state support, larger ventures—like the building of a school, an aqueduct or a modern health clinic—have required the state's involvement and the creation of special partnerships between the organizations and government entities.

Héctor Cabral, who presided over Modebo's Boca Canasta chapter for 11 years, recalls that the first partnerships between the people of Boca Canasta and the state, in the Post-Trujillo era, came in 1967, at a moment when the town needed a cemetery to bury their dead. In conjunction with the people of El Llano, a neighboring village, they organized a joint committee that purchased a tract of land and then lobbied the state, through the OCD, for assistance. Because they were organized and had ownership of the land, the OCD was able to assist them. The community put the land, materials and the non-specialized labor and the OCD brought technicians, masons and carpenters to help build the cemetery.

These types of partnerships that stressed *ayuda mutua y esfuerzo propio* (mutual aid and local effort) became common in many parts of the Dominican Republic where organized citizens wanted to develop local public works. Once Modebo and Soprovis were organized, similar strategies were pursued to get the state to invest resources and produce infrastructure projects in their communities. Both communities were able to get the state to build them modern primary school buildings in the late 1970s, partly because the organizations owned parcels of land where the structures could be built. But just securing a site did not assure that the state would intervene. As the leaders recall, they needed to lobby the state, through



local political leaders who were members of the organizations and had access to influential public officials and politicians.

As the organizations became more adept at developing community projects and raising funds, thanks to the combined efforts of the stateside and hometown chapters, they strengthened their standing as powerful civil society entities that had the moral and financial backing of local and transnational citizens. This status afforded them opportunities to make further claims to state authorities. In the 1990s, Modebo was able to raise \$50,000 to build a much-needed aqueduct through a series of fundraising activities in Boston and Boca Canasta. Although this amount would only help them drill a new well and set-up a new water main—which they had begun constructing—to solve the problem, it was sufficient to nab the attention of Balaguer who, in a visit to inaugurate a public project in the municipality of Baní, told the community to “keep their money” since he was going to build them a proper aqueduct system. In a short amount of time, a concrete water tower was erected by the national water company in a small plot owned by Modebo. The money raised for the aqueduct project was used to construct a modern funeral home.

Members of Soprovis and Modebo argue that these partnerships have helped their communities enjoy the benefits of projects that they would have not been able to develop on their own, given the high monetary costs, the Byzantine permitting processes and the coordination issues that are associated with these ventures. But these joint ventures also provided opportunities for the organizations to keep a close watch on how the projects were carried out and impose some informal controls that would ensure that the work was

finalized on-time while keeping the corrupt practices associated with government projects were kept at a minimum.

Soprovis' experience with the funeral home is a case in point. As the organization came out from its "dormant period" they decided to work on the town's funeral home, which was in need of serious repairs. Through their contacts, they were able to get the national government's Fund for the Promotion of Community Initiatives (known in the Dominican Republic as Procomunidad) to provide some assistance in repairing the existing wooden structure that stood in the center of the community. But the Santo Domingo leaders were interested in something more, they wanted to build a new cement structure. Procomunidad agreed to help, but they asked the community to come up with 25% of the funds that were needed (around 800,000 Dominican pesos) and they would cover the rest.

The organization accepted the challenge and acted swiftly to raise the funds. But since they had a financial stake in the project, and worried that the funds would be lost in the usual palm greasing that characterized government projects, they requested that a member of Soprovis, a native son of the community who's a well-known architect, become the designer and project director. They also created a *comisión* (ad-hoc committee) composed of Soprovis members who had experience with project management and political contacts, to oversee the construction and provide assistance to the project director. At times when the project was stalled because the funds were held up in Procomunidad, the *comisión* would call the Santo Domingo leadership, who would use their contacts in the government to meet with the officials in charge and get the project back on track. According to those involved in the project, the funeral home was built in record time, compared to the schedule of regular government projects.

While both HTAs have been able to use their standing as well-funded and highly-organized community institutions to garner the attention of politicians and those in power, Soprovis has taken the partnership model a step further and has succeeded in bringing state structures closer to the community. In 2001, Soprovis was able to successfully lobby the Dominican Congress to raise Villa Sombrero's status to that of Municipal District. This was no small feat, since the elevation of the “villa”<sup>8</sup> to the status of Municipal District involved a complicated and cumbersome political process that required a legislative act of the Congress and that the Mayor of the main Provincial Municipality name a Municipal Director and Municipal District Board who were responsible for managing and administering the district. The efforts of Soprovis' Santo Domingo chapter were instrumental in the process leading to the designation. Because most of its members are established businessmen who have developed close relationships with important private and public sector actors, they were able to effectively use their contacts to lobby the Congress in favor of Villa Sombrero.

Soprovis' leaders explain that one of the principal benefits of being named a municipal district is that the new municipal authorities receive a specific budget allocation, handed down from the National Treasury, which is used to address local needs, generate jobs and promote economic activity. Another important outcome has been the opportunity to work directly with a local mayor who understands the importance of partnering with organizations like Soprovis and who considers himself a bona fide member of the organization. These advantages are not available for the residents of Boca Canasta who are

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8 “Villa” is an politico-administrative category that is ascribed to settlements with more than a thousand persons. According to Dominican law, a settlement that wishes to be named a Municipal District has to meet several requirements related to population size and income generation, and has to submit a feasibility report that is evaluated by the national legislature before being considered.

overseen administratively and politically by the Municipality of Baní, which is also the main administrative seat of the Peravia Province.

Becoming a Municipal District has also intensified partisan political activity in Villa Sombrero. But instead of creating serious divisions, as is normally the case in the politically-charged Dominican Republic, it has helped strengthen the organization's resolve to place community affairs above political considerations. Evidence of this is the fact that important political leaders from opposing parties share responsibilities in the hometown chapter and make use of their party connections to gather support for Soprovis' projects and activities. While partisan politics are a common conversation topic in many of the chapter's meetings (not just in the Dominican Republic but in the United States as well) members are discouraged from making political statements, or using the organization's name or structures, to advance partisan goals. When hometown leaders are asked how they manage to keep partisan battles from interfering in their work with Soprovis, many respond: "I am a communitarian first, and then a member of my party". This view is also shared by many civil servants who are loyal to the political parties that helped them obtain a government job, and are active members of the hometown chapter. Like the active politicians, government workers have become an important source of information regarding public projects and programs and have helped Soprovis establish "*amarres*" (linkages) with diverse bureaucracies.

The stateside chapters have also taken advantage of the new district status as an opportunity to advance projects that materialize their ideas of amenities and services that modern municipalities should provide. Some of these notions, packaged as "social remittances" (Levitt 2001) are rooted in the migrant experience and based on what those abroad have

seen and come to rely on in their host environments. An interesting example is the local fire station, which was opened in 2005 after the Boston chapter took the initiative to purchase a used fire truck in the United States and ship it to Villa Sombrero. But getting the station running proved to be more difficult than just shipping a vehicle. Both the Boston and the hometown chapter had to organize a volunteer fire squad, rent a building that would serve as the station and secure the needed certifications and permits from various government entities, amongst other tasks, before the truck could be put into use. Although Boston has been providing most of the financial support to sustain the station, locals have also been contributing through the *patronato* or trust that was created to help support the effort. Nevertheless, the leaders from Boston do not expect to carry this financial burden for much long and are pressuring the local mayor to assume this role. In one of their meetings, Carlos Melo, former president of Soproviz-Boston exclaimed: “I have been reading that in all places [in the United States] the firemen are supported by the authorities”. Although some assistance is being secured from the state, the Boston members would like the mayor to assume the same responsibility that is expected of top local government executives in US cities. It is highly likely that Soproviz will need to continue providing some level of support in the years to come, but residents can also expect to see the Mayor following Boston's lead and placing greater attention and investing more resources towards public security in the district.

#### *Analyzing development impacts and comparing trajectories*

The two organizations examined present similarities and differences in the way they have pursued community-based development projects—with and without the state's assistance—and leveraged transnational connections in their favor. This scenario presents an opportunity

to draw some important lessons regarding the development potential of HTAs and to shed some light on the ways in which synergistic state-society relations lead to favorable outcomes for home communities.

Both Modebo and Soprovís exhibit all the features outlined by Orozco (2007) that make for a successful HTA development delivery capacity. In a period that extends over 30 years, the two organizations have developed the ability to identify local needs, secure needed resources, and implement proposed projects. They have also learned to adapt and transform their organizational structure to incorporate new members from the diaspora and hometown groups, and weathered internal problems. Furthermore, these entities have been adept at dealing and partnering with the Dominican state in its various incarnations, from Balaguer's despotic regime to Leonel Fernández' neoliberal government. Clearly, their capability to establish partnerships with other institutions and work transnationally with stateside chapters has been critical to their success. Another key element that can be easily overlooked is the fact that both organizations began as hometown self-help groups that became HTAs as transnational linkages were established with leaders who migrated North and expressed a desire to continue contributing to their communities of origin. These strong hometown roots have ensured that local residents are continually engaged in the organizations' decision-making processes, and been instrumental in their ability to enter into collaborative schemes that require continuous oversight and monitoring on behalf of the HTAs. Hometown chapters in Boca Canasta and Villa Sombrero usually assume the roles of internal auditors or inspectors who are looking after the interests of the community and the organization. However, it must be made clear that these local ties are no antidote to the tensions that arise when migrants' desires clash with those of the hometown residents. While the continued

participation of hometown residents in organizational affairs may ensure that their voices are being heard, stateside proposals that are backed with monetary support are usually not contested. But the fact that their collective efforts have led, in the long run, to solid transnational relationships that evolve into mostly positive outcomes for the communities, may lead us to think that these tensions have a way of being worked out internally, and do not pose an immediate threat to their development capacity.

The organizations' ability to work transnationally, tackle complicated projects and enter into agreements with the state, has also prompted private investment activity in the hometowns. Such is the case of Bolivar Dumé, a former president of the Soprovis-New York chapter, who wishes to spend more time in his hometown and has invested many of his savings in a private housing development project in Villa Sombrero, in partnership with other US migrants and members of Soprovis-Santo Domingo. The same is true for Diómedes Romero, a return migrant, successful business owner in Boca Canasta and former president of Modebo, who wants to leverage the organization's transnational connections to export fruits and vegetables grown in the hometown to the United States. The relationships and experiences that these men have accumulated, through their work with the HTAs, have led them to expand their level of involvement, from community developers to community investors.

Cooperation between citizen groups and state structures has been an on-going phenomenon in Villa Sombrero and Boca Canasta. As the evidence shows, these relationships have relied on what Evans (1996) calls “complementarity”, or a clear division of labor where the conjunction of inputs provided by each camp results in a greater output than what they

could have delivered on their own. The most common form of complementarity is evidenced in projects where the communities were able to get organized to raise funds, lobby the state and purchase tracts of land where government entities could help build important public facilities. Public investment in these communities, mostly in the form of construction projects, offered an opportunity for the communities to oversee the management of the projects and establish some level of local accountability that would, in turn, increase social capital amongst members of the community and establish a working relationship with government entities that stressed trust and good governance. Project monitoring would also ensure that works would be finished on-time and within budget, which, according to hometown residents, is quite uncommon in the Dominican Republic. Endowments of social capital within civil society—established through their agricultural practices and the government's promotion of youth clubs and civic organizations—were key in fomenting complementarity, but so were the deployment of organizational “soft technologies” in the form of *comisiones*, or ad-hoc committees which included persons with technical knowledge and individuals who had political contacts, to manage community projects.

Differences in the organizations' internal structures reveal important lessons about their capacity to lobby and work with the state. From the outset, both organizations had established chapters in Santo Domingo that offered monetary and logistical support. The passing of some of its members and the eventual migration of other leaders to Boston meant that Modebo's Santo Domingo chapter would cease to exist several years after being founded. While some of those who left for the United States found refuge in the Boston chapter, the loss of a stable representation in the capital has limited the organization's capacity to lobby the central state, something that Soprovís has been able to master over the



years. Migrants to Santo Domingo from Boca Canasta were not just better off economically; like their counterparts from Villa Sombrero, they also became part of a merchant class that was able to cultivate relationships with important private sector actors and develop ties with legislators and politicians who could lend a helping hand. For the leaders of Soprovis-Santo Domingo, their class status and their closeness to the halls of power has made possible the nurturing of political relationships that have led to important outcomes like the Municipal District status and the construction of a modern aqueduct system which is controlled and operated by the community.

Soprovis' ability to bring the state's administrative structures closer to the residents of Villa Sombrero has presented opportunities to build a dense set of relationships with government workers and the local mayor that have led to important interactions that support “embeddedness”, or the permeability of public-private boundaries (Evans 1996). In Villa Sombrero, there are tens of organizations operating locally that range from neighborhood and agricultural associations to social clubs and a community-run water company. These groups form part of a thick civil society structure that responds to the needs of local residents and takes action to solve local problems. State entities recognize this condition and take advantage of these important networks to carry out their work. The mayor of Villa Sombrero, Juan Peña, for example, uses these community organizations to disseminate important information and coordinate services like garbage disposal and the organization of cultural activities. He also sees these entities as important sources of information regarding the problems and needs of the citizens. His view of what Soprovis represents and how he is engaged in organized community life is indicative of the strong ties that exist between state and community actors. As he states:

Soprovis has been the engine of development in the community. For example, I used to define it as a small town council, because through them it was possible to get the land for the school, for the principal park, for the funeral home, for the clinic...I come from the organizations. I did not come unilaterally from the political sphere...I belonged, in my teenage years, to the *Club Inmaculada Concepción*. I belonged to the agriculturalists [organization], *Sombrero en Marcha*, in the late nineties; and I am member number 107 of Soprovis.

Since his appointment, in 2002, Soprovis and the local mayor have collaborated in several projects and activities where responsibilities are shared and both sides partake in making decisions. The latest one is a sports complex, which is being built on land purchased by the District and the Municipality of Baní. Their relationship is not devoid of friction, but both sides recognize that they must work together to advance their goals. The same is true for civil servants who, through their membership, are able to link the organization to different government initiatives and can also take advantage of Soprovis' structures to reach out to larger publics.

Complementarity and embeddedness are at the heart of the state-society synergy that has evolved between Soprovis and state authorities. Although Modebo has been able to produce important developmental outcomes for Boca Canasta through collaborations with state entities and their ability to incorporate organized community groups into their ranks, the evidence demonstrates that synergies with the state have not materialized. This is due, in part, to the adoption of more confrontational style when dealing with politicians and state actors. In more than one occasion, members of Modebo were quick to point out that the state has done very little for the community and that they like to keep politicians at bay, except when they have something to offer the community. Thus, their strategy for calling the state's attention is focused more on making strong claims and denunciations. This arms-length relationship with the state has produced some opportunities for complementarity but

not embeddedness. While it is hard to determine to what extent this situation has limited development prospects in Boca Canasta, it is clear that brokering synergistic ties with key public sector actors may prove to be beneficial in the years to come.

Despite the different results and approaches, Soprovis and Modebo have contributed to the formation of a distinct logic of local governance and community development that is not common in many parts of the Dominican Republic. The formation of a local fire squad—which is a public safety service usually provided by local governments—was beyond the reach of the mayor's budget, but Soprovis rallied behind it because it reflected their vision of what governments should provide for their citizens, and it was clear to them that once in operation, the local authorities would need to find the resources to support the effort. Pressuring the government to take action by taking the initiative is one way these groups are transforming the relationship between state and society and blurring the boundaries of where society's role ends and when the state's begins. Furthermore, through informal monitoring mechanisms that serve to establish some level of accountability, these HTAs are also imposing some disciplinary mechanisms that can lead to better managed and more cost-effective public projects.

## **Conclusion**

Although the link between migration and development has given academics much to talk about and reflect over the years, the recent debates on migrant transnationalism, collective remittances and HTAs have established new avenues that lead to fertile grounds where more food for thought can be cultivated. The growing literature on HTAs is part of a recent trend that sees migrants' associational ties and collective practices as channels that deepen

transnational interactions and open possibilities for socioeconomic advancement. Although recent scholarship has tried to establish a systematic approach to the study of HTAs, that helps us move beyond anecdotal accounts and towards a more rigorous evaluation of their work and impacts, there is still much work to be done. This is especially true when analyzing the various types of state-society interactions and governance impacts that are made possible by HTAs that engage in transnational community development. Recent accounts of Mexico's 3-for-1 program and El Salvador's *Unidos por la Solidaridad* have shed light on the challenges and opportunities that emanate when transnational migrant organizations engage in collaborations with state structures to pursue development projects. This paper takes these works into account but goes several steps further and examines how states and societies engage in diverse arrangements that aim to foster synergies—or relations built around complementarity and embeddedness—between state and social actors. While studies on state-society synergies have become a common occurrence in the development literature, few have actually used this framework to examine HTA activity. Similarly, very few scholars have placed attention on Dominican HTAs despite the country's strong migratory tradition and their well known associational experience in the United States<sup>9</sup>.

The data on Soprovis and Modebo serves to highlight four important trends that advance our knowledge of how HTAs operate transnationally and are able to foment state-society partnerships. First, transnational connections between home and migrant chapters (especially those in developed countries) helps HTAs garner a solid financial footing that makes them stronger and more stable entities in the eyes of the community and local state structures.

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<sup>9</sup> To the extent that Dominican migrant organizations have been highlighted in the academic literature, the majority of the writings have focused on social clubs and related groups whose main objectives are geared towards community-building and migrant incorporation in host environments (See: Hofnung Garskof 2008; Hernández and Rodríguez 2004; Torres-Saillant and Hernández 1998; Itzigsohn forthcoming).

Second, these multi-stranded linkages foster local debates about what development means and how it should be pursued. In cases where state-society relations are characterized by both complementarity and embeddedness, these dialogic processes can lead to a process of state learning and knowledge circulation that may open up opportunities to promote new ideas on how to tackle long-standing problems. Third, organizational structure plays an important role in fomenting synergy and facilitating transnational work. Being able to identify and leverage each chapter's strengths, adopting "soft technologies" that promote dialogue between those who left and the ones who stayed behind, and negotiating diverse points of access to state structures, are all key ingredients. Fourth, a dynamic culture of active participation in community affairs helps generate norms of trust and collaboration amongst residents, and between citizens and state structures, that make it easy for migrants to establish transnational associational ties and work across borders.

The relative successes of Modebo and Soprovís, and the existence of other transnational community development groups in the Dominican Republic, may lead us to think that the Dominican state has its sights set on adopting a series of national policies and programs to promote transnational community development through HTA-state partnerships. Unfortunately, this is not the case. While past and current administrations have recognized the importance of worker remittances and taken steps to better incorporate migrants into the political and economic spheres—through laws that facilitate migrant investments, dual citizenship and the extension of voting rights—they have not shown much initiative when it comes to HTAs. At present, more attention is being placed on promoting "brain circulation", global knowledge networks and identifying high profile professionals in the diaspora that can help shepherd a national development plan. These are not worthless aims,

but they are popular strategies that have worked out for a small group of countries, with a high level of institutional capacity and professionalized bureaucracies, that are able to link overseas professionals' networks with successful local initiatives as part of a coordinated national policy framework. The Dominican Republic claims to be working towards these goals, but its policy and institutional contexts are still underdeveloped. Working closely with HTAs and developing a series of models to nurture transnational interchanges that promote state-society synergy, may serve to improve the country's institutional bases and provide needed experience that may lead them to where they would like to be.

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