

Investigating Party Abroad: Party Origins and Degrees of Formalization

Sorina Soare 

Department of Political and Social Sciences, University of Florence, Italy

Correspondence: Sorina Soare (sorinacristina.soare@unifi.it)

Submitted: 14 August 2023 **Accepted:** 5 January 2024 **Published:** 13 March 2024

Issue: This article is part of the issue “The Political Representation and Participation of Migrants” edited by Sergiu Gherghina (University of Glasgow) and Sorina Soare (University of Florence), fully open access at <https://doi.org/10.17645/pag.i354>

Abstract

This article contends that contemporary transnational dynamics have given rise to novel political subjects and territories for political engagement. By looking at how parties as organizational actors operate abroad, this study reworks extant classificatory attempts and proposes an amended typology in which the salient elements of variation are the origin of the party abroad and the degree of formalization. These two dimensions produce a matrix delineating four distinct types of party organization: branch-abroad, organization-abroad in franchising, committee-abroad, and semi-political structures. Conceptually, the typology elucidates the multifaceted nature of the structural approaches employed by home parties in their endeavors to establish connections with communities abroad. Empirically, this contribution enhances the comparability between organizational configurations abroad and extant research on party structures at the national level.

Keywords

communities abroad; party organization; political parties; transnational politics; typology

1. Introduction

The scholarly literature underscores the existence of various channels through which migrants engage with their countries of origin, subsequently remitting both material and immaterial resources that wield influence over economic, social, and political behaviors (De Haas, 2005; Krawatzek & Müller-Funk, 2020). The proliferation of these multifaceted relations and attachments across borders is intricately linked to the alteration of the traditional articulation between civil, political, and/or social rights and the national state (Bauböck & Faist, 2010). While the initial corpus of literature primarily documented migrants' agency within

a people-led process, subsequent scholarship has chronicled the intensification and diversification of forms and strategies employed by countries of origin in engaging with overseas communities (Gamlen et al., 2019; Koinova & Tsourapas, 2018). The global phenomenon of migrant enfranchisement (Collyer, 2014; Lafleur, 2013; Umpierrez de Reguero et al., 2023) has further compelled national institutions and, increasingly so, political actors at the national level to grapple with a novel spatiality and the potential reinvention of political paradigms.

In this context, the article asserts that the extensive and highly substantive research available has paved the way for a more refined understanding of how various transformations either maintain or diverge from established knowledge in national-level party politics. Turning to this thematic issue, this study supplements existing research on the adaptation of party strategies in recruiting and selecting candidates for public office. More precisely, it broadens the examination of how political parties in public office represent communities abroad, as elucidated by Boldrini (2024) and discussed by Umpierrez de Reguero and Navia (2024). The research expands upon the investigative approach outlined by Yener-Roderburg and Yetiş (2024), delving into how national parties mobilize extensive segments of communities abroad, ultimately incorporating them into more or less formal party structures. Finally, it complements the burgeoning body of literature, exemplified by Gherghina and Basarabă (2024), which explores how migrants shape their voting behavior under the influence of their transnational lifestyles.

This article delves into the nuanced dynamics of cross-border political interaction, particularly focusing on party organization as a crucial element of transnational interconnectedness outlined in existing literature (Vertovec, 2009). The central argument of this article is that extraterritorial party organizations play a pivotal role in enhancing the effectiveness of transnational democratic politics. The theoretical rationale for emphasizing party organizations abroad is rooted in the recognition that representative governance is inherently partisan, with party structures playing a pivotal role in reinforcing connections between citizens and political elites (Scarrow & Webb, 2017, pp. 1–2). Formal and informal party infrastructures abroad can be seen as activities and practices that, in various permutations, may generate positive externalities conducive to democratic governance. These extraterritorial infrastructures act as crucial transmission channels, ensuring that representation aligns with the dynamics of transnational interactions. Drawing on comprehensive empirical evidence from recent years (for an overview, see van Haute & Kernalegenn, 2021), these extraterritorial infrastructures empower overseas communities to influence national policymakers. Simultaneously, they compel home parties to navigate a delicate balance between short-term interests and the enduring concerns of an increasingly transnational political landscape.

Despite operating within the same country and addressing the same overseas community, national political parties may employ diverse infrastructures and procedures to engage, mobilize, and encapsulate their supporters. While some extraterritorial organizations invest in robust structures, others lack stable infrastructures. To better comprehend these differences, the research question guiding this study is: How can political parties' organizational structures abroad be conceptually apprehended? The analysis answers this question by proposing a conceptual framework that enhances the understanding of party organization abroad and promotes comparability with national party structures, such as the Political Party Database Project. It refines existing classifications, addressing two specific gaps: the ambiguous definition of a party abroad and the operational dimensions considered when assessing the row and column dimensions that form the matrix of reference. Building on Duverger (1965), this article defines a party as a collection of

communities linked by coordinating institutions, emphasizing political connectedness across borders. It breaks down the overarching concept into two dimensions—organizational origins and the degree of formalization—clarifying the operational aspects for a higher degree of specification. The resulting matrix refines Rashkova and van der Staak's (2020) groundbreaking work, identifying four distinct types: branch-abroad, organization-abroad in franchising, committee-abroad, and semi-political structures. These ideal types aid comprehension, though recognizing that reality cannot be fully captured in cross-tabulations (Collier et al., 2012; Stapley et al., 2022). The goal is to facilitate scholars' focus on two critical dimensions in parties' organizational connectedness across borders and to capture both formality/informality and the intensity of transnational party politics.

The next section delineates the theoretical underpinnings of the contemporary academic debates surrounding political parties operating abroad. The third section introduces the amended typology briefly discussed above and undertakes an extensive discussion of the four distinct types characterizing parties abroad. The article concludes with a succinct presentation of final remarks.

2. The Challenges of the Transnational Arena and How National Parties React to Them

Although different diasporic political parties (Laguerre, 2006; Sheffer, 2003) and cross-border party-connected infrastructures have long existed (Collard, 2013; Gherghina & Soare, 2020; Østergaard-Nielsen, 2003), the 2000s witnessed a marked increase in the visibility and relevance of cross-border political activities. By the extant literature on party politics (Aldrich, 1995), scholars demonstrate that parties engage in electoral contests abroad based on a calculus where the benefits outweigh the costs and that not all parties exhibit an equivalent level of investment in overseas communities (Østergaard-Nielsen & Ciornei, 2019a). Substantiating this, research indicates that parties endorsing enfranchisement processes receive electoral support throughout several elections (Østergaard-Nielsen et al., 2019; Waterbury, 2020; Wellman, 2021). Notably, recent analyses reveal that migrants' political preferences can either catalyze or impede party involvement abroad (Turcu & Urbatsch, 2020). The accelerated proliferation of overseas party activities cannot be solely attributed to pragmatic electoral advantages. Friedman and Kenig (2021) illustrate this phenomenon in the Israeli context, where, despite the absence of vote-seeking motivations, an array of alternative incentives is identified. The recognition of the active role played by the Jewish diaspora in the struggle for independence has prompted established parties, such as the Likud and Labor parties, to maintain a robust presence in overseas communities, enhancing their legitimacy and fostering privileged symbolic relationships within relevant diasporic communities. Additionally, there is an interest in promoting Israel's domestic agenda on the international stage. In brief, the burgeoning body of academic research underscores considerable variation in how and to what extent home parties invest in interactions with overseas citizens and the development of party organizations abroad.

In seeking to understand the drivers of party organizations abroad, three specific inputs from the party politics literature can be identified.

First, there are inputs concerning the political system level and, more specifically, the institutional context within which political parties operate. The focus here complements the literature that shows that the regulation of political parties is important because it allows the creation of institutions of representation for migrants (Burgess, 2020; Gamlen et al., 2019). A more focused inquiry on the regulation of parties abroad

can clarify how the legitimacy of party politics in the extraterritorial arena is built. While debates have blossomed on the combination of variables that explain why parties invest in communities abroad rights, there is still a lack of systematic empirical knowledge of the scope and magnitude of regulations dealing with parties' activities abroad. By clarifying the features of the national regulatory framework, the literature can shed light on how these rules and procedures impact the organizational behavior of political actors abroad.

The second input centers on the party system, particularly electoral competition dynamics. The transnational aspect of party politics is rooted in the idea that parties, functioning as rational maximizers, strategically modify electoral institutions to align with their interests (Benoit, 2007). However, recent research challenges the notion that transnational party politics is solely governed by cost-benefit logic. Østergaard-Nielsen et al. (2019) demonstrate that in contexts with significant policy changes regarding emigrant voting rights, some party families (e.g., center-right parties) are more likely to support emigrant enfranchisement. Moving beyond considerations tied to various stages in migrant enfranchisement (Palop-García & Pedroza, 2019), the variation in the implementation of legal rights (Wellman et al., 2023), or aspects such as migrants' partisan attitudes and turnout (Ciornei & Østergaard-Nielsen, 2020; S. A. Umpierrez de Reguero & Dandoy, 2022), this level of analysis also delves into parties' activities in the electoral realm. This literature encompasses candidate selection, campaign management, and party financial management. This inquiry emphasizes the need to reevaluate classical political participation and representation theories within the context of international mobility (Boldrini, 2024; Ciornei & Østergaard-Nielsen, 2020; Østergaard-Nielsen & Camatarri, 2022; S. Umpierrez de Reguero & Navia, 2024). Focusing research on these intricate topics promises significant contributions to a deeper understanding of the technical and political dynamics of parties operating abroad.

Turning to the third aspect, the focus centers on party organization, which encompasses territorial structures, grassroots presence, personnel, and the spectrum of activities carried out between elections. The importance of this dimension is empirically grounded in a longstanding tradition of studies that explore how party organization channels input from voters, fosters distinct social identities, and ultimately enhances the party's electoral viability (Husted et al., 2022; Panebianco, 1988). Research on parties operating abroad sheds light on logistical challenges that constrain the expansion of structural networks beyond national borders (Caramani & Grotz, 2015). Scholars also document migrants' general disaffection with homeland politics and parties, thereby raising the costs associated with mobilization abroad (Turcu & Urbatsch, 2020).

It is unclear to what extent parties abroad benefit from national party income or rely on voluntary labor and private donations. Interactions with migrant associations offer alternative resources and enhance transnational organizational capacity (Fliess, 2021; Paarlberg, 2023). The literature also outlines pertinent legal challenges, such as the need for parties to adapt their statutes and the fact that structures abroad may not necessarily follow the same decision-making, candidate selection, or mobilization procedures as their national counterparts. Additionally, while recognized legally in the countries of origin, these infrastructures abroad may lack legal status in the countries of settlement, impacting organizational efficiency (e.g., party professionalization and continuity of activity between elections). In certain cases, explicit bans on foreign political parties campaigning or being registered exist (Lafleur, 2013). Examining the variation in party organization abroad proves particularly valuable for a nuanced understanding of how political parties grapple with the complexities of transnational democratic linkages with overseas communities.

While all three inputs hold equal relevance, this analysis concentrates exclusively on the level of party organization. Several reasons underpin this decision. Firstly, political parties function as pivotal organizations, wielding a crucial role in shaping democracy. Their impact extends not only to democratic governance, enabling legislators to manage the policymaking agenda and furnishing effective tools for voters to collectively hold policymakers accountable (Diamond & Gunther, 2001; Stokes, 1999). They foster loyalties, provide valuable information shortcuts aiding voters in decision-making, and offer arenas for political expression beyond voting (Aldrich, 1995; Gherghina, 2014; Scarrow, 2015; van Haute & Gauja, 2015). An understanding of how party organizations operate yields valuable insights into how political parties channel political participation, influence representation (Scarrow & Webb, 2017), and implicitly present opportunities to mitigate the likelihood of feeling disconnected and disaffected with (national) politics and democracy. Secondly, there exists evidence suggesting that the strength of political party organizations at home fosters interest in ensuring organizational interconnectedness between the country of origin and countries of settlement (Gherghina et al., 2022; Østergaard-Nielsen & Ciornei, 2019a, 2019b). Thirdly, the literature demonstrates that beyond electoral periods, these organizations enhance the party's visibility on the ground, offer opportunities for interactions with national representatives, and facilitate the internalization of the party's values (van Haute & Kernalegenn, 2020). Consequently, these organizations emerge as effective tools for reproducing political loyalty over time.

3. Understanding Party Organization Abroad

To systematically organize the rich theoretical and empirical insights outlined in the literature above, the first step is to clarify the central concept of the typology. By amending Duverger (1965), the typology refers to the party as a collection of communities linked by formal or informal coordinating institutions in a process of interactions aiming to provide political connectedness across borders. This definition of party abroad incorporates party politics within a transnational political landscape characterized by intricate interactions between the countries of residence and the home countries. This altered spatial context fosters a novel conception of political participation that transcends national boundaries, prompting home parties to focus on integrating significant numbers of non-resident citizens into the politics and democratic value structures of the home country. This shift necessitates modifications not only in formal regulations, such as party statutes on territorial coverage and power dynamics but also in everyday practices and routines, including the informal aspects of politics.

While the existing literature has provided valuable insights into how party organizations operate in the evolving transnational landscape, a significant limitation arises: the uneven focus on the structured interactions within these party organizations. This limitation can be attributed, in part, to the inherent difficulty in collecting comparable data on party organizations operating abroad. Many parties do not disclose information about their organizational structures in foreign territories, posing a considerable challenge in obtaining details about their formal recognition and interactions with party organs. This includes aspects such as representation in the national party executive, openness to candidates from overseas constituencies, the number and rules of basic organizational units abroad, and the origin and distribution of financial resources across extraterritorial levels, etc. Additionally, there is a notable challenge in acquiring information on the informal less-structured interactions that characterize the internal dynamics of these organizations. Consequently, there is a compelling need for a model that systematically delineates the variation in party organizations operating abroad.

Several analyses have previously examined how differences in organizational dynamics manifest abroad. One remarkable example is the typology developed by Østergaard-Nielsen and Ciornei (2019a), which focuses on transnational infrastructure, considering the degree of transnational infrastructure (*low/high*) and the degree of ideological linkages (*high/low*). While this typology is effective for comparing transnational campaign strategies across various electoral systems and addresses organizational structure to some extent, it falls short of fully capturing the variation in party organization. Similarly, in the conclusions of their influential edited volume on parties abroad, van Haute and Kernalegenn (2020) delineate a typology based on the location of the party headquarters (home country/outside the home country) and the relation with the home country (emigrant politics/diaspora politics). While their aims are descriptive and the typology successfully captures variance in the development of party branches abroad, the focus remains only partially connected to the party organization itself. A more focused approach to the organizational infrastructure is found in von Nostitz's (2021) analysis, which relies on Poguntke's classification of four types of collateral organizations. The comparative interest lies in "mapping the diverse and varying organizational types and relationships between national homeland parties and their transnational branches" (von Nostitz, 2021, p. 2). However, despite clear and insightful theoretical argumentation, the empirical application is weakened by a limited operationalization of the four criteria: the official role of international party branches, membership criteria and processes, their influence in intra-party decision-making, and the control of international party branches by the home party in both organizational and financial aspects. Finally, E. Rashkova (2020) employs a precursor version of the typology co-developed in collaboration with van der Staak (E. R. Rashkova & van der Staak, 2020) to encapsulate the multidimensionality inherent in political parties abroad. E. Rashkova (2020) scrutinizes three distinct criteria: (a) the level of organization; (b) the nexus to and influence on a national political party; and (c) the national regulatory framework, which conditions the extent of operations beyond national borders, assessed on a tripartite scale denoting *low*, *medium*, and *high* levels. Despite a resolute endorsement of the pertinence of these three criteria and her exceptionally innovative approach, Rashkova's typology (2020) remains connected to the empirical application only and does not produce a matrix able to identify conceptually distinctive theoretical types. This article deals with this gap by identifying four distinct types. Moreover, it increases the operational application by clarifying how the two criteria can be coded. This operational coding increases the opportunity for comparative research.

Taking this into consideration, Table 1 provides an amended typology built on two interconnected assumptions. The first assumption is that party organization is shaped by its origin (Panebianco, 1988). The question that supports the row dimension is: *Which organizational origins make up the party abroad?* In empirical terms, this dimension distinguishes between (a) home party-led organizations in which the infrastructure abroad starts from the home party's endeavor and (b) rooted-abroad organizations in which the infrastructure abroad builds on existing societal organizations with rudimentary organizational infrastructure. Rooted-abroad organizations refer to a wide repertoire of migrant associations: NGOs, faith-based organizations, voluntary associations, etc. These societal organizations formulate and communicate specific goals and expectations about community abroad. In line with consolidated research on national party politics (Bolleyer, 2013, p. 47), the typology assumes that the origin of the organizational infrastructure abroad impacts the inner dynamics (e.g., goals and temporal orientation). The mainstream literature points out that parties organize according to specific goals. According to Strøm (1990), parties have more than one goal, and, quite often, conflicting goals coexist within complex trade-offs that shape the parties' policies, electoral strategies, and/or coalitional behavior. In line with the rich evidence from migration studies and transnationalism, different goals coexist with different temporal orientations in

Table 1. Types of party organizations abroad.

		Degree of formalization	
		High	Low
Party origins	Home party led	Branch-abroad	Committee-abroad
	Rooted-abroad	Organization-abroad in franchising	Semi-political associations

extraterritorial politics; rooted infrastructures abroad are more likely to be oriented towards representing specific group interests in the medium/long term. Conversely, in cases where launching an extraterritorial organization is primarily a home party's initiative, the goals are more likely to be oriented toward immediate electoral rewards. This makes them more short-term oriented; top-down extraterritorial infrastructures are designed as strategic electoral vehicles meant to resonate the home party's interests in communities abroad.

The second assumption is that parties are not necessarily unitary actors. Consequently, it is important to delve into intra-party politics to identify the differences in organizational structures (Scarrow & Webb, 2017, p. 7). The question that guides the column dimension is: *To what extent do the party statutes provide for clearly identifiable diaspora party organs and define how power is distributed between the party at home and the party abroad?* In empirical terms, this implies the evaluation of the degree of formalization referred to patterns of interaction prescribed by statutory rules (Janda, 1980). More specifically, a party organization that ranks *high* in the degree of formalization is characterized by (a) a well-codified extraterritorial network in the party organs (e.g., explicit statutory recognition) and (b) clear functional relations between the home party and the extraterritorial units (e.g., the degree of involvement in candidate/leader selection procedures). A low level of formalization refers to cases where: (a) the extraterritorial organization is either absent or so vaguely mentioned that no explicitly designated party unit that officially (and predictably) caters to constituents abroad can be identified. In direct consequence, (b) the functional relationship between national parties and extraterritorial interlocutors remains for the most part informal. These informal and/or less-structured forms of interactions are compatible with alternative substantial linkages. While party statutes represent the main source of information for assessing the *high* level of formalization, relevant insights about these informal linkages can be unveiled by additional sources of information (e.g., secondary literature, interviews, surveys, etc.).

The result is a matrix with four cells that charter the transnational universe of party politics; it does so by considering parties as organizational actors that have to reconcile internal demands from the home party and external requests connected to the constituency abroad. Note that the four cells in Table 1 need to be read as ideal types designed with the intent to aid the understanding of the phenomenon under review; as such the reality cannot be fully identified in the different crosstabulations (Collier et al., 2012).

3.1. Exploring Extraterritorial Party Structures: The Branch-Abroad Type

Branch-abroad corresponds to a party organization whose origins can be traced prevalently to the home party and firmly knit to it. Two key characteristics specify the output of the home party-led outreach: (a) a prevalent focus on electoral mobilization and (b) limited interest in a stable rootedness through local activities between elections. Considering the direct involvement of the home party in the foundation of structural infrastructures abroad, party statutes rapidly identify the party organization abroad. This

formalization provides home parties with an effective tool to justify intra-organizational control. The expected outcome is the branch-abroad full alignment with the home party and the explicit creation of a functional hierarchy between national politics and politics abroad. Branches abroad tend to be statutorily controlled, disciplined, instructed, and supervised by the home party. In the long run, it is reasonable to expect that the trade-offs parties generally face when prioritizing specific goals (Strøm, 1990) fine-tune the initial short-term perspective and motivate the national central offices to invest in viable party infrastructures abroad. More specifically, considering the resources invested in this infrastructure abroad, the central offices become interested in stabilizing their electoral support and, hence, setting up functional structural channels that give the party abroad a say in the home party politics. In other words, electoral goals and group-interest representation become compatible goals in the medium/long run. In this vein, the literature shows that several home parties provide increased space for the inclusion of the communities abroad demands in the national programmatic offer (Østergaard-Nielsen & Ciornei, 2019a, 2019b) and, more generally, in the development of locally rooted organizational structures with regular grassroots following.

The American Democratic Party fits well in this cell. The national party acknowledged the Democrats Abroad (DA) as a 51st state well before the federal right to vote (Klekowski von Koppenfels, 2020, p. 47). Positive electoral outcomes opened a window of opportunity for non-resident activists to interact with the home party and to benefit from a stable organizational basis abroad, with increased opportunities to impact the party's goals (Klekowski von Koppenfels, 2020). The long-term performance increased the synergies between the DA and the home party and led to a functional connection with party supporters online and offline. Note that, in this specific case, the home party's traditional openness to a communitarian approach *ab origine* limited possible tensions between the group's abroad and the national goals (Klekowski von Koppenfels, 2020, p. 49). A similar trajectory can be identified in the case of the French Les Républicains (LR; von Nostitz, 2021). The current party is benefitting from the investments of its center-right predecessors in establishing a relatively wide network of transnational party branches. Statutorily, the LR's transnational branches aim to integrate the specific needs of communities abroad into the party programs. Special seats are guaranteed for their representatives in the home party's executive board and those territorial units with 50 members or more have been granted the right to elect a delegate for the national party congress (von Nostitz, 2021). The transnational branches of LR can influence and participate in the intra-party decision-making processes during the party congress and in the candidate selection process (von Nostitz, 2021). The LR case shows a strategic top-down investment in building locally rooted organizational structures able to recruit activist membership while preserving the collective identity by sharing bottom-up inputs. The extent to which the extraterritorial units can act autonomously from the home party remains limited. The available research testifies to a high degree of control exerted by the home party in important decisions, such as the weight of the national party office in the selection of the leaders of the extraterritorial branches (von Nostitz, 2021).

3.2. Exploring Extraterritorial Party Structures: The Committees Abroad Type

In the case of committees abroad, the home-led origin is not supported by an elaborated formal codification of the party organs abroad in the statutory documents. This leaves space for higher levels of informality in grassroots politics and the interactions between the home party and the extraterritorial arena. Committees abroad are managed by local agents, in personal liaison with the home party's organs. Weakly knit, these committees have a prevalent interest in vote maximization. For the most part, the network of contacts

abroad is seen as an informal setting for like-minded migrant people to socialize and discuss, and, most importantly, to electorally mobilize. Beyond the electoral activities, these flexible structures act as political lobbies for homeland politics, activated upon demand of the home party. All in all, the committees abroad can be seen as advisors for the party at home. During election years, they provide the migrant communities with information and opportunities to meet with candidates. In exchange, they benefit from the contacts with the national candidates while reinforcing their credibility among the communities abroad.

This formation process corresponds to the American Republicans' trajectory abroad (Klekowski von Koppenfels, 2020). Despite the increased awareness of the relevance of overseas votes, the Republican Party did not formalize the inclusion of the Republican overseas (RO) in the party organs. Within a context of transnationalism from above characterized by limited grassroots activity and individual entrepreneurship (Klekowski von Koppenfels, 2020, pp. 47–48), there is evidence that the membership of the infrastructure abroad and the home party partially overlap. Not only do key representatives of RO reside in the US, but also representatives of the home party regularly reach out to overseas voters in a person-to-person interaction (Klekowski von Koppenfels, 2020, p. 48).

The organizational structure of British Conservatives Abroad (CA), as detailed by Collard and Kernalegenn (2021), conforms to the characteristics of the ideal type under consideration. The origins of CA trace back to a department within the Conservative Party International Office, driven by a pragmatic goal of consolidating votes and financial resources. Following a traditional trajectory of organizational development through extraterritorial outreach, led by central leadership and a select group of elites, CA underwent rapid expansion. The organizational framework retained an informal nature, with CA members participating in the Conservative Policy Forum, attending party conferences, and holding the right to vote in party leadership elections (Collard & Kernalegenn, 2021). Despite its longstanding presence overseas, CA's impact on home party politics remains relatively limited, with the majority of its activities focused on fundraising and electoral registration endeavors (Collard & Kernalegenn, 2021; von Nostitz, 2021)

3.3. Exploring Extraterritorial Party Structures: Organization Abroad in Franchising Type

Organization abroad in franchising comes from putting together preexisting ties to organized societal groups and a high level of coordination. As in the model developed by Carty (2004), this type provides mutual autonomy to the home party and the abroad components in exchange for exhibiting a reliable and identifiable political "label" on which migrants can count. While in the previous two types, the goal of the vote-maximization goal was prevalent, in this case, there are complementary interests and goals. From a bottom-up perspective, cooperation and investment in building a functional party infrastructure are motivated by the strategic aim of making the needs, voices, and opinions of the community abroad "present" in public policy-making processes at a national level. In the interaction with homeland politics, the diffused societal linkages in communities abroad provide at least rudimentary organizational infrastructures that become relevant for national politics both in terms of material (e.g., votes, funds, and human resources) and immaterial resources (e.g., diffusion of a recognizable and legitimate political brand, networking with sister parties, and lobbying institutions in the country of residence). The franchise logic couples the pragmatic interests of the home parties with the representational aspirations of the extraterritorial infrastructures in interaction based on explicitly codified statutory rules and procedures (e.g., technical details on the extent of the party's common actions, the selection of candidates, etc.). Within the same party, the arrangements can

vary. Extraterritorial units with comparatively larger resources tend to have more leverage over home parties, mainly because they can make a bigger contribution to the home party's main aims.

The Conservative People's Party of Estonia (EKRE) fits very well in this cell. The literature has documented relevant bottom-up inputs for a specific extraterritorial organization which eventually led the national party council to equate the extraterritorial units to a national district organization (Jakobson et al., 2021). With an active network of members, EKRE's Finnish organizational unit has obtained sufficient autonomy to conduct targeted activities on the ground, devoting itself mainly to online and offline events for the Estonian community abroad. In this way, the extraterritorial unit has primarily aimed to be responsive to the needs of the community of reference, while maintaining a strong connection with the national central offices in electoral matters.

Although in principle more flexible and adaptable than the branches abroad, the units in the franchise are potentially turbulent and prone to conflict. In line with Panebianco (1988), bottom-up formations are weakened by the need to find a compromise between various actors that perceive potentially distinct interests. The Save Romania Union (USR; Gherghina & Soare, 2020) corresponds to this profile. The origins of the extraterritorial organization can be traced back to the community of Romanians in Paris in the context of the 2016 Romanian legislative elections. As in the case of EKRE, the recognition from the central party came as a direct consequence of the intense mobilization on the ground for party-related interest (e.g., support for the collection of signatures in support of the USR candidates). However, tensions over the functional relationships between the national headquarters and the extraterritorial organizations have rapidly gained visibility, in particular concerning the selection of candidates and party leaders. These tensions went beyond the question of who should have been selected within the framework of the statutory procedures and raised questions of ideology and legitimacy while feeding antagonistic factions within the party.

3.4. Exploring Extraterritorial Party Structures: Semi-political Structures Abroad

Semi-political structures correspond to a variety of promoter organizations or groups with social roots that do not fully integrate the party community. There is sheer difficulty in assessing the direction of these informal interactions; indeed, this category is conceptually more fragile, with at least two main sub-types.

There is a sub-type that corresponds to a mutualistic symbiosis. There is extensive evidence that already organized migrant associations/networks abroad facilitate extraterritorial political mobilization by making (material and immaterial) resources easily available to home parties (for an excellent literature review see Fliess, 2021). Considering their societal roots, these organizations easily get involved in politics with a focus on voicing the diaspora-group interests (Lafleur, 2013; Østergaard-Nielsen, 2003). The informality of the interactions with home parties delineates a wide space of negotiation (Paarlberg, 2023). Parties at home can more easily target specific social segments and obtain votes and access to relevant resources while ignoring the complex costs of party organization abroad. Interestingly, individual candidates can become an active part of this process; Japanese candidate-centered politics has expanded abroad in the form of candidates' contacts with associational networks (Uekami et al., 2020). There is also evidence that migrant associations can provide a relevant campaign advantage since the members of the community are much more likely to consider specific political candidacies if a local association or an individual they know asks them to do so

(Fliess, 2021; Paarlberg, 2023). The lack of institutionalized permanent party presence in the Mexican diaspora made the network of migrant associations increasingly appealing to home politics. There is evidence that representatives of these associations offered targeted campaign advice and assisted different parties with specific needs in and beyond elections (e.g., fund-raising, lobbying, etc.). All in all, these migrant associations act as political brokers able to define and redefine party politics abroad. The outcome of this cooperation is a semi-political extraterritorial structure, a functional substitute for traditional party linkages (Lawson, 1980) in the sense that it serves as an informal agency for ensuring that home parties will be responsive to the views and interests of communities abroad in exchange for votes and/or other relevant resources (e.g., fundraising and lobbying). These relationships generally develop within informal settings. However, home parties may also attempt to formalize alliances with migrant organizations and integrate them into the historical collateral organizations, similar to the approach national parties used to connect with specific societal interests that were not easily accessible (Poguntke, 2002). Gherghina and Soare (2020) provide evidence in this direction concerning the Romanian Social Democratic Party.

The second scenario includes a more intrusive role of party politics and, eventually, forms of commensalist symbiosis. In this extreme case, there is a one-sided relationship in which the societal association is not harmed, but the home party benefits more. The Turkish-Islamic Union for Religious Affairs (Yener-Roderburg, 2020) fits in this description. Created two decades before the creation of the Justice and Development Party (AKP), the association has been intensively instrumentalized politically by the AKP, with implicit rewards (Yener-Roderburg, 2020, p. 226). Beyond this extreme relationship, in most cases, the bottom-up origins are diluted in different intensities of party invasion ranging from infiltration to co-optation, including the ad hoc creation of migrant associations (Fliess, 2021). The strategies of intrusion documented in the Bolivian case are less invasive than in the Turkish case. Migrants with a partisan background have joined associations with the prevalent intent to socialize with fellow compatriots abroad; in the context of electoral campaigns, their partisan background was activated and targeted people from their networks abroad. However, the migrant associations maintained an apolitical position. To wit, the MAS-IPSP campaign team took part in different events organized by migrant associations in which their party members were involved; the representatives of the home party shared photos of these events on Facebook, implying an implicit endorsement from the different associations (Fliess, 2021). Among Ecuadorian parties, strategies of co-optation led to a permanent transnational executive committee in which migrant leaders occupied official positions (Fliess, 2021). In parallel, presidents in migrant associations became local representatives of parties (e.g., Alianza País, CREO, and SUMA; Fliess, 2021). All in all, the strategies of infiltration and cooption provide home parties with functional collateral networks that support them in broadening the transnational reach of the parties they represent.

4. Conclusions

Within an increased dialogue with the literature on party politics, the literature shows that across different political settings, contemporary political parties have built temporary or stable organizations abroad where physical and virtual and formal and informal cross-border political activities and practices coexist. An important aspect emerging from this wide literature is that party organizations abroad have become part of a transnational democratic representation, in the sense that parties abroad integrate communities abroad into politics, motivate them to vote, and provide them with opportunities for socialization. The evidence also indicates that this transnational party politics has affected not only the migrants' sense of (political)

belonging but also the responsiveness of homeland politics with a focus on how much or little public policies include the demands and preferences of communities abroad through the political process. In this context, the analysis looked at the connections and activities held by party organizations across borders. The extraterritorial party organization has been interpreted as part of the interconnected experiences through which national political actors/institutions and migrants have been forging multifaceted links between the country of origin and the country of residence.

The analysis presented a typology that reworked previous classifications to clarify how parties are organized in the transnational arena. The typology was meant to allow a higher interaction with the mainstream literature on party politics, more specifically an increased comparability with data collected at the national level. The four types identified showed that the strength of the societal linkages abroad varies according to both internal and external factors and, most importantly, that the collection of national communities and communities abroad that make up contemporary party organizations does not necessarily share the same interests and goals. There are, however, relevant caveats to be mentioned. This analysis had a prevalently descriptive aim; hence, it did not clarify how or why some configurations are more frequent than others or why some types might perform better than others in the long run. At the same time, the configurations mapped dealt prevalently with (procedural) democratic contexts. The typology did not take into account how the nature of a non-democratic regime might impact the organizational features of parties' transnational engagement. Last but not least, the typology focused on one of the three main dimensions that characterized the organizational capacity of a party, namely the structural dimensions. It is necessary to include the other two dimensions in the research agenda aiming to provide a more fine-grained analysis of the variance in terms of party organization abroad. Similarly, the mainstream literature agrees that cross-national (and even subnational) differences in terms of party organization are explained by both internal and external characteristics (e.g., the political opportunity structure). In the current form, the typology does not assess the impact of the electoral rules, the dynamics and nature of party competition, the role of the media, and/or the political cleavage structure. All these caveats can be seen as guidelines for further zooming in on the organizational dynamics of transnational politics.

Acknowledgments

The author wishes to extend profound gratitude to the anonymous reviewers for their invaluable and insightful comments and suggestions on the preceding versions of this article. The contributions of the reviewers have played a pivotal role in markedly elevating the overall quality of the manuscript.

Conflict of Interests

The author declares no conflict of interests.

References

- Aldrich, J. (1995). *Why parties? The origins and transformations of political parties in America*. University of Chicago Press.
- Bauböck, R., & Faist, T. (Eds.). (2010). *Diaspora and Transnationalism: Concepts, Theories, and Methods*. Amsterdam University Press.
- Benoit, K. (2007). Electoral laws as political consequences: Explaining the origins and change of electoral institutions. *Annual Review of Political Science*, 10(1), 363–390.
- Boldrini, M. (2024). Political professionalization beyond national borders: An analysis of Italian MPs in overseas constituencies. *Politics and Governance*, 12, Article 7470.

- Bolleyer, N. (2013). *New parties in old party systems: Persistence and decline in seventeen democracies*. Oxford University Press.
- Burgess, K. (2020). *Courting migrants: How states make diasporas and diasporas make states*. Oxford University Press.
- Caramani, D., & Grotz, F. (2015). Beyond citizenship and residence? Exploring the extension of voting rights in the age of globalization. *Democratization*, 22(5), 799–819.
- Carty, R. K. (2004). Parties as franchise systems: The stratarchical organizational imperative. *Party Politics*, 10(1), 5–24.
- Ciornei, I., & Østergaard-Nielsen, E. (2020). Transnational turnout. Determinants of emigrant voting in home country elections. *Political Geography*, 78, 102–145.
- Collard, S. (2013). The expatriate vote in the French presidential and legislative elections of 2012: A case of unintended consequences. *Parliamentary Affairs*, 66(1), 213–233.
- Collard, S., & Kernalegenn, T. (2021). The membership of parties abroad: A case study of the UK. *Comparative Migration Studies*, 9, Article 34. <https://doi.org/10.1186/s40878-021-00238-0>
- Collier, D., LaPorte, J., & Seawright, J. (2012). Putting typologies to work: Concept formation, measurement, and analytic rigor. *Political Research Quarterly*, 65(1), 217–232.
- Collyer, M. (2014). Geography of extra-territorial citizenship: Explanations of external voting. *Migration Studies*, 2(1), 55–72.
- De Haas, H. (2005). International migration, remittances, and development: Myths and facts. *Third World Quarterly*, 26(8), 1269–1284.
- Diamond, L., & Gunther, R. (Eds.). (2001). *Political parties and democracy*. Johns Hopkins University Press.
- Duverger, M. (1965). *Political parties: Their organization and activity in the modern state*. Methuen.
- Fliess, N. (2021). Campaigning across continents: How Latin American parties link up with migrant associations abroad. *Comparative Migration Studies*, 9, Article 20. <https://doi.org/10.1186/s40878-021-00227-3>
- Friedman, A., & Kenig, O. (2021). The activities of Israeli political parties abroad: More than just a voters' game. *Comparative Migration Studies*, 9, Article 23. <https://doi.org/10.1186/s40878-021-00230-8>
- Gamlen, A., Cummings, M. E., & Vaaler, P. M. (2019). Explaining the rise of diaspora institutions. *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies*, 45(4), 492–516.
- Gherghina, S. (2014). *Party organization and electoral volatility in Central and Eastern Europe. Enhancing voter loyalty*. Routledge.
- Gherghina, S., & Basarabă, A. (2024). Migrants' voter turnout in the home country elections: Non-integration or political anchor? *Politics and Governance*, 12, Article 7396.
- Gherghina, S., & Soare, S. (2020). Vote-seeking among non-resident citizens: How Romanian parties form organizations abroad. *Representation*, 59(3), 423–439.
- Gherghina, S., Tap, P., & Soare, S. (2022). More than voters: Parliamentary debates about emigrants in a new democracy. *Ethnicities*, 22(3), 487–506.
- Husted, E., Moufahim, M., & Fredriksson, M. (2022). Political parties and organization studies: The party as a critical case of organizing. *Organization Studies*, 43(8), 1327–1341.
- Jakobson, M. L., Saarts, T., & Kalev, L. (2021). Institutionalization of transnationalizing political parties: The case of the Conservative People's Party of Estonia. *Comparative Migration Studies*, 9, Article 40. <https://doi.org/10.1186/s40878-021-00241-5>
- Janda, K. (1980). *Political parties: A cross-national survey*. The Free Press.
- Klekowski von Koppenfels, A. (2020). Federal structure and party politics as simultaneous opportunity and constraint: Transnational political engagement of overseas Americans. In T. Kernalegenn & E. van Haute (Eds.), *Political parties abroad: A new arena for party politics* (pp. 39–56). Routledge.

- Koinova, M., & Tsourapas, G. (2018). How do countries of origin engage migrants and diasporas? Multiple actors and comparative perspectives. *International Political Science Review*, 39(3), 311–321.
- Krawatzek, F., & Müller-Funk, L. (2020). Two centuries of flows between “here” and “there”: Political remittances and their transformative potential. *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies*, 46(6), 1003–1024.
- Lafleur, J.-M. (2013). *Transnational politics and the state. The external voting rights of diasporas*. Routledge.
- Laguerre, M. S. (2006). *Diaspora, politics, and globalization*. Palgrave Macmillan.
- Lawson, K. (1980). *Political parties and linkage: A comparative perspective*. Yale University Press.
- Østergaard-Nielsen, E. (2003). *Transnational politics. Turks and Kurds in Germany*. Routledge.
- Østergaard-Nielsen, E., & Camatarri, S. (2022). Styles of representation in constituencies in the homeland and abroad: The case of Italy. *Parliamentary Affairs*, 75(1), 195–216.
- Østergaard-Nielsen, E., & Ciornei, I. (2019a). Political parties and the transnational mobilization of the emigrant vote. *West European Politics*, 42(3), 618–644.
- Østergaard-Nielsen, E., & Ciornei, I. (2019b). Making the absent present: Political parties and emigrant issues in country of origin parliaments. *Party Politics*, 25(2), 153–166.
- Østergaard-Nielsen, E., Ciornei, I., & Lafleur, J.-M. (2019). Why do parties support emigrant voting rights? *European Political Science Review*, 11(3), 377–394.
- Paarlberg, M. A. (2023). Hometown associations and parties as vehicles for Mexican electoral campaigns in the US. *Representation*, 59(3), 403–422.
- Palop-García, P., & Pedroza, L. (2019). Passed, regulated, or applied? The different stages of emigrant enfranchisement in Latin America and the Caribbean. *Democratization*, 26(3), 401–421.
- Panbianco, A. (1988). *Political parties: Organization and power*. Cambridge University Press.
- Poguntke, T. (2002). *Parties without firm social roots? Party organisational linkage* (Working Paper No. 13). Keele European Parties Research Unit (KEPRU). <https://www.keele.ac.uk/media/keeleuniversity/group/kepru/KEPRU%20WP%2013.pdf>
- Rashkova, E. (2020). The party abroad: A new modus operandi for political parties. *Parliamentary Affairs*, 73(4), 839–855.
- Rashkova, E. R., & van der Staak, S. (2020). The party abroad and its role for national party politics. *Security and Human Rights*, 30(1/4), 108–132.
- Scarrow, S. (2015). *Beyond party members: Changing approaches to partisan mobilization*. Oxford University Press.
- Scarrow, S. E., & Webb, P. D. (2017). Investigating party organization. Structures, resources, and representative strategies. In S. E. Scarrow, P. D. Webb, & T. Poguntke (Eds.), *Organizing political parties. Representation, participation, and power* (pp. 1–27). Oxford University Press.
- Sheffer, G. (2003). *Diaspora politics: At home abroad*. Cambridge University Press.
- Stapley, E., O’Keeffe, S., & Midgley, N. (2022). Developing typologies in qualitative research: The use of ideal-type analysis. *International Journal of Qualitative Methods*. Advance online publication. <https://doi.org/10.1177/16094069221100633>
- Stokes, S. C. (1999). Political parties and democracy. *Annual Review of Political Science*, 2(1), 243–267. <https://www.annualreviews.org/doi/abs/10.1146/annurev.polisci.2.1.243>
- Strøm, K. (1990). A behavioral theory of competitive political parties. *American Journal of Political Science*, 34(2), 565–598.
- Turcu, A., & Urbatsch, R. (2020). Emigrants vs. rural politics: Cosmopolitan outlooks and electoral opposition to agrarian parties. *Journal of Rural Studies*, 77, 138–147.
- Uekami, T., Park, J., & Chen, B. (2020). External voting without political parties abroad? Comparing Japan,

- South Korea, and Taiwan. In T. Kernalegenn & E. van Haute (Eds.), *Political parties abroad: A new arena for party politics* (pp. 135–153). Routledge.
- Umpierrez de Reguero, S., Finn, V., & Peltoniemi, J. (2023). Missing links in migrant enfranchisement studies. *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies*, 49(10), 2473–2499.
- Umpierrez de Reguero, S., & Navia, P. (2024). Why do non-resident citizens get elected? Candidates' electoral success in Ecuadorian extraterritorial districts. *Politics and Governance*, 12, Article 7495.
- Umpierrez de Reguero, S. A., & Dandoy, R. (2022). Compulsory voting and electoral participation of Latin American migrants in Belgium, Luxemburg and the Netherlands. *Politics of The Low Countries*, 4(2), 136–158.
- van Haute, E., & Gauja, A. (Eds.). (2015). *Party members and activists*. Routledge.
- van Haute, E., & Kernalegenn, T. (2020). Conclusion: A framework of analysis for political parties abroad. In T. Kernalegenn & E. van Haute (Eds.), *Political parties abroad. A new arena for party politics* (pp. 238–254). Routledge.
- van Haute, E., & Kernalegenn, T. (2021). Political parties abroad as actors of transnational politics. *Comparative Migration Studies*, 9, Article 27. <https://doi.org/10.1186/s40878-021-00234-4>
- Vertovec, S. (2009). *Transnationalism*. Routledge.
- von Nostitz, F. C. (2021). Party expats? Mapping transnational party branches of French, German and UK parties. *Comparative Migration Studies*, 9, Article 11. <https://doi.org/10.1186/s40878-020-00219-9>
- Waterbury, M. A. (2020). Populist nationalism and the challenges of divided nationhood: The politics of migration, mobility, and demography in post-2010 Hungary. *East European Politics and Societies*, 34(4), 962–998.
- Wellman, E. I. (2021). Emigrant inclusion in home-country elections: Theory and evidence from sub-Saharan Africa. *American Political Science Review*, 115(1), 82–96.
- Wellman, E. I., Allen, N. W., & Nyblade, B. (2023). The extraterritorial voting rights and restrictions dataset (1950–2020). *Comparative Political Studies*, 56(6), 897–929.
- Yener-Roderburg, I. Ö. (2020). Party organizations across borders. Top-down satellites and bottom-up alliances. The case of AKP and HDP in Germany. In T. Kernalegenn & E. van Haute (Eds.), *Political parties abroad: A new arena for party politics* (pp. 218–237). Routledge.
- Yener-Roderburg, I. Ö., & Yetiş, E. Ö. (2024). Building party support abroad: Turkish diaspora organisations in Germany and the UK. *Politics and Governance*, 12, Article 7546.

About the Author



Sorina Soare is a lecturer at the University of Florence. Her research focuses on political parties, populism, migrants' participation, and the role of gender in politics. Some of her recent publications include *Saved by the Diaspora? The Case of the Alliance for the Union of Romanians* (with C. Tufis, for the European Political Science, 2023) and *Speaking Out Against the Discrimination of Romanians Abroad: An Analysis of Parliamentary Speeches in the Home Country* (with S. Gherghina and P. Tap, for Nationalities Papers, 2023).