



### Political Parties Abroad. A New Arena for Electoral Politics

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## About the Special Issue

In recent decades, following globalization and transnationalization trends, emigrants have increasingly obtained civil and political rights in their country of origin: voting rights (in 149 countries), but also specific representative institutions (in 15 countries) and sometimes direct representation in the national parliament. These transformations concern millions of citizens: an estimated 3% of the world population live outside their country of birth. These reforms have important consequences. Emigrant voters can influence the outcome of elections, as it was the case in Romania in 2009 or in Italy in 2006. They constitute opportunities and challenges for political parties who face the choice of engaging or not in this new arena.

The Special Issue (SI) focuses on these important developments and investigates (1) why and how parties decide to campaign abroad, and (2) how voters abroad are receptive to these campaigns and operate their party choice in this specific context. In addressing these questions and putting the emphasis on the supply-side, the SI brings together two important fields of the literature, that of transnationalism and of party politics.

The introduction presents the two fields in the literature and their gaps, our research questions, and offers a framework for the analysis of political parties abroad. It mobilizes the classic literature on political parties, applied and adapted to parties abroad. We look at the barriers and opportunities for the development of parties abroad, and how these barriers and opportunities shape the choice of parties to campaign abroad and their relative success in doing so. In return, the study of parties abroad can inform, qualify or challenge dominant ideas in classic party literature. Contrary to the dominant narrative on party decline, some parties have successfully invested the new arena of extra-territorial politics.

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3 The SI mixes four case studies and one comparative paper. The case studies address our three  
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5 research questions simultaneously. They investigate why some political parties campaign  
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7 abroad while others remain focused on the national territory, and how emigrants outreach  
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9 strategies vary across parties, especially with respect to emigrant voters mobilisation and  
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11 campaign strategies.  
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17 The comparative paper analyses the electoral behaviour of European citizens living abroad  
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19 and focuses on the drivers of emigrants' registration and vote choice. It looks at the effect of  
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21 prior socialisation at home and re-socialisation in the host country, and the role of political  
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23 parties in this process.  
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28 Overall, the SI contributes to a better understanding of transnationalism, long-distance  
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30 representation, and party politics.  
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## Political Parties Abroad. A New Arena for Electoral Politics

### Abstract

This Special Issue contributes to the growing literature on parties abroad. Expansive citizenship has transformed and reinforced the civic and political links between emigrants and their home country. Political parties face the dilemma of engaging or not in this new arena for electoral politics and must consider how. However, until recently the literature on transnationalism and on party politics has surprisingly largely overlooked this issue. This introduction identifies the existing gaps in the literature, and stresses two main questions that remains largely unanswered, namely (1) why and how parties decide to campaign abroad, and (2) how voters abroad are receptive to these campaigns and operate their party choice in this specific context. The five articles offer a mix of case studies and comparative perspective, and quantitative and qualitative analyses. This case selection allows to explore the diversity of strategies adopted by political parties abroad in different settings, with different tools. The results illustrate the impact of local party branches and entrepreneurs' outreach and local campaigns on mobilisation, turnout, and the result of elections, but also show that emigrants' vote choice is influenced both by the context of their country of origin and of their country of residence.

**Key words:** political parties, voting abroad, emigration, transnationalism, electoral campaign, voting behaviour

### Introduction

Globalization processes have put the issue of citizenship and political rights back on the agenda (Arrighi & Bauböck, 2017). In a worldwide trend of "expansive citizenship" (Bauböck, 2005),

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3 a majority of countries have extended the political rights of non-national residents on the  
4 national territory, and of national emigrants<sup>i</sup> residing abroad (Finn, 2020; Lafleur, 2013;  
5 Safran, 1997). In the last 30 years, the number of countries granting voting rights to non-  
6 resident citizens has dramatically increased (from 31 to 149 between 1989 and 2019),  
7 especially after 2000 (Brand, 2010, 2014; Caramani & Grotz, 2015; Collyer, 2014a).<sup>ii</sup> By the  
8 end of the 2010s, most democracies, but also authoritarian states or countries in democratic  
9 transition, could claim some form of external voting, enabling emigrants to take part in the  
10 political life of their home country.<sup>iii</sup> In some instances, emigrants have been granted political  
11 representation in dedicated institutions and sixteen countries, including five Member States of  
12 the European Union, have even provisioned the right for their emigrants to directly elect  
13 members of parliament in constituencies abroad (Bauböck, 2017; Burgess & Tyburski, 2020;  
14 Collyer, 2014b; Ellis et al., 2007; Makkonen, 2021; Østergaard-Nielsen & Camatarri, 2020;  
15 Palop-García et al., 2019). Millions of citizens experience these new rights, come election time  
16 (Meseguer & Burgess, 2014), with important electoral and political consequences (Bauböck,  
17 2003, 2005). Indeed, external voting has effects on homeland public opinion, politics and  
18 elections (Gamlen, 2015; Malet, 2022; Meseguer & Burgess, 2014), and may even sometimes  
19 weigh on the outcome of elections, as in Romania in 2009 (Burean, 2011) or in Italy in 2006  
20 (Laguerre, 2013). This extension of voting and representation rights to residents abroad and its  
21 consequences represent opportunities and challenges for political parties. They face the  
22 dilemma of engaging or not in this new arena of electoral politics. If they do get involved, they  
23 need to consider how.

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26 Given their significance, these reforms have generated an increasing body of literature.  
27 However, until recently this literature has surprisingly largely overlooked the issue of their  
28 implications for political parties and their role in a new arena of electoral politics. This Special  
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3 Issue contributes to fill this gap. Our main goal is to investigate (1) why and how parties decide  
4 to campaign abroad, and (2) how voters abroad are receptive to these campaigns and operate  
5 their party choice in this specific context. In doing so, it contributes to a better understanding  
6 of the most recent transformations of democracy and representation.  
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### 14 **Defining Parties Abroad**

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16 (Van Haute & Kernalegenn, 2020) offer a first classification of parties abroad, based on two  
17 criteria: their relation to the home country, that can be more or less conflictual, and the location  
18 of their headquarters, that can be in the home or outside of it. *Emigrant party branches* are  
19 parties with non-conflictual relation with the home country and with headquarters in the home  
20 country. In other words, they are extraterritorial branches of a mother party. *Diaspora or anti-*  
21 *diaspora parties* have conflictual relations with the home country with headquarters in the  
22 home country. Their goal is to coordinate the diaspora in favour or against home country  
23 politics. *Emigrant parties* are parties with non-conflictual relation with the home country but  
24 with headquarters abroad. They mobilize followers with an emigrant background and defend  
25 their interests. Finally, *forbidden parties* have conflictual relations with the home country with  
26 headquarters abroad. They mostly function in dictatorial contexts, when party life is impossible  
27 in the home country and is therefore maintained abroad.  
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47 This Special issue focusses on emigrant party branches, that is, parties that have roots in non-  
48 conflictual, emigrant politics (Østergaard-Nielsen, 2003) and have developed some forms of  
49 organization and activities abroad.  
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### 56 **Studying Parties Abroad**

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3 The literature on emigration and citizenship was the first to focus on the development of  
4 external voting rights and representation. Authors have discussed the normative implications  
5 of these developments for citizenship (Bauböck, 2003; Rhodes & Harutyunyan, 2010), and  
6 analyzed system-level explanatory factors for the (non-)expansion of political rights of  
7 emigrants (Bauböck, 2005; Caramani & Grotz, 2015; Hartmann, 2015; Hutcheson & Arrighi,  
8 2015; Jaulin, 2016; Lafleur, 2015; Margheritis, 2022; Østergaard-Nielsen et al., 2019; Pallister,  
9 2020; Palop-García et al., 2019; Reidy, 2021; Turcu & Urbatsch, 2020; Umpierrez de Reguero  
10 et al., 2021; Wellman, 2020).

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24 This literature shows how these reforms enable emigrants to engage in various types of political  
25 participation (Østergaard-Nielsen, 2003; Tsuda, 2012), both formally and informally  
26 (Bermudez, 2010), in their host country and their country of origin (Chaudhary & Moss, 2019;  
27 Finn, 2020; Morales & Pilati, 2014). While the literature on electoral participation and  
28 representation of national migrants as immigrants in their host country has developed earlier  
29 (Bilodeau et al., 2010; Bird et al., 2015), similar works on emigrants and their homeland took  
30 off more recently but is rapidly expanding.

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42 First, scholars have analysed emigrant turnout in homeland elections and its determinants. They  
43 have stressed the low turnout among emigrants compared to national residents (Battiston &  
44 Luconi, 2020). Among the explanatory factors for this low turnout, most studies focus on  
45 macro- or micro-level factors. Institutions in the home country matter: turnout decreases with  
46 strict registration rules and difficult access to information (Escobar et al., 2014), in person  
47 voting opposed to internet voting or voting by proxy or by post (Belchior et al., 2018; Germann,  
48 2021; Hutcheson & Arrighi, 2015), and undemocratic regime at home (Belchior et al., 2018;  
49 Ciornei & Østergaard-Nielsen, 2020), while state-led outreach and the existence of emigrant  
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3 institutions have a mobilizing effect (Burgess, 2018; Koinova & Tsourapas, 2018). Institutions  
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5 in the host country also play a role, but conclusions are not clear. For instance, Chaudhary,  
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7 (2018) shows that turnout among emigrants is lower in host countries with solid democratic  
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9 institutions and inclusive and accessible national and local political opportunity structures,  
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11 pointing to a trade-off between transnational engagements (Peltoniemi, 2018). Other authors  
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13 show that emigrant living in countries with higher level of democracy and better living  
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15 conditions are more easily mobilised to vote (Ahmadov & Sasse, 2016; Belchior et al., 2018;  
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17 Ciornei & Østergaard-Nielsen, 2020). Still at the macro level, historical linkages and proximity  
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19 between the home and the host country, for instance in the form of post-colonial ties, increase  
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21 turnout (Chaudhary, 2018; Ciornei & Østergaard-Nielsen, 2020). Geographical proximity and  
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23 socio-economic factors also matter: emigration density and population stability, phone access  
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25 in the host country and high levels of remittances increase turnout (Burgess, 2014; Ciornei &  
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27 Østergaard-Nielsen, 2020; Dandoy & Kernalegenn, 2021). Finally, higher levels of  
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29 competitiveness and turnout in homeland elections are associated with higher turnout among  
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31 emigrants (Chaudhary, 2018; Dandoy & Kernalegenn, 2021), but not always (Belchior et al.,  
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33 2018). At the individual level, studies have emphasized that emigrants with higher levels of  
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35 resources (age, gender, education) have a higher probability to vote in homeland elections, very  
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37 much like national residents (Burgess, 2014; Guarnizo et al., 2019; McIlwaine & Bermudez,  
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39 2015; Mügge et al., 2019). The country of birth and the length of residency in the host country  
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41 also play a role (Peltoniemi, 2018; Szulecki et al., 2021): studies point to a decline in  
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43 participation with length of residence abroad (Belchior et al., 2018; Waldinger, 2012). Studies  
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45 show that interest in home country politics as well as previous political experience in the home  
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47 country increases the likelihood of voting (Lafleur & Chelius, 2011; McCann et al., 2019;  
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49 McIlwaine & Bermudez, 2015; Peltoniemi, 2018), yet higher cost of voting (distance to polling  
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51 station (Peltoniemi, 2018), and higher perceived cost of voting, decrease the probability to vote  
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3 (Maminskaitė, 2021; McIlwaine & Bermudez, 2015; Wass et al., 2021), confirming findings  
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5 at the aggregate level. Participation in homeland elections is also driven by a sense of duty,  
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7 patriotism, homesickness, and a desire to reproduce a social milieu abroad (Boccagni, 2011;  
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9 Boccagni & Ramirez, 2013; Knott, 2017; McCann et al., 2019).

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15 Second, scholars have started to investigate the determinants of external vote choice. Studies  
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17 stress that differences in vote choices between emigrants and national residents can be  
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19 attributed to compositional effects, with emigrants presenting different profiles in terms of  
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21 resources and social class (Goldberg & Lanz, 2019; Lawson, 2003; Mügge et al., 2019). But  
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23 this is only part of the story. Goldberg & Lanz (2019) show that there are also behavioural  
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25 differences: emigrants' vote choice would be more driven by class and religious beliefs, and  
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27 less by partisanship or issues than national residents. While the homeland political identity  
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29 would prevail due to early socialization, emigrants would develop new, transnational identities  
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31 and attitudes vis-à-vis the home country, including attitudes towards democracy and the  
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33 political system (Ahmadov & Sasse, 2015; Battiston & Luconi, 2020; Jaulin, 2016).

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40 However, this literature has tended to ignore the partisan dimension of external voting, rarely  
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42 connecting it to the literature on electoral and party politics. Similarly, the fields of parties and  
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44 electoral politics heavily focuses on the national level (Deschouwer, 2006). Despite a turning  
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46 point denouncing the dominant methodological nationalism (Schakel & Jeffery, 2013) and the  
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48 development of a literature focusing on political parties in multi-level contexts (Detterbeck,  
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50 2012), it still largely ignores the extra-territorial dimension of party and electoral politics.

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56 It is only recently that a burgeoning literature has begun to focus on the partisan dimension of  
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58 emigrant politics (Kernalegenn & van Haute, 2020; Rashkova, 2020). Studies started to  
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3 investigate why parties support (or not) external voting rights and how, more broadly, they  
4 tackle emigrant issues (Østergaard-Nielsen et al., 2019). We also see some research emerging  
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6 on the organizational development of parties abroad, as well as studies on their role and  
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8 functions (Collard & Kernalegenn, 2021; Friedman & Kenig, 2021; Gauja, 2020; Gherghina &  
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10 Soare, 2020b; Jakobson et al., 2021; Kernalegenn & Pellen, 2020; Piccio, 2020; Siotos, 2020;  
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12 Uekami et al., 2020; von Nostitz, 2021).  
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19 Regarding more specifically the electoral function of parties abroad (Borz, 2020; Jakobson et  
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21 al., 2020; Kalu & Scarrow, 2020), these new research have started to stress the (non-  
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23 )mobilizing role of parties in the electoral process (Burgess, 2018; Burgess & Tyburski, 2020;  
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25 Fliess, 2021; Paarlberg, 2020a), finding that the involvement of homeland parties among  
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27 emigrants is the most relevant factor in explaining their turnout in homeland elections (Ciornei  
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29 & Østergaard-Nielsen, 2020). We see some pioneer work on external campaigning by parties  
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31 abroad that look at the incentives and strategies developed to engage in campaigns abroad, and  
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33 how parties' organizational structures facilitate or hinder this engagement (Østergaard-Nielsen  
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35 & Ciornei, 2016; Paarlberg, 2017). Some authors (see Umpierrez de Reguero & Dandoy, 2020)  
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37 have also started to analyse the electoral performances of parties abroad and their determinants  
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39 (Umpierrez de Reguero & Dandoy, 2020).  
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47 However, our knowledge is still very limited about why and how parties decide to campaign  
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49 abroad, and how voters abroad are receptive to these campaigns and operate their party choice  
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51 in this specific context. This Special Issue contributes to fill this gap.  
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### **Empirical basis of the Special Issue**

To answer our research questions, the Special Issue adopts an inductive and comparative perspective. The SI mixes four case studies: Ecuador (S. Umpierrez de Reguero & Dandoy, 2021), France (Kernalegenn et al., 2021), Mexico (Paarlberg, 2020b), and Romania (Gherghina & Soare, 2020a) and one comparative paper focused on member states of the EU (Ognibene & Paulis, 2021). The papers were selected for their diversity and for their expected potential to investigate whether, why and how political parties abroad perform their electoral functions in this new arena abroad. The selected cases are characterized by differences in terms of legal frameworks and social and political contexts both at home (various electoral systems, with and without institutional provisions for representation for emigrants, European and non-European countries) and in the host country. In Ecuador, France, and Romania, emigrants have direct representation in the parliament of their home country, while in Mexico they don't. This is the strategy adopted in the classic theories of parties: comparing party organizations in different settings to highlight commonalities and to understand differences. Furthermore, two of the papers use quantitative methodologies while three papers mobilize qualitative tools. This case selection strategy allows to explore the diversity of strategies adopted by political parties abroad in different settings, with different tools.

### **Emigrant Party Branches as Actors of Campaigns and Elections Abroad**

To investigate whether and why parties engage in their electoral functions abroad, this Special Issue focuses on contrasting cases.

Umpierrez de Reguero and Dandoy (2021) investigate the determinants of the entry of political parties in the three two-seats Ecuadorian overseas districts, explaining transnational party competition. They find that the decision to participate in elections in overseas districts often results from a cost-benefit calculation, and single out two main determinants. Parties are more

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3 likely to enter the electoral competition in districts (1) displaying a lower level of  
4 competitiveness and (2) where they have previous electoral experience. The authors also show  
5 that the characteristics of the districts and party ideologies do not impact the decision of parties  
6 to enter the competition.  
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14 On the contrary, Paarlberg (2020) focuses on a case – Mexican emigrants in the U.S. – where  
15 parties fail in their role as vehicles for electoral campaigns among emigrants, notably due to  
16 legal restrictions. With extremely low voter turnout, outreach by Mexican parties is limited.  
17 While parties fail to build permanent party structures among emigrants, Mexican political  
18 engagement in the U.S. is mostly carried out by Hometown Associations. As Paarlberg  
19 concludes, Mexico presents a negative case of diaspora outreach by parties. However, this is  
20 instructive as well, and reinforces the idea that party branch infrastructures abroad are essential  
21 to carry out transnational electoral activities.  
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35 The remaining papers engage with the issue of how parties perform their electoral function  
36 abroad, in terms of campaigning and mobilization, but also in terms of structuring vote choice.  
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42 Gherghina and Soare (2020) analyse how Romanian political parties are established in  
43 countries hosting large numbers of Romanian emigrants. Romanian parties started to organise  
44 abroad in 2008, in link with the greater mobility made possible after the country's accession to  
45 the EU and the larger share of the electorate entitled to vote from abroad. However, they show  
46 that the geography of the establishment of parties remains unequal: emigrant party branches  
47 are mostly present in large European capitals, and not much beyond that. Importantly, all party  
48 branches abroad benefitted from a strong bottom-up dynamic and from the strategic role of  
49 political entrepreneurs and grassroots. While the mother party at home formalises their  
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3 existence, the autonomy of branches abroad and the crucial role of local entrepreneurs is a  
4 persistent feature. Electoral politics among Romanians abroad has therefore a strong local  
5 component.  
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12 Kernalegenn, Pellen and Smith (2021) also stress the importance of the local dimension of  
13 electoral politics abroad. More specifically, they compare electoral campaigns in three of the  
14 constituencies for French abroad during the general election of 2017. They explain how  
15 differentiated and localised campaigns attuned to local political dynamics and the specific  
16 histories and sociologies of constituencies are not only possible but also a condition of electoral  
17 success. While campaign dynamics in the home country do matter abroad, localised campaigns  
18 abroad are essential, both online and offline. Indeed, they emphasize that electoral campaigning  
19 abroad is not necessarily de-territorialised: the whole range of campaign methods found in  
20 metropolitan France can also be found abroad.  
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35 The last paper, by Ognibene and Paulis (2021), analyses external voting choices from emigrants  
36 from six European countries (Croatia, Czech Republic, France, Italy, Poland, and Romania)  
37 who settled in 28 European countries (the 27 EU member States + the United Kingdom), using  
38 longitudinal electoral data (1995-2019). They demonstrate that if emigrants' vote choices in  
39 home country elections mostly reflect the political context of their country of origin (emigrants  
40 tend to produce voting patterns relatively similar to those who haven't left), it is also influenced  
41 by the political life of their country of residence. The voting behaviour of emigrants is not  
42 therefore fully transnational and can be influenced by the political parties of both their home  
43 and host nations.  
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3 This special issue therefore contributes to the literature by confirming, illustrating, and  
4 elaborating on existing hypotheses, such as the strong impact of parties' outreach and local  
5 campaigns on mobilisation, turnout, and the result of elections, or that emigrants' vote choice  
6 is influenced both by the context of their country of origin and of their country of residence. It  
7 also offers new angles, by bringing a qualitative dimension to the field, by asserting the need  
8 to focus on grassroots and local party branches and entrepreneurs, and by stressing the crucial  
9 role of previous political experience in the home country.  
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5 <sup>i</sup> We use the concept of emigrants to designate all country nationals residing abroad, independent of the length of  
6 their stay, their status or motivation for emigration.  
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8 <sup>ii</sup> <https://www.idea.int/data-tools/data/voting-abroad>, accessed 28/11/2022.  
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10 <sup>iii</sup> Only two full democracies (Malta and Uruguay) and five ‘flawed’ democracies (Jamaica, Sri Lanka, Suriname,  
11 Taiwan and Trinidad and Tobago) have no provision for external voting as of 2019. We use the Democracy Index  
12 2018 definition and may therefore have omitted micro-states excluded from that source.  
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14 <https://www.eiu.com/topic/democracy-index>, accessed 28/11/2022.  
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