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Author

Fox, Jonathan A

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21. See "Hoy en Telecomunicaciones," January 11, 2006, <http://www.lda.bz/xportal/xportal.php?cve=Te071116>, accessed February 6, 2008.

22. See "Low-Cost Mobile Phones Planned for One Billion Users." <http://www.tech-web.com/wire/networking/180205406>, accessed June 5, 2007.

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Exit Followed by Voice

Mapping Mexico's Emerging Migrant Civil Society

JONATHAN FOX

More and more of Mexico's rural youth imagine their futures far from home, and those with the necessary social networks increasingly go to the United States. Will the broadening and deepening of migration seal the fate of future rural social movements? The objective of this chapter is to contribute to a rethinking of the relationship between rural out-migration and collective action. Is migration necessarily *instead of* collective action, or can it lead to *new forms* of collective action? Diverse forms of Mexican migrant collective action suggest that while exit might substitute for voice in the short term, exit can also be followed by voice.

Migration to Mexico's cities and to the United States has long been a pathway to escape the landlessness and the weakening of smallholder agriculture, often as part of diversified family survival strategies. While out-migration to the United States was historically concentrated in Mexico's center-west, since the 1980s and 1990s migration has spread throughout the nation's countryside, as well as into cities and across a broader mix of social classes. For rural Mexico, consider the implications of the fact that the one million Mexican farmworkers who gained permanent residency in the United States under the immigration reform of 1986 were equivalent to one-sixth of the adult men in rural Mexico at that time (Martin 2005, 6). For increasing numbers of Mexicans, what previously was circular migration has become a one-way trip.

Since NAFTA, estimated annual Mexican migration levels to the United States have risen by 63 percent, from 329,000 people in 1992 to over 530,000 in 2000.¹ Given this context, analysts need to go beyond merely referring in passing to the social and political relevance of cross-border migration as an "escape valve" and begin to explore more systematically how migration influences the future of public life in Mexico.

According to the Mexican census of 2000, 25 percent of the population continued to live in localities with less than 2,500 inhabitants. According to the most recent National Employment Survey, the share of agricultural employment fell from 24 percent in 1991 to under 15 percent at the end of 2005.² Another similar survey found a loss of 1.3 million agricultural jobs between 1993 and 2002. These data indicate a growing gap between the population that lives *in* the countryside and the population that lives *from* the countryside. The growth in the share of the rural population that does not live off agriculture has major implications for the future of public life in the countryside.

Exit and Voice: Dichotomous or Interactive?

This exodus of working-age adults must affect the prospects for future social and political change in the countryside, but the patterns of this impact remain unclear. It is no coincidence that analysts in Mexico often refer to this issue as the “migration problem,” yet for the migrants themselves, access to the U.S. labor market represents a solution. What are the possible effects of this massive exercise of the “exit option” on the prospects for addressing the problem of the underrepresentation of the concerns of the rural poor in the national policy process?

It is worth recalling that during the post-NAFTA decade, with the notable exception of the regionally bounded Zapatista movement, Mexico experienced no sustained protest movement of the rural poor of national scope.³ The broad-based but brief “Countryside Won’t Take Any More” march on Mexico City in 2003 was the decade’s only peasant protest of national significance that focused on making family farming economically sustainable. Though the mobilization was much larger than even sympathetic observers expected, it ended up having virtually no impact on national agricultural trade and investment policies, which continued to be extremely biased in favor of better-off producers.⁴

Does the “exit option” offer an alternative to “voice,” potentially undermining the capacity for collective action among those left behind? As one of Mexico’s most incisive political analysts put it, migration, along with the lack of formal sector employment, “stimulates the disintegration of the communities and the social fabric that sustain popular movements. They severely erode traditional forms of political and social mediation” (Hernández Navarro 2006, 27). Meanwhile, in spite of the change after 2000 in official Mexican rhetoric toward greater public recognition of migrants’ contri-

butions to the homeland, many still refer to those who moved to work in the United States as having “abandoned” their country. At least until recently, migrants were widely considered in Mexico as second-class citizens, too subject to U.S. influence to be worthy of the right to vote. In Mexico, the “exit” option is still widely associated with a lack of loyalty.

These concepts of exit, voice, and loyalty draw from the classic approach developed by the heterodox economist Albert Hirschman (1970). In this view, exit and voice are two alternative responses to decline (in firms, organizations, states). Exit refers to opting out, voting with one’s feet—whether as a consumer changing brands or as an emigrant leaving one’s homeland. Voice refers to more direct expressions of dissent, whether through protest, electoral contestation, or suasion. Loyalty cuts across both options, affecting decisions about whether to use exit or voice by making voice more likely. One of Hirschman’s main points was that easy availability of exit is inimical to voice, because voice is generally more costly than exit. “The more pressure escapes through exit, the less is available to foment voice” (Hirschman 1993, 176). If this hypothesis holds for rural Mexico, then the implications are dramatic.

Yet the relationship between exit and voice may not be predetermined. This is the context for asking, along with one of Hirschman’s critics, “whether in some cases the same factors make for exit *and* for lack of voice among those remaining” (Barry 1974, 85). Hirschman later recognized that under certain conditions, exit and voice can be mutually reinforcing, and the East German revolution of 1989–90 offered a vivid example. It remains to be seen under what conditions exit and voice are complementary versus contradictory.

Looking back at the dramatic increase in levels of out-migration from Mexico during the 1990s, it might be useful to rethink the importance of Mexico’s national elections of 1994. The public policies that are now widely associated with the increase in out-migration—notably the end of crop support prices, cuts in input subsidies, and NAFTA—date primarily from the Salinas presidency (1988–94). In this sense, the elections of 1994, had they been fully democratic for rural voters, might have served as a referendum on this package of public policies.

Reports from the citizens’ movement for independent election monitoring in 1994, led by the Civic Alliance, show that at least half of the polling places in the countryside lacked guaranteed ballot secrecy (Fox 1996). The Civic Alliance also found vote-buying pressures in 35 percent of rural polling places, which means that a significant fraction of the rural electorate

was denied free and fair electoral choices about the country's national future. To put this in Hirschman's terms, given the lack of political voice for most of the rural poor, many turned to exit. While this was certainly not the only migratory push factor, out-migration rates did rise substantially over the rest of the decade, perhaps suggesting some relationship between lack of voice and the exit option—at least at that political turning point.

The clearest expression of rural political voice during this period came from Mexico's indigenous peoples, whose numerous local and regional organizations began to come together nationally for the first time during the 1990s and influence the national political agenda. Yet during the same decade, cross-border migration processes began to extend for the first time to almost all of Mexico's indigenous regions (Fox and Rivera-Salgado 2004). Looking back over the past decade and a half, Mexico's indigenous peoples have been exercising *both* voice *and* exit more than during the previous decades. Both decisions involve agency, though with very different implications for the balance of power in the countryside.

In Hirschman's approach, loyalty is an "intervening variable" that influences the choice between collective action in communities of origin versus the individual or family-based strategy of migration. Yet a growing body of research on migrant collective action based on shared communities of origin suggests that many migrants bring their sense of community with them and re-create it with their *paisanos* in the United States. Migrants' sense of shared collective identity is broadened when hometown associations form statewide federations, constructing a regional civic identity that the migrants may not have shared before they left. Similarly, the experience of collective identity formation of Oaxacan indigenous migrants suggests that they developed shared ethnic and pan-ethnic identities through and because of the migration process, leaving behind more traditional, highly localized identities (Fox 2006).

At the same time as one recognizes the emergence and consolidation of transnational communities, to be discussed below, one must also recognize that many who migrate do abandon their communities. Some do not return. Not all send resources to support their families. Plus, when organizers migrate, their organizations suffer a loss—especially if the organizations have invested in their training, as in the case of coffee cooperative certifiers of organic production (Mutersbaugh 2002).

These patterns suggest that while exit may sometimes weaken voice, and at other times exit and voice may reinforce each other, perhaps exit can also

Table 15.1. Locating Migrant Civil Society in Terms of Exit and Voice

Exit options:		
Leave	Unorganized migrants	Migrant civil society
Stay	Compliance, clientelism	Mass protest, electoral opposition
Voice options:		
	Silence	Voice

Source: This approach draws on ideas presented in Barry 1974, in response to Hirschman 1970.

reflect the prior weakness of voice. Many people point to regions of long-term out-migration and see a very thin civil society, yet the cause and effect relationship is not so clear-cut. Many migrants leave regions where rural civil society was already thin. In addition, even in regions that had experienced autonomous collective action, few campaigns had produced lasting change, and even fewer could offer viable future options from the point of view of young people. But if we extend the temporal and geographic frame for considering the interaction between exit and voice and take the binational arena into account, new ways of considering the relationship between exit and voice emerge, as well as the role of loyalty as a mediating factor.

Several steps are involved in broadening the frame. The first is to recognize that at least some migrants engage in collective action, along a range of possible pathways to be discussed further below. Second, for many migration has a collective dimension, insofar as it is only possible thanks to extended networks of social capital in which loyalty and trust can make the difference between life and death, between economic success and disaster, and between deep alienation and cultural survival. Third, when migrants send a significant fraction of their wages to their relatives and communities, they are also expressing loyalty. As suggested schematically in table 15.1, when migrants come together in hometown associations to send collective remittances, they are expressing not only loyalty, but also voice—as they participate in debates over what social investments are most important. For those migrants who did not have access to autonomous, dense civil society alternatives back home, their exit can permit the exercise of their voice, whose costs are born out of loyalty.⁵

In other words, one could argue that many of the diverse and growing patterns of social, civic, and political engagement among Mexican migrants in the United States reflect the exercise of voice by a (formerly) rural population that had exercised the exit option. In this view, exit was a step toward voice rather than a substitute.

Mapping Migrant Civil Society

Possibly hundreds of thousands of Mexican migrants work together with their *paisanos* to promote “philanthropy from below,” funding hundreds of community development initiatives in their hometowns. More than forty thousand exercised their newly won right to cast absentee ballots in Mexico’s presidential election of 2006. Others are more engaged with their communities in the United States—as organized workers, parents, members of religious congregations, and naturalized voters. In addition, some Mexican migrants are working to become full members of both U.S. and Mexican societies at the same time, constructing practices of “civic binationality” that have a great deal to teach us about new forms of immigrant integration into the United States.

Increasingly, to account for both migrant collective action and patterns of continued engagement with their home countries, many scholars have worked with the concept of “transnational communities.” Transnational communities are groups of migrants whose daily lives, work, and social relationships extend across national borders. This idea helps to reveal relationships that are not visible when migrants are seen only through the lens of their engagements in the United States, yet the concept also tilting too far in the other direction, leaving out migrants’ engagements in the United States.

The idea of “migrant civil society” offers an alternative frame for understanding Mexican migrant collective action in the United States. Transnational communities provide a social foundation for, but are not the same as, an emerging migrant civil society, which also involves the construction of public spaces and representative social and civic organizations. Just as only some migrants are members of transnational communities, only some transnational communities become the building blocks for representative social and civic organizations of migrants themselves. This idea is the point of departure for a comparative approach to analyzing Mexican migrants in the United States, which involves recognizing the diverse and sometimes overlapping patterns of migrant collective action in the United States.

Most often, in migration studies comparative analysis refers to one specific approach, the comparison of different national origin groups. This approach, most often used in survey research, has generated rich findings. Yet the Mexican migrant population in the United States is so large and so diverse that national-origin averages can mask key variables, such as ethnicity, region of origin, or region of settlement. For example, migrants from

different Mexican states organize hometown associations at widely varying rates. Mexicans from the same states organize at different rates in different regions of the United States. Among indigenous Mexican migrants, members of some ethnic groups organize much more than others, in some regions more than others. Sectoral differences may also matter, insofar as we have not yet compared participation trends across hometown associations, workers’ organizations, neighborhood associations, or religious communities. In the literature on naturalization and voting patterns of new citizens, it turns out that national samples can hide significant regional differences. Migrants in California have followed a much more highly politicized path than those in Texas and Florida, in terms of their rates of naturalization and voting (Pantoja et al. 2001). These differences only become visible once one takes a comparative approach—across regions, sectors, and patterns of participation.

Simply put, migrant civil society refers to migrant-led membership organizations and public institutions. Specifically, this includes four very tangible arenas of collective action. Each arena is constituted by actors, while each set of actors also constitutes an arena.

Migrant-led Membership Organizations

Membership organizations composed primarily of migrants can range from hometown associations (HTAs) to workers’ organizations and religious congregations. The Mexican consulates have registered well over six hundred such clubs (Rivera-Salgado et al. 2005). Each has a core membership of perhaps an average of two dozen families, some with hundreds more. They are primarily concentrated in metropolitan areas. Many members of HTAs are relatively established, and many leaders of HTAs have relative economic stability and are either legal residents or U.S. citizens. Hometown associations have in turn federated into associations that bring people from one state in Mexico together in another state in the United States.

Today’s Mexican HTAs have a long history, with the first Zacatecan club in California dating back to 1962 (Moctezuma 2005). But their numbers and membership have boomed in the past fifteen years as the result of several converging factors. Within the United States, the massive regularization of undocumented workers that followed the immigration reform of 1986 facilitated both economic improvement and increased cross-border freedom of movement for millions of migrants. On the Mexican side, the government deployed the convening power of its extensive consular apparatus, bringing together people from the same communities of origin and offering match-

ing funds for community development to encourage collective social remittances, through the Three-for-One program. Though this policy began as a response to pressures from organized Zacatecan migrants, it also served as a powerful inducement for other migrants to come together in formal organizations for the first time. After all, many transnational social and civic relationships unfold outside of the clubs and federations. In addition, the Mexican state changed the tone of its relationship with the diaspora by formally permitting dual nationality for the first time (Castañeda 2006). While many clubs emerged from below, many of the state-level federations were formed through engagement with the Mexican state (Goldring 2002).⁶

At least until recently, many Mexican migrant organizations were disengaged from U.S. civil society. For example, back in 1994, Mexican HTAs participated little in the broad campaign against California's notorious anti-immigrant Proposition 187 (Escala Rabadán and Zabin 2002). In contrast, a decade later, when the main state-level immigrants' rights advocacy campaign involved the right to drivers' licenses for the undocumented, members of HTAs were actively involved, working the phone banks at the headquarters of Los Angeles's trade union movement.⁷ The leadership of the Southern California Council of Presidents of Mexican Federations has now joined the fray of state politics (Rivera-Salgado et al. 2005). Some Mexican federations have also joined the National Alliance of Latin American and Caribbean Communities, especially in the Midwest. These kinds of alliances would have been hard to imagine a decade ago.

While HTAs are one of the main forms of expression of Mexican migrant civil society, they are but one among many. The broad category of migrant membership organizations also includes workers', religious, community-based, and indigenous organizations. Some include migrants of diverse nationalities, while others are primarily or exclusively Mexican—as in the case of a growing number of trade union locals (discussed further below).

Migrant-led Communications Media

Migrant-led communications media can range from local and binational newspapers to radio programs, independent video, and now numerous Internet discussions oriented to hometowns or regions. For example, the Oaxacan community in Los Angeles is now sufficiently large and established to support *two* serious newspapers, *El Oaxaqueño* and *Impulso de Oaxaca*. The first publishes more than thirty thousand copies bi-weekly and circulates both in California and Oaxaca. The migrant-run Spanish-language public radio network, Radio Bilingüe, is broadcast on approximately fifty

stations in the United States and twenty more in Mexico. In addition, for many years it broadcast the *only regular programming in indigenous Mexican languages*. For many migrant farmworker communities, Radio Bilingüe is their principal news source.

Beyond the nonprofit media is the huge world of commercial Spanish-language media. Though for-profit enterprises fall outside of most definitions of civil society, these media nevertheless play key civic roles, not only informing their publics, but also encouraging public service. Spanish-language media have actively encouraged both U.S. citizenship and voter turnout (Rodríguez 1999). Such practices contrast sharply with critics' assumptions that the persistence of Spanish is associated with an unwillingness to join U.S. civil society (for example, Huntington 2004). At the same time, migrant-oriented media is not necessarily the same as migrant-owned, so Spanish-language media institutions therefore only overlap partially with a strict definition of migrant civil society. In many cases, however, key media decision makers, such as editors and reporters, are most often migrants.⁸

Migrant-led NGOs

While many NGOs, or nonprofits, serve migrant communities, in this approach only those that are migrant-led would be considered part of migrant civil society. Here one must keep in mind the clear distinction between NGOs and membership organizations—a distinction that is side-stepped by the fuzzy U.S. term “community-based organization.” In some cases migrant membership organizations have spun off their own NGOs, as in the case of the Indigenous Front of Binational Organizations (FIOB), which has set up its own NGOs in California and in Oaxaca to provide support services and to invest in community development and public education projects.⁹

To continue recognizing gray areas of overlap, this category within migrant civil society can also include those migrants who, as individuals, have gained positions of leadership within established U.S. nonprofits, including foundations. They are strategically located to make major contributions to the capacity building of other migrant civil society institutions.

Autonomous Migrant-led Public Spaces

This term refers to large public gatherings where migrants can come together to interact and to express themselves with relative freedom and autonomy. Here culture, religion, sports, and recreation are key. For example, in California, indigenous Oaxacan migrants now organize huge annual mu-

sic, dance, and food festivals known as Guelaguetzas. They are the embodiment of the imagined cultural and civic space known as “Oaxacalifornia.”¹⁰ Specifically Oaxacan migrant civil society in California is now sufficiently dense that migrants put on six different Guelaguetza festivals each year. They are held in parks, high school auditoriums, and college campuses, and the largest is held in the Los Angeles Sports Arena—the former home of the Los Angeles Lakers basketball team. In each one, hundreds volunteer their time so that thousands can come together, so that parents can share their culture with their children. Indeed, probably few had had the opportunity to see such a festival when they were living in Oaxaca. With so much activity, California’s multigenerational Oaxacan migrant dance groups are in high demand, and they represent yet another network of membership organizations. Each of the six annual festivals reveals an x-ray of the social networks and organizational styles of different strands of the web of Oaxacan civil society in California. For example, some work with local Latino politicians and organizations, others collaborate with the Oaxacan state government, which is controlled by the Institutional Revolutionary Party (PRI), while others keep their distance.

Having reviewed these four different arenas of migrant civil society, how might we think about their relationships with U.S. civil society? Is migrant civil society the U.S. branch of Mexico’s civil society? Or is it the Mexican branch of U.S. civil society? The concept of migrant civil society proposed here would include both, because it is defined by the migrants themselves rather than by the national arena within which they are active. The hometown associations would be the clearest example of a branch of Mexican civil society that is *in*, but not necessarily *of* the United States. They have created a public sphere that is clearly Mexican, not only because of its participants’ national origin, but also because of its culture, organizational style, symbolic references, and principal counterparts. In contrast, for examples of Mexican branches of U.S. civil society, we could look at the trade union locals that have become majority-migrant and migrant-led, as in the case of several major agro-industrial, service, and construction unions in California, or the probably hundreds of religious congregations that have become Mexican spaces within U.S. churches.¹¹

When Organized Migrants Go Public—As Immigrants, as Workers, and as Mexicans

A key part of forging civil society involves migrants “coming out” as public, collective actors, representing themselves rather than relying on advocates. To illustrate this process, here follows a brief comparison of two different ways in which migrants have entered the U.S. public sphere. In the first one, organized migrants came together through the cross-country Immigrant Worker Freedom Ride in 2003. This initiative was led in part by the broadest multiracial set of U.S. civil society organizations—the trade union movement. This convergence was made possible, in turn, by the growing voice and clout of Latino leaders within the mainstream labor movement—most notably in California.¹²

By highlighting the historic legacy of freedom rides, migrants of many nationalities explicitly reached out to diverse U.S. constituencies by framing immigrants’ rights under the historical mantle of the African American civil rights movement. Migrant organizations, including California’s Oaxacan Federation, were officially represented on the ride.¹³ In several areas of recent Mexican settlement in the United States, such as Nashville, the Freedom Ride permitted migrant organizations to become public actors for the first time.¹⁴ Old habits die hard, though, and some Mexican migrant bus riders were frustrated with what they described as their trade union handlers’ “mania for control.” This cross-cultural disconnect erupted at one point into a brief, behind-the-scenes “rebellion” by migrant riders against the coordinators of one of the buses.¹⁵ This small but revealing incident is emblematic of how much more work is needed to build and sustain cross-cultural coalitions. Overall, the Immigrant Worker Freedom Ride made unprecedented inroads in terms of projecting humanizing images of migrants in the mainstream media.

In contrast to what could be called the Immigrant Worker Freedom Ride’s “integration strategy,” Mexican migrant-led organizations also construct and deploy their own collective identities as their primary basis for claiming a space in the public sphere. For example, not long after the freedom ride, the Tepeyac Association—a Mexican faith-based membership organization in New York—led its own mass traveling collective action for immigrants’ rights. Tepeyac’s second annual relay Torch Run traveled through several of Mexico’s “sending” regions and arrived in Saint Patrick’s Cathedral in New York City on December 12. Along the way, the runners, called “Messengers for the Dignity of a People Divided by the Border” prayed to the Virgin for

the right to permanent legal residency. Their repertoire resonates widely, though Mexicans in New York also form hometown associations and workers' organizations.

The Tepeyac Association pursues a distinctive strategy for forging the collective identity of its members, based around the combined ethno-national and spiritual symbolism of the Virgin of Guadalupe, together with an explicit effort to build a shared collective identity as undocumented workers (Rivera Sánchez 2004). Founded by Jesuits, its New York City social base is organized in forty different neighborhood Guadalupano communities. This is very different from the hometown-based approach to migrant organizing. Tepeyac's original U.S. partner was the New York Diocese of the Catholic Church, whose leadership took the initiative that led Tepeyac to form in the first place, by reaching out to Mexican church counterparts.

Both the Immigrant Worker Freedom Ride and Tepeyac's Torch Run brought organized migrants into the public sphere, both crossed vast territories in the process, and both were organized from below but counted on institutional allies in the United States. Yet they followed different strategies to broaden their bases—one ventured from west to east, while the other traveled from south to north. The Immigrant Worker Freedom Ride framed migrants as the most recent wave in the long history of struggle against social exclusion in the United States, building a multiracial class identity as immigrant workers, while Tepeyac looked across the border to build a shared identity as Mexicans fighting for dignity and recognition as Mexicans. Each strategy has its own strengths and limitations.

As one considers the idea of migrant civil society, then, migrants are represented through two main pathways. The first is the most straightforward: organizations that are led by and made up of migrants themselves. The second is less straightforward because the boundaries are more blurred, and it takes the form of U.S. civil society organizations that have effectively been transformed by migrant participation. This would describe many Catholic parishes, trade union locals, workers' centers, and parent teacher associations—or Chicago's 170 elected School Councils that are primarily Mexican (IME 2005).

Mexican workers are an increasingly important part of the trade union movement in those regions and sectors where unions are dynamic and organizing new members. By 2004, Mexican-born workers represented 2.3 percent of all union members, over 360,000, with unionization rates much higher for long-term residents (Milkman 2006, 5). In regions of high union density, Mexican migrants are well-represented in the membership of

unions that represent primarily low-wage workers, such as UNITE-HERE (a merger of the Union of Needletrades, Industrial and Textile Employees and the Hotel Employees and Restaurant Employees International Union), the Service Employees International Union (services, including health-care workers and the legendary Justice for Janitors campaign), the United Food and Commercial Workers (food processing), and the Teamsters (agro-industry). Further research would be needed to map Mexican workers' presence across sectors and regions with precision, and to determine how many of those union locals are migrant-led and therefore part of migrant civil society as defined here. Clearly, however, in terms of both sheer numbers and the impact on members' daily lives, unions are by far one of the most important institutions for the representation of Mexicans in the United States.

Nevertheless, trade unions face many structural, institutional, and cultural constraints in their efforts to organize immigrant workers. In response, a new set of institutions has emerged to try to fill the gap between traditional workplace-based unions and low-wage immigrant workers. Workers' centers include a wide range of grass-roots organizing initiatives that operate separately from trade unions. Sometimes they coordinate, and sometimes they are in tension. A comprehensive recent survey found 137 workers' centers across the United States, 122 of which work closely with immigrant workers (Fine 2006). Of the 40 studied in depth, about 17 have a significant Mexican constituency, and 13 of them are predominantly Mexican.¹⁶ Central Americans have played a key leadership role in workers' centers, in part because of their experiences organizing in their home countries before escaping the repression of the late 1970s and 1980s. Some workers' centers operate more like NGOs, while others are membership-led. The National Network of Day Laborers brings together 29 workers' centers from 11 states, with half in New York and California.¹⁷

Workers' centers that are migrant-led could be seen as institutions of migrant civil society. If the first approach to unpacking migrant civil society involves distinguishing between organizations in terms of whether they are U.S. institutions transformed by migrants or are "migrant institutions," a second approach would involve unpacking the participation of migrants as individuals. The same people may participate in both arenas of migrant civil society, though sometimes separately, a form of double militancy. Note the case of Oregon's farmworkers' organization, the Northwest Treeplanters and Farmworkers United (PCUN), whose membership combines Mexican Americans, mestizo Mexican migrants, and indigenous Mixteco migrants

from Mexico's state of Oaxaca. While the PCUN is very much a U.S. organization, some of its Mexican members are also active in their own hometown associations. In the case of some of the Oaxacan HTAs, they have as many as a dozen branches spread across the United States, each raising funds to support community development projects back home.¹⁸

The PCUN is one of several regional U.S. farmworkers' organizations, each one with thousands of members. Some have won tangible victories, which are especially notable in the overall national context of eroding union bargaining power—including the Farm Labor Organizing Committee (FLOC), a trade union based in the Midwest and North Carolina, and Florida's Coalition of Immokalee Workers (CIW). Majority-migrant workers' organizations, like so many trade union locals in California, the United Farm Workers (UFW), the PCUN, FLOC, the CIW, and day laborer organizations, are all U.S. organizations whose goals are to defend their members' rights, both as workers and as migrants in the United States. In some of these regional organizations the vast majority of members are Mexican, while others include workers of multiple nationalities, as in the case of the CIW. Few have binational or cross-border priorities, with the exception of FLOC. Yet their members may also have other affiliations, often invisible to outsiders, as in the case of the PCUN, or the representation of leadership of the UFW on the Mexican government's migrant Advisory Council. Further research would be necessary to see whether their members are also organized binationally around their communities of origin.

While most civic binationality takes the form of individuals who do double duty, some migrant organizations are following what we could call "fully binational" paths as well. This means being engaged with social, civic, or political agendas in both countries. The leading example in the United States is the Indigenous Front of Binational Organizations, formerly known as the Oaxacan Indigenous Binational Front (FIOB). The FIOB is one of the very few mass membership organizations that include organized bases in both the United States and in Mexico, with thousands of affiliated members organized in branches in California, Baja California, and in their home state of Oaxaca.¹⁹

The FIOB is not a federation of hometown associations, though its members have a strong sense of shared homeland, in the sense of being *paisanos*. Their sense of being *oaxaqueño* is a shared identity that comes out of a struggle against the intense racism they face in northern Mexico and in California, where they face ethnic slurs, like "*oaxaquito*," or "*oaxaco*," from other Mexicans. In this context, *oaxaqueño* is not just a geographic refer-

ence, but rather a term of both respect and self-respect. In the process, regional identity becomes socially constructed as a pan-ethnic umbrella identity, since Oaxaca includes at least sixteen distinct ethnic groups. In this context, the FIOB's recent decision to change its name is especially notable. The change in the wording from "Oaxacan" to "Organizations," while keeping the FIOB acronym, reflected the new realities of its mass bases in California and Baja California, where indigenous migrants from states other than Oaxaca are increasingly involved. Among the new binational leadership commission elected in March 2005, five Mexican languages are spoken (Mixtec, Zapotec, Mixe, Purépecha, and Spanish).

The FIOB actively pursues a wide-ranging rights agenda on issues that range from family and community-level public interest advocacy, environmental justice, public health education, and PTA training to national immigrants' and indigenous people's rights in both countries (Domínguez Santos 2004; Martínez Saldaña 2004). The FIOB works closely with a wide range of public interest groups in both countries, its leaders run for local and state offices in Oaxaca, and it does public interest advocacy at local, state, and federal levels in both countries. This raises a conceptual issue. Does the FIOB represent the migrant wing of Mexico's national indigenous movement? Does the FIOB represent the indigenous wing of a broader cross-border migrant movement? Clearly the FIOB plays both roles.

Puzzles for Future Research

Based on this review of the contours of the landscape of Mexican migrant civil society, here follow three of the many possible analytical puzzles that emerge. In some sectors, significant additional research is needed even to formulate the analytical questions—most notably in the areas of Mexican migrant civic-religious participation, women's participation, workers' organization, and community organization. These are all areas where a binational perspective would shed light on "where Mexicans are coming from" in arenas that have so far been analyzed through exclusively U.S. lenses.

What Are the Social, Civic, and Political Effects of Migrant Associations in Their Hometowns?

The discussion of the impact of migration on sending communities has shifted from an earlier focus on the loss of human capital to a debate over whether family remittances contribute to more than survival for the relatives who stay behind, and whether remittances can become a lever for job

creation (for example, Goldring 2004). In terms of the dichotomy often posed between the use of remittances for consumption versus investment, documented experiences with sustainable job-creating enterprises beyond a very small scale are very limited, at least so far. Family investment of remittances in education appears to be much more substantial, though often miscategorized as consumption. There are many powerful reasons why the results of job-creating investment of remittances have been limited, including a less-than-hospitable policy environment, the greater attraction of public versus private goods (in the case of collective remittances), and very limited investment opportunities in many sending communities.

In the discussion of the effects on sending communities, one could argue that the focus on economic flows has “crowded out” recognition of *non-economic* effects, which can be described as social and cultural remittances (Levitt 2001). How do migrant hometown clubs affect public life in their communities of origin? Do they encourage local democratization? Do they affect women’s opportunities for participation and representation?²⁰ Many participants and observers expect that HTAs do have democratizing effects, though the evidence is not yet clear. Clearly, returned migrants play key roles in public life, as individuals. According to a survey carried out by the migrant support agency of the Michoacan state government, 37 percent of the 113 mayors who governed in the state from 2002 to 2004 were former migrants (Bada 2004b).²¹

But the fact that some migrants return to fill local leadership roles does not answer the question about the civic and political effects of HTAs. To what degree do the hometown associations reproduce the political culture that dominated Mexico in the twentieth century? Optimists often suggest that organized civil society generates democratic values and practices, and this is sometimes the case. But civil society also carries the weight of history and is cross-cut by hierarchies and inequality between genders, classes, and ethnic groups, as well as the legacy of less-than-democratic political ideologies. After all, many of the federations, as well as some of the HTAs, came together in response to initiatives of the Mexican government. If one interprets this relationship through the lens of state-society relations in Mexico, then this government strategy represents a response to real demands from below, while also serving as an institutional channel to regulate relationships with migrant civil society.²² In principle, in contrast to similar government efforts *in* Mexico, one might expect that migrants in the United States would be less vulnerable to clientelistic manipulation.

The broad question of home community impact needs to be unpacked

in at least two ways. First, to what degree do the HTAs themselves generate democratic values and practices? So far, research that compares the internal practices of different state federations finds a wide range of practices, from more to less democratic (Rivera-Salgado and Escala Rabadán 2004). The second question would focus on their effects in home communities. These questions are distinct because, in principle, hometown clubs could be highly representative of their constituencies, but not necessarily of the non-migrant population.

Some studies argue that HTAs tend to hold local governments accountable (for example, Burgess 2006). Even if most clubs are internally democratic, and even if they hold local governments accountable, this does not necessarily generate democratization within the home community. Accountability refers to a power relationship, checks and balances, in this case between a specific constituency and the local government—but not necessarily *vis-à-vis* the majority of the community (whether defined in local or translocal terms). Do the non-migrants play any role in determining how to invest collective remittances? How are choices weighed between infrastructure projects that the migrants use on their annual visits home and those that may have a greater impact on the daily lives of non-migrants (for example, rodeo rings versus water systems)? It should be no surprise that relationships between migrants and mayors are not always easy, especially now that local elections are more democratic in many regions of Mexico.

How Can Disenfranchised Migrants Gain Political Representation?

The issue of how migrants can gain political representation poses a puzzle. If they lack voting rights in their host country, then host country politicians have little electoral incentive to make the political investment necessary to enfranchise them. If they also lack voting rights in their home country, then their home country politicians will lack political incentives to enfranchise them. This presents a “chicken and egg” problem—migrants need to gain electoral clout for politicians to pay attention, yet they need politicians to pay attention to get electoral clout.

In Mexico, the recent approval of the absentee ballot represents a first step toward overcoming this problem, though the voting procedures discouraged participation. The complex mail-in balloting, combined with the impossibility of registering abroad, was approved by a near-total consensus in the Mexican Congress. This allowed congressional representatives to show their recognition of Mexican migrants’ citizenship rights without actually risking a significant change in the composition of the electorate.

In the United States, the unrepresented population is huge and growing. In California, for example, 20 percent of the adult population lacks the right to vote. The discursive frame of “non-citizen enfranchisement” challenges the systemic political exclusion of immigrants but also blurs the distinction between undocumented immigrants and permanent residents. The respective reasons for their exclusion are different, as are their possible pathways to inclusion. In the first case, the enfranchisement of undocumented immigrants would require a comprehensive policy reform that included a pathway to citizenship, which in turn would require a dramatic shift in U.S. politics at the national level—an issue too complex to address adequately here. In contrast, in the second case, more active support for the enfranchisement of legal permanent residents would not require major legal changes and could be pursued by a wide range of actors at all levels of government and civil society.

The size of the immigrant population that is already eligible for citizenship is huge. In 2003, eligible permanent U.S. residents of Mexican origin numbered 2.4 million people, or 30.2 percent of the total (Rytina 2005, 4–5). Yet the federal government lacks a policy to encourage immigrant integration. As Murguía and Muñoz (2005) suggest, a serious new effort to encourage naturalization would require substantial changes in the priorities of a wide range of U.S. institutions, though civil society actors and local governments do not need to wait for new federal laws to make a difference.

Why the Persistent Disconnect Between Analysis and Action Involving Migration and Development?

In light of the clear overlap between the challenges of migration and rural development, one might expect high levels of dialogue and convergence between the analysts and social actors involved.²³ After all, the growth in migrant workers’ remittances, combined with the spread of organized hometown associations, has provoked widespread optimism about prospects for investing in cross-border community development. Yet analyses of Mexican migration and development continue to engage at most sporadically, for reasons that are not well understood. Each agenda tends to treat the other as a residual category, while fully integrated approaches have yet to be developed. One factor may be that specifying the nature of the linkages between migration and development turns out to be easier said than done. For example, does organic and fair-trade coffee production and marketing

provide an alternative to migration, does it serve as a source of funding for marketing, or do remittances end up subsidizing coffee production because demand at fair-trade prices is insufficient?²⁴

So far, the huge volumes of remittances have attracted most of the public and policy attention. The framing of migration and development issues through the lens of remittances draws attention to questions of how financial institutions can capture the funds. While “banking the unbanked” is certainly important to those sending remittances, the connection to broader development remains uncertain. For migrants and their families, the most tangible impact of the widespread public discussion has been the significant recent reduction in transaction costs, driven in part by increased competition from the private sector. The focus on remittances also draws attention to the efforts of organized migrants to generate collective investment funds, primarily for social infrastructure rather than economic development. As a result, neither the financial nor the social emphasis on remittances directly engages with the challenge of making rural communities economically sustainable.

From a development point of view, most of the policy discussion involving remittances has focused on the Mexican government’s cutting-edge efforts to support collective social remittances through its Three-for-One matching fund program. The program now has a significant track record that analysts are carefully examining, but its high public profile contrasts remarkably with its practical application. In 2004, the Mexican Social Development Ministry budget marked about \$18 million, less than 1 percent of its budget, for matching migrant-generated funds for social development projects in migrants’ home communities. Almost none of these funds supported productive projects.

Indeed, in spite of almost a decade of public discussion about the potential of remittance investments to create development alternatives, in Mexico there is still little tangible evidence of remittance investments that generate sustainable jobs beyond a few micro-level cases. This should not be surprising given the dearth of investment opportunities in so many sending communities, as well as the critical need for on-the-ground entrepreneurial and technical capacity. The issues of economic viability are compounded by the structure of the decision-making process. When migrants pool their hard-earned money for hometown projects, they place a premium on those investments that provide benefits to the community as whole. Most job-creating investments, in contrast, directly affect only a small subset of the

community. In addition, their benefits may be perceived as at risk of being captured by local elites—in a context in which long-distance accountability is difficult. This dilemma suggests the importance of identifying those productive investments that can also have “public goods” effects, such as improved coffee-processing infrastructure in those communities where most people depend on coffee and already have years of experience working together in a marketing cooperative whose leadership is publicly accountable. Yet this category of potential investment projects has yet to be linked to migrant collective action.

Creative practitioners and analysts are beginning to address this longstanding disconnect between migration and development agendas. Yet efforts to bring migrant organizations into the broader development policy debate are still incipient, as their Mexican policy agenda continues to be dominated by the traditionally bounded “migration policy” framework, limited to the Three-for-One program, the Institute for Mexicans Abroad, and Mexico’s approach to U.S. immigration and border policies. Even at the level of local and translocal policy agendas, few cross-border membership organizations support grass-roots development agendas both in communities of origin and of settlement. The FIOB is a notable exception, as it consolidates a participatory grass-roots micro-credit network back home to build a locally accountable institutional base that could effectively receive and invest remittances.

In an effort to craft a new way of framing the relationship between migration and development, the Mexican rural development strategist Armando Bartra (2003) bridges the migration, development, and rights agendas with the call for respect for “the right to not [have to] migrate.” After all, Article 123 of the Mexican Constitution still speaks of citizens’ right to “dignified and socially useful work.” The “right to not migrate” can be a useful bridging concept for promoting reflection and discussion between diverse and sometimes disparate actors who see the process differently. This principle recognizes that while migration is an option, it is a choice made within a context imposed by public policies that enable some development strategies over others. The idea also shows how the term “migration policy” is deceptive insofar as it is often limited to those policies that deal with migrants, such as matching funds for projects or protection from police abuse on the way home for the holidays. The idea of “migration policy” should also take into account how the full range of public policies, such as the withdrawal of support for family farming, affects the decision to migrate. Yet the appar-

ently limited impact of the concept of the “right to not migrate” suggests that translating an evocative frame into practical strategies for grass-roots organizations turns out to be a serious challenge.

What might explain this persistent disconnect between migration and development? Migration is increasingly recognized as spreading throughout Mexico, remittances are widely seen as a development resource, and those practitioners and analysts working on migration increasingly acknowledge the need to take into account dynamics in communities of origin. Perhaps the roots go deeper and one needs to look at the basic frameworks used to define strategies for change. For almost all of Mexico’s rural development practitioners and analysts, migration is still seen as occurring *outside* the framework. Migration is treated as an external process happening “around” the grass-roots development process, whereas for peasant families, migration is inside the box, a central component of a diversified survival strategy. For most practitioners and analysts who are working on migration, in contrast, the development dimension of the relationship between receiving and sending community focuses on the “philanthropy from below” process, including the challenges of raising and sending the funds, and finding high-profile projects that offer “something for everyone.” But who decides how to invest the funds, who ends up managing the projects, how sustainable are they? How do longer-term development effects figure into the decision-making process?²⁵ Where do the rest of the government’s social, economic, and environmental policies fit in?

To contribute more directly to grass-roots development strategies on the ground, a next stage of mapping is necessary. Perhaps at the level of a state or a region, it would be very useful to take a map of those communities whose migrants have generated hometown associations and lay it over a map of those communities of origin that have also generated the social, civic, and economic development organizations that could serve as counterparts with the organized migrants. Some “sending” communities in the state of Oaxaca have very limited economic development prospects, but others have significant, scaled-up community-based enterprises, such as organic coffee and timber cooperatives. Imagining alternatives with those organized migrants who come from hometowns with community-based economic development track records could go a long way toward addressing the issues that make productive investments of remittances difficult. Those issues include the need for viable investment prospects, for entrepreneurial experience and reliable technical support, for public accountability

to the communities of origin, and for positive social spillover effects beyond the local interested parties. Yet matching organized migrants to grass-roots initiatives has yet to be done.

Conclusions

The emergence of Mexican migrant civil society suggests that exit can be followed by voice. For many Mexican migrants, autonomous collective action begins as they look homeward. For those who were active before they left, civic life back home may be undermined, at least in the short term—though some return to provide community service later in life. Untold numbers of activist Mexican migrants had track records of collective action before leaving, suggesting that many find new pathways for expressing their commitments, following Hirschman's (1984) principle of the "transformation and mutation of social energy."

When compared to the vast size and diversity of Mexican society in the United States, clearly the vast majority of migrants remain unrepresented by formal organizations of any kind. Nevertheless, the idea of migrant civil society recognizes that Mexicans in the United States are creating their own institutions, as well as joining existing ones. Some are building multi-national and multi-ethnic workers' organizations. Others are joining community and faith-based organizations. Some also participate in cross-border Mexican civil society, joining with their *paisanos* in hometown associations and voting rights campaigns, while at the same time campaigning for immigration policy reform in the United States. Meanwhile, much of Mexican migrant social and civic participation unfolds within the U.S. categories of Mexican American, Hispanic, and Latino.

Mexican migrant civil society in the United States is just beginning to emerge. Organized migrants are just beginning to construct points of convergence—across social sectors, regions of origin, and regions of settlement in the United States. With the exception of the voting rights campaign, organized Mexican migrants also lack consolidated partnerships with potential counterparts in Mexican civil society. The debates needed to identify shared agendas and to agree on shared goals have yet to happen. The future of rural Mexico has yet to be imagined jointly, between those who left and those who stayed. While the whole may be greater than the sum of the parts, it is not yet clear how these parts will come together.

Notes

Author's note: This is an abridged version of a chapter in Fox 2008. An earlier version was presented as the keynote address to the fifth congress of the Mexican Association of Rural Studies, Oaxaca, May, 2005, <http://www.amer.org.mx>, accessed February 25, 2008. The research was made possible by grants from the Rockefeller and Ford foundations, as well as a 2004–5 fellowship from the Woodrow Wilson Center. The ideas presented here were informed by ongoing conversations with colleagues too numerous to thank here, but I would like to express my special appreciation for input from Xóchitl Bada and Gaspar Rivera-Salgado.

1. See the dramatic chart in Passel and Suro 2005, table 5a. Their estimate of Mexican migration rates later fell to 460,000 in 2004, apparently in response to rising unemployment levels in the United States after September 11, 2001.

2. "Población ocupada según sector económica (nacional)," Encuesta Nacional de Ocupación y Empleo, <http://www.inegi.gob.mx>, accessed January 23, 2008.

3. The well-known Barzón movement for debt relief reached national scope but represented primarily small-to-medium-sized commercial producers. Only a minority of Mexican farmers were sufficiently well-off to have received bank credit in the first place.

4. On the distribution of the Mexican government's agricultural spending across social classes, see the little known but nominally public social incidence analysis by the World Bank (2004). For background on the "El campo no aguanta más" movement, see, among others, Schwentesius et al. 2004; a thematic issue of *El Cotidiano* (no. 124, March–April 2004); and the extended debate in 2003 between Luis Hernández Navarro and Armando Bartra in the pages of *La Jornada*.

5. This proposition leaves aside the question of whether exit undermines the voice option for those who remain, a major dilemma that is beyond the scope of this discussion.

6. For more on Mexican HTAs, see also, among others, Bada 2004a, 2004b; Goldring 2002; Lanly and Valenzuela 2004; Moctezuma 2005; Rivera-Salgado and Escala Rabadán 2004; and Smith 2005.

7. On the role of trade unions in Los Angeles as channels for political participation by noncitizens, see Varsanyi 2005. On subnational immigration politics more generally, see Wells 2004.

8. Consider an effervescent immigrants' rights march in Chicago that predated the mobilization of spring 2006, led by a Spanish-language radio host and inspired by a local Mexican priest's call-in to denounce the claims of the "Minutemen" (Martínez and Piña 2005).

9. See <http://www.fiob.org>, accessed February 25, 2008; Domínguez Santos 2004; Rivera-Salgado 2002; Fox 2006; and Fox and Rivera-Salgado 2004.

10. For background on this concept, see Nagengast and Kearney 1990.

11. More research is needed to determine the degree of specifically Mexican presence within the U.S. Catholic Church with greater precision, including comparison across regions, dioceses, and religious orders.

12. On U.S. workers' organizations and Mexican migrants, see Bacon 2004, 2005, 2006; Fine 2006; Gordon 2005; Johnston 2003, 2004a, 2004b; and Milkman 2006.

13. The two returning Oaxacan migrant federation representatives on the ride were honored with a photo on the front page of the *El Oaxaqueño* newspaper, which is based in Los Angeles (October 18, 2003, 4 [116]).

14. See, for example, Miller 2004 and Reyes 2003a, 2003b. On the broader processes of new Mexican settlement in the South and the Midwest, see Hernández-León and Zuñiga 2005.

15. See Ehrenreich 2003 and Jamison 2005 for detailed accounts.

16. Janice Fine, personal communication, June 2005.

17. See <http://www.ndlon.org>, accessed January 23, 2008.

18. See <http://www.pacun.org>, accessed February 25, 2008; and Stephen 2004 2007.

19. The campaign of the ex-bracero workers for the restitution of government wage deductions is one of the few others that is both cross-border and binational.

20. For a case study of the relationship between migration and women's empowerment in a home community in Oaxaca, see Maldonado and Artía Rodríguez 2004.

21. Such roles are also very common in Oaxacan towns and villages, many of which retain high expectations in terms of their expatriate citizens' duties and responsibilities (Kearney and Besserer 2004; Mutersbaugh 2002; Robles 2004).

22. The government's role in inducing the formation of HTA federations recalls and parallels Mexico's experience with the National Solidarity Program, which induced the formation of only nominally participatory committees from above in some areas, while in others bolstering representative social organizations that took advantage of this partial opening to consolidate.

23. This section draws on Fox 2006.

24. For one of the few studies to directly address the relationship between coffee and migration, see Lewis and Runsten 2005.

25. For a heterodox critique of the conventional discussion of remittances and development, see the Declaración de Cuernavaca from the Migration and Development Network, *Enlaces News* 10 (August 2005), <http://www.enlacesamerica.org>, accessed January 23, 2008. It is worth noting that researchers have yet to agree on the validity of the official data, the share of the Mexican population that receives remittances, or the degree to which they reach the poorest communities.

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Women and Social Movements in Transborder Communities

Mexico and the United States

LYNN STEPHEN

It is impossible to talk about women and social movements in Latin America without considering the role of both internal and cross-border migration. In this chapter I focus on the ways that women from rural transborder migrant and immigrant communities are using bifocal vision—seeing what is going on close to home as well as in their communities spread out over borders—to guide their participation in local, regional, and cross-border organizations. This exploration requires that we reconceptualize our ideas about communities in terms of how they function in relation to multiple sites, in relation to multiple nation-states and legal statuses, and in terms of the networks and resources they have to work with in the context of significant levels of transborder movement. I will highlight the case of women from the Mixtec region of Oaxaca and their organizing efforts there and in the state of Oregon.

The two organizations I focus on are the Women's Regional Council of the Indigenous Front of Binational Organizations (FIOB) of Juxtahuaca, Oaxaca, Mexico and Women Fighting for Progress (MLP) based in Woodburn, Oregon. The Women's Regional Council integrates women's groups from Mixtec and Triqui communities in Juxtahuaca who have organized themselves around income-generating projects. The council is part of the FIOB, which has a total of more than twenty thousand members and offices in Juxtahuaca, Tijuana, Los Angeles, and Fresno (California).

The MLP brings together Mixtec, Zapotec, Triqui, Mam, and Kanjibal indigenous immigrants living in Oregon along with some mestiza immigrant workers in an organization focused on income-generating activities and in developing technical, business, and leadership skills among its

Rural Social Movements in Latin America

Organizing for Sustainable Livelihoods

EDITED BY

CARMEN DIANA DEERE AND FREDERICK S. ROYCE

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