

Jonathan Fox and Gaspar Rivera-Salgado*

⇒ Building Migrant Civil Society: Indigenous Mexicans in the US¹

1. Introduction

Mexican migrants in the United States are still widely assumed to be an ethnically homogeneous population. Historically, most Mexican migrants did share many common characteristics, coming primarily from rural communities in the central-western part of the country. Over the last two decades, however, the Mexican migrant population has diversified dramatically, both socially and geographically. Their regions of origin now include a more diverse range of states, as well as large cities. For example, the Los Angeles area now has federations of hometown associations from at least 13 different Mexican states, and 11 state-wide federations are active in Chicago. Regions of migrant settlement in the United States are becoming similarly diverse – researchers recently found license plates from 37 different U.S. states just along the main road of San Juan Mixtepec, Oaxaca.²

The Mexican migrant population is not only growing more geographically diverse, it is also increasingly multi-ethnic. Some Mexican indigenous peoples, such as the Purépechas of Michoacán and Oaxaca's Mixtecs and Zapotecs, have many decades of experience with migration to the United States, dating back to the Bracero Program (1942-1964). This binational government program also recruited Nahuas, as revealed in the recent account of a rare (successful) strike by *braceros* in the late 1950s. As one participant reported, “We spoke in *mexicano* [Nahuatl] and they didn't understand us, that's how we were able to organize even though it was prohibited and we fought for fair pay. We did the strike in *mexicano*.”³

* Jonathan Fox is Professor and former Chair of the Latin American and Latino Studies Department at the University of California, Santa Cruz. His books include: *Demanding Accountability: Civil Society Claims to the World Bank Inspection Panel* (co-edited, 2003); *Cross-Border Dialogues: US-Mexico Social Movement Networking* (co-edited, 2002); *Decentralization and Rural Development in Mexico: Community Participation in Oaxaca's Municipal Funds Program* (co-authored, 1996).

Gaspar Rivera Salgado is Asesor Binacional del Frente Indígena Oaxaqueño Binacional/Oaxacan Indigenous Binational Front (FIOB) and Director of Transnational Communities Program, New Americans Immigration Museum and Learning Center. He is co-editor of *Indigenous Mexican Migrants in the United States with Jonathan Fox*, 2004).

¹ This paper is based on Fox/Rivera-Salgado (2004a).

² See López/Runsten (2004). Besserer documented that this municipality received remittances from 171 locations scattered across 7 states in Mexico and 15 states in the United States (2003: 67-69).

³ “Hablábamos en *mexicano* y no nos entendían, de esa manera pudimos organizarnos aunque estaba prohibido y luchamos por un pago justo. Hicimos la huelga en *mexicano*.” Testimony of Florencio Martínez Hernández, from Tlaxcala, cited in Ramírez Cuevas (2003: 11).

Historically, however, most indigenous migrants went to large cities or agribusiness jobs within Mexico. Until the 1980s, their relative share of the overall cross-border migrant population was relatively low. More recently, however, the indigenous proportion of the Mexican migrant population has grown significantly, most notably in both urban and rural California and increasingly in Texas, Florida, New York, and Oregon. As the public debate within Mexico continues over the nation's multi-ethnic character and indigenous rights, the growing presence of indigenous migrants has also raised this issue within Mexican migrant communities in the United States.

To provide context, it is important to keep in mind that in absolute terms, Mexico's national indigenous population is the largest in the hemisphere, with approximately one quarter of the Indians of the Americas as a whole.⁴ In relative terms, at least one tenth of the Mexican population is of indigenous origin, according to the government's relatively strict criterion of indigenous language use (though the most recent national census allows for ethnic self-identification for the first time). In other words, despite five centuries of pressure to assimilate, at least one in ten Mexicans report to their national census that an indigenous language is spoken in their household.⁵

The future projected by Mexico's dominant economic model has little place for indigenous peoples, other than their joining the urban and agro-export workforce. The widespread perception of systematic social exclusion by the dominant economic model was summed up by Subcomandante Marcos' widely-repeated prediction that NAFTA would be "a death sentence" for Mexico's indigenous people. Since NAFTA, the government's rural development strategy has been based on the assumption that a large proportion of the rural poor would either move to the cities or to the United States. Indeed, Mexico City's population of urban Indians is officially estimated by the city government at half a million in the Federal District and one million in the greater metropolitan area.⁶ The long-term crisis of the peasant economy has been exacerbated in recent years by the persistent collapse of the international price of coffee, which is the principal cash crop for many of Mexico's indigenous farmers.⁷

Both in the United States and Mexico, indigenous migrants find themselves excluded both as migrants and as indigenous people – economically, socially and politically. Economically, they work in ethnically segmented labor markets that relegate them to the bottom rungs. In the social sphere, in addition to the well-known set of obstacles that confront cross-border migrants, especially those without documentation, they also face entrenched racist attitudes and discrimination, from other Mexicans as well as from the

⁴ In terms of the relative sizes of national indigenous populations in Latin America, Mexico is followed by Peru, Guatemala, Bolivia and Ecuador. See Dossier "Les Indiens aux portes du pouvoir. 44 Millions d'Indiens en Amerique Latine" in *Courrier International*, No. 668, August 21, 2003.

⁵ The National Indigenous Institute's most recent estimates of the national indigenous population range between 10.3 to 12.7 million people, depending on the criteria. See Serrano Carreto/Embriz Osorio/Fernández Ham (2003) for details on the 2000 census.

⁶ This is the official estimate of the Government of the Federal District (Pablo Yanes, Dirección de Atención a los Pueblos Indígenas, personal communication, June 24, 2003). For details on ethnicity and the most recent census in the Mexico City context, see Yanes Rizo (2002). For background on the Assembly of Indian Migrants of Mexico City, see <www.indigenasdf.org.mx>.

⁷ For background on coffee and corn, see Aranda (2003); Nadal (2000) and Oxfam (2002, 2003). On the impact of NAFTA on Mexico-US migration, see Cornelius (2002).

dominant society in the United States. In the civic-political arena, most cross-border migrants are excluded from full citizenship rights in either country. On the one hand, the U.S. government resists proposals to regularize the status of millions of undocumented workers. On the other hand, by 2003 the Mexican government had yet to comply either with the 1996 constitutional reform that recognized migrants' right to vote or with the 1996 San Andrés Accords on Indigenous Rights and Culture that had promised a modest form of indigenous autonomy.⁸ In addition, lack of effective absentee ballot provisions also prevent many migrants within Mexico from being able to vote. In the less tangible arena of the dominant national political culture, both indigenous peoples and migrants have long been seen, especially by Mexico City political elites, as less than full citizens. This powerful historical inheritance only began to change substantially in the mid-1990s. Like other migrants, indigenous Mexicans bring with them a wide range of experiences with collective action for community development, social justice and political democratization, and these repertoires influence their decisions about who to work with and how to build their own organizations in the United States.

2. Reframing Mexican migration as a multi-ethnic process

The pasts and the futures of the Mexican nation can be seen in the faces of the tens of thousands of indigenous people who each year set out on their voyages to the north, as well as the many others who decide to settle in countless communities within the United States. To study indigenous Mexican migrants in the United States today requires a binational lens, taking into account basic changes in the way Mexican society is understood as the 21st century begins. On the one hand, Mexico is increasingly recognized as a nation of migrants, a society whose fate is intimately linked with the economy and culture of the United States. On the other hand, the experiences specific to indigenous migrants require understanding Mexico as a multi-ethnic society in which basic questions of indigenous rights are finally on the national agenda, but remain fundamentally unresolved.

Historically, different indigenous peoples in Mexico have pursued different migration paths. Note, for example, that there is no direct correlation between the relative size of the populations of Mexico's different indigenous peoples and their respective tendencies to migrate to the United States. Until recently Mexico's two largest indigenous ethnolinguistic groups, the Nahuatl and the Maya, did not tend to cross the border in large numbers. Even within the state of Oaxaca, there is no direct correlation between the lowest-income municipalities and those with the most out-migration. In contrast to the predominance of Oaxacans among migrants to Baja California and the United States, the groups with the largest presence in Mexico City are of Nahuatl and Hñahñu (Otomí) origin, representing approximately 27% and 17% respectively.⁹ However, as the economic

⁸ For background on the right to vote issue, see Martínez Saldaña/Ross (2002). On the San Andrés Accords, see Hernández Navarro/Vera Herrera (1998).

⁹ In Mexico City, Mixtecos and Zapotecos come in third and fourth place, with 14% and 13.5% respectively, followed by Mazahuas, with 4.2% (Dirección de Atención a los Pueblos Indígenas 2001: 2).

and social dynamics that encourage migration spread more deeply throughout the Mexican countryside, indigenous peoples who did not have a history of migration outside of their regions are coming to the United States. For example, Mayans from Yucatán and Chiapas are now working in California and Texas; both Hñahñus and Nahuas from central Mexico are coming to the Midwest and Texas; Mixtecs from Puebla are settling in the New York area, followed more recently by Hñahñus from neighboring Veracruz; and Mixtecs and Nahuas are also coming to the United States from Guerrero, a Mexican state whose migration patterns have received relatively little research attention so far.¹⁰ As newer arrivals, coming with different traditions of community organization back home, these indigenous migrants' experiences differ from those of the Oaxacans. To improve our understanding of these new groups and their regions of origin and settlement, researchers will need to broaden the exchange between those who study indigenous communities and those who study migration, as well as between those who focus on domestic vs. international Mexican migration.

It is important to recognize that only some migrants have formed satellite communities in the United States, which is a key precondition for organizing along hometown lines, and even fewer have formed ethnic, regional or pan-ethnic organizations. Some indigenous Mexican migrants organize as members of ethnically mixed groups, whether along religious lines, as in the case of New York's Asociación Tepeyac, or along class lines, as in the case of Oregon's Treeplanters and Farmworkers of the Northwest, or Florida's Coalition of Immokalee Workers.¹¹ Indigenous migrant organizations also vary in terms of their degree of interest in collaboration with other kinds of groups, whether organizations of other kinds of migrants or U.S.-focused civic and social organizations. Indigenous migrants tend to organize themselves differently from *mestizo* Mexicans. In Los Angeles, for example, the Oaxacan federation works closely both with other Mexican organizations, as well as with trade unions and civil rights organizations, on issues such as access to drivers' licenses for undocumented workers.

Because of cultural, political and language differences between different groups of Mexicans, any efforts to communicate or build coalitions among these groups must take these differences into account. Advocacy efforts by U.S. groups on behalf of indigenous migrants face major challenges in terms of building trust and cross-cultural communication.¹² Various incipient cross-sectoral coalition-building efforts have not coalesced, leading to some skepticism as well as suggesting the need for greater mutual understanding to facilitate the process of finding the common ground needed to sustain balanced multicultural coalitions.

¹⁰ See, for example, Burke (2004); García Ortega (2002) and Schmidt/Crummett (2004).

¹¹ On the Tepeyac Association, see Rivera Sánchez (2004). On the PCUN (Pioneros y Campesinos Unidos del Noroeste), see Stephen (2004). On the Coalition of Immokalee Workers (CIW), see Bove (2003). Their struggle is especially notable because they actually managed to convict violent labor contractors on criminal charges of slavery. CIW works to empower low-wage workers in Southwest Florida and its members include Latinos, Haitians, and indigenous migrants from Mexico and Guatemala.

¹² For one precedent-setting case, see Paul Johnston's study of the community-based coalition defense against a 2001 roundup of Triqui men by the Immigration and Naturalization Service (Johnston 2004).

3. The experience of Oaxacan indigenous migration

Historically, most indigenous migrants to the United States were temporary, but the increased risk and cost of crossing the border without documents has led more to settle in the U.S. for the long-term. This is possible in part because their networks have matured over the past two decades. In addition to the cross-border workers in the Bracero Program, the first travels of Oaxacan villagers in search of employment began back in the 1930s, taking them to Oaxaca City, the sugar cane fields of Veracruz and later to the growing neighborhoods on the periphery of Mexico City, in Ciudad Nezahualcóyotl. Then labor contractors supplying the agribusinesses of the northwestern state of Sinaloa began recruiting, especially in the Mixteca region. These south-to-north flows later extended to the Valley of San Quintín in Northern Baja California. By the early 1980s, indigenous migrants reached further north, to California, Oregon and Washington.¹³

Early migrants were able to regularize their status and settle down in the United States following the 1986 immigration policy reform (IRCA). Within California, Oaxacans have long-established communities in the San Joaquin Valley, the Los Angeles metropolitan area and northern San Diego county. Within a relatively short time, these indigenous migrants went from invisibility to outsiders to attracting media attention and becoming a subject of both academic research and progressive activism.

Oaxacan migration took off by the end of the 1980s, with the extensive incorporation of Zapotecs in urban services and Mixtecs in farm labor – often in the most difficult and lowest-paid jobs.¹⁴ The IRCA reforms permitted millions of earlier migrants to regularize their status, allowing them to move up in the labor force, leaving open bottom rungs in the social ladder for newer indigenous migrants. Employers of low-wage workers have been more than willing to continue their long tradition of encouraging ethnic segmentation in labor markets. Indigenous workers also draw on ethnic difference to position themselves in the labor market. The proportion of predominantly indigenous migrants from southern Mexico in California farm labor almost doubled during the 1990s, from 6.1% (1993-1996) to 10.9% (1997-2000), leading to projections that indigenous migrants will represent more than 20% of California farmworkers by 2010.¹⁵

The parallel process of long-term settlement and geographic concentration has led to the creation of a “critical mass” of indigenous Oaxacans, especially in California. This has permitted the emergence of distinctive forms of social organization and cultural expression, especially among Mixtecs and Zapotecs. Their collective initiatives draw on ancestral cultural legacies to build new branches of their home communities. Their public expressions range from building civic-political organizations, the public celebration of religious holidays, basketball tournaments involving dozens of teams, and the regular mass celebration of traditional Oaxacan music and dance festivals, such as the *Guelaguetza* festivals and the formation of village-based bands, some of which return to play

¹³ For recent reviews of the literature on Oaxacan migration, see Fox/Rivera-Salgado (2004a) and Varese/Escárcega (2004). See also Guidi (1992); Klaver (1997) and Hulshof (1991), among others.

¹⁴ On the disparities in wages and working conditions between *mestizo* and indigenous migrants, see Schlosser (1995) and Zabin et al. (1993).

¹⁵ See Kissam (2003: 1).

in their hometown *fiestas*, as in the case of the Zapotec community of Zoogocho. Their cultural and political projects also include the revival of traditional weaving workshops, the publication of binational newspapers, indigenous and Spanish language radio programs, efforts to provide translation services and preserve indigenous languages, as well as the emergence of writers and visual artists with cross-border sensibilities.

4. Ethnic identity and collective action

Our understanding of the relationship between Mexican migration, collective action and the formation of ethnic identities has been greatly influenced by the research of Michael Kearney, who pioneered the study of Mixtec migration to the United States.¹⁶ His work provides detailed descriptions of the transformative impact of migration on the ethnic identities of indigenous Oaxacan workers. The process of racist discrimination and exclusion, both in northern Mexico and the United States – though not completely new for Oaxacan indigenous people – was sharpened in the agricultural fields of Sinaloa, Baja California and California’s San Joaquin Valley. Vividly represented by the widespread use of derogatory terms such as “oaxaquitas” and “indios sucios”, this process of racialization led to a new ethnic identity for many migrants. Not only does this experience intensify their sense of ethnic difference, Kearney goes further to suggest that the process of migration to a new social context generates a new, broader ethnic identity that brings together migrants from communities that would not necessarily have shared identities back in Oaxaca: “This experience of discrimination outside of Oaxaca was a major stimulus for indigenous migrants to appropriate the labels – *mixteco*, *zapoteco*, and *indígena* – that formerly had only been used by linguists, anthropologists, and government officials, and to put them to work in organizing along ethnic lines.”¹⁷

The newly-appropriated ethnic identities that emerged in the process of migration created new opportunities for collective action that were expressed through the emergence of a diverse array of civic and political organizations in the United States and northern Mexico. These organizations differed from those in the communities of origin, where cross-community solidarity was often blocked by persistent legacies of inter-village conflict. Kearney argues that workers from communities that might have been rivals in Oaxaca came to develop a sense of solidarity through their shared experiences of class and racial oppression as migrants. The resulting pan-Mixteco, pan-Zapoteco, and later pan-indigenous Oaxacan identities made possible broader pan-ethnic organizing among migrants for the first time. This interpretation has been confirmed by recent develop-

¹⁶ See Nagengast/Kearney (1990); Kearney (1988, 2001), among others. They coined the term “Oaxacalifornia” to refer to the deterritorialized community from which new forms of organization and political expression emerged.

¹⁷ Personal communication, Michael Kearney, July 25, 2003. Ethnic slurs used against indigenous migrants from Guerrero include: “nacos, güancos, huarachudos, montañeros, piojosos, indios pata rajada, calzonudos, comaleros, sombreroudos, sin razón, paisanitos, indio bajado a tamborazos de la Montaña, Metlatontos (de Metlatónoc), Tlapanacos (Tlapanecos), son de Tlapa de me conformo (Tlapa de Comonfort), tu no savi, tu sí savi (tu no sabes tu sí sabes), mixtequillo, indiorante (ignorante), paisa, mixerco (mixteco terco)” (cited in García Leyva 2003).

ments within the Oaxacan Indigenous Binational Front, which include a collaborative agreement with a newly organized Purépecha community in Madera, California.

In spite of the adverse conditions that indigenous migrants encounter, they have nevertheless managed to create a wide range of civic, social and political organizations that are notable for the diversity of their strategies and goals. Within this indigenous migrant civil society, two main kinds of organizations stand out. The first includes the large number of hometown associations, known as *organizaciones de pueblo*, *clubes de oriundos*, or *clubes sociales comunitarios*. They are made up of migrants from specific communities who come together mainly to support their community of origin, most notably by raising funds for local public works, such as road or bridge-building, water systems, electrification, or public spaces such as town squares, sports fields, schools, churches or community halls.

The second main kind of indigenous migrant association includes coalition-building projects that draw on hometown, “translocal” ties, but bring people together from a broader, regional ethno-geographic sphere. The most consolidated coalitions include the Oaxaca Indigenous Binational Front (Frente Indígena Oaxaqueño Binacional, FIOB); the Oaxacan Regional Organization (Organización Regional de Oaxaca, ORO); the Union of Mountain Communities of Oaxaca, (Unión de Comunidades Serranas de Oaxaca, UCSO); the Coalition of Indigenous Communities and Organizations of Oaxaca (Coalición de Organizaciones y Comunidades Indígenas de Oaxaca, COCIO); the International Indigenous Network of Oaxaca (Red Internacional Indígena de Oaxaca, RIIO) and the recently-formed Oaxacan Federation of Indigenous Communities and Organizations of California (Federación Oaxaqueña de Comunidades y Organizaciones Indígenas de California, FOCOICA), whose affiliates include most Oaxacan organizations in California.

Both kinds of organization have created spaces within which indigenous migrants can engage in collective action and cultural sustenance. These organizations open up spaces within which social identities are created and recreated through the institutionalization of collective practices in which migrants are recognized as Oaxacans and as indigenous people. That is, these diverse collective practices generate discourses that recognize their specific cultural, social and political identities. The real and imagined space in which they develop these practices is called *Oaxacalifornia* – a transnationalized space in which these migrants bring together their lives in California with their communities of origin more than 2,500 miles away.

Despite the wide variety in the political backgrounds of indigenous migrants, they all emphasize public activities and mobilizations that reaffirm their collective identities as indigenous peoples. As a consequence, the migrant organizations’ wide range of public cultural events nourishes the multicultural experience of its citizens. The *Guelaguetza* festivals of music and dance are among the most important Oaxacan cultural events, and at least four of them are now celebrated annually in California. “Guelaguetza” is a Zapotec word that refers to reciprocity, or mutual aid, but its meaning now refers to dance and musical exchanges in the context of a broader pan-ethnic Oaxacan indigenous identity. Public religious celebrations have also emerged much more recently among indigenous migrants in California.

Sports competitions are also important public events for the Oaxacans. Basketball is more popular than soccer, and one of the most important tournaments is the Los Angeles “Juárez Cup”, organized by the Union of Mountain Communities of Oaxaca each March

for the past six years. Approximately 65 teams participate, representing more than 40 Oaxacan communities (Quiñones 2001). In many Oaxacan villages, basketball courts are central public spaces. Historically, they were often among the few paved surfaces and therefore filled many village needs, ranging from keeping coffee clean while drying to protecting community dances from mud or dust. Some Mixtecs and Zapotecs in California also play "Mixtec Ball", a pre-columbian game (García 2003b).

The use of alternative media also plays a central role in the process of building migrant civil society. Notably, the biweekly *El Oaxaqueño Newspaper*, "the voice of Oaxacans in the U.S.", is one of the few professional newspapers of any kind with a binational circulation. The newspaper was launched by a successful Zapotec migrant entrepreneur, Fernando López Mateos (a native of Matatlán), and has published more than 117 issues since its founding in 1999. The content of the newspaper is developed binationally, the graphic design is done in Oaxaca, and then it is sent back to Los Angeles for printing. Their press run of 35,000 copies is distributed throughout California and other migrant communities in the United States, as well as in the state of Oaxaca itself. Reports range from local village conflicts back home and the campaign against the proposal to build a MacDonald's on the main square in Oaxaca City, to the binational activities of hometown associations and California-focused coalition-building for the rights to drivers' licenses and against cutbacks in health services.

Oaxaca indigenous migrants are also using radio and electronic media in the U.S. For example Filemón López, a native of the Mixtec community of San Juan Mixtepec, has for the last six years anchored *La Hora Mixteca*, a bilingual (Mixtec-Spanish) weekly program broadcast on the Radio Bilingüe network. This radio network was founded by Hugo Morales, another Oaxacan migrant from the Mixteca region (Magagnini 2002).

The effort to sustain the use of indigenous languages has become a collective activity, both as part of the political struggle for rights and as an effort for cultural survival. Indigenous migrants who do not speak Spanish well experience intense language discrimination on an everyday basis at the workplace, as well as in their interactions with legal, educational and health institutions. Longstanding Mexican cultural prejudices, symbolized by the use of the term "dialect" to describe languages, are widespread in immigrant communities in the United States. In at least two well-known cases in Oregon, indigenous language speakers were incarcerated for years because they did not speak Spanish or English. One is now a trilingual community organizer.

The situation began to change in the 1990s. California Rural Legal Assistance set a precedent by hiring the first Mixteco language-speaking outreach worker in 1993. Migrant organizations have also had to respond to the need to create their own interpreting services in Mixteco, Zapoteco and Triqui, to help people dealing with criminal charges and trying to access health care and other public services. The interpreting service created by the Binational Center for Indigenous Oaxacan Development (Centro Binacional para el Desarrollo Indígena Oaxaqueño, CBDIO) works throughout California, as well as in other states. The Madera School District has hired a Mixtec community outreach worker to be able to communicate with hundreds of parents who send their children to the public schools of this farming community in the heart of California's Central Valley. The Oaxaca-based Academy of the Mixtec Language recently began carrying out workshops in California's Central Valley to teach the writing of the Mixtec language (Stanley 2003b). At the same time, the Mexican government's adult education agency,

which is already active in 18 U.S. states, recently launched a new outreach project specifically for indigenous migrants. These initiatives have been reinforced by the use of creative new CD-Rom teaching materials in English and Spanish that provide accessible introductions to many dimensions of Mixtec history and culture, from analysis of little-known codices to contemporary issues of land and identity (Bakewell/Hamann 2001).

Migrant organizations face a huge challenge with the coming of age of the second generation. With the long-term settlement of thousands of families, the numbers of children born in the United States are growing, posing the challenge of the loss of indigenous languages. In some cases, migrant youth overcome their adverse circumstances and learn to be trilingual, becoming critical resources for the migrant community. The FIOB (Frente Indígena Oaxaqueño Binacional), for example, has employed several trilingual organizers in strategic positions, encouraging leadership development. Nevertheless, these cases are the exception. More often, second-generation indigenous youth are not unlike other migrant groups, with low levels of retention of fluency in their parents' first language.

Gender roles are also changing the terms of community membership. Some migrant women experience changes in the division of labor when they begin to earn wages. In the less isolated new areas of settlement, they are exposed to different customs and institutions, and sometimes enter into contact with U.S.-based social actors that promote gender equality. Note, for example, Líderes Campesinas' campaign to make domestic violence a public issue for the first time in many small towns of rural California – challenging the widely held view that such violence is strictly a private matter and that it cannot be changed.¹⁸ Women are also taking on public leadership roles in mixed gender migrant organizations in the United States (Martínez Saldaña 2004; Maceda et al. 2003). At the same time, migration from many indigenous communities of origin remains primarily male, increasing the workload for women who remain, while sometimes increasing their access to the local public sphere. In some communities of origin, women are participating more in assemblies, creating their own organizations and fulfilling their husbands' community obligations (in a context in which local citizenship is often still explicitly reserved for men).¹⁹ This increased public role for women is often in the name of their absent spouse, so it could be considered a form of "indirect citizenship".

This nascent process in which migrants are creating their own public spaces and membership organizations is built on the foundation of what are increasingly referred to as "transnational communities", a concept that refers to groups of migrants whose daily lives, work and social relationships extend across national borders (Bada 2003; Besserer 2003; Fitzgerald 2000 and 2004; Fletcher/Margold 2003; Goldring 2002; Smith 2003). The existence of transnational communities is necessary but not sufficient to be able to speak of an emerging migrant civil society, which also involves the construction of public spaces and representative social and civic organizations.

¹⁸ Líderes Campesinas is a California-based women's membership organization that is *mestiza*-led but includes indigenous migrant women as well. It is the first organization in this country founded by and for farmworker women, and is assisting nascent organizations in other states, including Arizona, Iowa, Oregon, Texas, and Washington.

¹⁹ See Maldonado/Artia (2004); París Pombo (2003); Robles (2004); Velasco Ortiz (2002) and Velásquez (2004).

5. Transnational communities and alternative approaches to citizenship

To describe cases where migrant collective action has transformed the public sphere in the U.S., some analysts use the concept of “cultural citizenship”. This term “names a range of social practices which, taken together, claim and establish a distinct social space for Latinos in this country” and serves as “a vehicle to better understand community formation [...] It involves the right to retain difference, while also attaining membership in society” (Flores/Benmayor 1997: 1-2). This process may or may not be linked to membership in a territory-based community, either in the home country or the U.S. Instead it may be driven by other kinds of shared collective identities, such as racialized and gendered class identities as Latina or Latino workers. The idea of cultural citizenship is complementary to but quite distinct from the notion of transnational community, which both focuses on a specific kind of collective identity and emphasizes sustained *b*inational community membership.

Research also has to speak to a third way of conceptualizing migrants as social actors, which is the process of constructing a *de facto* form of “translocal community citizenship”. This term refers to the process through which indigenous migrants are becoming active members both of their communities of settlement and their communities of origin.²⁰ Like the idea of transnational community, translocal community citizenship refers to the cross-border extension of the boundaries of an existing social sphere, but the term “citizenship” differs from “community” in at least two ways. First, it involves much more precise criteria for determining membership rights and obligations. Second, it refers explicitly to membership in a public sphere. The idea of “translocal community citizenship” therefore involves much more explicit boundaries of membership in the public affairs of a community that is geographically dispersed or, in Kearney’s terms, “deterritorialized”.

Like cultural citizenship, the term “community citizenship” refers to a socially constructed sense of membership, often built through collective action, but it differs in at least three ways. First, community “citizenship” incorporates the term that is actually used by the social actors themselves to name their experience of membership. In indigenous communities throughout rural Mexico, a member in good standing – one who fulfills specific obligations and therefore can exercise specific rights – is called a “citizen” of that community.²¹ In contrast, it is not clear whether the idea of cultural citizenship has been appropriated by those it refers to. Second, the idea of translocal community specifies the public space within which membership is exercised, whereas “cultural citizenship” is deliberately open-ended as to the arena of inclusion (local, regional or national? territorial or sectoral?). Third, the concept of cultural citizenship focuses, quite appropriately given its goals, on the contested process of negotiating new terms of incorporation into U.S. society, in contrast to the emphasis, embedded in the idea of

²⁰ In some cases this process could be called “dual community citizenship”, but since many migrant communities are “multi-local”, or “multi-sited”, it is more inclusive to use a more open-ended term.

²¹ Note that this use of the term “citizen” for full membership in local communities predates the widespread usage of the term by national and international civil society organizations. Its use appears to be widespread within indigenous Mexico.

translocal community citizenship, on the challenge of sustaining binational membership in a cross-border community.

The concept of translocal community citizenship has its own limits as well. It does not capture the broader, rights-based perspective that transcends membership in specific territory-based (or deterritorialized) communities, such as the broad-based migrant movement for Mexican voting rights abroad, or the FIOB's emphasis on pan-ethnic collective identities and indigenous and human rights. These collective identities are shared beyond specific communities. The idea of translocal is also limited insofar as it does not capture the frequently multi-level process of engagement between migrant membership organizations and the Mexican state at national and state as well as local levels.

These different concepts for describing migrants as social actors are all complementary and reflect important dimensions of that process, each one refers to social processes of migrant identity and organization that may overlap but are distinct, both in theory and in practice. At the same time, they do not capture the full range of migrant collective identities. The broader idea of "migrant civil society" provides an umbrella concept for describing diverse patterns of collective action.

The collective and individual practices that are beginning to constitute a specifically indigenous migrant civil society shows us a positive side of what would otherwise be an unrelentingly devastating process for Mexico's indigenous communities – their abrupt insertion into globalized capitalism through international migration in search of wage labor. In spite of their dispersion throughout different points along the migrant path, at least some indigenous communities manage to sustain the social and cultural networks that give them cohesion and continuity. In some cases, the migratory experience has both broadened and transformed collective ethnic identities. This open-ended process serves as a reference point for rethinking what it means to be indigenous in the 21st century. Notably, "long-distance membership" in home communities, as well as the construction of new kinds of organizations not based on ties to the land raises questions about the classic close association between land, territory and indigenous identity.

To illustrate the potential for indigenous migrant civil society coalition-building experiences, consider the two recent initiatives in the domain of symbolic politics. The historic memory of Benito Juárez continues to resonate powerfully among Oaxacan migrant communities. As a result, migrant organizations took initiatives that raised statues in his honor in prominent public places, on the 197th anniversary of his birth, in March 2003. Independently, both the FOCOICA (Federación Oaxaqueña de Comunidades y Organizaciones Indígenas de California) in Los Angeles (Lynwood) and the FIOB in Fresno launched campaigns to build the broad coalitions necessary to build and install the statues – coalitions that involved policymakers in both countries as well as organized sectors of U.S. society. In the Lynwood case, the FOCOICA first persuaded the Governor of Oaxaca to donate the statue. They then persuaded the mayor of the city of Lynwood (a migrant born in the state of Michoacán), to authorize its placement, and convinced a Korean migrant businessman to donate a location in his shopping center (including funding the pedestal). The FOCOICA also gained the support of the Council of Federations in Los Angeles, which represents Mexican migrant federations from fourteen different states.²² In Fresno,

²² "Oaxaqueños reivindican principios juaristas", in *El Oaxaqueño*, March 29, 2003.

the FIOB followed a similar strategy, gaining support from the governor of Oaxaca, local elected officials, businesses and public interest groups to inaugurate a statue of Juárez, right next to the statue in honor of the Bracero workers. As County Supervisor Juan Arámbula put it, the statue was in an especially appropriate location “because it is between two symbols of justice, the State Court on one side, and the Federal Court on the other [under construction]” (Martínez 2003). Juárez’s most famous phrase bound his legacy to the principles of self-determination: “between nations as between individuals, respect for the rights of others means peace”.²³ This message, inscribed on the statues, gave them an unforeseen but powerful added meaning in the midst of the U.S. war in Iraq. Indeed, just two weeks before the inaugural ceremony in Fresno’s main square, the FIOB’s leadership released a communiqué addressed to the presidents of both the U.S. and Mexico entitled “No to the United States’ unilateral and hegemonic war!”²⁴

Benito Juárez is a symbol not only of pan-Oaxacan unity, but of a more pluralistic approach to Mexican migrant identity as well. It turns out that Juárez himself was once an indigenous migrant worker when in exile in the U.S. during the European invasion (Martínez Saldaña 2004). The installation of the statues was only possible because of the multi-sectoral and cross-border coalitions that Oaxacan migrant organizations in the United States have built over more than a decade. The statues’ incorporation into the public landscapes of Los Angeles and Fresno also symbolizes the coming of age of a new phase of Mexican migration, one in which indigenous migrants are taking their place in the collectively imagined Mexico outside of Mexico. To sum up, indigenous Mexican migrants’ organizational initiatives and rich collective cultural practices open a window on their efforts to build new lives in the United States while remaining who they are and remembering where they come from.

Bibliography

- Aranda, Josefina (2003): “Peasant Farmers in the Global Economy: The State Coalition of Coffee Producers of Oaxaca”. In: Wise, Timothy/Salazar, Hilda/Carlsen, Laura (eds): *Confronting Globalization: Economic Integration and Popular Resistance in Mexico*. West Hartford, Conn: Kumarian, pp. 149-170.
- Bada, Xochitl (2003): “Mexican Hometown Associations”. In: *Citizen Action in the Americas*, 5, <www.americaspolicy.org> (26.01.05).
- Bakewell, Lize/Hamann, Byron (2001): *Mesolore: Exploring Mesoamerican Culture*. Providence: Brown University/Prolarti at <<http://www.mesolore.com>> (26.01.05).
- Besserer, Federico (2003): *Contesting Community: Cultural Struggles of a Mixtec Transnational Community*. Ph.D. dissertation, Stanford University, Anthropology Department.
- Bowe, John (2003): “Nobodies: Slavery in Agricultural Industries of South Florida”. In: *The New Yorker*, 79, April 21, <http://www.rfkmemorial.org/human_rights/2003_CIW/2003_New_Yorker_Article_on_CIW_4-03.pdf> (26.01.05).
- Burke, Garance (2004): “Yucatecos and Chiapanecos in San Francisco: Mayan Immigrants Form New Communities”. In: Fox, Jonathan/Rivera-Salgado, Gaspar (eds.): *Indigenous Mexican*

²³ “Entre las naciones como entre los individuos, el respeto al derecho ajeno es la paz” (Martínez 2003).

²⁴ “¡No a la guerra unilateral y hegemónica de Estados Unidos!”, dated March 13, 2003 and posted at <<http://www.laneta.apc.org/fiob/guerra.html>>.

- Migrants in the United States*. La Jolla: University of California, San Diego; Center for Comparative Immigration Studies/Center for US-Mexican Studies, pp. 343-354.
- Cornelius, Wayne (2002): "Impacts of NAFTA on Mexico-U.S. Migration". In: Chambers, Edward/Smith, Peter H. (eds.): *NAFTA in the New Millenium*. La Jolla: University of California, San Diego, Center for US-Mexican Studies and University of Alberta Press, pp. 287-300.
- Dirección de Atención a los Pueblos Indígenas del Distrito Federal (2001): "Situación de Pueblos Indígenas Originarios y Poblaciones Indígenas Radicadas en el Distrito Federal: Elementos para un Diagnóstico". In: <http://www.equidad.df.gob.mx/indigenas/diagnostico_situac_indigena.htm> (05.01.05).
- FIOB (2003): "Comunicado: Frente Indígena Oaxaqueño Binacional, Coordinación Estatal Baja California, Asamblea Estatal", March 2.
- Fitzgerald, David (2000): *Negotiating Extra-Territorial Citizenship: Mexican Migration and the Transnational Politics of Community*. University of California, San Diego, Center for Comparative Immigration Studies.
- (2004): "Beyond 'Transnationalism': Mexican Hometown Politics at an American Labor Union". In: *Ethnic and Racial Studies*, 27, 2, pp. 228-247.
- Fletcher, Peri/Margold, Jane (2003): "Transnational Communities". In: *Rural Mexico Research Review*, 1, in <http://www.reap.ucdavis.edu/rural_review.html> (26.01.05).
- Flores, William V./Benmayor, Rina (1997): "Constructing Cultural Citizenship". In: Flores, William V./Benmayor, Rina (eds.): *Latino Cultural Citizenship: Claiming Identity, Space, and Rights*. Boston: Beacon Press, pp. 1-23.
- Fox, Jonathan/Rivera-Salgado, Gaspar (2004a): "Building Civil Society Among Indigenous Migrants". In: Fox, Jonathan/Rivera-Salgado, Gaspar (eds.), pp. 1-65.
- (eds.) (2004b): *Indigenous Mexican Migrants in the United States*. La Jolla: University of California, San Diego; Center for Comparative Immigration Studies/Center for US-Mexican Studies.
- García, Martín Alejandro (2003a): "Guelaguetza en Los Angeles". In: *El Oaxaqueño*, April 26.
- (2003b): "La pelota mixteca: una tradición milenaria". In: *El Oaxaqueño*, May 24.
- García Leyva, Jaime (2003): "Por los caminos del sur indígena". In: *Ojarasca (La Jornada)*, 79, November.
- García Ortega, Martha (2002): *Nómadas, viajeros y migrantes: la comunidad sin límites de la región Nahua del Alto Balsas, Guerrero*. Masters Thesis, Escuela Nacional de Antropología e Historia.
- Goldring, Luis (2002): "The Mexican State and Transmigrant Organizations: Negotiating the Boundaries of Membership and Participation". In: *Latin American Research Review* 37, 3, pp. 55-99.
- Guidi, Marta (1992): *Estigma y prestigio: la tradición de migrar en San Juan Mixtepec (Oaxaca/Mexico)* (Mundus Reihe Ethnologie 55). Bonn: Holos Verlag.
- Hernández Navarro, Luis/Vera Herrera, Ramón (eds.) (1998): *Acuerdos de San Andrés*. Mexico D.F.: Ediciones Era.
- Hulshof, Marije (1991): *Zapotec Moves: Networks and Remittances of U.S.-Bound Migrants from Oaxaca, Mexico*. (Nederlandse Geografische Studies 128). Amsterdam: Koninklijk Nederlands Aardrijkskundig Genootschap.
- Johnston, Paul (2004): "The Blossoming of Transnational Citizenship: A California Town Defends Indigenous Immigrants". In: Fox, Jonathan/Rivera-Salgado, Gaspar (eds.): *Indigenous Mexican Migrants in the United States*. La Jolla: University of California, San Diego; Center for Comparative Immigration Studies/Center for US-Mexican Studies, pp. 385-400.
- Kearney, Michael (1988): "Mixtec Political Consciousness: From Passive to Active Resistance". In: Nugent, Daniel (ed.): *Rural Revolt in Mexico and U.S. Intervention*, Center for U.S.-Mexican Studies Monograph Series, University of California, San Diego, pp. 113-124.

- (2001): “Struggle and Difference: The Jujitsu of Transnational Indigenous Resistance and Domination”. In: Holland, D./Lave, J. (eds.): *History in Person: Enduring Struggles and Identities in Practice*. Santa Fe, NM: School of American and Research Press, pp. 247-280.
- (2002): “Transnational Migration from Oaxaca, the Agrarian Question and the Politics of Indigenous Peoples”. In: *Oesterreichische Zeitschrift für Geschichtswissenschaften*, 13, 4, pp. 7-21.
- Kissam, Edward (2003): “Trends in the Ethnic Composition of the California Farm Labor Force, Memo to Agricultural Worker Health Initiative Policy Advisory Group”. Unpublished document, July 1.
- Klaver, Jeanine (1997): *From the Land of the Sun to the City of Los Angeles: The Migration Process of Zapotec Indians from Oaxaca, Mexico to Los Angeles, California*. (Netherlands Geographical Studies, 228). Utrecht/Amsterdam: Dutch Geographical Society.
- López, Felipe/Runsten, David (2004): “Mixtecs and Zapotecs Working in California: Rural and Urban Experiences”. In: Fox, Jonathan/Rivera-Salgado, Gaspar (eds.): *Indigenous Mexican Migrants in the United States*. La Jolla: University of California, San Diego; Center for Comparative Immigration Studies/Center for US-Mexican Studies, pp. 249-278.
- Maceda, Oralia et al. (2003): *Immigrant Women: A Road to the Future/Mujeres inmigrantes: Camino al futuro*. Fresno: Pan-Valley Institute/American Friends Service Committee.
- Magagnini, Stephen (2002): “Radio Gives Mixtecs Their Own Voice. ‘La Hora Mixteca’ Reaches Out Across California”. In: *Sacramento Bee*, October 20 <http://www.radiobilingue.org/archive/02_10_20_radiogivesmixtecs.htm> (26.01.05).
- Maldonado, Centolia/Artia, Patricia (2004): “‘Now We Are Awake’: Women’s Political Participation in the Oaxacan Indigenous Binational Front”. In: Fox, Jonathan/Rivera-Salgado, Gaspar (eds.): *Indigenous Mexican Migrants in the United States*. La Jolla: University of California, San Diego; Center for Comparative Immigration Studies/Center for US-Mexican Studies, pp. 495-510.
- Martínez, Nayamin (2003): “El Benemérito de las Américas habita en el corazón de Fresno”. In: *El Tequilo*, March-April, <<http://www.fiob.org/eltequilo/teqmarz03/benemerito.html>> (26.01.05).
- Martínez Saldaña, Jesús (2004): “Building the Future: The FIOB and Civic Participation of Mexican Immigrants in Fresno, California”. In: Fox, Jonathan/Rivera-Salgado, Gaspar (eds.): *Indigenous Mexican Migrants in the United States*. La Jolla: University of California, San Diego; Center for Comparative Immigration Studies/Center for US-Mexican Studies, pp. 125-144.
- Martínez Saldaña, Jesús/Ross, Raúl (2002): “Suffrage for Mexicans Residing Abroad”. In: Brooks, David/Fox, Jonathan (eds.): *Cross-Border Dialogues: U.S.-Mexico Social Movement Networking*. La Jolla: University of California, San Diego, Center for U.S.-Mexican Studies, pp. 275-292.
- Nadal, Alejandro 2000: *The Environmental and Social Impacts of Economic Liberalization on Corn Production in Mexico*. Oxford: Oxfam, Great Britain and World Wide Fund for Nature.
- Nagengast, Carole/Kearney, Michael (1990): “Mixtec Ethnicity: Social Identity, Political Consciousness and Political Activism”. In: *Latin American Research Review*, 25, 2, pp. 61-91.
- Oxfam (2002): *Mugged: Poverty in Your Coffee Cup*. In: <<http://www.maketradeair.com/en/index.php?file=16092002163229.htm&cat=3&subcat=4&select=1>> (26.01.05).
- (2003): “Dumping Without Borders: How US Agricultural Policies are Destroying the Livelihoods of Mexican Corn Farmers”. In: *Oxfam Briefing Paper*, 50, Oxfam-International, August, <http://www.maketradeair.com/assets/english/corn_dumping.pdf> (26.01.05).
- París Pombo, María Dolores (2003): “Género y etnicidad entre los migrantes triquis al Valle de Salinas, California”, presented at Seminario Permanente sobre Migración Internacional, Colegio de la Frontera Norte, Tijuana, July.

- Quiñones, Sam (2001): *True Tales from Another Mexico*. Albuquerque: University of New Mexico.
- Ramírez Cuevas, Jesús (2003): "Cuando los braceros se fueron de huelga en California". In: *Masiosare (La Jornada)*, 304, Oct. 19, p. 11.
- Rivera Sánchez, Liliana (2004): "Expressions of Identity and Belonging: Mexican Immigrants in New York". In: Fox, Jonathan/Rivera-Salgado, Gaspar (eds.): *Indigenous Mexican Migrants in the United States*. La Jolla: University of California, San Diego; Center for Comparative Immigration Studies/Center for US-Mexican Studies, pp. 417-446.
- Robles, Sergio (2004): "Migration and Return in the Sierra Juárez". In: Fox, Jonathan/Rivera-Salgado, Gaspar (eds.): *Indigenous Mexican Migrants in the United States*. La Jolla: University of California, San Diego; Center for Comparative Immigration Studies/Center for US-Mexican Studies, pp. 467-482.
- Schlosser, Eric (1995): "In the Strawberry Fields". In: *The Atlantic Monthly*, November, <<http://www.theatlantic.com/issues/95nov/strawber.htm>> (26.01.05).
- Schmidt Ella/Crummett, Maria (2004): "Heritage Re-Created: Hidalguenses in the United States and Mexico". In: Fox, Jonathan/Rivera-Salgado, Gaspar (eds.): *Indigenous Mexican Migrants in the United States*. La Jolla: University of California, San Diego; Center for Comparative Immigration Studies/Center for US-Mexican Studies, pp. 401-418.
- Serrano Carreto, Enrique/Embriz Osorio, Arnulfo/Fernández Ham, Patricia (eds.) (2003): *Indicadores Socioeconómicos de los Pueblos Indígenas, 2002*. Mexico D.F.: INI/PNUD/PNUD.
- Smith, Robert (2003): "Migrant Membership as an Instituted Process: Transnationalization, the State and the Extra-Territorial Conduct of Mexican Politics". In: *International Migration Review*, 37, 2, pp. 297-343.
- Stanley, Eduardo (2003a): "Homenaje a Juárez refleja el crecimiento oaxaqueño en California". In: *El Oaxaqueño*, March 29, p. 12.
- (2003b): "Mixtec Revival: Mexican Indigenous Language on the Rise". In: *Pacific News Service*, September 16, <<http://news.pacificnews.org/news/>> (26.01.05).
- Stephen, Lynn (2004): "Mixtec Farmworkers in Oregon: Linking Labor and Ethnicity through Farmworker Unions and Hometown Associations". In: Fox, Jonathan/Rivera-Salgado, Gaspar (eds.): *Indigenous Mexican Migrants in the United States*. La Jolla: University of California, San Diego; Center for Comparative Immigration Studies/Center for US-Mexican Studies, pp. 179-202.
- Varese, Stefano/Escárcega, Sylvia (eds.) (2004): *La Ruta Mixteca: El impacto etnopolítico de la migración transnacional en los pueblos indígenas de México*. México City: Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México.
- Velasco Ortiz, Laura (2002): *El regreso de la comunidad: Migración indígena y agentes étnicos (Los mixtecos en la frontera México-Estados Unidos)*. Mexico D.F.: El Colegio de Mexico/El Colegio de la Frontera Norte.
- Velásquez, María Cristina (2004): "Migrant Communities, Gender, and Political Power in Oaxaca". In: Fox, Jonathan/Rivera-Salgado, Gaspar (eds.): *Indigenous Mexican Migrants in the United States*. La Jolla: University of California, San Diego; Center for Comparative Immigration Studies/Center for US-Mexican Studies, pp. 483-494.
- Yanes Rizo, Pablo (2002): "Urbanización de los pueblos indígenas y la etnicización de la ciudad", presented at Seminario Permanente "Ciudad, Pueblos Indígenas y Etnicidad", July 9, <<http://www/equidad.df.gob.mx>> (26.01.05).
- Zabin, Carol et al. (1993): *Mixtec Migrants in California Agriculture: A New Cycle of Poverty*. Davis: California Institute of Rural Studies.