

# Social Capital And Democracy In Mexico: The Social Limits Of Political Change\*

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## *Abstract*

*It is widely held that Mexican civil society is a fundamental factor in the shift towards democracy in Latin America, in spite of its articulation from a structurally unequal society. The purpose of this article is to analyze that paradox through the concept of social capital. I illustrate the mal-distribution of this resource and the rules that regulate it under a segregationist mentality. This mentality affects quotidian relationships as much as the bonds of the social-political system, which underlines how Mexican society is a frame of unequal relationships characterized by a restricted flow of social capital that limits the quality of political change.*

## **Introduction**

Since the mid 1980s Mexico has been going through two slow, gradual, and negotiated processes of political change. First, Mexico has undergone reform, whose greatest results have been the control of inflation and public deficit as well as the inclusion of the country in diverse areas of free trade. Within this logic there also have been notable advances in the decentralization and innovation of public politics, especially visible in the fight against poverty. Many aspects of Mexican society truly function, such as the transformations of the bureaucratic

*\*This article is the result of line of investigation that I have followed for the last four years as well as of my participation in a variety of academic projects fueled by it. Due to that, the reader will notice the use of multiple references to sources and direct data. However, for reasons of space and argumentation, I must warn that I will not exploit any of them in a systematic way. I will limit myself to making reference to a general description of each of the instruments, the documents in which they have been worked out most systematically, and whenever possible to the web sites that interested readers can access directly.*

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system, increased access to justice, and fiscal and energy reforms have shown, Nonetheless, institutional change has been incapable of generating a climate of trust. Corruption, unemployment, lack of security, and poverty are still the first concerns of its citizens, which increases expectations of democracy.

Second, there is a gradual democratization process that has been impelled via the electorate. Effective party competition has disassembled the authoritarian political system that turned around the Institutional Revolutionary Party (PRI). Today, there is alternation, presidential limits, erosion of corporatism, regeneration of political spaces of deliberation, and openings of new channels for participation. There are also negative effects to the centrality of the electorate that translate into a dramatization of a permanent struggle between the political actors. Before the intermediate elections of 2003, where a record of absenteeism prevailed with 60% of voters not casting their votes, the country was already installed in the logic of the 2006 presidential election. This “conjuncturalization” caused a loss of negotiating capability, party conflicts, permanent scandals and erosion of the legitimacy of the political class, as well as a blockage of the very reform of the State whose fate passes through the retributions it can generate for each of the opponents.

Mexican state reform and its democratization process are at a standstill. In this critical conjuncture civil society’s etiquette takes renewed importance in a country where, traditionally, social mobilizations impel political transformations. Together with this historical lot, the state reform’s agenda as well as the theoretical recommendations about processes of democratic consolidation stem from the premise that participation in the public sphere relates positively with civil culture and the institutionalization of pluralist government mechanisms. This paper treats the role played by Mexican society in the construction of democracy. While it does not intend to prove or disprove such presuppositions, it does seek to problematize them with a certain amount of skepticism. Given the abundant academic, political and mediating protests about the intrinsically beneficial role of the social in the public sphere, I think it more usable to adopt a pessimistic perspective that highlights the social sphere’s limitations on the ability of a society, such as Mexico, to achieve change.

This pessimistic slant admits a fact that characterizes the whole of Latin-American countries, which is the presence of extensive “brown zones,” which are occupied by poor individuals incapable of exercising to the fullest their rights as citizens (O’Donnell, 1993). The reasons why such zones continue to exist are because of the poor performances of the market and the state. However, it is also because of the way in which the society itself organizes and finds expression in the public arena. To think through the contributions that Mexican society can make to the process of change, we cannot just conceptualize the country as a counterweight to the market and the state, but as a historically constructed space under deep ethnic and economic divisions that two centuries of independence and modernization have not been able to abolish. My question is: What type of

democracy can be built from a society with as much inequality as Mexico's?

To answer this question I make use of the concept of social capital because I believe that it offers a new perspective about inequality, and its relationship to democratic development, that starts with the social, as it adjusts to purposes of this work. The concept of social capital has two sources. The first, tied to Pierre Bourdieu, defines it as the totality of social relationships that a given individual is able to mobilize (Bourdieu and Wacquant 1995: 85), being a marginal term from within a wider theory of the social structure (Bourdieu 2003: 14). The second, more or less close to this "originating" proposition, treats social capital as a central resource for economic and political development through collective action. This work is framed by the second perspective that stems from current debates (see Kliksberg 2000). However, the first version must also be considered as it underlines a problematic condition of the social capital developmental camp: the autonomy that is generated from society itself beyond the economic and institutional systems with which it is connected.

Facing social capital, the concept of civil society, with its emphasis on autonomy, permits us to observe the ways in which collective action flows into the dynamics of governability and democratic change, such that social capital and civic community were confused with one another (Putman 1994). However, here we insist on the use of the concept as we consider that the ways in which society builds democracy are not circumscribed in a system of autonomic social organizations, but that it extends to all forms of social relations. The concept of social capital serves this perspective because it differentiates between informal social capital and the formal social capital that is effectively identified with associationism.

The answer to the question asked passes through the ways in which formal and informal capitals are expressed and how they relate to each other. The hypothesis that I want to illustrate is that the distribution of informal capital in Mexico is unequal because it is done through a set of rules founded on a segregationist mentality, a fact that is transferred to the modes of articulation of the formal social capital, or in other words, to the way in which society builds formal connections between its members and bridges with the political system. To develop this idea this work contains two parts. On the one hand, it treats the inequality in the distribution of informal social capital, while on the other it addresses the articulation of formal social capital.

### **Inequality In The Distribution Of Informal Social Capital**

Strong socioeconomic inequality is a constant in the history of Mexico. The famous work by Oscar Lewis, *The Children of Sanchez*, sums it up in a precise manner: "The thing is that there is no equality here. The contrast is so great, so marked, that he who is rich is truly rich, and he who is poor is poor in the

full meaning of the word” (Lewis 2001: 344). What does it mean to be poor “in the full meaning of the word?” Poverty in Mexico is a phenomenon that tends to be totalizing. Not only because more than half of the country’s population is categorized as poor, and extremely poor at that, but because the very act of being categorized as such implies a strong distinction-subordination with regard to the rest of individuals. Poverty includes a variety of dimensions that are tightly interrelated. Noted are the lack of economic, human, and cultural resources, as well as a limited exercise of rights and access to resources, and hence, to the assignation of unequal roles within the economic and institutional systems as well as to the unequal access and enjoyment of social relations. The latter is evident in the relationship between social capital and socioeconomic variables.

Social capital is an inexpensive resource for development because it is found in all of society and it can be reproduced with its very use (Ostrom and Anh 2003). Nevertheless, quantitative studies in Latin America demonstrate that the distribution of social capital is uneven, depending on income, but particularly depending on the education and ethnicity of the individual (Atria 2003: 587). In this section I illustrate this fact in three spheres: (1) the family, (2) friends and social relations, (3) neighbors and community. I show how behind the workings of these spaces there exists a segregationist mentality that determines the restricted course of social capital flow.

### **The Family**

The family is a central institution in the fabric of Mexican society, to the point that it can be thought of as an extensive net of consanguineous and political kinships. However, this institution is suffering great transformations, which is why this construction must be viewed with caution. For example, in a series of discussion groups that took place in Mexico City, the discourse of “family crisis” was presented repeatedly. On the other hand, today’s family evokes nostalgic feelings. 28% of those polled, when asked openly: “What have families today gained as compared to those of the past?” answered “nothing”, while 14.7% “did not know.” In spite of this, examples that the family remains a basic resource among Mexicans abound.

Social capital regards trust as one of its most defining variables. Beyond its problems with mediation, interpretation and comparison, in the usual scales from zero to ten used by the polls, the notion of family received results of above nine. We can add to this that those polled had a tendency to use the family unit to resolve a number of problems and meet many necessities, such as for borrowing funds or even to face “natural disasters.” The importance given to the family is such that in one of the groups cited above an older interviewee described his own culture in a way that in other latitudes would sound like a

critique: “[the Mexican is] very ingenious but very lazy and it is not his fault. Here the family would never let you die of hunger” (high, 50-70 years old). The dilemma is that the capacity of the family as protector and integrator depends upon the socio-economic placement of its members. To the question: “what place does your family hold in the achievement of your goals?” most of those interviewed placed it in the upper levels of importance. However, this tendency was much lower for the “un-schooled”, which includes 20.4% that were unable to answer the question (EMAS 2002; Corrochano 2003a).

Obviously, the poor do not expect the same level of efficacy from their families, probably also poor, that would be expected by a middle-class individual from a middle-class family. This was shown in a series of stories told about families in crises collected in different Mexican cities. While in most middle class families the main resource in the solution of the crisis is the same family, with the exception of those who reached out for private help (essentially psychologists), among the lower classes two phenomenon took place: (1) the impossibility of movement of resources, including familial ones; and (2) high diversification of resources incorporating the family in nets such as parishes, public institutions, friends, etc. Both answers serve to certify that among the poor the family appears to be a resource that cannot be mobilized or that is not enough in itself to resolve an internal crisis. Not only its efficacy but also how it inserts itself in broader social relations, are different according to the socio-economic situation of its members.

### **Friends and Social Relations**

In a megalopolis like Mexico City, or Monterrey or Tijuana, friendship is restricted to the sociability limits imposed by the modern life-style and the difficulties proper to the urban landscape. A participant of the aforementioned groups put it succinctly: “*I am Hector’s good friend because we go to the same gym together, but the day that one of us stops going will be the end of the friendship*” (high, 55-70 years old). In spite of this, *cuatismo* (“being good buddies”) remains a culturally assumed institution in Mexico and in theory it is generally accepted that relationships that have weak bonds are more important in the mobilization of resources than dense nets (Granovetter, 1973).

The importance of friends and relations is evident when one looks at a concrete problem such as a job-search, one of the most frequently mentioned dilemmas among Mexicans polled. In a context marked by impoverishment, the lack of employment, one of the most recurrent discursive lines of the discussion groups, underlined that studying is no longer enough of a resource for access to employment. What is interesting is that this shared diagnostic has very different solutions for those youths that belong to the upper and those of the lower classes. A youth with an upper-class background noted: “*independently of all the studies*

*I think that the world still functions through friendship*” (high, 18-25 years old), meaning that they make use of its usable social capital. Very differently, a youth from a lower-class background lives the search for employment as part of the shared injustices under which society operates: *“I think that [unemployment] only exists in some sectors. Right? Because, for example, those who have money, like it is said, they give some money under the table to the supervisor, or I don’t know, then they get the job”* (low, 18-25 years old). Social complaints built upon the differences between the rich and the poor are more marked when looking at a highly coveted and increasingly scarce good: *“Well, one tries to get a job, and because one is needy they try to give you whatever, and so, I don’t know, people are failing morally and economically”* (low, 55-70 years old).

The poor lack the resources that others have, including social capital; *“the people... are failing already.”* Hence, when asked what is the importance held by “social relations” with regard to the attainment of personal goals, education becomes a far stronger discriminatory factor than it is in the case of the family. Again 22.8% of those polled who were uneducated were unable to respond to the question “what place does your family hold in the achievement of your goals?” (EMAS 2002; Corrochano 2003a). The polls also show that as the level of education increases the chances of knowing people of better, the same, or lower socio-economic conditions also increase (ENCC 2003; Corrochano 2003b). In other words, there is a differentiated accumulation of social capital and a perception of more varied nets that reflects that the world of the poor is disconnected from the rest of society in many ways, and this disconnect is maintained by a segregationist mentality.

## **Neighborhoods and Community**

Despite the fact that the Mexican political system created a deep-rooted nationalism that is able to sustain a certain idea of unity among its citizens, the truth is that social fractures are evident, particularly when one looks at conflicts such as those over public security. In any Mexican city, in middle and middle to upper class zones barriers against delinquency are developed while in the lower strata one can observe a tangible fear of the streets as a space of insecurity and crime. In polls, the fear of being robbed is wide-spread, with poverty and unemployment being considered as the main causes of the lack of security for 12.3% and 36.1% of those polled (EMAS, 2002; Corrochano, 2004a). This implies not only that people recognize a connection between socio-economic mal-adjustments and crime, but also points to a stereo-typing of individuals to be feared under such delinquency potential: the poor and the lazy. The concern of society is evident in the space-but also in the discourse-of a divided community.

In scales measuring the notions held about “people richer than you” and “people poorer than you” from zero to ten, behavior barely changes with education when looking at trust in the “poorest”, but when we evaluate the “richest,” as the education level increases so does trust: 16.1% of those people on the scale polled who had no schooling give a zero against 5.9% of university students (ENCC 2003; Flores Et All, 2004). For the poor, the social duality is lived in terms of discrimination and conflict on the face of the “rich.” The poll “The Voice of the Poor” reflects that they, in 41.8% of the cases, believe that the “principal enemy of the people” is the rich; 84.05% noted that in Mexico there is discrimination against the poor and 70.7% believe themselves to be “second class citizens.” Following up data from this poll, those interviewed declared that they felt discriminated against due to their economic situation (51.1%), being indigenous (50.9%) or because of their lack of education (39.9%). The point I want to underline is that this sort of discrimination has a component that is purely social and that corresponds to a way of seeing the world as it is assumed by the poor and reproduced by the middle class.

Among the middle classes a segregation mentality manifests itself through qualitative techniques. As observed in the discussion groups, people believe that they possess distinctive tools that over-qualify them unlike others: *“all of us sitting around this table are able to talk with each other because we share certain educational parameters, as well as language... There are many people that cannot explain this”* (middle, 26-54 years old). In extreme cases discursive lines harden and even though they are not assumed by the group they are also not a voided. The poor is seen as an amoral being: *“it is incredible to see in populations in Oaxaca, or in the State of Mexico families like that, families in quotation marks, where the man lives with three wives...unable to distinguish what is and what is not normal”* (high, 18-25 years old). This mentality, and the implied differences about the distribution of informal social capital, translates to the field of civil society.

### **The Fragmentation Of Formal Social Capital**

Mexican civil society is inserted in processes that involve conflicts and fractures to the point that in these later years a new preoccupation has emerged about a burgeoning “un-civil society” (Whitehead, 1999). However, what stands out is the evolution towards a system of participation that is more and more autonomous and complex. In the 70s and 80s, participation in society was articulated by urban movements that operated underneath the dichotomist fracture popular-conservative. After the 90s, these developed into different citizen movements and NGOs that vindicate universal rights and involve solidarity (Olvera, 2003). In spite of the ability that the concept of civil society has to describe the conflicts and evolution of forms of organization in Mexican society,

we insist on the use of the notion of social capital.

The operative concept of civil society restricts the cases in which it presents itself to conditions of deliberation and following of norms. The notion of formal social capital is more flexible in that it refers to all forms of collective action, more or less structured and/or with precise objectives, without getting into the form and nature in which these are realized. Hence, we cannot presuppose a direct relation between the development of this social capital and good democratic fulfillment, particularly in contexts such as those in Latin America where, for example, political clientelism plays an important role in the development of participation (Durstun, 1999). However, what can indeed be observed is that the mal-distribution of formal social capital implies unequal relationships in front of the political system. We will see this in three areas: (1) associationism, (2) electoral clientelism, and (3) accountability. At the same time, we will see a reproduction of the segregationist mentality in the arena of formal social capital.

### **Associationism**

The traditional picture of the family, friends and neighborhood as nuclei of strong joint activity among Mexicans is complemented by the realization of facing a society that is highly participatory. After all, the authoritarian political regime fomented participation, albeit controlled, and the political transition has been marked by continued social mobilizations that cover the span from student movements to the electoral protests of the 1980s and the Zapatista guerilla war of the 1990s. In this section I cannot disprove such images given that I work with measurements of associationism that are often based on simple questions like: "Did you attend recently any meeting of the following organizations?" Nevertheless, we know that when we ask how much time was dedicated to such associations the answer is usually "little," and that concomitant with declarations that would suggest a potential participation there are others that would suggest a strong process towards a social closure, in other words, the abandonment of public space: 45.3% of those polled agree, or very much agree, with the statement: "as long as things go well in my home, I do not care what happens in politics" (ENCC 2003; Flores et al. 2004).

Besides needing to be prudent when we speak of participatory levels, not all modes of association demonstrate the same behavior in terms of the socio-economic placement of the individual. I have been able to observe two phenomenon through exercises done with polls: first, that the differentiating effect of education is strong only in associations that demand economic costs and certain entry requirements, such as sports organizations or trade unions (Corrochano 2003b); and second, that among those organizations that do not have entry requirements, we can distinguish between those that have reports of high social participation, such as religious groups and neighborhood societies,

from those that have equality but barely have declared members, such as political parties (Corrochano 2003a). In other words, against my planned hypothesis, there stands the presence of a wide field of social participation that is connected particularly to the church and the territory, in which social capital flows in an egalitarian manner. There also exists an environment of direct connection to the political system, while the parties are less used but still socially homogenous. However, behind this image there exists a fragmented participation where segregationist elements are reproduced.

Participation between poor sectors and the rest of society do not answer to the same interests or the same motivations. About the first the polls show that there are similar degrees of agreement according to income with phrases such as: “the government has to raise spending in social programs.” However there are very different behaviors as the following sentences show: “the poor should not have to pay for public services” and “taxes should be raised for the rich.” Here the numbers were 72.1% and 76.8% agree or very much agree amongst those who earn between nothing and minimum wage, against 48.2% and 48.9% amongst those who receive more than ten times the minimum wage per month (ENCC 2003). Coupled with this diversity of interest there exist differences in people’s reasons to participate.

After asking in a series of open questions why they participated or did not participate in certain activities, school appears to be a significant point of difference for groups with higher education and those without it. Among the first, attending PTA meetings and school activities are seen as responsibilities towards the education of their children, for the second as a way of social enjoyment and sociability (Flores et al. 2004). These differences of interest and motivation manifest themselves in the socio-political arena so that, even though they share the same space, the poor and the rest of individuals do not act in the same way or for the same reasons. This is evident in two contexts closely tied to the democratic process and state reform-clientelism and accountability.

### **Electoral Clientelism**

Among Mexicans, participation in political parties is reported as scarce yet egalitarian. Nevertheless, the roles of the poor and the middle class in politics are very different. This is evident in the phenomenon of electoral clientelism, the exchange of votes for favors that constitute such a substantial part of the politics of the poor in Latin America (Auyero 2001). In Mexico, under the slogan “purchase and coercion” of the vote, it is part of the appreciable limits of the democratizing change in such a way that for most of those polled it remains a generalized practice of political parties whose primary cause is, precisely, poverty (Corrochano 2004b). Again, as was the case with public security, this does not

serve only to localize an effective connection between clientelism and social mal-adjustments but it also allows society to view the poor as subjects who are incapable of participating in politics.

Despite this perception, among the poor there exists an accurate knowledge of democratic procedures and, because of this knowledge, clientelist practices lose legitimacy (Scheddler 2003). Nonetheless, through a series of semi-structured interviews we can test how those sectors with low income make the assumption that their economic shortages limit their access to and enjoyment of political spaces (even though, as the reader will be able to appreciate, the poor speaks of himself as an 'other'): "*Mainly in indigenous villages... they come and say, if you do not vote for this or that we'll take away Progressa, we'll take away everything... sadly they are poor, they lack communication*" (mason, 50 years old, Puebla). And in another interview "*well, many times they vote because they make them, there are few who are aware of the meaning of voting...they don't understand*" (primary school teacher, 32 years old, Tamazulapan, Oaxaca). This assumed incapacity ("*poor little things... they don't understand*") is part of a complex discourse of resistance and domination in which a segregation mentality transfers to the possibilities of linkage with the political system, resulting in a part of society that assimilates as second-class citizens.

The connection between the poor and public institutions functions through political intermediaries that are capable of transforming the right to vote into an immediate resource, as well as linking distinct groups of society with the political system. This rite of access to the political is not opposed to democratizing change. However, it assimilates and interprets it in such a way that the political role of the poor is reduced to spaces that are controlled and subordinated. An example of this complex process of adaptation, which does not mean the disappearance of clientism, I permit myself to reproduce the following public denunciation made by a mayor of a small rural town in Oaxaca, one of the poorest states of the country:

FACTS: ...a list of 78 persons is made under the pretext (sic) of procuring the grant of fertilizers from the branch in charge... we have been waiting for them since last week and since they did not show up now we do not have fertilizer... due to this I dare to denounce these facts because I believe I was used..." (Oaxaca de Juarez, Oaxaca, June 30, 2000).

The poor watch the new institutional framework and re-interpret it to fit their circumstances. In the above example, the issue is not denouncing an attempted fraud but rather pointing to a client pact that had not been fulfilled. The denouncer adopts an active role given a context of profound democratizing change, "*I dare denounce,*" but his role is reduced to his condition as client and not as citizen. In this manner, the discourse underlines the roles adopted by the poor in relationship of resistance-domination that places him in a position that lacks decision: "I was used." This assumption of marginality, which is part

and parcel of the logic of the poor as they relate to the political system, carries over to the way in which the middle class sees them as political subjects. This is evident in the dynamics of accountability and of linkages with local politics.

## Accountability

Differences in access to the political sphere between the poor and middle classes are reflected in polls through a battery of questions that refer to the capacity to mobilize resources to demand accountability from the authorities. Once again, it is the individuals with the most education who feel that they have means of protest against the political system, such as turning to communications media, their representatives, etc. Meanwhile, those less educated only report one notable form of making claims: marches and demonstrations (Corrochano 2002; Flores et al. 2004). Despite the scarcity of accountability in Mexico-63.7% of those interviewed answered “no” when asked, “In your community or neighborhood, has there ever been a meeting to demand an accounting of money for public works from the municipal presidency or the delegates?”-in the indices of associationism, participation linked to territory appears fundamental. However, it is precisely in local spaces where the class biases can be seen most clearly.

In my own research, the original goal of which was to analyze a municipal model of innovation in participative management (the case of Naucalpan de Juárez), the segregationist mentality under which social action was directed in the public space appeared almost natural (Corrochano 2003c). When it referred to a model of business management that was applied to a locality polarized between middle and popular classes (but with a very rooted middle class identity), I could see how the formal bodies of citizen participation were almost monopolized by the middle-class sector. More importantly, behind this effect is the segregationist mentality that we have seen throughout the text but this time as it applied to the effective bridges between society and government.

The middle class is again considered the bearer of attributes that provide it with a capacity that differentiates it from the poor, even considering the latter as “a public burden”: *“there is a marginal class, a popular class that is part of the people. Of course you cannot make them disappear. You have to bear the burden of governing them as well”* (president of the council on participation). In the most extreme cases they are seen as beings that lack morals: *“they are invaders that come from the [popular] metropolitan zone... These people are not used to working. They are used to soliciting, begging, shouting, as if they had a right instead of analyzing it... so tell me, what sort of values can they have in that zone? What sort of principles? How do you base your citizenship? Your love for your country?”* (president of association of neighbors). All societies have a criterion that differentiates hierarchically; nevertheless the degree to which these are expressed

amongst Mexicans feeds a social fracture ample enough to render impossible any construction of plural environments for the channeling of demands and for accountability. The issue is not that formal environments should regulate conflicts of interests, since that is already their objective, but that this function is voided as long as the other is negated as a legitimate equal towards a possible achievement of consensus. Hence, the persistence of differentiating channels for political access seems to be tied, not only to the pernicious effects of the market or deficiencies of the state, but to the way in which the society itself is articulated and understood.

## **Conclusion**

What type of democracy can be built in a society with as much inequality as Mexico's? As I have argued, the answer to this question is not optimistic. This is why, before answering, I think it necessary to start with two observations. First, being skeptical about the role that Mexican society can have in the democratizing process does not constitute a negation of those contributions made by certain groups and movements have made towards a political evolution of the country, nor does it mean the negation of impulses towards participation now or in the future. Second, that treating the case of Mexico as a clear example of the expression of segregationist discourses surrounding poverty can be applied, surely, to all Latin American countries, as well as to other more developed societies.

State reform and democratization in Mexico have a key supporting point in society. Without society, it is impossible to think through the configuration of pluralist institutions capable of resolving conflicts, channeling demands, and nourishing the efficacy of the state and the market. However, society cannot be thought of as the only and main ingredient of the process of change given its characteristics, which are unfavorable to the establishment of democratic formulas. Mexican society is characterized by an unequal flow of social capital. As has been shown, it becomes manifest in the lesser accumulation and efficacy of social capital for the poor, but also in the different ways in which they relate to the political. Both aspects are pierced through by the same discourse. In this way not only the interests and the motivations of the poor and those of the rest of society are different but also they take up roles through which they are negated as social subjects that can be politically efficient. This mentality is not confined to an evaluation of how the poor vote or what rights they are assigned through accountability, but it comes from a more profound matrix that situates them in a inferiority scale within the totality of the social scheme. It seems necessary, then, not only to problematize the ways that Mexican society can contribute to change, but to think through how, just as civil society serves as a counterweight to the state, civil society and the state can together counteract the maladjustments that internally characterize the society itself.

## Endnotes

<sup>1</sup>Although Pierre Bourdieu is thought of as the father of the concept of social capital, Francis Fukuyama opened up a new line of interpretation that cites Lyda Judson Hanifan as the original reference, excluding the French scholar from any mention.

<sup>2</sup>There were nine discussion groups, with a minimum of eight and a maximum of ten people each, who were selected according to age and social status in the Federal District and the metropolitan area (See Taracena et al 2002). The groups functioned under the direction of Elvia Taracena and were formed under the frame of the investigation coordinated by German Perez and the title: *State Reform and Social Malaise in Mexico*, FLACSO-CONACYT (2001-2002). With regards to the discourse on family crisis, the participants made statements such as: "I personally believe that the dynamics in my family are so individualistic" (middle, age 18-25); "[Television] has disintegrated families . . . and about the small families living better, it does not cease to be an economic reason" (high, age 50-70); "there is no justice in the family . . . just in marriage, how many marriages find themselves with children and beatings" (low, age 50-70).

<sup>3</sup>These data comes from the National Poll on Social Malaise (henceforth called by its Spanish acronym, EMAS 2002), which was a statistical instrument, both stratified and covering multiple stages that was applied to individual homes. The poll, in which 3,226 people were sampled, turned out representative results at the national level for the 18 to 80 year old Mexican population at large. Ricardo Aparicio designed the questionnaire within the frame of the investigation coordinated by German Perez under the title: *State Reform and Social Malaise in Mexico*, FLACSO-CONACYT (2001-2002). The firm Mitosfki was the business responsible for its start-up. There is already an earlier report on the results on this poll in Pérez et al. 2002. The final report is now undergoing its editing process. My preliminary conclusions about the behavior of social capital can be found in Corrochano, 2003a.

<sup>4</sup>This has been observed in EMAS 2002 as well as in the National Poll of Civic Compromise (hence forth by its Spanish acronym ENCC 2003). This last poll is also a statistical instrument, both stratified and covering multiple stages, that was applied to homes, and for which 4,960 fifteen years old teens and over 31 federative entities were interviewed. This poll was part of the investigation coordinated by Julia Flores titled: *The Nature of Civic Compromise*, IFE-IISUNAM-UDES0 (2003-2004). The results of this investigation can be consulted in Flores et al. (2004) and the database is available on the webpage of the Electoral Federal Institute: [www.deceyec.ife.org.mx/enc\\_cultura\\_civ.html-3k](http://www.deceyec.ife.org.mx/enc_cultura_civ.html-3k). The firm Mitofski was responsible for its start-up.

<sup>5</sup>In the polls cited here, as well as in others that I decided not to use here, such as the series of polls under ENCUP 2002-2003-2004, National Polls on Political Culture, conducted by the Secretary of Government (see [www.gobernacion.gob.mx](http://www.gobernacion.gob.mx)), it is demonstrable that answers to public dilemmas fall upon the state and mechanisms of the market (Corrochano 2002). However, the family is at the center for solutions of personal problems and it constitutes an important response to many other types of public dilemmas (Corrochano 2003a). I found the data about the use of the family, even in cases of natural disaster, in the poll *The Voice of the Poor*, which will be cited later. In it 36% of those polled gave this as their answer.

<sup>6</sup>This conclusion derives from 15 stories told by families in the states of Oaxaca, the Federal District, Chihuahua and Yucatan, where families in crises from different socio-economic strata were selected and were given three individual interviews (mother and/or others) and a group session with the three people interviewed. This work was done under the coordination of Patricia Safa (2002) and under the frame of the investigation directed by German Perez with the title: *State Reform and Social Malaise in Mexico*, FLACSO-CONACYT (2001-2002). Particularly, I have worked with this material in Corrochano (2003a).

<sup>7</sup>Looking at different polls, one can see that the most widely perceived problems in the country are: lack of security, domestic economy, unemployment, and poverty.

<sup>6</sup>The groups that maintained this discourse express it in different ways: "I think that there has been uncertainty but not like we have right now. I think my father knew that he was going to be able to finish school. Surely he knew that he was going to have a job" (middle, 18-25 years old); "We do not have an assured future. We can not say, like our parents could, that if you study you will be better off or will have this or that" (high, 18-25 years old); "I feel like the experiences of unemployment have been rough . . . it has left me on guard in face of society" (middle, 25-54 years old); "Now they ask them for more education. I think that is why there is so much vagrancy. There are many that do not have enough education and that is when they are rejected" (low, 26-54 years old).

<sup>9</sup>It is curious to state that this fear of the common space, expressed throughout the groups, holds little consideration in other socio-economic levels, which speaks to the degree to which some parts of society have been able to protect themselves. The poor say: "*In the streets there are such things... drunkards, and as many thieves*" (low, 26-55 years old); "*...they even tried to beat me up. They took whatever chance I had and wanted to take my shoes*" (low, 17-25 years old); "*...yesterday precisely I went to the center to buy some materials for my work and they stole my wallet*" (low, 55-70 years old).

<sup>10</sup>My participation in the poll *The Voice of the Poor 2003*, started by the Secretary of Social Development, was limited to collaboration on the design of the questionnaire. However, it has been an instrument used by other scholars. It can be consulted on the institution's webpage, where the database is available: [www.sedesol.gob.mx/subsecretarias/prospectiva/voces/Lo\\_que\\_dicen\\_los\\_pobres.pdf](http://www.sedesol.gob.mx/subsecretarias/prospectiva/voces/Lo_que_dicen_los_pobres.pdf). This poll is a statistical instrument, both stratified and covering multiple stages, that included 3000 interviews with individuals older than 18 considered poor according to official criteria. Birma is the firm responsible for its start-up.

<sup>11</sup>These references belong to a series of fifty-five semi-structured interviews that were done in the year 2000 in several places throughout the country. They were coordinated by Rosalia Winocur within the frame of the investigation directed by German Perez and Hector Diaz-Santana, "*Studies On Citizens' Participation And The Conditions Of Free And Secret Vote In The Federal Elections Of 2000*," IFE/FLACSO 1999-2001. Extracts were selected from the working document Winocur (2001); however, Andreas Schedller carried out the detailed analysis of these materials (2003).

<sup>12</sup>This extract comes from the document about Oaxaca annexed to the report made by Civic Alliance about the elections of 2000. The documents of this organization can be consulted on their webpage: [www.alianzacivica.org](http://www.alianzacivica.org)

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