

Work and Citizenship in Mexico in the Era of Globalization
Travail et citoyenneté au Mexique à l'ère de la mondialisation
Trabajo y ciudadanía en Mexico en la era de la globalización

Arnulfo Arteaga García

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Article abstract

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Work and Citizenship in Mexico in the Era of Globalization

ARNULFO ARTEAGA GARCÍA

This article analyzes the case of Mexico in order to provide an overview of citizenship at work in the context of a dependent regional economy in a global era. It examines the framework of rights (civil, political and social) linked to the condition of the working class in a state-corporatist labour regulation model. It also explores the repercussions for workers, both at work and beyond the workplace, of current transitions from this model as well as looking at the redefinition of labour rights now taking place. Four different segments of the labour force are used to illustrate the nature of the historical and continuing deficit in the exercise of citizenship at work. This preliminary exploration leads to the identification of some paths for future research.

The objective of this article is to analyze the Mexican case in order to provide an initial overview of some of the characteristics of the redefinition of citizenship at work in the context of a dependent regional economy in a global era. This overview will allow me to explore some of the repercussions of regional economic integration for workers, both at work and beyond the workplace, and to explore, in the diverse spheres of the world of work, the redefinition of labour rights and their impact on the exercise of citizenship. The preliminary nature of this exploration will not allow me to develop all aspects of this intricate relationship but it should highlights some paths for future research.

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The starting point, as we shall explore in the first part of this article, is the role of work according to the classic definition of Thomas Humphrey Marshall (1950) and the way that it is used to analyze the successive accumulation of civil, political and social rights in the constitution of citizenship. Mann (1987) points to the need to analyze the specificities of different socio-economic formations, the processes of institutionalization of conflict between classes and the legitimization of inequality starting with the recognition of citizens' rights. In order to do so, Mann develops a typology to analyze societies characterized by a higher level of economic development. While this typology is very useful, it does not adequately capture the realities of dependent socio-economic formations such as Mexico.

The history of citizenship in Mexico, as will be developed in the second part of this article, must be understood in relation to the Mexican Revolution from 1910 to 1917 and, in particular, the adoption of the Constitution in 1917. This ushered in many social reforms, notably Article 123 concerning the regulation of labour relationships. Article 123 recognizes basic rights for male and female workers including minimum wage, protections for child labour and for women workers, and worker participation in enterprises and utilities, among others. The 1931 Federal Labour Work established the organization and control of worker mechanisms, which was further consolidated into a form of state corporatism and class compromise within the Mexican Revolutionary Party (PRM) during the period of President Lázaro Cárdenas del Río (1934-1940). This brief history underscores the importance of the concept of the *state-corporatist labour regulation model* (Bensusán, 2000). It represents the institutionalization of conflict and the creation of a framework of rights linked to the conditions of the working class in a corporatist regime.

It is argued here that in the context of the current economic and political transformations experienced by Mexico, we can see the signs of exhaustion and declining effectiveness of this state-corporatist approach. In the third part of this article, we will illustrate this through the exploration of four groups of workers, each being located in a specific segment of the economy which is integrally related to the continuing transformation of the Mexican economic and political model. The first group includes the most modern aspects of the organization of production and work, notably workers in modern manufacturing such as the automobile industry and workers of the Maquila industries too. The second group includes workers in the information and communications technologies. A third group is that of informal workers. They represent between 40 percent and 50 percent of the Mexican labour force and their activities range from manufacturing to trade and services, some of which are illegal, such as drugs and piracy.

This group is characterized by the absence of the basic rights and obligations generally associated with formal employment relationships. Instead, they have tended to develop their own “legality,” which can encompass organizational and political processes, sometimes visible and, at other times, invisible. The fourth group of workers examined is that of Mexican migrant workers, who are central to both the Mexican and the United States economies. This group is deprived of their rights in their home country and, more often than not, also deprived of rights at work when they are engaged in clandestine work in the US.

While not all aspects of these cases easily fit into an analysis of citizenship at work, thus limiting the possibility for a systematic demonstration, it is possible to explore some of the changes as they relate to rights at work and to broader citizenship rights. The analysis of these different groups provides a glimpse into the increasingly polarized world of labour in Mexico. It also offers an understanding of the historical deficit in the exercise of worker citizenship such as the freedom of association, the right to choose a union, the election of union representatives and many other rights related to the protection of trade unions at the level of the firm. Paradoxically, current economic and political transformations in Mexico mean that the previously dominant levers of state corporatism are losing their ability to act as an intermediary between the “top” (the State and employers) and the “bottom” (those that the intermediaries previously represented). It will be argued that it is possible to observe the emergence of some new forms of citizenship rights in each case. Moreover, since the segments of the labour force under investigation in this article are particularly sensitive to the processes of globalization and the economic integration of Mexico with the United States, they offer particular insights for an understanding of citizenship at work in a dependent regional economy in a global era. The conclusions are necessarily provisional but in as much as each of the cases examined invites a focus on rights in the workplace and their repercussions on the wider scope of citizenship they do point to an agenda for further research.

WORK AS A VECTOR OF CITIZENSHIP?

Classic Readings: From Alfred to T. H. Marshall

T. H. Marshall (1950), in his classic work, *Citizenship and Social Class*, makes ample reference to *The Future of the Working Classes* (1873), written by his predecessor Alfred Marshall. Alfred Marshall was not so much concerned with the theme of citizenship as with the role of work and its effects on the working class beyond its subordinate condition. Whereas

T. H. Marshall merely sought to confirm this reading, since at the time of writing of his classic analysis the contours of the Welfare State were already largely established in the most advanced industrial economies, Alfred Marshall, who was writing in the 1870s, was engaged in an exercise of optimistic premonition.

Whether there be valid ground for the opinion that the amelioration of the working classes has limits beyond which it cannot pass. The question [Alfred Marshall said] is not whether all men will ultimately be equal—that they certainly will not—but whether progress may not go on steadily, if slowly, till, by occupation at least, every man is a gentleman. I hold that it may, and that it will (cited in T. H. Marshall, 1950: 4).

Alfred Marshall sees in the improvement of the workers' conditions a dual effect: their recognition as workers, but also a process of dignifying their human condition.

They are steadily developing independence and a manly respect for themselves and, therefore, a courteous respect for others; they are steadily accepting the private and public duties of a citizen; steadily increasing their grasp of the truth that they are men, and not producing machines. They are steadily becoming gentleman (ibid., 5).

Even when wage earners have not yet been incorporated to the “virtuous circle” of extended capital reproduction, there was a sufficient material base to anticipate the scope of capitalist development from the productive forces “by showing that world resources and productivity might be expected to prove sufficient to provide the material bases needed to enable every man to be a gentleman” (ibid., 6). Following this argument, Alfred Marshall again takes up the role of work in this transformation into the status of “gentleman.” T. H. Marshall notes that

Marshall [Alfred] gives us an additional clue by suggesting that, when we say a man belongs to the working classes, *we are thinking of the effect that his work produces on him rather than the effect that he produces on his work . . .* The phrase was intended to catch the imagination, and to point to the general direction in which Marshall's [Alfred] thoughts were moving. And the direction was away from quantitative assessment of standards of living in terms of goods consumed and services enjoyed towards a qualitative assessment of life as a whole in terms of the essential elements in civilization or culture. (ibid., 7).

While Alfred Marshall did not identify the life of a *gentleman* with citizenship, T. H. Marshall draws on his predecessor's analysis to engage in a conceptual update: “We can, I think, without doing violence to Marshall's meaning, replace the word gentleman with the word civilized.” T. H. Marshall linked this condition to the possibility that each person demands his right to participate in the legacy of civilization as a full member of society, that is, as citizen (ibid., 8).

But T. H. Marshall acknowledges the contradictory character of the construction of the citizenship. In spite of the sustained and unsuspected increase of the rights clearly identified with the status of the citizen, this same process has been converted into the legitimization of inequality within capitalist society. "In other words, the inequality of the social class system may be acceptable provided the equality of citizenship is recognized. [He concludes that] citizenship has itself become, in certain respects, the architect of legitimate social inequality" (ibid., 9). Thus, we can observe the legitimacy of inequality and social differentiation through the free interplay of the laws of the market, but inequality and differentiation are diminished by State intervention in laws and the regulation of social actors.

T. H. Marshall (1950: 7) certainly understood the need for State intervention as he asked whether "basic equality can be created and preserved without invading the freedom of the competitive market?" The answer was an unequivocal "no" since, in his view, the modern system was "a socialist system", although he hastened to add that "the market still functions." He also questions "the effect of the marked shift of emphasis from duties to rights," querying whether this is "an inevitable feature of modern citizenship-inevitable and irreversible?" The historic irony of this classic reading, of course, is the reality of the systematic transgression of the rights of the working classes and the shift of that responsibility to the people who work (García and Lukes, 1998: 2). Without doubt, this suggests that the movement observed by T. H. Marshall is perhaps inevitable but it is also reversible.

The Workplace as Site for the Exercise of Citizenship

In the post-1945 period, the world witnessed the consolidation of a series of processes allowing workers, both in developed and underdeveloped or dependent countries, to emerge as actors with recognized rights in the civil, political and social spheres. These rights were the basis for the exercise of their citizenship at a societal level. Obviously, this is not a similar process in all countries and societies (Mann, 1987).

Of course, there is a link between the emergence of the Welfare State (predicated on a model of mass production and consumption) and the consolidation of rights associated with citizenship. While Marshall writes that civil rights emerged in the 18th century, political rights in the 19th century and social rights in the 20th century, he also affirms that social rights enable the full exercise of civil and political rights (Marques-Pereira and Rajchenberg, 1998: 9; Marshall, 1950: 14).

From a social standpoint, the massive influx of workers into the labour market and their incorporation into industrial firms characterized

by *Taylorist* and *Fordist* forms of work organization further shaped the arrival of the worker as a *social actor* at the point of production in the workplace. According to Castel (1997: 15), the *factory* is the initial “area of social cohesion” of the working class. Workers’ subordinate and salaried condition allowed the identification of interests and a relatively common vision of the world.

This acknowledgement is expressed in constitutional ordinances and specific labour legislation that constitute basic rights as persons and also social rights derived from the status of worker. Both promote access to full membership in society.

The emergence of the working class as a *political actor* originated in the struggle for the right to organize in the workplace. This political integration was apparent in local unions, industry federations, confederations and even international unions organizations; through which the expression of the power resources of the working class were as important outside of the factory as inside it.

In economic terms, the salary became the motor of post-war capitalist reproduction. The increase of basic wages through productivity growth, in addition to a range of mechanisms ensuring economic security and social protection and a policy of full employment, facilitated the access of the working class to mass consumption. The working class thus became a key *economic* actor in the capitalist expansion until the end of the 1970s. However, the economic groups that over the previous decades had been instrumental to the strengthening of the civil, political and social rights of the working class began to erode. This process was accompanied by the debilitation of the institutions, mechanisms and rights that had been central to the exercise of the working class citizenship.

Flexibility and neo-liberal politics eliminated the certainty of exercising citizenship as a *worker actor*. From the remains of the old institutions has emerged a group of agreements that aim to construct a new legality, as much as new elements that put into place the idea of a new citizenship. In this sense, work continues to be the reference point in the same way that it had been in the twentieth century, but now subject to quite different circumstances.

The catalogue of the new elements related to work and citizenship is extensive: new technologies affecting process, production, information and communication; modular production and forms of high-performance work systems; different forms of labour flexibility; subcontracting; forms of precarious work that are characteristic of the harshest stages of capitalist exploitation in earlier centuries (homework, child labour, the elimination of social guarantees, informality in violation of legal norms, criminal economic

activity; and massive economic migration. This panorama of new elements is not merely contextual because it affects the very means by which persons who work can express themselves as citizens in the global society.

THE STATE-CORPORATIST BASIS OF CITIZENSHIP IN THE MEXICAN WORKPLACE

The classic contribution of T. H. Marshall to explain the constitution of citizenship as an historical-political process is a necessary starting point, but it does not take account of the diversity of processes observed in different capitalist countries. Michael Mann (1987) has highlighted two particular limits to this classic analysis: its Anglo-centricity and its bias toward an evolutionary account. To overcome these limitations, he proposes a typology based on a comparative historical analysis of the strategies of institutionalization of class conflict in industrial societies. He identifies five such strategies: liberal, reformist, monarchical authoritarian, fascist and social authoritarian (Mann, 1987: 339). He therefore seeks to reconcile Marshall's account with the processes of institutionalization of class conflict in each socio-economic formation and thereby breaks with an evolutionary notion of citizenship as the gradual accumulation of rights. Mann's approach is especially useful for a country like Mexico in as much as it is important to look at how *class conflicts were institutionalized* at the end of the Mexican Revolution and their subsequent evolution in terms of labour rights.

Bensusán (2000: 61) offers an important analysis of the "the counter-insurreccional use of social reforms" associated with Article 123 "Of Labour and Social Forecast" of the Mexican Constitution of 1917¹ and the Federal Labour Law of 1931. She suggests that while these reforms reflected the aspirations of workers, they also explain the alliances on which the domination of the working classes were based. For Bensusán, the aspiration to legitimize the new constitutional order . . . and fulfill the promises offered during the armed fight of the Revolution complicated the future exercise of working class domination, conceding very early a level of

1. The Constitution contains "individual guarantees" of equality under the law—secular education, freedom of speech, of beliefs and of association, among others. Article 123 includes the mandate for both federal legislation and each state within the federation. Among them, it regulates: the eight-hour workday; protection for women and minors; minimum wage; profit-sharing for workers; overtime pay; provision of housing, schools, and infirmaries; protection against risk in the workplace; the right of association and the right to strike; the temporary suspension of labour as a protection for employers and the obligation to resolve conflicts between capital and labour in the Conciliation and Arbitration Meeting, which is a tripartite body (Political Constitution of the United States of Mexico, 1917).

wage-earner protection that was much higher than the limited development of productive forces and the state of Mexican capitalism could support. Since that time, leaders have had to choose between adhering to this labour regulation regime, seeking to repeal it, or finding a way “to make it flexible” without questioning the historic alliance with the working class and labour unions. These different options have given rise to a diversity of phases and differentiated forms of accommodation throughout Mexican history (*ibid.*, 32–33). This tension was institutionalized in the *model of Mexican labour regulation* as state corporatism.²

Despite the many aspects of the Mexican state which we could cover, our analysis must be limited to the model of labour regulation. This model was founded on an import substitution strategy of industrialization. In order to promote this strategy, the State and the capitalist class—the latter being strengthened by a highly protected industrial development—were in a position to share with union leaders and the growing segments of the work force from the most advanced industrial and service sectors the fruits of economic growth in terms of wages and social protection, job security and education.

In terms of the labour relations framework, “Mexican legislation contains rules that award guarantees to the workers but offer at the same time the opportunity of state control of the organizing process (registration of the unions, compulsory affiliation and limits on pluralism)” (*ibid.*, 248). As regards civil and political rights, while the intervention of the State certainly provided for and protected some of these rights, at the very same time and depending on the timing and level of confrontation, the State has also systematically transgressed other rights, particularly the freedom of association, of thought and of election. This might be labelled as historic deficits in the full exercise of basic citizenship rights in the world of work.

Another aspect of labour regulation, according to Bensusán (2000: 250), is the particular role of the jurisdictional and administrative

2. The 1930s gave rise to the consecration of state-corporatism in Mexico. The acting president, Lázaro Cárdenas del Río (1934–1940), put forward a nationalist project based on the tenets of the Mexican Revolution. In a confrontation with the management style of ex-president Plutarco Elías Calles, Cárdenas del Río organized and mobilized the popular sectors (including peasants and workers) as well as important segments of the army. This resulted in the creation of the Party of the Mexican Revolution (PRM), inside of which was the Confederation of Mexican Laborers (CTM). The State expressed the more general interest of the popular sector. “To be a member of a syndicate, of an *ejido*, of a corporation, of a military department . . . automatically converts them into participants of the PRM . . . which obliges them to develop their political activities *en masse*, sectorially and only within the party” (Hernández Chávez, 1979, cited in González Ibarra, 1988: 23).

organs (with predominance of tripartite mechanisms and dependence on Executive power) and the concentration of the political power in the Executive (in detriment to the legislative and judicial power) which guarantees the discretion typical of a state-corporatist model. This discretion is only feasible because of the participation of union leaders who ensure the control and management of working class demands. This also causes a distancing of the leaders from those they represent, so much so that it can even become irreversible in as much as the leaders are more likely to take on a role of “intermediation” as opposed to “representation.” In Mexico this characteristic was further accentuated because the union leaders were part of the dominant class within the Institutional Revolutionary Party (PRI) during the 1940 to 2000 period.

In the Mexican case, these functions of intermediation have been seen strongly limited in two ways: first, by the transition from a closed economic model with strong State control to an open economy where the State promotes the free play of market forces in the context of globalization (1982–2000); second, the end of the PRI’s control of Executive power has also had an impact on the capacity to serve as an intermediary, even though it continues to play a functional role in the control of the working classes.

THE EMERGENCE OF A NEW CITIZENSHIP AT WORK IN MEXICO?

“We are thinking of the effect that his work produces on him rather than the effect that he produces on his work.”
Alfred Marshall

The restructuring of the Mexican economy from the 1980s onwards has important consequences for the role of workers in Mexican society. The fundamental characteristic has been the gap between the need for job creation for a growing population and the capacity of a stagnant economic apparatus to meet that need. Based on growth projections of the Economically Active Population, 1.2 million people pay in, annually, the largest part of which cannot insert themselves into the formal economy.³

This gap between need for employment and capacity to respond to this demand directly affects the labour market to polarize conditions under which distinct *labour sectors* are integrated. Table 1 presents an overview of some of the sectors that have been most affected by the process of

3. National Employment Survey (1998–2001), www.stps.gob.mx.

regional economic integration and globalization. We will explore each of these segments of the workforce below.

TABLE 1
Characteristics of Different Segments of the Mexican Workforce
in the Global Era

<i>Labour Sectors</i>	<i>Creation</i>	<i>Working Conditions</i>	<i>Regional Location</i>	<i>Characteristic Sectors</i>
A) Modern Manufacturing	Growth of foreign investment to create exporting capacity; primarily under the maquila or exporting zone concept (for example, labour-intensive assembly) but also modernization of large traditional firms and, through outsourcing, of supplier firms	Unionized (within several types of unionism); application of labour rights; flexibilized contracts; downgrading of employment and working conditions	Metropolitan areas and northern region of the country	Automobile, electronics, textile and garment, food and manufacturing, in general
B) Information and Telecommunications Technologies	Foreign investment by the opening of financial, banking, and telecommunications sectors and the expansion of services in general	Minimization of labour rights; little union presence; wage, numerical, functional and legal flexibility	Mexico City's metropolitan area	Call centers, data process centres and other establishments using information and communications technologies
C) Informal Sector	Lack of opportunities in urban regions (absence of investment), generalized poverty but enrichment of corrupt leaders; degradation of public services	Precarious work, generally under the protection of "clientelist" or protective relations; no application of labour legislation; piracy or illegal economic activities	Metropolitan areas	Public transportation, commerce, several service and manufacturing industries
D) Migrant Labour	Lack of opportunities in urban and rural regions sparks movement of generally impoverished workers; little support from public services	Illegal work, notably in the informal sector in the US economy	USA	Various

Modern Manufacturing

The growing importance of foreign investment in manufacturing processes, particularly in the assembly segments—including the thousands of maquila plants—has generated a competitive platform for exports in key industries facing international competition, notably automobile assembly and auto parts, electronics and clothing. This is the successful face of the integration of Mexico into the United States (US) economy. But this dependency on the US market and the increasingly stronger presence of China as a destination for maquila investments have underscored the weaknesses of this sector in terms of investment and employment.

The liberalization of trade and the integration of these manufacturing sectors into the dynamics of the US economy, as well as the global strategies of the transnational businesses located in Mexico, have caused the transfer of leading edge technologies and of management models identified as hybrids of Japanese models or High-Performance Work Systems (HPWS). At the same time that these models have sparked the conversion of the Mexican economy into one of the principal exporters in the world, they also have revamped the managerial discourse, introducing new concepts and practices in large firms and unions, both inside and outside the factory (Arteaga García, 1998: 28-37).

The National Survey on Employment, Wages, Technology and Training (ENESTYC, 1992, 95, 99, 2001) chronicles important *changes in work organization* in the manufacturing sector in the context of regional economic integration. During the years covered by the survey, the percentage of establishments reporting changes in work organization has had sustained growth: from an increase of 13.9% in 1992 and 14.7% in 1995, to 30.2% in 1999 and 37% in 2001. These changes include just-in-time systems, job rotation such as multi-skilling, statistical process control, quality control circles, reduction in worker supervision, participation of workers in decision-making and formalization of procedures (ENESTYC, various years).

The largest proportion of workers in the export sector are located in the *maquila*, which is known for its poor working conditions despite operating in a context of high-performance work systems and high productivity. Employment in this sector grew from 583,000 workers in 1994 to 1.4 million in October of 2000, which was a peak in the history of this sector, representing an increase of 230 percent in less than six years. There then began a gradual, but sustained, decline of employment within the sector, which at its lowest point lost 300,000 jobs. Irrespective of the debate as to whether the *maquila* constitutes a separate model of industrialization (Carrillo and Hualde 1998; Carrillo and Lara 2004; Bendesky et al., 2003),

what does stand out is the extremely high utilization of the new forms of management and work organization. In general terms, we find these same type of changes carried out at the establishment level: just-in-time systems; job rotation (multi-skills, polyvalence); statistical control process; quality control circles; reduction in worker supervision; participation of workers in decision-making; and formalization of procedures). Ninety-five percent of the *maquiladora* establishments reported having carried out this type of modification in 2001 (ENESTYC, 2001, Maquila Industry Module), which is a rate of adoption three times greater than that observed in the non-maquila establishments.

At the macroeconomic level, exportations of the non-assembly manufacturing sector and the *maquiladoras* passed from less than one billion dollars at the beginning of the 1980s, to approximately 141 billion dollars during 2003 (www.banxico.org.mx). Of this total, the maquila sector, which includes 3,046 establishments, accounted for 55% of exports (ENESTYC, 2001).

Since the beginning of the 1980s various case studies (Arteaga García, 1993, 2003; Arteaga and Carrillo, 1988; Carrillo, 1990, Juárez Nuñez and Babson, 1999; García Gutiérrez, 1993; Covarrubias, Grijalva and Barrientos, 1993; Montiel, 1991; Sandoval Godoy, 2003; Reygadas, 2002) have reported on the strategies and repercussions of introducing these changes in the technology base, the geographic relocation and changes in work organization.

We present below a few testimonies of workers in high-export firms. Even though such a small selection cannot be in any way conclusive, they do highlight changes in the performance of employed personnel within the manufacturing sector, both within and outside labour circles, as they relate to the “new values” of quality, consensus and involvement as well as the rights and duties that accompany these values. The testimonies reflect how these new concepts and values permeate behaviour within the plant and how they are assimilated into daily family life, even affecting gender behaviour.

[The concepts] are very important, one gives them much more interest, because also they do not use them only to keep us quiet for a while, yes, they have many positive things, they are focused on your *way of life* (our emphasis) and you can apply them to your house and in your work, in all aspects. For me, for example, group work is one of the best things that the plant has . . . in [which] we see the concept of improvement continues as a *lifestyle, applicable on the job, in the family, and in the community where we live, a way of being that we learn and that we can inherit . . . the participation of each member of the quality control circle is voluntary. The motivation to participate in these groups is personal development that is achieved by knowing and dominating new techniques for problem-solving, this helps the team members to carry out*

their daily work, with greater ease inside and outside the plant (our emphasis) (Sandoval Godoy, 2003: 196).

Life outside the factory and family life are substantially modified by these new forms of participation in production, particularly as regards quality of life and the expectations generated by social environments.

The plant has given us many courses that have benefited us. Before entering the plant I did not know much about safety, and I would go about the housework without taking necessary safety measures to avoid accidents; today, yes, we take all precautions. *And also coexistence with the family, in other words, we all collaborate in a group. Not only the mother has to pick up, now me and my children are involved; each one tidies up their bedroom, we get together to do this or that* (our emphasis). For example, when I work in mechanics they help me [the children] . . . where before I would run them off and they did not learn anything, but no more, I notice that my wife is content that I am at Ford, because since I entered I help her more with the kids and the housework, we share the chores.

This alignment of values and attitudes is expressed in the fusion of workers' expectations with those of the company:

There is no excuse that justifies an accident . . . Stop already the lack of care! In a plant where more than 1000 people work, we are all responsible for the security of our co-workers; neglect, distraction, a joke is not an excuse for an accident. At GM SILAO the most important thing is the people. For that reason WE SHOULD TAKE CARE OF OURSELVES. (Carolina Montes de Oca, communication staff).

Competition is tough! . . . it is here where the effort to assemble vehicles with total quality will give us the competence award. IN EACH ONE OF US IS THE RESPONSIBILITY OF MAKING GM TRIUMPH, AND US, TOO! (Arteaga García, 1999: 17).

Even so, the perceptions of the workers are contradictory, particularly for the fact that they know, at least have *heard*, that in other areas the workers have more benefits. In this way they perceive a lack of congruence between the promises and the practices of high-performance work systems:

Supposedly there—because they have told us—the company-worker relationship is reciprocal. Here no! Here they want to introduce this philosophy to us; but they only want someone to respond to the company, but the company is not concerned with the worker; they do not copy the benefits that the Asians give to their workers (Sandoval Godoy, 2003: 226).

I have been assigned to positions where I can provide more quality, but I don't. Why should you give more if you don't receive more benefits or a higher salary? (Reygadas, 2002: 256)

The transfer of these forms of work management have occurred over a short period, something like two decades, especially if we think of the long

processes implied by incorporation of *new values, attitudes, knowledge and social skills*. The perceptions displayed point to a modification of referentials concerning the world of labour and its relation with the environment of working class life outside the factory.

In two particular industries—automobile and auto-parts—unions are more widely present. Their position in the restructuring of the State and the relocation and flexibilization of transnational firms has changed from being a docile actor to adopting more critical and proactive positions. After 60 years of atomization and organizational dispersion, some unions are therefore advancing despite the fact that the immense majority of unions remains at Mexican Workers Confederation (CTM). In the case of the *maquiladora* industry, even though the union protection of business interests remains an important reality, there also exist democratic union organizations that represent worker interests.

Workers in the Information Technology and Communication Sectors (TIC)⁴

The incorporation of Mexico into the use of TIC has brought about a new urban labour profile. In most industrialized countries, millions of people work in telework and call centres. In other nations, it takes the form of off-shore work. In either case, such work involves services that contribute to the value-added of business, generally corporations with global products. Although workers in these knowledge-based sectors are concerned with innovation, their work often resembles the industrial processes of mass production, with strict routines and poor salaries and conditions.

The economic restructuring in Mexico during the 1980s and 1990s reinforced the position of the service economy in Mexico City. The boom in financial and social services and the rapid expansion of the city into a metropolis integrating previously unconnected regions and cities contributed to an economic recovery during the 1990s.

The second half of the decade witnessed the rapid expansion of call centres, which are so typical of the information age. In Mexico City nearly five thousand workers are concentrated in two large centres (Micheli, 2004). One is Teckmarketing, a business created in 1996 by the leading firm Telephones of Mexico.⁵ The other centre is a subsidiary of the US business

4. This case is based on Micheli (forthcoming).

5. In the 1980s, Telmex, the public telephone company, held a monopoly in the industry. However, the pace of investment and modernization was inferior to the growth requirements of society and the economy. Moreover, the firm increasingly went into debt. In 1990–91 Telmex was privatized and much of it was acquired by the Carso Group. In 2005 Telmex was one of the largest telephone companies on the American continent and owns businesses in various countries.

Teletech⁶ created in Mexico in 1997. Both resulted from the deregulation of long distance telephone services⁷ which were a tremendous source of growth for these businesses. Between 1990 to 2000, long distance calls from Mexico increased 5.7 times, while national calls increased 4.2 times. Workers in these call centres are typically university students who spend from 3 to 4 hours a day in transit to and from their workplace and their place of study. Approximately half of these workers live in zones peripheral to the metropolitan area. Their average salaries fluctuate between 4 and 6 thousand pesos monthly (approximately between 300 and 440 US dollars). Work days are 8 hours and the work week is frequently six days. In an 8-hour work day, they have 20 minutes “free,” and this time off is monitored by the same technology that they use. Worker rights are practically non-existent. Only in Teckmarketing does a union exist; this union is part of the National Telephonists Syndicate of the Mexican Republic (SNTRM).

Even though precise data does not exist, it is believed that there are between 6,500 and 10,000 workstations and between twenty and thirty thousand telemarketing employees in Mexico City. These figures include call centres which do outsourced work and those that are fully integrated into a larger business. The labour data gathered is similar to evidence from other parts of the world.⁸ Telemarketing is an activity that allows flexible use of the work force, especially with university students who have acquired

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6. Teletech is located in 16 countries and has 30 call centers in the US and Canada. In Latin America, in addition to its call centre in Mexico City, it has another in Sao Paulo in Brazil.
 7. Long distance telephone businesses are especially important in the context of worker migration from Mexico to the United States. Local calls inside Mexico are charged by the call, while international calls are charged by time. As a limited illustration of the trend line, the time of calls to the US grew from 1.8 million to 2.25 million minutes between 1997 and 1998.
 8. “To enter the company what is asked of you is that you have a way with words. Then, following a campaign they can require some more specific information: for Telepadre (consultant for filing income taxes), for example, they ask for a career in business or economics. Even though older people are now also entering the workforce, middle-aged, unemployed people find that they have no other option but to accept whatever there is. There also exists a significant number of women. It certainly appears to be the type of work that corresponds to the profile of women, and that requires typical qualities associated with the female gender, such as kindness, a permanent smile, and skills in understanding, communication and affection . . . Women [are] those who make up the greatest proportion of interviewees, perhaps it is because we are also the most affected by the instability of the labour market? In the business, the training that is received is limited or nonexistent. Previously, before receiving the contract they spent a week in an unpaid training course [now, by agreement, these courses have been reduced to three days], after which they can contract you or not. The training constitutes free work: whatever you learn, you teach it to your coworkers,” http://www.sindominio.net/karakola/precarias_tele.htm [consulted January 15, 2004].

communications skills. The labour expectations of the telemarketing workers are seasonally short, and the high turnover rate (an average of 25% annually) is very functional for this standard use of work.

The characteristics of this segment of the labour market suggest at least three scenarios with regard to labour rights. One possibility is that inasmuch as they are university students, these workers do not consider this employment as part of their long-term professional development. We can infer this on the basis of the high rate of turnover, which is also linked to the intensity of the work. A second possibility is that because it is an expanding sector, it will continue to be an increasingly important employment option for workers from other sectors, thereby further spreading a model which combines high technology and precarious working conditions. The third scenario is focused on the union in this sector, which is a section of Mexican National Telephone Operators Union (SNTRM) and an important component of the creation of the National Workers Union (UNT), is one of the leading opponents of the traditions of corporatist unionism. It is possible that this union will play an important role in organizing this and related sectors.

Informal Sector

One of the dominant trends in the world of work over the last two decades is the growing importance of the informal economy.⁹ The number of establishments reported by the National *Micro-business Survey* (ENAMIN) showed a steady increase from 2,658,406 to 4,414,600 establishments over the last decade, with a particularly sharp increase in the number of “changarros” (small shops or market stands). These establishments are divided into those with an employer and those with only self-employed workers. In the first case, the total in 2002 was 590,436, with employment concentrated in those establishments with an average of two or three workers. These small establishments accounted for 75.7% of the total employment in this category. The second category included 3,824,164 establishments, with employment concentrated in those with one or two workers, accounting for 96.8% of the total employment in this category.¹⁰

9. During the 1991–1999 period, an average of 48.7% of the total population with a paid job in the most urbanized areas of the country worked in the informal sector (Llamas and Bordonaro, 2003).

10. ENAMIN (1992, 1994, 1996, 1998, 2002). STPS-INEGI, electronic version of tables. <http://www.stps.gob.mx>. The sample of this survey was based on the Urban Employment National Survey, which is conducted through home visits. That is how the “employers” and “self-employed workers” constituting the population of the study are identified.

Another part of the informal sector includes production and sales outside legal boundaries. This entails both manufacturing (knockoffs) and low value services. Workers in these activities are of course not recruited and selected by traditional training institutions that lead to the formal labour market. From the standpoint of labour rights, no government or private *institution* has any visible involvement in the regulation of this labour market and the relationships established in it. Some activities are in fact part of the *formal economy* and are regulated by a specific legal framework, but this does not extend to labour questions.

A good example of that is urban transportation in Mexico City where there are between 45 and 50 thousand public transportation drivers working for operators licenses by local authorities to the owners of the vehicles. However, these drivers are not recognized as workers by their employers or by the local authorities themselves (Arteaga García, 1998).

In the case of the production, distribution and sale of pirated knockoffs,¹¹ this activity takes place in the world of *illegality*. All arrangements are contingent and the intermediary capacity of *administrators* in this sector is based on control over space and the capacity to admit or reject those who aspire to get a *street* stand or a spot in those places where pirated products are made. Some of them even say their control depends on organized crime. The representatives of formal activities (production, distribution and sale) affected by these activities contend that piracy has led to both economic and job loss. The underlying truth, however, from the economic and labour standpoints, is that these activities are more appealing and profitable in the informal sector. In fact, the informal sector has become more dynamic in terms of job creation than the formal sector.¹²

Even though the concept of *informal* in itself does not account for the complexity of the economically active population in Mexico; technically, one half of them are in this sector. In any event, it allows the identification of those people who work in this sector as subordinates who lack the capacity to exercise the rights *resulting from their condition as workers*.

11. It has been suggested that Mexico is the third most important country in this kind of production, only after China and Russia. According to information from the Mexican Attorney General's Office, 70% of piracy in the country is concentrated in one Mexico City neighbourhood. According to the Chamber of Commerce, there are 20,000 street vendors in Mexico City's Historic Centre, although newspaper sources estimate that there are as many as 650,000. *Milenio Diario*, Mexico, 10/01/2003. Electronic version: www.mileniodiario.com.

12. According to the Banamex-Citigroup Report published by the newspaper *La Jornada* (04/06/04), "In 2003, the number of workers affiliated with the Social Security Institute increased by 0.1%, while informal urban employment increased by 4.8%. During the first quarter of this year, the increases were 0.7% and 4.3%, respectively," <http://www.jornada.unam.mx>.

Although they are subject to labour market regulations and protection, and the law recognizes their rights, in practice they do not have the capacity to exercise those rights. They are therefore excluded from the social benefits guaranteed by institutions such as the Mexican Social Security Institute (IMSS), the Retirement Savings System (SAR) and the National Housing Institute (INFONAVIT), among others. They do not have a collective or individual work contract specifying their daily and weekly shifts, protection from professional risk, training or guarantees about income. All these aspects are either not recognized by employers or are determined at the employers' discretion. Moreover, the *de facto* exclusion of the exercise of these rights constitutes a further justification for not assuming other duties related to citizenship. In this way, informality, and, in good measure, illegality apply both to the conditions that ensure their survival and to their identification as equals in the realm of citizenship.

Migrant Labour

Restructuring has also involved a reinforcement of the traditional migratory trend of rural labour into the US market. Despite a long debate dating back to the 1930s and the existence of at least two types of studies (analytic and speculative), the exact number of people who have migrated is so far unknown. Nevertheless, we believe it is necessary to highlight two aspects of this process: first, it is one of the largest human exoduses in the last century and the early stage of this century, the cause of which is not the result of a war or conflict, but an economic and social war waged against poor people in Mexico. Second, there is an entire segment of the Mexican population living and working in a foreign country but representing a crucial support for the development of regional economies and the communities from which they migrated in their country of origin.

At present, one fifth of the Mexican labour force is considered to be working in the US, and the phenomenon no longer has a strictly rural connotation, since it has also turned into a flow of labour with higher levels of education (Zárate Hoyos, 2004: 35).¹³ “Permanent migration (or that

13. According to estimates by Corona Vázquez and Santibáñez Romellón based on the 1997 National Demographic Dynamics Survey (Enadid-97) and taking into account temporary and permanent immigrants, the total migration to the United States reached a total of 4,614,413 during the 1993–1997 period. This was roughly 4.95% of the total Mexican population at the time. However, these authors recognize that “this figure does not allow for a comprehensive estimate of the phenomenon because, conceptually, the procedure to identify permanent outward migration does not include any outward migration prior to the five-year period before the interviews conducted for this survey. Moreover, immigrants living alone and those migrating to the US with their families were excluded from the sample for the five-year period under study.” *Los migrantes mexicanos* (Zárate Hoyos, 2004: 35).

involving the usual change of residence) of Mexicans into the US increased from 26,000 to 29,000 in the 1960-1969 decade to a range between 120,000 and 150,000 in the 1970s and between 210,000 and 260,000 in the 1980s. According to the Survey on Migration in the Northern Mexican Border, the total was 3,925,380 between 1998 and 2001" (ibid., 25). Undoubtedly, most of these figures not only underestimate the actual dimension of the phenomenon, but also allow an insight into determining the magnitude of migratory movements across the international border which has the highest number of daily crossings in the world.

This subject will be one of the most important factors shaping the identity of Mexican society and labour in the 21st century. At present, its importance in the macroeconomic arena can be seen by the fact that their contribution to the Mexican economy through remittances has grown from 8.9 billion dollars in 2001 to 13.3 billion dollars in 2003, resulting in the second highest source of external income to Mexican economy. On the United States side, they allow this economy to practice *social dumping* by lowering the cost of reproduction and production in different sectors of the US economy and, therefore, they represent a decisive platform for the international competitiveness of that country. In the case of these binational citizens, we must also consider the conditions of these workers and the exercise of their citizenship as migrants, when they ensure much of the underground work for the world's largest economy.

CONCLUSION

I have sought to argue in this article that the classic vision of T. H. Marshall on citizenship is relevant, albeit subject to certain qualifications, in at least four ways. First, it identifies a role for the working classes and for work in the development of the rights defining the full inclusion of the individual in society. Second, it helps us to think about the legitimatization of inequality and the necessity of State intervention as a countervailing force to the tendency of market economies towards polarization and social differentiation. Third, it points to the irreversibility and inevitability of a growing accumulation of citizenship rights in industrial societies, although the current context certainly does not support a linear vision of the development of such rights. Finally, Marshall points out that "the modern drive towards social equality is, I believe, the *latest phase* (our emphasis) of an evolution of citizenship which has been in continuous progress for some 250 years." (Marshall, 1950: 10). This perspective presupposes a *teleological and passive* vision of citizenship in that the individual is perceived as a repository of the rights emanating from the State. However, the current context in Mexico highlights the need both to make the rights

that are being violated more *visible* and to make demands for new rights in order to achieve an *active citizenship* in the world of work, especially in terms of rights that are adapted to changing circumstances.

The critique developed by Mann (1987) raises the challenge of carrying out an historical and political study of the process of institutionalization and legitimization of inequality. In the specific case of Mexico, this must start with the construction of citizenship within the long ensconced, corporatist State that characterized the Mexican socio-economic formation. In particular, this is related to current transitions because of the tradition of unionism based on the control of workers, little democracy and corruption, a tradition that has been protected through a privileged relationship with the State. In spite of the diminished capacity of Mexican unions to engage in dialogue both with the “above” (the State) and with the “below” (their members), this continuing model raises governance and renewal issues within the union movement: in particular, whether these traditional unions will continue to play the role of the principal intermediary between the working classes, the State and capital?

Although the state-corporatist labour regulation model offers a relatively good explanation of the historical construction of the relationship between citizenship and work in Mexico, it is important to sharpen the focus on labour relations and work as they are related to citizenship. In the current economic, social and political context, the organization, integration and control of the working classes are not assured under this old corporatist model. More than half of the economically active population (approximately 22 million workers) is located in the informal sector. Despite the efforts of certain “clientelist” organizations, it is apparent that workers here and in other sectors are no longer under the same political sway of State leaders that once characterized the state-corporatist model of labour regulation.

The specific cases presented in this article are a telling illustration of this point. Only a part of modern manufacturing can be classified as the old corporatist model. In the majority of the *maquila* plants, unions either do not exist or, in some of the plants, are only now fighting for recognition of their emerging organizations. It is evident, moreover, that the millions of people who work in the informal sector, the expatriate workers and the majority of workers in the new technology and communications industries are outside the framework of relations controlled by the corporatist union organizations. This phenomenon poses fundamental research challenges: are these new segments of the workforce assuming a sense of ownership or are they being excluded from the realm where they work; and, in turn, how is this process related to the larger context beyond where they work, i.e. in terms of their identification as full members of society?

Paradoxically, whereas formal democracy and the exercise of citizens' votes are advancing, the world of work is characterized by diminishing worker rights. This paradox is further exacerbated by the historic legacies of Mexican labour relations, notably a lack of union freedom, the absence of rights to elect leaders, the existence of union structures characterized by "gangsterism," and the absence of transparency in the registration or certification of union organizations and collective agreements at work.

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RÉSUMÉ

Travail et citoyenneté au Mexique à l'ère de la mondialisation

Cet essai se veut une analyse de la reformulation du concept de citoyenneté au travail au Mexique. L'objectif est d'inventorier les effets de l'intégration économique régionale sur les travailleurs, tant au travail qu'en dehors des lieux de travail, et de mettre en perspective, dans les diverses sphères du monde du travail, la redéfinition des droits des travailleurs et leur influence sur l'exercice de la citoyenneté dans une économie régionale dépendante, à l'ère de la mondialisation. Le caractère préliminaire de cette recherche ne se prête pas au développement de tous les aspects de cette relation, mais il dégage certaines avenues pour d'autres recherches.

Notre étude débute par le rôle du travail selon la définition classique qu'en donne Thomas Humphrey Marshall (1950) et la manière dont on s'en sert dans l'analyse de l'accumulation successive des droits civiques, politiques et sociaux dans l'établissement d'une citoyenneté. Ensuite, Mann (1987) souligne la nécessité d'approfondir les aspects spécifiques de différentes formations socio-économiques, les processus d'institutionnalisation des conflits de classes et de justification des inégalités en prenant comme point de départ la reconnaissance des droits des citoyens. Pour ce faire, Mann met au point une typologie en vue d'analyser les sociétés caractérisées par un niveau élevé de développement économique. Même si cette typologie s'avère très utile, elle ne permet pas de saisir correctement la réalité des formations socio-économiques dépendantes comme celle du Mexique.

L'histoire de la citoyenneté au Mexique, telle que relatée dans la seconde partie de cet essai, doit être comprise dans le contexte de la Révolution mexicaine de 1910–1917, plus précisément, au moment de l'adoption de la Constitution de 1917. Celle-ci s'est traduite dans plusieurs réformes sociales concernant la régulation des relations du travail. L'article 123 reconnaît, entre autres, des droits fondamentaux aux hommes et aux femmes incluant le salaire minimum, l'encadrement du travail des enfants et des femmes et la participation des travailleurs dans les entreprises et les services. La loi fédérale sur le travail ouvrier de 1931 a permis l'établissement et le contrôle des moyens de défense des travailleurs, ce qui est devenu par la suite une forme de corporatisme d'État et un compromis de classe, au sein du Parti révolutionnaire mexicain au cours de la période du mandat du président Lázaro Cárdenas del Río (1934–1940). Cette courte histoire sous-estime l'importance du concept d'un modèle de régulation du travail de type corporatisme d'État (Bensusán, 2000). Il reflète l'institutionnalisation du conflit et la création d'un encadrement des droits propres aux conditions de la classe ouvrière dans un État corporatiste.

On soutient que, dans le contexte des transformations économiques et politiques actuelles vécues au Mexique, on peut déceler les signes d'un déclin et d'un épuisement de l'approche du corporatisme d'État. C'est ce qu'illustre la troisième partie de cet article en procédant à l'analyse de quatre groupes de travailleurs; chacun de ces groupes provenant d'un secteur particulier de l'économie lié à la transformation du modèle politique et économique du Mexique. Le premier groupe englobe les travailleurs des secteurs les plus modernes de l'organisation de la production et du travail, notamment les travailleurs de l'automobile et de l'industrie *Maquila*. Le deuxième regroupe des travailleurs dans le secteur des technologies des communications et de l'information. Le troisième groupe est constitué des travailleurs au noir. Il représente entre 40 et 50 % de la main-d'œuvre mexicaine et leurs activités s'étendent au secteur manufacturier, à ceux du commerce et des services; quelques-unes prennent aussi un caractère illégal, telles que le commerce de la drogue et la contrefaçon. Ce groupe est habituellement caractérisé par l'absence d'obligations et l'absence de droits fondamentaux normalement associés à une relation normale d'emploi. Ces gens ont plutôt opté pour développer leur propre « légalité », qui comporte des processus organisationnels et politiques, parfois visibles et, à d'autres moments, invisibles. Enfin, le quatrième groupe analysé est celui des travailleurs mexicains migrants, qui sont importants autant pour l'économie mexicaine que pour celle des États-Unis. Ces travailleurs se voient privés de leurs droits dans leur propre pays et, plus souvent qu'autrement, de leurs droits au travail aux États-Unis, lorsqu'ils sont engagés dans du travail au noir.

Bien que tous les aspects de ces cas ne puissent être intégrés à une analyse de la citoyenneté au travail, il est possible tout de même d'étudier quelques-uns des changements économiques et politiques au Mexique en les plaçant en relation avec des droits au travail et un répertoire plus vaste de droits inhérents à la citoyenneté. Cette analyse des différents groupes fournit un reflet du monde du travail mexicain qui est de plus en plus polarisé. Elle permet également une compréhension du déficit historique au plan de l'exercice de la citoyenneté, tel que le droit à la liberté d'association, le droit de choisir un syndicat, l'élection de représentants syndicaux et une multitude d'autres droits liés à la protection du travail dans l'entreprise. De manière paradoxale, les transformations politiques et économiques au Mexique signifient que les leviers antérieurs dominants du corporatisme d'État perdent de leur capacité à servir d'intermédiaire entre le « sommet » (l'État et les employeurs) et la « base » (ceux des intermédiaires identifiés antérieurement). Dans chaque cas, cependant, il est possible de constater l'émergence de nouvelles formes que peuvent prendre les droits de citoyenneté. De plus, puisque les segments de la main-d'œuvre observés

sont particulièrement sensibles aux processus de mondialisation et à ceux de l'intégration de l'économie mexicaine à celle des États-Unis, ils fournissent des jalons particuliers dans la compréhension de la citoyenneté au travail dans une économie régionale dépendante à l'ère de la mondialisation. Ces conclusions sont nécessairement provisoires, mais, en autant que chacun de ces cas nous incitent à nous intéresser aux droits dans les lieux de travail et à leur impact sur la sphère plus vaste de la citoyenneté, ils délimitent un plan d'action qui permettra de pousser plus avant la recherche sur le sujet.