〈Research Note〉

Expanding Mexican Migrant Society and the Mexican Government*

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"(W)here do you want Mexicans to work,
in Mexico or the United States?
I would rather export goods than labor."
Carlos Salinas de Gortari (March 1990)[1)]

"Los mexicanos, llenos de dignidad, voluntad y capacidad de trabajo,
están haciendo trabajos que ni siquiera los negros quieren hacer allá."
(The Mexicans, with full of dignity, will and ability to work,
are undertaking works that not even blacks want to do there.)
Vicente Fox Quesada (May 2005)[2)]

Introduction

In the United States, the population born in foreign countries has reached an unprecedented level, and Mexico, its neighbor to the south, is the largest sender of those immigrants. The Mexican-born population in the U.S. has increased dramatically in the decade of 1990s, from 4.3 million in the 1990 Census to 9.2 million in the 2000 Census (Passel 2004). According to the latest estimate available from U.S. Census bureau, based on the survey conducted in March 2006, their population reached 11.3 million (U.S. Census Bureau 2006)[3)]. At the same time, it must be pointed out that many of the migrants are "unauthorized"[4)], that is, either they entered the country with-

out proper documents, or they overstayed after their documents expired. According to an estimate by experts, in January 2005 there were 24.9 million foreign-born residents in the U.S., of which 10.5 million were unauthorized immigrants, and 5.97 million of them were from Mexico (Hoffer et al. 2006 : 6–7)[5].

Mexican migration to the U.S. is not only increasing in terms of numbers but also expanding geographically. A decade or two ago, the most common destinations were California, Texas, and other Southwestern parts of the U. S., and metropolitan areas such as Chicago and New York. However, now their destinations include North Carolina, Virginia, Arkansas, and other states where the Mexican population was once scarce (Passel 2004 ; Pew Hispanic Center 2006). In terms of their place of origin, while states in the Center-North such as Jalisco, Michoacán and Zacatecas have been the traditional migrant sending area, today significant numbers migrate to the U.S. from practically every region in the country. This includes urban areas such as Mexico City and Guadalajara, which were formerly destinations for rural immigrants rather than the origin of international emigration (Lozano Ascencio 2004 ; Arias y Woo Morales 2004), and southern and indigenous states like Oaxaca, Chiapas and Yucatán, despite their remoteness from the U.S. border (Fox and Rivera-Salgado 2004 ; Stephen 2007 ; Cornelius et al. 2007).

Migration is studied more often from the receiving country's point of view, as those migrants actually live there, but naturally it affects the society of the sending country, too. In the case of Mexican migration to the U.S., it is especially important to see the phenomenon from both sides, as most migrants from Mexico maintain the strong ties with their hometown, sending remittances to family back home, making regular visits, receiving people from the same village, among other things. Despite the huge amount of

works published on Mexican migration to the U.S., there are relatively small number of studies focused on the role of the Mexican government (both federal and local) in the 'emigration' issue, or on the relation between governments and the migrants. This relative lack of attention can be explained in several ways. Guarnizo (1998) and Rosenblum (2005) argue that the Mexican Government has taken a relatively passive position toward the 'emigration' of their people until late 1980s. On the other hand, Fitzgerald (2006) argues that the Mexican federal government did try to control emigration, but failed to do so because external factors such as U.S. immigration policy and U.S. economic conditions were much more influential, and also because the federal government lacked necessary cooperation from its local counterparts to implement its policy. Since the 1990s, however, the Mexican federal government, as well as state and municipal governments, has enacted several policies in response to the problem, as we will see below.

It is difficult to summarize Mexican government's policies and attitudes toward the migrants, but two well-known quotes from Presidents Carlos Salinas de Gortari (1988–1994) and Vicente Fox Quesada (2000–2006), printed at the top of this article, reveal its ambivalent position. Salinas tried to slow down emigration by signing the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA), declaring that he preferred to export goods rather than labor, assuming that FTA would create more employment within Mexico. On the other hand, Fox wanted to praise Mexicans in the U.S. so highly that he inadvertently insulted African-Americans, and by doing so, received harsh attack from African-American organizations and the media. Of course, the political attitudes of Salinas and Fox cannot be reduced to these remarks. As we will see below, it was under Salinas's administration (in 1993) that the prototype of the collaboration program between migrants and Mexican government was designed. Meanwhile, like Salinas, Fox and his successor Felipe Cal-

derón have claimed from time to time that they were creating jobs within Mexico so that people would not need to look for the opportunity elsewhere. To decipher their attitudes the best thing one can do is to examine their policies and see how they tried to accommodate the migration issue in their overall agenda.

This essay aims to understand the Mexican government's policies toward Mexican migrants in the United States. Recently scholars have begun to focus on the government's policies, but the topic is still a relatively new. Koido, one of the few Japanese scholars who has studied the very contemporary Mexican migration to the U.S., examined on the role of the national governments under NAFTA and points out that in the 1990s the Mexican government started to contact with migrants, concerned especially about the electoral politics (Koido 2002 : 186–189). However, things have developed considerably since Koido studied it at the beginning of the decade. Goldring (2002) and Michael Peter Smith (2003) studied the interaction between the Mexican local governments and transnational migrant organizations (associations created by the Mexican migrants who live in the U.S., most often from the same hometown) in Zacatecas and Guanajuato, respectively. They explain to us how the hometown associations collaborated with the local governments to improve infrastructure in the town by combining donations from the migrants and subsidies from the governments. Those projects ended in mixed results, but nowadays this program has spread all over Mexico ; it has been introduced even in states like Yucatán, where migration started much more recently compared to states like Zacatecas and Guanajuato that Goldring and Smith examined. It is this kind of project that I would like to focus on in the last part of this essay. Relations between the Mexican government and migrant organizations have been studied by those experts, but cases about late-comer states such as Yucatán would certainly complement

these achievements.

This essay begins with a brief history of Mexican migration to the U.S. and a sketch of the migrant society across the border. In next three sections I will focus on the Mexican government's policy on migration. Section II examines bilateral treaties between the governments of Mexico and U.S. concerning migration, focusing particularly on the consequences of the NAFTA upon employment opportunity. In section III, I will concentrate on the policy-making that concerns migrants at the individual level. Specifically, I will explain how the Mexican government changed its attitude toward migrants in the 1990s, by allowing dual nationality and the right to vote in abroad, and bringing about several other activities on the border and within the U.S. to help them. In section IV I will focus on the so-called '*Tres por Uno*' matching fund program designed to encourage migrant organizations to make donations so as to improve social conditions in their hometown. I will explain the general scheme of the program and complement it with evidences from a Yucatecan town of Peto, many of whose villagers live in California. I believe those examples help us to envision the current conditions of the migrants, and thus are a useful addition to the theoretical discussion.

I Mexican Migrants in the U.S. : Societies Expanding across the Border

1 Historic origins of the Migration into the U.S. and the shift in the 1980s

Migration from Mexico to the United States has always been an important issue for those two countries. Socio-economic and political conditions on both sides of the border have affected migrants' fate since early twentieth century. Although it is commonly believed that the migration always existed since the end of the U.S.-Mexico war, recently scholars have argued that it is more appropriate to consider that the migration from Mexico started in the first decade of the twentieth century. Gonzalez and Fernandez (2003 : ch.2)

argue that the industrialization propelled by the foreign (including U.S., of course) direct investment in the late nineteenth century under President Porfirio Díaz led to the destruction of agrarian society in Mexican countryside, and uprooted many peasants from their traditional villages. Some of these displaced villagers became workers in mines, industry, and day laborers at haciendas (large estates), but many others remained unemployed. This created a pool of potential migrants to the U.S., that started to head toward north at the beginning of the 20th century (Gonzalez and Fernandez 2003 : 38–45)

In 1941, the U.S. and Mexican governments implemented the so-called *Bracero* program, which brought thousands of Mexican workers to the U.S. and laid the pattern of migration for next four decades. Originally intended to fill the labor shortage caused by the World War II, the program continued even after the war ended in 1945, in order to provide a cheap labor force for U.S. farms. The primary destination for the workers was California, where farms needed a temporary labor force at harvest time to pick tomatoes, strawberries, grapes, and other cash crops. The program was finally abolished in 1964, but the flow of migration did not disappear so easily, as U.S. employers had grown accustomed to a cheap and flexible labor supply from Mexico and the Mexican workers became aware of the economic opportunity on the north of the border. Instead of going north as officially-endorsed *braceros*, they simply crossed the border without papers (Massey et al 2002 : 41–43)[6]. Given these historical origins of the migration, especially the *Bracero* program, Mexican migrants were mostly considered temporary farm workers, who came to work in the U.S. at certain times of the year such as harvest season, but went back to Mexico once they earned enough money and their seasonal job was over. They are mostly male, working in the agricultural sector, are possibly married but migrate to the U.S. alone as so-

journer, leaving their family in Mexico.

Recent migrants are of a totally different character. In 1992 Cornelius pointed out that in the 1980s the migration pattern underwent certain shift : Mexican migrants became more likely to settle in the U.S. ; their working place moved from rural to urban ; and more women or whole families started to migrate (Cornelius 1992 : 156, 171–182). These tendencies continued through the 1990s, when the Mexican immigrant population in the U.S. more than doubled. This huge increase, especially of unauthorized immigrants, was highly controversial because it occurred despite the fact that since 1993 the U.S. Government strengthened the border control considerably (Cornelius 2005 : 777). To explain this phenomenon, it is useful to think in terms of migrants themselves. Before the border control got tighter (which became even stricter after the 9/11 attack), many Mexican migrants went back and forth between the U.S. (where they work) and their hometown (where they have extended families), even without a visa, partly because of the relatively loose border control. Now the unauthorized Mexican migrants who are already in the U.S. are discouraged to go back home temporarily, as they avoid the risk of failing to cross the border and not being able to return to the U.S. again. Meanwhile, those who have not been to the U.S. may try to cross the border despite the stricter border control anyhow (Cornelius 2005 : 784 ; Striffler 2005 : 107)[7]. As a consequence, the Mexican population on the northern side of the border has increased considerably.

A decade later, in their research based on the survey data taken in the Southern California region, Marcelli and Cornelius (2001) found apart from the continuing increase in female migration and the shift in the point of departure from rural to urban, a higher percentage of more educated people among migrants and a younger age of arrival to the U.S. They explained these results by three main factors : changing labor demand in the U.S.

(from seasonal workers to year-round employment, especially in the service sector), economic crisis in Mexico since 1980s, and the network created by the migrants. It seems that their findings are still relevant today. Mexicans migrate to the U.S. not just to earn some money and come back, but to stay longer, sometimes to raise their families there. This new pattern gives more importance to the networks among those migrants, as we will see below.

2 Migrant Network across the Border and Transnational Civil Society

As Marcelli and Cornelius (2001) pointed out, a series of economic crises ——primarily the 1982 debt crisis and the 1994–5 currency crisis—— that led to a deterioration of living standard for many Mexicans provided them an incentive to leave their country, but economic conditions alone cannot explain the whole issue of migration. For example, while towns of Peto (where I have done my fieldwork) and Oxkutzcab in the southern part of Yucatán state, have sent thousands of their villagers to the U.S., Tekax and Tzucacab, towns with similar economic conditions and located between them, have relatively fewer migration among residents (Indemaya 2005 : 11, 26).

This difference is explained by another mechanism that facilitated the migration flow : the network that ties migrants and their hometown. Migrants from a certain locality in Mexico tend to go to the same place (in the U.S.) to work : for example, people from Peto, Yucatán usually go to San Rafael, California. As there is someone who receive new migrants from the village, the cost of crossing the border is significantly reduced, because new comers already know where to go and can even get a job through their predecessors' personal connections. In turn, the newcomers help to maintain ties between the hometown and their 'colony' in the U.S. This concept of 'migrant network' and *cumulative causation* helps us to understand how the migrant societies are formed among Mexican migrants (Massey et al. 2002 :

18–21).

Such villager networks are not the only form of migrant organizations. Migrants might network through a church organization, at the work place, or just in the neighborhood (Garcia 2005). Sometimes migrants organize their own NGOs. In other cases, hometown organizations form alliances to become a larger organization that covers more territory such as municipality or state[8]. Small-scale media such as migrant community papers, magazines and radio programs also are important nodes of the society[9]. Cultural events like traditional dance or music, religious celebration like Christmas, Carnival, Easter, and the Day of the Dead, sacred icons such as 'Virgen de Guadalupe' attract many migrants who live in the area nearby (Fox 2005 : 5–10). Political scientist Jonathan Fox and anthropologist Gaspar Rivera-Salgado (Fox and Rivera-Salgado 2004 : 26–29 ; Fox 2004 : 19–22 ; Fox 2005 : 11–13) propose a comprehensive concept of 'migrant civil society', to define these forms of associations created and organized by migrants. This notion of 'migrant civil society', they claim, "provides an umbrella concept for describing diverse patterns of collective action (Fox and Rivera-Salgado 2004 : 28)," thus serves to describe a society in which migrants live and represent themselves in relation to both Mexican hometown community, among other migrants, and also in the context of the civil society in the United States.

The expansion and consolidation of the 'migrant civil society' have drawn attention from governments and politicians of both Mexico and the U. S. In the rest of this essay I will examine how the Mexican government has changed its policy toward migrants.

Ⅱ Migration and Bilateral Treaties between the U.S. and Mexico

1 NAFTA : Economic Liberalization and Migration

Probably the most important diplomatic change between the U.S. and

Mexico in the last 20 years was the signing of the North American Free Trade Agreement. By signing this treaty with the U.S. and Canada, the Mexican Government intended to merge its economy with the North American market and strengthen the export sector by attracting the investment from corporations aiming at U.S. markets, offering cheap labor while taking advantage of the country's geographical proximity to the U.S. For President Carlos Salinas and the Mexican Government, this treaty also signaled the culmination of an economic shift from the state-oriented development model to the market-oriented economy, which started in the aftermath of the debt crisis of 1982.

The main focus of NAFTA was the trade issue, but Salinas certainly had migration issue in mind, too. Part of the logic behind NAFTA was that, by abolishing the tariff barrier and attracting more direct investment, Mexico could create more employment opportunity within the country and thus slow down emigration. However, the opposite seems to have happened : as we have seen in introduction, the growth of out-migration never slowed down during the 1990s. It is not easy to analyze NAFTA's effect on migration, all the more so because Mexico suffered a major economic crisis soon after Salinas left office at the end of 1994. Neither is it clear how Salinas evaluated the balance between economic opportunities and loss of employment, both created by the liberalization. He should have realized that agricultural sector, especially the producers of maize and other basic staples, would suffer from the market opening[10].

Did he simply underestimate these negative consequences of the liberalization, or his concept was altogether wrong? It is easy to point out errors *ex post*, but even before the treaty was implemented, a strong counter-argument against Salinas's premise had been presented. Saskia Sassen (1988), in her path-breaking study on relation between capital movement

and international migration, claims that direct investments in developing countries actually stimulate emigration. She argues that direct investment certainly creates job opportunities, but these are not the kind of the employment the traditional society has had. These mostly export-oriented manufacturing industries require more female labor than male, so men who have lost their employment cannot expect to get hired in these new industries. At the same time, those young women who started working can easily be replaced, as their job experience is not appreciated by the company. Once these women get working experience in these factories, even when they lost their job again, it is difficult for them to go back to the traditional society where they are from. In the end, these women, along with men who have lost their job opportunity as the traditional work structure crumbles, both become potential migrants (Sassen 1998 : 17–21). It is not clear whether these working experiences really uproot people from the traditional society, as these traditional societies itself may transform in accordance with industrialization, changing attitudes in other ways that may slow emigration, but here it is sufficient to note that employment created by the new industries does not necessarily keep people in that country.

Andreas (1998 : 212–213) points out four NAFTA related factors that may have increased migration to the U.S. First, the border industrialization program attracted many workers to the border-zone assembly factories (*maquiladoras*) and significant number of these workers continued to go north, across the border. Second, the liberalization of agricultural products that brought corn and beans from the U.S. uprooted more than 1 million people from the countryside who had traditionally produced these staples themselves[11]. Those peasants who leave the land may have headed toward urban area within Mexico, but many of them may well have headed toward north, too. Third, even though political leaders are correct in claiming that in the

long run the economic growth will help Mexico to retain its people within the boundary, in the short term, economic reforms actually increase the number of migrants, for the reason we already discussed. This increase in migration over the short term can result in a long-term increase, as it generates the network that accelerates the flow of migration. Finally, the Mexican state may not want to admit openly —— but cannot ignore either —— the fact that the migration would bring both higher income for the country through remittances and more social stability as they lower the unemployment rate.

It seems to me that these arguments by Sassen and Andreas explain much more convincingly NAFTA's effect on migration than the claim made by Salinas and other politicians on both sides of the border. In the following sections, we proceed to see what kind of measure his successors have taken upon migrant issue, but before that, let us take a look at another potential bilateral treaty, guest worker program.

2 Negotiations toward a Guest Worker Program and Its Relevance

At the beginning of his term, President Fox made strong diplomatic efforts to solve the problem of unauthorized migrants in U.S. On September 5, 2001, he and President Bush met in Washington to talk about the resolution of the migration issue between two countries. The 9/11 tragedy and the shift in U.S. diplomatic interest toward the Middle East virtually put the migration issue in the bottom of the pending tray (Rosemblum 2005 : 91, 112–114). Fox's successor, current President Felipe Calderón proposed a temporary visa program while he was campaigning for the presidential election in 2006[12]. No bilateral accord is in sight at the moment, but I think it is useful to consider what the consequences of such an accord would be.

To examine the guest worker program, it is useful to look at a precedent, the *Bracero* program. In his work on Mexican migrant labor, Gilbert

Gonzalez (2006 : especially ch.3) criticizes the whole scheme of the Bracero program, based especially on the bad condition suffered by braceros. Workers suffered not just from poor living conditions and low wages, but also had to bribe border officials to secure their positions in the program, or at their hometown to obtain the necessary certificate (Fitzgerald 2006 : 273–275). Cornelius also points out 'conceptual flaws' in the guest worker programs proposed so far. Those programs fit the preferences of neither the migrant workers nor employers, as the working patterns have become less and less suited to this kind of program. At the same time, he points out that politicians can hardly admit that they want Mexicans to undertake "permanent jobs in an advanced industrial economy that cannot be filled with native-born workers (Cornelius 2005 : 788)."

I might add another reason why the guest worker program is not viable nowadays. There is a substantial difference between the Bracero era and the first decade of the new millennium : it would be more difficult for the Mexican Government to negotiate the treaty, as the government is under pressure from voters and the congress under electoral democracy. The political setting was totally different 60 years ago, when the Government did not face any substantial challenge from the opposition. It would be safe to conclude that there would be many difficulties in practice to create a guest worker program, despite the willingness of top politicians of both countries.

Thus, it is safe to conclude that bilateral treaties may not bring the results that politicians who designed those programs expected. Now we will turn to Mexican government's other policies toward migrants. In the next section we will look at several policy changes related to the civil status of the migrants.

Ⅲ Seeing Migrants as External Citizens of Mexico

1 Dual Nationality and Political Participation : Civil Rights of the Migrants

In the huge literature on Mexican migration to the U.S., the role of the Mexican Government toward migration issues is relatively neglected, partly because the Mexican Government has taken a passive attitude toward migrants. To put it simply, the government didn't care too much about those who left the country. Yet, recently the government has become more and more concerned with the Mexicans living in the U.S. They realized not only the importance of the remittance flow for the national economy ; since Cuauhtémoc Cárdenas, an opposition presidential candidate, went to California for his electoral campaign in 1988, the political parties in Mexico also realized their political potential (Koido 2002 : 187–8). In Zacatecas, a successful migrant businessman became involved in politics in his home town and eventually elected as the mayor there (Bakker and Smith 2003)[13].

We can point out two major changes in the middle of the 1990s, both of which are related to the rights of migrants as Mexican citizens. One was the constitutional amendment in 1997 to allow Mexicans dual nationality, enabling Mexicans who obtain nationality elsewhere to retain their Mexican one (Fitzgerald 2006 : 278). There is no doubt that the government was concerned above all with the Mexicans who would obtain U.S. citizenship. This measure shows the Mexican government's intention to endorse migrants' Mexican nationality not only in terms of their national identity but also in legal terms.

On the other hand, the electoral reform of 1996 for the first time allowed Mexicans to vote from abroad. However, the electoral law did not assign concrete method of voting, and it took almost another decade until lawmakers finally reached an agreement on *how* they would vote. The 2005 new electoral law created the voting scheme, in which Mexican voters abroad

submit votes by post. Thus, in the 2006 Presidential elections migrants were allowed for the first time to vote without going back to Mexico. Due to the low credibility of the postal system in Mexico and the long and complicated procedure to get qualified as voter from abroad, the new system attracted less than 1% of the potential voters. Of course, the voting method should be improved so that the government can ensure migrants' right to participate, and at the moment the voting right is still more symbolic than substantial, yet, along with the dual nationality, it has demonstrated government's commitment to these migrants.

2 ID card and 'guide books' : Government's Efforts to Protect Migrants

Mexican politicians and officials see the problem of unauthorized migrants with mixed feelings. Those migrants are certainly not allowed to stay in the U.S., but they contribute to Mexican economy with the remittance they send back home[14], and to some extent the emigration solves the problem of unemployment. On the one hand, as we saw in the previous section, the government has tried to open the way for Mexicans to work legally in the U.S. through guest worker program, but negotiations for the guest worker program have taken much time and have not borne any fruit so far. While these macro-level attempts have hit a wall, the Mexican Government has taken several micro-level measures in relation to the increasing migration, both at the national and local level. Most of these policies are designed to help migrants, either in the U.S. or upon their return to Mexico, regardless of their migrant status in the U.S.

Within U.S. territory, Mexican Consulates facilitate migrants' life regardless of their migrant status. For example, consulates issue an identification card called *Matrícula Consular de Alta Seguridad* (High Security Consular Registration Card) to the migrants upon request. This card seems to be

serving their holders as a semi-official ID card within the U.S. Despite strong attacks from U.S. critics (e.g., Dinerstein 2003), this card is accepted as an official ID at several major banks, thus facilitating their financial activities, including sending remittances to their family in Mexico through the bank system (Hernández-Coss 2005 : 11–12).

Another remarkable micro-policy, which actually was criticized harshly by U.S. conservatives, was the publications of so-called *guidebooks* for the potential migrants. One of them, a small handbook called *Guía del migrante yucateco* (Indemaya 2004), was published in 2004 by the Yucatán state government. It explained 'where not to cross the border', advised would-be migrants to 'be careful of dehydration (when you walk in the desert, of course)', and even contained sections entitled 'what to do if you are arrested in U.S.' and 'you have your rights even if you don't have papers'. The contents of this handbook eloquently illustrate the Mexican Government's position toward unauthorized migrants. The government cannot forbid Mexicans not to go abroad without proper documents, because this does not violate Mexican law (even if it does violate U.S. law), nor can it encourage them in what they are doing. Yet, they do wish to show concern for Mexicans even if they are abroad, and to protect them if there is any problem.

While we hear a lot about the U.S. border patrol, the wall they have built, and other measures U.S. government has taken to control the border, we may wonder what the Mexican government has done in the border zone. One thing it has done is to create the special police unit, named *Grupo Beta*, to protect the migrants. First opened in Tijuana in 1990, the unit expanded along the border eventually and was composed of 75 agents in 2000. Since 2001 they gave up policing functions and dedicate to protect the migrants, rescue them, and to inform them about the danger of border crossing, although they don't stop them from doing so (Fitzgerald 2006 : 279).

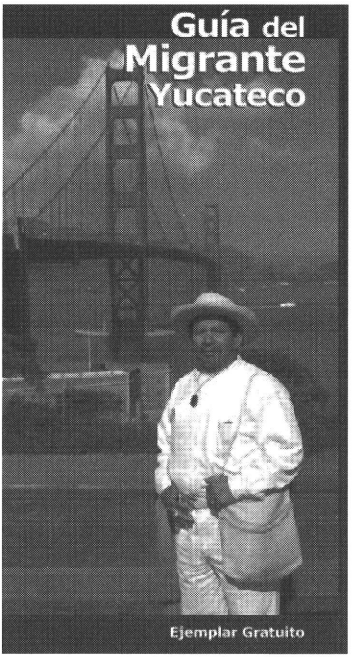

Figure 1 : The front page of *Guía del migrante yucateco*, the controversial pamphlet issued by the state government of Yucatán in 2004.

As we have seen, there are several measures taken by the Mexican government to protect migrants regardless of their migrant status in the U.S[15]. In the next section, I would like to focus on the other face of the coin : the government not only see migrants as its protégé ; it also sees them as potential contributors to their home country.

Ⅳ Migrants' and the Local Development : Programa *Tres por Uno*

1 Programa *Tres por Uno* : Its Evolution and Contradiction

Family members or relatives are not the only beneficiaries of the financial contributions of migrants from a given locality. Sometimes they contribute for the public goods, and in this sense, they have played an important role in the development of local society. Robert Smith's research in Ticuani (pseudonym), Puebla shows that the migrants donated pavement, schools, a

church, and even most of the cost of a drinking water system since as early as 1970 (2006 : 53–58). According to Michael Peter Smith (2003 : 489), in Timbinal (also pseudonym), Guanajuato, migrants raised funds for the local public goods such as church renovation and school construction since the late 1980s.

At the beginning of 1990 s, the government tried to incorporate these migrant-led projects into its social policy agenda, in an attempt to create a system that attracts more donations and institutionalizes the resource flow. In 1993 the federal government started the *Programa Dos por Uno* (two for one) to encourage Mexican *paisanos* (countrymen) in the U.S. to make donation to improving local public infrastructure. *Dos por Uno* means that every donation to the fund is matched by an equal amount of subsidy from the state government and the federal government (Goldring 2002 : 66–70). Migrant-sending states such as Zacatecas, Guanajuato, Jalisco and San Luis Potosí, Puebla, Michoacán and Oaxaca also participated in this program (Goldring 2002 : 75–76). In case of the state of Guanajuato, the government even pushed the scheme further. 'Mi Comunidad' program, started in 1997, encouraged migrants to open maquiladora garment factories so that their remittances go not only to the consumption but also to the investment (M. Smith 2003 : 481–484).

In 1996 the *Dos por Uno* program was suspended in most of the participating states (except for Zacatecas) due to the economic crisis (Goldring 2002 : 67), but in 1999 the Ministry of Social Development (*Secretaría de Desarrollo Social : Sedesol*) restarted the *Dos por Uno* program, expanding it into the *Programa Tres por Uno* (three for one) (García Zamora 2007 : 166–167). In addition to the federal and state governments, municipal governments also contribute the same amount to the program, which makes migrants' contribution four times more than the original amount at the time

of implementing the project. With the expansion of the matching fund program, the role of hometown associations becomes more complex. Now they are not just a group for mutual aid and exchange, but an agent that mediate those donations.

Each of the three parties (migrants, villagers, and the government officials) has its own interests, and they do not always reach agreement. A Federal Government official told me that when they decide how to allocate these resources the migrants' will is respected, but things may not be as clear-cut as he claims[16]. Indeed, Michael Smith reported cases in which migrants and local officials got into conflict (Smith 2003 : 487–492). As we will see later, this has happened in Yucatán, too. Having seen the mechanism of the program, in the following part of this section I will take a look at the case of Peto, Yucatán, where I conducted fieldwork. I hope this gives us a sense of how the program is actually run and conceived elsewhere.

2 Ambulance Car and Nursery Home in Peto : Tres por Uno in Practice

Peto is a small town right in the middle of the Yucatán Peninsula with population of approximately 20,000, according to the 2000 Census. The town is surrounded by small farms, and once prospered as base camp for the rubber gatherers, but currently there is no significant industry[17], so villagers often go to nearby Caribbean resorts in search of work (Rodríguez Sabido 2005 a : 103–106, 124). Migration from Peto to the U.S. started in an unexpected way. In 1980 an American priest, who had lived as a missionary in Peto, invited young villagers to come to his new parish in San Rafael, California to work. At first, it was only 8 young men who went, but this number rapidly grew and now it is estimated that 4,000 *petuleños* reside in the U.S. (Rodríguez Sabido 2005 b)[18]. As one of the most notable migrant-sending municipality in the state, the town was chosen as a venue of "the Day of Yu-

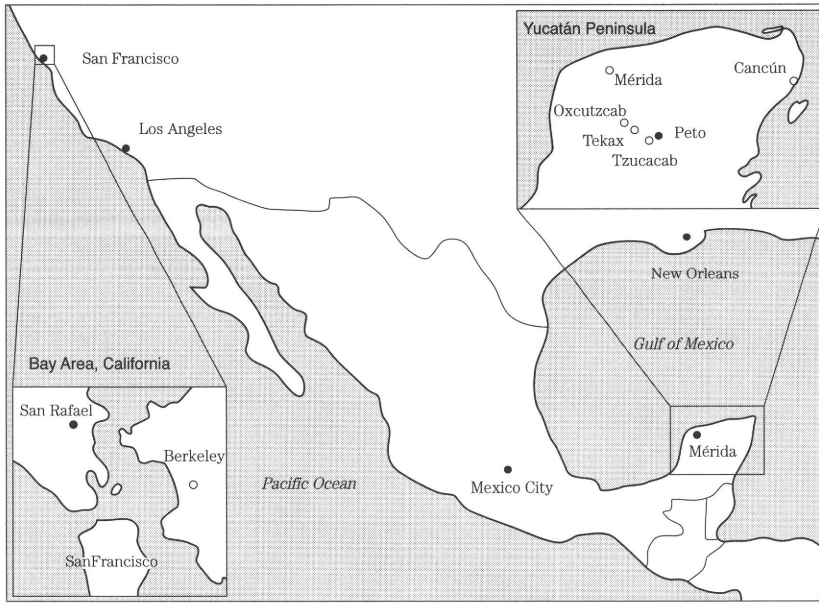

Figure 2 : Map of Yucatán, Mexico, and Bay Area, California

catecan Migrant" ceremony at the end of December 2004.

I visited Peto several times since 2000, and I also visited San Rafael in June 2005 and November 2006. A few miles away from San Rafael's downtown, there is an area called Canal district, whose residents are mostly of Latino origin. I got in touch with two migrant organizations from Peto. Those migrant organizations hold meeting on a weekly basis, and participate to other occasional events. In one meeting I attended in 2006, their children practiced the traditional Yucatecan dance, *la jarana*, which was presented at an event dedicated to the Day of the Dead (*Día de los muertos*). The event was held in the community center and several migrant organizations and local civic groups prepared their *ofrendas* (offerings) to their altar. Apart from the Yucatecan *jarana*, there were several traditional dance performance by groups from other parts of Mexico. Many of the visitors were

Figure 3a : Ambulance cars parked in front of the Peto City Hall. The one on the right hand side (without side window) was acquired by *Tres por Uno* program and bears migrant association's logo, "Chan Kahal" behind the rear wheel, instead of Yucatán state government logo like the other one. (Dec. 13, 2006, photo by the author)

non-Latino local Americans. Leaders of Yucatecan migrant organizations told me that the main purpose of their meeting was to preserve the culture from their homeland, but these at the same time are the organizations that are involved in the *Tres por Uno* program.

The *Tres por Uno* program in Yucatán started in November 2003 thanks to the initiative of several migrant organizations and their negotiation with the federal and state government[19]. Since then, 66 projects have been carried out within the State, with the total spending of 43 million pesos. Chan Kahal, a migrant organization from Peto, was one of the first contributors of the program. The municipal government acquired an ambulance car through the program, which was proposed by one of the migrants, whose mother could have been saved from the fatal heart attack if she could have been transported to a hospital with adequate service[20]. Thanks to another *Tres por Uno* project in Peto, the town built a nursing home for old people. The

Figure 3b : Nursing home in Peto built by the *Tres por Uno* program yet to function (May 27, 2007, photo by the author)

construction finished in December 2006, but the building has not been used for more than a year. The reason is not entirely clear : most probably, the death of the main promoter of the project on the side of migrant group also affected the plan, but it seems that the municipal government hasn't planned how to organize the house, and/or does not have enough resource to run the facility[21]. The last project to date, construction of a house for disabled people, has failed because of similar problem.

In general, migrants I interviewed in San Rafael (in 2006) expressed that they were proud to make contribution to the wellbeing of people in their hometown, but at the same time they had mixed opinion about these projects. Some of the migrants did not hide their dissatisfaction with the local government officials. Their complaints include : that instead of spending money to travel to the U.S. to promote the program, the government should spend that money for the community ; and that despite the regulation of the

Tres por Uno program that allows migrants to decide the kind of project to allocate the resource, officials tend to insinuate what should be given the preference.

Relations between migrant organizations and the state government have always been delicate as we have seen in the first half of this section, but the case of Yucatán is complicated for several other reasons. First, the Yucatecan migrant organizations are relatively smaller compared to organizations from other states. *Tres por Uno* scheme has been developed in other parts of Mexico, where the migration has much longer tradition and migrant organizations are much larger, before being implemented in Yucatán. Yucatecan hometown clubs have been working on cultural activities, exchange informations among them, and when they became aware of the program *Tres por Uno*, some of them decided to take advantage of it, especially as their hometowns have suffered from natural disaster. Yet, in the end the financial resource for the *Tres por Uno* is the donation from each individual members, and the amount they can contribute is naturally limited. Later on, once the department that copes with the *Tres por Uno* and migrant issues was created within the government[22], it seems to me that the officials started to promote, rather than simply administrate the program, despite the original scheme of the program to respect the will of the migrants themselves. Probably, it was first of all this attitude that had caused certain dissatisfaction from the migrant leaders mentioned above.

The issue of *Tres por Uno* program shows us ambiguous aspects of the decentralization in Mexico. Once highly centralized under PRI (*Partido Revolucionario Institucional*) regime, the government administration was decentralized in late 1990s, promoted both by the PRI government and opposition parties (Klesner 2006 : 400–403). However, the decentralization is not a one-way process that transfer the power to the local government : the fed-

eral government maintains certain control over local issues through programs such as *Tres por Uno*. Still, Yucatecan local government perhaps could have designed policies in accordance to their local conditions such as smaller size and number of the migrant organizations, which is one of the advantages of the federalism. The lesson from this case is that despite the claim that decentralization makes administration more open to the public, there remains certain barrier between government officials and civil society, especially when the civil society expands across the border.

Yucatecan migrants' complicated relations with the local government shows us how difficult it is to establish good and efficient relations between migrant society and the government. This relation is even more complicated when we take into account changes in the government. Indeed, in May 2007 the ruling *Partido Acción Nacional* (PAN) lost to *Partido Revolucionario Institucional* (PRI) in the local elections. At the time of writing (March 2008) it is difficult to predict how the migrant-state relations will change with this substitution in the government. One certain thing is that migrants' presence in the Yucatecan society continues to be important, with their economic contributions and their increased consciousness as participants in the political process.

Final Remarks

In this research note I have examined Mexican migration to the U.S. in relation to Mexican government policy. Migrants have created organizations of various types and scales, and have built what several academics have called 'migrant civil society'. They organize themselves to maintain their Mexican identity through cultural events, language, media, ethnic business, and keep their ties with hometown, often making financial contributions to the community and getting involved in local politics. With increasing num-

bers of migrants and the expansion of migrant society, the Mexican government has become more involved in migration issues. Nowadays not only the Federal Governments of both countries but also the state and municipal governments are concerned with the migrants as well.

As we have seen, there are many actors involved in this socio-political process, and the relationships between them are fairly complicated. To begin with, we have to look at the social ties among migrants and their organizations (and sometimes rivalries among them) and relations between migrants and their hometown. The governments at all levels have become an important actor, too, and economic disparity between villages that receive remittance and those do not may grow. Only certain thing is that it is necessary to look at domestic politics to understand migration, and it is also necessary to take migration into account to understand domestic politics. In most of Mexican villages, as the mayor of a migrant-sending village in the Puebla State put this way, "*Los ausentes siempre presentes* (Those who are absent are always present)" (R. Smith 2006 : 53).

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Notes

1) Quoted in Moffett (1990).
2) *La Jornada*, 14 de mayo de 2005.
3) The total "Mexican" population is calculated at 28.3 million, of which 39.9% were born in Mexico.
4) In this paper I use the term "unauthorized" migrants, but others call them "illegal" or "undocumented", often reflecting one's attitude toward those migrants.
5) It is also impressive that in 2006 these immigrants organized huge demonstrations in defense of their political rights.
6) Although the visa slot for the Mexicans diminished considerably, this continuous flow of immigrants did not decrease much. This difference led to the increase of unauthorized immigrants.
7) Other consequences of the tighter border control (unexpected for American lawmakers) that Cornelius (2005) points out are : a greater variety of entry points into the U.S. along the border, a much higher cost of illegal entry, more deaths suffered during attempting migration, and a rise in anti-immigrant vigilance activities.
8) In October 2006, the *Consejo de Federaciones Mexicanas en Norte América* (COFEM), an alliance of 14 federations, each of which consists of several hometown associations from a Mexican state, organized the First Binational Convention 'Dialogue without Borders'.
9) Spanish-language media is everywhere, but now there are even radio transmissions using indigenous languages such as Maya (Adelson 2004).
10) In 2005, Salinas gave a lecture at London Business School and clearly states

that "(w)ith the opening of the economy, we hoped jobs would migrate south where people live." (London Business School website, http://www.london.edu/11634_12291.html, accessed on January 30, 2008).

11) This point was raised by Gonzalez (2006 : 19–23) too, who points out that the competition with imported commodities from the U.S. made agricultural production in Mexican countryside less and less profitable, forcing Mexican peasants to abandon their traditional agricultural society and become potential migrants.

12) This statement came from the second TV debate among presidential candidates on June 7, 2006. He went even further and claimed that he would negotiate with U.S. government to legalize all the Mexicans who have stayed in the U. S. for more than five years. In the debate he also declared to attract more investment to create employment inside Mexico so as to discourage them to leave, which is reminiscent of the Salinas's rationale behind NAFTA.

13) Andrés Bermúdez, alias *Tomato King*, serves as a congressman since 2006.

14) Remittance from migrants exceeded every other external source of finance but oil in 2003 (Hernández-Coss 2005 : 4). In 2007, the estimated total amount of remittance was almost 24 billion dollars, which was slightly more than the total of foreign direct investment in the same year (*New York Times*, February 26, 2008).

15) It is also worth mentioning the *Programa Paisano*, which was created in 1989 to help migrants who come back to Mexico and to eliminate troubles they face when they cross the border, especially fraud on the part of corrupt border officials.

16) Author's interview, Los Angeles (COFEM convention venue), October 27, 2006.

17) A small maquiladora garment factory was built in late 1990s, but the economic outcome was poor and the factory has ceased to function a few years ago.

18) According to one of the migrants I interviewed (in November 2006), the number may well have reached 8,000. Surprisingly, there are even migrations *into* this small town because of the remittance wealth, according to Mr. Rodríguez Sabido (Author's interview, December 2005), who worked at the moment as local coordinator of the State Migration office.

19) According to Sara Zapata Mijares, President of the Federación de Clubes Yucatecos - U.S.A., the first "Club Yucatán de California" was organized to help out Yucatan residents who suffered from the Hurricane Isidoro that hit the Peninsula in 2002 (personal communication, March 2, 2008).

20) Author's interview of a migrant (Peto, December 25, 2007).

21) "Petolandia : Portal de Peto" (http://www.vinformatica.com/, access date Feb. 13, 2008).

22) Currently named "Subdirección de Atención a Migrantes, Instituto para el Desarrollo de la Cultura Maya."

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