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SOCIO-ECONOMIC STATUS, TERRITORY AND POLITICAL PARTICIPATION IN TWENTY-FIRST-CENTURY MEXICO

ABSTRACT

This article is built on the reflections that the authors have had during their latest research on political participation in several municipalities of Mexico. Thus, based on the ethnographies conducted between 2006 and 2016, mainly in the town of Xico (Veracruz state), we set up as analyzing unities specific political interactions (including patronizing) among Mexican citizens within the five types recognized by Social Sciences: voting, campaigning, contacting political officials, working on public affairs and talking about politics. On this basis, we explore the articulation of the aforementioned interactions and, more specifically, of the roles adopted by the interacting citizens as identity markers linking these people in a highlighted way with a series of socio-economic and socio-territorial features, dimensions that, ultimately, turn out inseparable from the existing power relations in the local societies. In conclusion, we are of the opinion that, together with indicators of income, education, professional category or living *nearby territory*, it can be affirmed that the political behavior in Mexico is shown as both socio-economic indicator and socio-territorial belonging not because parties represent interests of class, but because there are well defined spheres of political behavior depending on the socio-economic stratum and the socio-territorial belonging of the individual.

Keywords: political participation, socio-economic status, territory, Mexico

INTRODUCTION

This article is the result of the reflections that arose in the context of an array of studies about the ways of political participation conducted from 2006 to 2019 in several Mexican municipalities. Specifically, we focus on the ethnography recorded in the municipality of Xico (Veracruz) between 2006 and 2016¹. We also consider the records taken in Michoacán² and Tlaxcala³.

As analyzing unities, we set up the specific political interactions (including patronizing) among Mexican citizens within the five types recognized by Social Sciences: voting, campaigning, contacting political officials, working on public affairs and talking about politics.² Based on it, we explore the articulation of the aforementioned interactions and, more specifically, of the roles adopted by the interacting citizens as identity markers linking these people in a highlighted way with a series of socio-economic and socio-territorial features, dimensions that, ultimately, turn out inseparable from the existing power relations in the local societies.³

This article is made up of several segments: a brief review of the main characteristics of the Mexican political system with a particular focus on its political culture; a general portrayal of the municipality studied, which is known due to its local configuration in several territorial scales; a categorization of the existing levels of socio-economic privilege and socio-territorial belonging in Xico; a series of examples of electoral political stages, campaigns and political organizations, thus aiming at showing the ongoing interactions within the municipality; and a presentation of a diagram about identity markers that clearly link the socio-economic and socio-territorial characteristics of the citizens with specific ways of political participation.

MEXICAN POLITICAL SYSTEM

Since 1917, the United States of Mexico's constitution defines the Mexican political order as a *representative, democratic and federal republic* (Art. 40). We will underline the four elements of the Mexican political system that we find as fundamental for its definition: the territorial organization of the federation; the political regime –highlighting the non-competitive character of the elections; the party system –focusing on the relation between the hegemonic party and opposing parties; and the political culture – the existence of informal norms related to the national culture.

¹ T. Hagene, I. González-Fuente, "Deep Politics: Community Adaptations to Political Clientelism in Twenty-First-Century Mexico," *Latin American Research Review*, vol. 51, no. 2 (2016), pp. 3-23.

² W.B. Davidson, P.R. Cotte, "Sense of Community and Political Participation," *Journal of Community Psychology*, vol. 17, no. 2 (1989), pp. 119-125.

³ J. van Deth, "A Conceptual Map of Political Participation," *Acta Politica*, vol. 49, no. 3 (2014), p. 349-367.

The constitution formally defines the Republic of the United States of Mexico as a federal state (Art. 40), integrated by 31 States and the Federal District (Art. 43). Each State counts on a Governor directly elected with no possibility of reelection. Like the President of the Republic and the State governors, the municipal presidents, the councilors and the official receivers may not be reelected at least for the upcoming period.

With the *political regime* understood as the set of both formal and informal rules and proceedings to select the national leadership and the public policies,⁴ holding elections is a necessary, but not sufficient, condition for a system to be considered democratic. In fact, the political stability produced by the regime that came out of the 1917 Revolution is due, to a large extent, to the existence of periodical electoral meetings and, even more, to the assumption by every political actor that those meetings would happen continuously and within the patterns marked by the constitution. However, elections shall be competitive, that is, there cannot be a predetermined winner, it shall be impossible to revert the electoral outcome, and there shall be certainty that the following electoral meetings must have the same regulations as the ongoing ones. Under these premises, a regime is considered authoritarian when there are no elections or they are not competitive either because only one political party is allowed to run or because opposing parties have no possibilities of electorally defeating the group in power.

Regarding the historical period from the Revolution until the 1988 election, the Mexican political system can be branded as a variant of authoritarian regime where certain relatively independent opposing parties are allowed to run in some elections when the victory of the ruling party is certain; in other words, it is a *hegemonic party system*.⁵

Among the features that used to give a non-competitive aspect to elections in Mexico, there is a combination of informal factors related to the political culture of the country together with formal factors guaranteeing the official party the possibility of resorting to fraud should the outcome be contrary to the interest of the governing group. On the one hand, on the informal side, the hegemonic party used to obtain a big flow of votes through the patronizing ties created at every social level by means of long-term loyalty relations including the exchange of goods and services for electoral support.⁶ On the other hand, there used to exist a wide set of formal rules allowing the Partido de la Revolución Institucional (PRI) to organize and validate elections, such as the Comisión Federal de Vigilancia Electoral (a body attached to the president which, since 1946, watched as over the permanence of the regime) or the Colegio Electoral (a political body made up by deputies aiming at conferring legality to the outcome as the last resort).

With this political framework, fraud was more of a permanent possibility rather than a frequent practice: as long as PRI had a clear majority of favorable votes, elections would

⁴ L. Adler de Lomnitz, R. Salazar, I. Adler, *Symbolism and Ritual in a One-party Regime: Unveiling Mexico's Political Culture*, transl. by S.A. Wagner, Tucson 2010.

⁵ B. Magaloni, *Voting for Autocracy: Hegemonic Party Survival and its Demise in Mexico*, Cambridge 2006.

⁶ L. Adler de Lomnitz, R. Salazar, I. Adler, *Symbolism and Ritual...*, *passim*.

be clean; otherwise, results could always be amended depending on the circumstances of the moment. Some scholars have registered certain frauds corresponding to other necessities, more complex than electoral triumph: for instance, when PRI's board wanted to generate a debt from the candidate towards the party, or when state leaders wanted to secure a better position in order to get higher perks by the future president.

Historically, the construction of the hegemonic party tracks its origins to the meeting among the 148 local parties in 1929 under the Partido Nacional Revolucionario [National Revolutionary Party] (PNR) electoral brand, named PRI only in 1946. The aim of such a unification was to get a presidential candidate able to count on the consent of the regional chiefs whose power used to stream from their role in the 1910-1917 revolutionary period. Thus, nominating the candidate becomes the center of the political dispute, and therefore losing candidates often merged their factions in form of new independent candidacies. As we will discuss below regarding Xico's case, this practice is still executed on a frequent basis and at every institutional level by some candidates.

Finally, we define *political culture* as the set of conducts and practices, empirical beliefs, feelings and values associated with both power exercises and structures, which arrange, give meaning, and provide assumptions and norms that govern the behavior and the performance in a political process.⁷ Particularly in the case of Mexico, a wide scholarship refers to a dominant political culture tending to give some continuity to the authoritarian system itself, consisting of the following elements: political ignorance, paternalism, personal-oriented, individualism, presidential ruling, autocratic ruling, centralism, apathy, civic misery, mistrust, personal helplessness, arrogance, self-impairment, corruption, dependence, plea-and-gift, no participation, workforce participation, corporate participation, despotism, vertical unionism, and violence of all kinds.⁸

Among all these features, we want to highlight vertical loyalty as a fundamental and permanent relation of the Mexican political system. Particularly, we want to stress those behaviors motivated not simply by the conviction, but especially by the obligation created in a context of chief-client relations, which makes for vertical subordination chains while originating horizontal solidarity networks.⁹

Horizontal relations are equal among people of the same socio-economic level who exchange favors under the reciprocity rule. Vertical interactions are marked by the inequality on resources or power between the sides. Thus, the dependence of the least powerful citizen towards the most powerful one defines such a relation as patronage: the resources distributed by the chief are work, protection, public services or bureaucratic godfathering; whereas the client brings labor force and political support. Both type of relations – vertical and horizontal – are informal, therefore the exchange of resources produced within their respective contexts is not subject to legally-sanctioned

⁷ R.P. Formisano, "The Concept of Political Culture," *Journal of Interdisciplinary History*, vol. 31, no. 3 (2001), pp. 393-426.

⁸ L. Adler de Lomnitz, R. Salazar, I. Adler, *Symbolism and Ritual...*, *passim*.

⁹ S. Lazar, "Personalist Politics, Clientelism and Citizenship: Local Elections in El Alto, Bolivia," *Bulletin of Latin American Research*, vol. 23, no. 2 (2004), pp. 228-243.

regulation. Its application and continuity depends, to some extent, on certain non-written codes representing cultural values. In this sense, political culture should not be seen as a rigid concept with some perfectly defined features, but as an abstract concept responding to complex combinations of characteristics present in social reality.¹⁰

WHO PARTICIPATES: CONSTRUCTION OF SOCIO-ECONOMIC AND SOCIO-TERRITORIAL CATEGORIES

Ethnography conducted in the community of Xico made us categorize the citizens studied in three socio-economic levels, which, at municipal level, are also spread in different identity territories, in a sense that the territorial dimension relevantly characterizes the very structure of the collectivity and the roles undertaken by the actors. Following the concepts utilized by the interviewees, we can speak of ‘only-chiefs’ citizens (owners of the production means; they live in big mansions, which may extend up to a block, in the main street of the municipality; every political interaction they take is top-down); intermediary citizens (small-and-medium-sized owners, bureaucrats, professionals or teachers; they live in medium-sized houses near the church and the main street; they can take top-down and bottom-up positions in political relations); and ‘only-clients’ citizens (salaried workers, peasants and informal workers, who depend on some of the above in certain ways; they live in the outskirts –beyond the main church – in *los carriles* (the sides) of the municipality or in the rural communities; all their interactions are bottom-up).

The only-chiefs citizens group in Xico is that of the large *rancheros* (countrymen) as well as those we get in the select category of *gente de razón* (rational people). It is a very high class made up of twelve families owning huge properties of coffee plantations and/or pastures. Furthermore, the interviewees add that: they consider themselves as descendants of Spaniards, even Hispanicizing their surnames; they tend to whiten themselves up to the point of ‘using lemon and rice powder to smear on the face and seem whiter, that is, more powerful’; they are *sangrones* (nasty) in the way they treat their subordinates; they owe several properties to rent; they request a special mass when they get married (among themselves); they do not participate in stewardships and have restrained dead altars (‘rational people’ are ‘more serious’: they are not butlers but responsible for the four festivities where ‘Indians’ do not go, *la Santísima Trinidad, la Dolorosa, la Soledad y las Lágrimas*, which are celebrated in a more European way, very similar as to how it is done in Spain); they are the ones that ‘dress fashionable’; they own several vehicles; they have travelled all over the Republic or even to the United States and Europe; their kids attend the best Mexican universities or abroad; they decided whether they run for politics or not, and once inside, whether they *tranzan* (cheat) or not.

¹⁰ K. Seffer, “Clientelism a Stumbling Block for Democratization? Lessons from Mexico,” *Latin American Perspectives*, vol. 42, no. 5 (2015), pp. 198-215; F. Montanbeault, “Overcoming Clientelism Through Local Participatory Institutions in Mexico: What Type of Participation?,” *Latin American Politics and Society*, vol. 53, no. 1 (2011), pp. 91-124.

The intermediaries are the ones trying to get closer and look like the rational people. The group is composed of small-and-medium-sized owners as well as professionals and bureaucrats who live out of the public agencies, and also teachers.¹¹ They are 'just so-so' families who get into politics 'because our budget is not sufficient.'

Based on the scope of the research, we classify these two groups of citizens as privileged (to different degrees), since we consider that they have real and objective opportunities of social-economic rise, that is, they have an easy access to resources (decent salary; certain educational level; institutional conditions in work: salary, benefits, laboring certainty), so they can have some autonomy wide enough for their choices to be their own.¹² Both only-chief and intermediary citizens, to a wider extent, have the possibility of taking their individual political decisions in such a way that even if it might be damaging to them, their choices only temporarily slow down their capacity of socio-economic rise, given their access to resources. A large part of the privileged citizens that we have interviewed have a 'person that helps us' on their service, so the daily and familiar treatment between the parts hides some very unequal and profoundly vertical non-regulated production relations:¹³ there is no contractual exchange but, as discussed above, chief's paternalism preponderates by giving some work to the most needy in socio-economic terms.

Most of the population in Xico are only-clients, that is, 'they rent themselves for work' or 'help' the intermediaries and chiefs: they live out of farming, construction or trading – 'the Tapango travelers'; they live in small houses made of stone (the lucky ones) or wood, constructed with materials obtained through projects from the different administrations; *rancheros* live in mountain communities, which are also subdivided in two groups: the Indians themselves and the non-indigenous or *atravesados* (cross-wised), which resembles the difference in the city is between Indians and the 'reasoned ones'; the interior of their homes is visible from the street; they get married in communal masses whose attendance is available to whoever wishes; they take part in *mayordomías* (cargo system) and their altars are colorful; in opinion of other groups, the indigenous 'dress badly,' 'they have a special suit, but their bad taste when dressing is noticeable, they go dirty, unkempt'; they lack engine vehicles and do not even have driving licenses; their longest journey has been to Mexico City; their kids do not study at university; they sell their votes in exchange of promises, vouchers, money and other gifts.

We consider the aforementioned group as non-privileged citizens (minimum degrees of privilege) since they count on scant or none possibilities of socio-economic improvement, that is, they do not own the necessary resources to avoid their dependency when taking decisions. Their choice capability is circumscribed to a very limited

¹¹ The teachers are a group that, in most cases, belongs to a medium-low socio-economic level, "dabs" in politics searching for some economic benefit, and is favored by the being considered as cultural intermediaries between peasants and chiefs, especially in the countryside.

¹² I. Gough, "Economic Institutions and the Satisfaction of Human Needs," *Journal of Economic Issues*, vol. 28, no. 1 (1994), pp. 25-66.

¹³ L. Lomnitz, "Horizontal and Vertical Relations and the Social Structure of Urban Mexico," *Latin American Research Review*, vol. 17, no. 2 (1982), pp. 51-74.

framework of possibilities, most of the times granted by the privileged ones. People belong to only-client citizens category in a sense that the opportunities for their socio-economic rise do not go any further, as we will show, of some specific limits of actions and interactions.

From the exclusive point of view of political participation, we can say that the executed activities and attitudes of these dependent citizens (starting from the fact that people with less resources are less prone to participate¹⁴) are limited to electoral participation and the participation induced by the intermediaries. Even more, when they are patronized, we identify these citizens as sellers of vote, hauled to a rally or protests led by intermediaries, in other words, despite the *tranza*, the socio-economic rise is irrelevant or little relevant in the daily life of the actors.

The intermediaries, together with the only-chiefs, are politically privileged citizens in a sense that they have the opportunity to participate in every activity defined above (the five modalities). Likewise, if they decide to execute patronizing actions, they do so because they consider it to bring them tangible benefits in a short-to-mid-term: they buy votes, address municipal committees, fund haulages or lead demonstration acts, in short, they play the roles that give access to the key places of political decisions.

We point out that those with high and relatively high degree of autonomy-privilege have the option to choose whether they run into politics or not, and once in, whether they *tranzan* (cheat) or try and be consistent with the democratic principles. On the other hand, the participative capacity of those with the minimum degree of autonomy-privilege is limited to decide whether they sell their vote or not; it little matters which party they 'support.' The key difference between citizens with different level of autonomy is that, once they decide to participate, their actions belong to specific categories of participation that identifies them as, respectively, privileged and non-privileged citizens. Table 1 includes the index discussed throughout the text. Additionally, we include those politically-motivated, thus positioning the citizen in a scale of privilege.

Table 1. Index of privileged and non-privileged citizens

INDEX	PRIVILEGED CITIZENS	NON-PRIVILEGED CITIZENS
EDUCATION	university studies	minimum education
PROPERTY	owners of big-and-medium lands	non-owners (landless peasants)
HOUSING	they own one or more properties to let	they build their own house with materials obtained from public projects
ADDRESS	at the core of the municipal head	at the periphery of the municipal head and rancherías
OCCUPATION	professionals	informal salaried workers
REGULATION	contractual relations	'help' without contract

¹⁴ C.A. Holzner, "The Poverty of Democracy: Neoliberal Reforms and Political Participation of the Poor in Mexico," *Latin American Politics and Society*, vol. 49, no. 2 (2007), pp. 87-122.

INDEX	PRIVILEGED CITIZENS	NON-PRIVILEGED CITIZENS
CLOTHING	westernized	indigenous
SURNAMES	Spanish/Castilian	native
VEHICLES	one or more	no driving license
POPULAR RELIGIOSITY	marriage at special masses; festivities of Spanish origin	popular marriages; they participate in cargo system
POLITICAL PARTICIPATION	they take autonomous political decisions	limited in their own decision-making
POLITICAL CLIENTELISM	they invest in politics	they sell their vote

Source: Own elaboration through ethnographic records.

ELECTORAL PARTICIPATION: EXCHANGING VOTES FOR PERKS¹⁵

Doing our fieldwork, we have recorded countless cases of trading votes both in official elections as well as internal elections within political parties. To a wider extent, the political stage counts on some of the following actors: the voter, whose suffrage is aimed to be bought, upon which the rest of the players depend; a wide set of participating forms that can be grouped, among others, in the role of financier of the purchase, a specific person whose main function is to fund parties' breakaway groups, electoral campaigns and, in this particular case, provide with the necessary resources to defray a strategy to exchange votes for all kinds of perks; the role of the organizer in the delivery of perks, a person whose position is that of leader of the political organization or campaign coordinator with several management duties; and the role of straight executor of the perks-for-promise-of-vote exchange, a bridge between the leaders and the rest of the population, performed as a strictly political figure (follower, member), as a kinship figure, godfatherhood or friendship, or as a working figure (*works together* with the individual with whom s/he interacts, being a salaried worker *from the top down* – manager – or colleague – *from the bottom up*).

At this points, we consider that the best way to explain the proposal here presented is by using an example which describes a political stage linked to electoral patronizing. It is the account of the first non-PRI mayor of Xico about the electoral fraud his candidacy suffered from when obtaining the highest number of votes three years before his first official victory.

¹⁵ In an interview, Gabriel, a local neighbor from Xico, shares his general view of the elections, which is not far from reality: he considers the electoral meetings as a sort of trade whereby candidates for municipal president promise a lot of things and then there are those who carry them out (constructions) and those who do not ('he stole as much as he wanted and went into retirement to his rancho'). Even more, some candidates promise to fix private houses in exchange of votes: people point at them by saying 'that one sold his vote.'

“All started in 1988,” he says by referring to the apparent fraud in the presidential election that same year whereby the PRI candidate, Carlos Salinas de Gortari, defeated the opposition candidate, Cuauhtémoc Cárdenas Solórzano, but at the same time prompted a national movement all over Mexico claiming for legal election. In Xico, something similar happened at a local level. In the 1989 municipal election where the aforementioned mayor ran with the PPS (Socialist Popular Party), the only electoral brand available at that time, there happened a great *tranza* when the credentials were still under control of the town halls’ secretaries.

The night before voting, the electoral officials at the service of PRI spread informal ballots by justifying these substitute the official ones. Despite every watchman being warned not to allow such ballots, nothing can be done to stop the PRI-allied officials. At those times, the fear to watch parties other than the hegemonic was still high: there were constant threats to peasants such as “those PPS-supporters are communists and your common land will be removed”; or to professionals, through official trade unions, with potential customers to their businesses going away.

Worse, when they report the fraud to the state government agencies, the PPS state head management betrays them: it has already negotiated with the Veracruz-based PRI and so gives up in the run to Xico’s mayoralty in exchange of another municipality further from the state capital, since it is not in the government’s interest to have an opposing mayoralty so close to them. In fact, there is a demonstration of around three thousand people towards Xalapa to protest against the electoral ‘robbery,’ when Dante Delgado is state secretary, ‘expert in political patronizing.’ They set up patrols to cut the advance of the demonstration, but they cannot help it reaching the palace. There are negotiations with the state of Veracruz. While Delgado shows polls guaranteeing the triumph of PRI (all the interviewees are relatives and friends of the PRI-candidate), the PPS leaders insist on the fraud. Eventually, all the pressure worked on favor of Xico’s PPS, which obtained two councils and the Junta de Mejoras – an institution depending on the town hall but out of its budget, from which any sort of activity can be done for the ‘improvement’ of the population through civilian collaboration-. Asked about the motivation in that moment to foster those demonstrations, the interviewee answers: *to show that it was possible to work for another party: the first thing was to get rid of PRI and later, through PRD, try and change things: activities to happen without exchange for political support; it was all about bringing resources: projects if any, money too, but it was always taken by the same ones, those on top.*

Digging in the aforementioned papers not only in the 1989’s example but also in more recent cases of electoral patronizing, we can find out certain socio-economic and socio-territorial characteristics that are common to people in charge.

The citizens targeted by the manipulation, be it through direct purchase of votes or by coercion, are mostly landless peasants or salaried workers with no legal contract.¹⁶ They lack education and live in the periphery of the municipal head or in *rancherías*.

¹⁶ Although no systematic research about the level in income in this kind of workers has been carried out, we are aware that the average daily salary they earn is between 50 and 100 Mexican pesos (between 2 and 3,50 euro at the moment of the research).

It is known by the whole community which citizens fund factions of the parties with the aim of, first, reaching the internal candidacy in their own organization and, second, aspiring to the municipal presidency. This funding, to a wider extent, aims at exchanging votes for all kinds of perks (money, provisions, etc.) as well as other actions such as haulage, pregnancy box, etc.¹⁷ This small group of citizens match the group of big owners and fortunes, who live mostly in the main street of the municipal head. In addition, some of these delegate this role to high-trusted intermediary people.

There is a whole array of intermediaries between funders and voters ranging from direct contacts with the former (they work for them and come upfront in the municipal committees of the parties by organizing the faction depending on the interests of the great chief) to the ones that act as mere conveyor belts in the specific patronizing tasks (they carry a door-to-door request on vote-for-perks exchange). Most of the people performing that role live in quarters near the core of the municipal head and belong to the group of teachers and professionals. Therefore, they have a relatively high level of education and income as well as a legally regulated job.

It is relevant that we have not found any citizen targeted to the purchase of votes that would, at the same time, carry out the rest of the roles, apart from going door-to-door doing the same thing he has been done. Likewise, nobody has offered provisions nor money to funders and direct intermediaries for their votes.

PARTICIPATION IN CAMPAIGNS: ‘PEOPLE WHO *ATTRACT* PEOPLE’

It turns out fundamental to explain the proposal presented here through two examples. On the one hand, these describe the political stage of a meeting. On the other hand, they draw a picture regarding the campaign’s route, house by house, by a political party in an electoral rally. First, we portray the electoral meeting through the narration of the recent political history of one of the closest collaborators of Xico’s mayor in 2005-2007, Constantino.

Constantino begins attending Convergencia’s meetings to accompany his father. In one of these meetings, Eladio’s wife – the unofficial chief (a sponsor who does not have any position within the organization of the party) of Convergencia in Xico and owner of one of the main *mole* companies in the village – turns to him to perform the duties of a secretary, that is, to take notes. He does so and sees that, from that moment on, they start counting on him. About the time of the pre-election campaign within the PRD-PT-Convergencia coalition, it is noticed from the beginning that the potential candidate Damián (Convergencia) has more support than the PRD’s shortlisted one, since in the meetings the former *used to have, for instance, around 60 people whereas the latter around 20 people, in addition to the latter asking publicly how a ranchero, someone who cannot read and has not even finished his primary education, could govern us.*

¹⁷ O. Fröhling, C. Gallaher, J.P. Jones, “Imagining the Mexican Election,” *Antipode*, vol. 33, no. 1 (2001), pp. 1-16.

The narrator goes with several youngsters to PRD meetings by a van used for the campaign, and makes noise with loudspeakers for the potential candidate not to be heard. Once the internal pre-election campaign is over, the toughest part yet remains: battling against PRI. During the mayoralty campaign, *the first you do is to find people who attract people, that is, leaders from blocks, quarters, communities [...] who can persuade people; Xico being a small village, you know more or less who can attract for your party and those who are hard-hearted PRI-supporters*. What characterizes Convergencia is that the campaigning headquarters is open all day and night long. Damián pays the food expenses to every member of the electoral team as well as whatever they might need with his own money: he spends around 30 thousand Mexican pesos.

This example includes several roles related to the in-campaign participation, not only regarding meetings, but also door-to-door strategies: two leaders interact in the pre-electoral campaign to choose a candidate for the PRD-PT-Convergencia coalition (the same happens within PRI, which has three potential candidates), whose worth as definitive official candidates is measured by the number of people attending their meetings. Apart from these two roles (public speaker-candidate and attendant-voter), we see an unofficial chief (funding master of one of the two candidates), trusted partners (who the narrator belongs to and who are to spread propaganda while expecting to get some 'prize' by the boss-candidate) and the 'people who attract people' (leaders who are aligned with some faction in exchange of perks more suitable to their mobility skills such as a job, or substantial economic improvements).

In the scenario of door-to-door campaign, we include some versions by two informants: Lucía, who is a people person, and Mariana, a non-privileged woman who accepts all kinds of gifts whatever party they come from. Lucía¹⁸ is a citizen to whom candidates *come to find because you attract people; when they invite, they offer you some positions*. In electoral periods, 'their people' come to ask her who she is going to vote for. She says and then when she is on, she runs really 'high' campaigns: she walks house by house all over the village (especially, around the peripheral quarters and *rancherías*) telling people about the program of the candidate she supports, *and many follow her*. In addition, she does all she can to get medicines, provisions, clothes *for the people that most need it*.

Mariana described the current situation regarding the exchange of perks from the point of view of those who receive these political-electoral visits: *When it comes to provisions, there is the difference that those from ranchos will receive them at home, whereas us from the municipality head will have to join a list, which sometimes works for you and sometimes against*. She continues: *now those from the ranchos have more than those from the municipality head, ladies are more fashionable, with perms...; those from the opportunities programs come and start asking from the church upwards and forget about those of*

¹⁸ Lucía's father is a carpenter and her mother a housekeeper. No one in her family is active in politics. Apart from co-owning a small restaurant together with her husband, she is also a teacher in San Marcos. She entered politics *because since childhood I was a leader in the school*. She has belonged to, and still belongs to, several organizations connected to PRI, especially feminist-oriented.

us who live in the periphery. Fox's government does help. Also Fidel.¹⁹ In the ranchos, people say, even animals, kids [young goats] and hens are supported through the government programs. And another candidate killed a pig for meat in a community during the PRI pre-election campaign.

The last provision that she has been given is by Damián, already as the mayor representing Convergencia. PAN-supporters give her some parasols. She acknowledges that Fox gives them some aids, but she still prefers the provisions and so she keeps voting for PRI.

The last two testimonies certify the political roles usually in place when rallying house by house for the electoral campaigns in Xico. Apart from the roles performed by the informers (Lucía as a people's person and Mariana as a visited one), candidates and intermediaries addressing the former (to recruit her as a direct visitor) and the latter (to directly offer her some provisions) are also cited. Implicitly, Lucía assures to do all she can to obtain gifts for those she visits, meaning looking for the financier partner.²⁰

Delving into the aforementioned roles not only for electoral meetings, but also for house-to-house rallies, further highlights the same correlation between socio-economic conditions and socio-territorial belongings of the citizens and ways of political participation.

Citizens attending the meetings and those being visited by the electoral tours spreading provisions are, to a large extent, what we define as only-clients. They live in the periphery of the municipality head or in *rancherías*, which coincides with the proven fact that campaigns in which all kinds of perks are offered take place in these areas.

The citizens funding factions of parties with the aim of reaching public positions, either directly or through high-trusted intermediaries, match with the group of rich or only-chief owners. Their *near territories* coincide with the core quarters of the municipality. They continue to be the major investors in politics in terms of the provisions to be distributed as well as of the organizing meetings with special amusements (music, dance, refreshments, etc.).

The intermediary citizens perform a whole range of interactions between financial partners and attendees-visited. These range from being candidates, leaders of the municipal committee or leader of the neighborhood (they coordinate and organize all the campaign activities; they mainly belong to the group of teachers and professionals) to the roles of those acting as a mere conveyor belt of specific campaign practices (they request the vote-for-perks exchange door by door or they are behind the speakers in the organization of the meetings).

¹⁹ It refers to Fidel Herrera Beltrán, PRI-backed elected governor in the state of Veracruz during this research.

²⁰ One of the PRI leaders in Xico denied that the money for the house-to-house rallies is part of the party's budget: *perks are not part of any budget whatsoever, but they depend on the money that one can get from each candidate. Normally, a series of through-and-through PRI supporters from the electoral roll are chosen and it is to them who perks are nurtured, thus aiming at motivating them and foster their mobilization to persuade their relatives and friends.*

It is fundamental to reflect on identity markers of political participation definers of socio-economic levels and socio-territorial belongings. So far, we are referring to the roles of vote-seller, meeting-attendee and electoral tour-visited, thus assuming that these can be performed by absolutely every citizen; are in practice carried out by the only-clients category, recognized by the lack of real estate and living in the periphery of the municipality. After that, we can find the roles of direct executor of the vote purchase, secondary collaborator in the organization of meetings and direct house-to-house visitor, which can be performed by non-privileged citizens as well as by those less privileged with certain capacity of social mobility. Lastly, the most privileged participants (residents in the main streets of the municipality head) take the roles with direct access to the decision centers.

We can go a bit further in the reflection and imagine Mariana interacting in the organization of a meeting with a non-privileged attendee like her as well as in the direct request for supporting a candidate with her in-front neighbor (she would do it for any party in exchange of a little money or submitting to a coercion): the interaction would have a negligible influence in the political process. We cannot forget that even if Mariana was a people's person as Lucía, what differs them in terms of political participation are higher and better opportunities to rise socio-economically that the restaurant and a teacher's job give to Lucía rather than the daily 50 Mexican-pesos salary as a house-keeping 'helper' in the case of Mariana.

PARTICIPATION IN POLITICAL ORGANIZATIONS: ABOUT FACTIONS AND PARTIES

The chosen scenario to introduce the form of participation in political organizations includes all kinds of interactions: trade of votes, haulage of voters, links between financiers and 'puppet' leaders, spreading campaign provisions, etc. It is interesting to highlight the scenarios where haulages and spreading provisions can symbolize the relative position of the social actors within a territory, so not only the bussed ones and receivers of the provisions at home, but also the bussing ones and givers of provisions get represented through power centers – in this case, the urban core within the municipality head

However, unlike the ways exposed so far, the main characteristic of this stage is that it works by means of citizens formally belonging to the inner structure of political parties. The focus relies on the voice of several interlocutors without losing sight of the two major existing axis of political actions: that of the member-leaders (devoted to develop strategies to access the public positions at any cost) and that of grassroots militants and sympathizers (submissively performing secondary, but necessary functions to obtain the strategic goals). We are referring here to what some scholars²¹ have called the phenomenon of *patronizing submission* in the sense that babbling citizens are first tried to

²¹ B. Badie, G. Hermet, *Política comparada*, México 1993.

be persuaded to trust the chiefs (known since long ago) and if this is not enough, coercion and fraud are included.

The story starts with Xico-based PRI, whose main characteristic is its inner 'divisiveness.' This is how a through-and-through PRI voter (Lucía) explains it: *There are two big PRI-groups in the village, one led by Ismael, an accountant and official representative of the great owners, especially the González family, self-defined as the people's PRI; the other one lead by Alfonso, a teacher, that is the teacher's PRI.* At the time of the research, the party committee was dominated by the group of teachers whereas *the other group is only concerned with the former not reaching power, they would rather PRI to lose than let the teachers win.*

The next step is to contextualize the research in the 2004 municipal pre-election campaign. PRI calls for internal primary election to choose who the representative to become mayor will be among three candidates: Ismael, Alfonso (whom the party supported at the state level and whose campaign fully funded) and Rubén (independent candidate). One of Rubén's trusted-partners recounts how those primaries went: *I saw it with my own eyes how Alfonso's people gave between fifty and two hundred pesos to people to vote for him in the PRI-primary election. They even ordered to bring people from the ranchos by cars. They even got in the cubicles with the people coming to vote with the excuse that they were illiterate. When she went to report the situation, she heard, 'You are new in this and anything goes in politics.' [...] Another thing that happened, apart from IFE doing nothing, was that PRD and PAN's people decided to participate in order to vote for the worst PRI candidate, Alfonso, and that can be proved since he had more votes in the primary election than in the municipal ones.*

Alfonso wins the PRI-internal election, which prompts the reaction we will focus on. One of the turncoats (Lucía herself) narrates it: *Then, once Alfonso won the PRI-candidacy, we switched to PRV, a party in a priori alliance with PRI, to the extent that when it was founded, the governor Fidel was present.* It is also interesting to see as a proof of sincerity the explanation about the same event by one of Alfonso's trusted persons: a key lawyer of PRI: *PRV was already appointed by the high management of Veracruz's PRI so that it was filled with those groups unsatisfied with PRI, because there would always be such ones. Then, considering future coalitions, it was preferred for them to move to a new party created by themselves rather than one of the opposition. The core issue is that there are always groups with differing interests in every party, and the problem is that a concept of long-term, party-oriented politics is non-existent: groups want to reach power today, they cannot count on the future in the sense of going all together and reaching agreements like this legislature goes for your group and that for mine; or that all PRI-supporters think: your candidate is the best one to win, so we all will support him. No, if a group cannot move its candidate forward, then it will search for the possibility somewhere else. And worse. They campaign against the succeeding group, even if it is the same party: that is the reason why we lost the previous election. And that is what has happened with every losing coalition: they lose because they get divided. That is why the current PRD-PT-Convergencia agreement, which is totally fractured, will pave our way to the victory in the next municipal [election].²²*

²² PRI won the municipal election in 2007.

Let us finish this example by commenting how far things can go within PRI when it comes to the official choosing who will run for the mayor's office: Ismael pays money to his supporters so that they vote against the teachers-lead PRI (Alfonso's candidacy); he manipulates the very PRI grassroots militancy to work in favor of the opposing parties. The PRD-PT-Convergencia coalition wins.

To sum up, we clearly see the interactions of trading during the campaign (hauling included) not only for the PRI-primary election but also for the 2004 municipal one. The purchases were done by the 'teachers' group' with money from the party, and by the 'people's group' with money from the rich families. We can also add what PAN and PRD offer to their grassroots militants in order to vote in the PRI-primary election for whom they consider the worst candidate. Therefore, three well differentiated roles – like minimum – with citizens belonging to three parties²³ (plus the factions of each and any of them): the financiers (be it candidates supplying resources from their common militancy in the party, be it financiers in the shadow), the leader-candidate (some self-defined as the 'teachers' group' and the other registered as professionals –also teachers – to the service of the big bosses), and the grassroots (all those known as militants, 'supportive,' or simply, the 'people,' voting here and there depending on the interests of who performs the two aforementioned roles).

Likewise, this time explicitly, the very actors symbolically associate these functions of funding, leading-coordinating, and voting with very specific socio-economic and socio-territorial characteristics, which include occupation, education and *near territory*. Interviewees are fine when speaking of 'big owners' and/or 'those who possess a big house in the main street' and often recognize them as acting in the shadow of the political factions. Such is the position of teachers in politics that they become their own group in Xico, notwithstanding that the other faction is led by an accountant and several professionals, and that both PAN and PRD count on leaders with similar features. Lastly, the spontaneous identification of those who passively participate in the mess of their bosses and more privileged neighbors voting in exchange of a salary as 'illiterates' or 'people from the *ranchos* and the sideways,' clearly points towards the main starting hypothesis: there exists a highlighted identity between certain socio-economic levels, specific socio-territorial belonging and determined ways of political participation. All these dimensions ensure, at a municipal level, the reproduction of the power relations.

CONCLUSIONS: WAYS OF POLITICAL PARTICIPATION AS SOCIO-ECONOMIC AND SOCIO-TERRITORIAL IDENTITY MARKERS

The information we have collected through observation and interviews allows us to explain that what identifies a citizen of Xico is not simply the party s/he votes for but also the role s/he adopts during the interactions in political participation. By recording

²³ The roles are shaped in themselves and they do not get any weaker when they are executed within a party-faction or any other model. One cannot forget either that parties are necessary vehicles used by the main players to channel their actions.

citizens who are supposed to sell their votes to the highest bidder, by meeting citizens that go through all the municipal committees in search of a candidacy, or by interviewing people who pledge politicians to *take the milk but not the whole cow*, we understand that it is fundamental to study the very ways of political participation. This is so especially in relation to both the socio-economic levels and the socio-territorial belongings of the citizens. This is even more determinant than the analysis of the manipulation-and-coercion's effectiveness on the sense of the vote. Our understanding matches with the conception of culture as an expression of the shapes of power.

In conclusion, Xico's local political framework leaves the following scenario. Undoubtedly, we can openly speak about an identification among citizens spread throughout particular territories and with specific socio-economic conditions, adopting certain roles of political participation (Table 2).

We observe Xico citizens marked as non-privileged in socio-economic terms and peripheral in socio-territorial ones who participate to a limited degree within some well determined roles: voter (more specifically, seller of one's own vote); attendee of a meeting ('herded' by some intermediary to make up the numbers); visited (more precisely, receiver of perks at home); grassroots militant (attendee to party assemblies expecting to receive some gifts on a frequent basis).

Table 2. Type of identifications of Xico citizens with ways of participation

TYPE OF ROLES	ONLY-CLIENT (Non-privileged and peripheral citizens)	INTERMEDIARY (Less privileged and semi-peripheral citizens)	ONLY-CHIEF (Privileged and core citizens)
VOTE	voter (sells the vote)	intermediary (executes the purchase)	financier (decides the trade)
MEETING	attendee (makes up the numbers)	coordinator (people who attract people)	financier (sponsors the event)
HOUSE-BY-HOUSE RALLY	visited (receives perks at home)	visitor (offers the exchanges)	financier (subsidies the perks)
PARTNERSHIP	grassroots militant (secondary actions)	militant with access to the core of the decision	financier (invests in a candidacy prone to his/her particular interests)
CONTACT	s/he addresses the public servants to request some perks in a submissive way	has bargaining power with authorities	from his/her funding position, s/he demands the appointees make decisions favorable to his/her own interests
DEMONSTRATION	shock force	organization and negotiation with authorities	funds in order to create a political faction

Source: own elaboration through ethnographic records

We identify less privileged and semi-peripheral Xico citizens participating in secondary functions of the political process such as directly executing the strategies planned by the most privileged. We refer to all those citizens who move the perks from the financier to the voter; who bring people to attend the meetings in order for the candidate to display the largest following, which is the hallmark of his/her worth; who knock on the doors to request political support for a candidate while offering some cushy job in exchange of the ballot; who are members of a party in order to find the political opportunity that makes them rise socio-economically (an opportunity that ends up happening, given their resources in terms of income, education and effort).

Finally, we notice Xico citizens who are more privileged, situated in the center of the territory and participating in the core political decisions. The financier role is highlighted as a common ground. The financier allows the citizen s/he represents to notably influence the political process (ultimate reason to participate). However, these individuals (socio-economically favored and socio-territorially central) are the ones deciding to purchase the votes, to organize meetings, to visit the *ranchos* and they become 'candidates' themselves within the first party that allows them to.

Regarding political patronizing, we aim at showcasing a strong association among those who only count on their non-regulated workforce, those who live in peripheral territories at a local level, and those who only count on their votes for a patronizing exchange in political terms. We do not say that all those non-privileged citizens necessarily sell their votes, but that in a context of political patronizing, where chiefs make business and intermediaries receive succulent perks, those non-privileged are more likely to sell the vote. More precisely, having a chief, an intermediary and a client, all of them willing to *tranzar* in a cultural context of patronizing, the *tranza* of the client is the sale of his/her vote (electoral participation), whereas the rest of participants have access to all the other patronizing ways (purchase of votes; hauling voters; funding of campaigns, etc.).

It is not that clients vote for particular parties (eventually, they receive cushy jobs from all the major parties), but that people who receive gifts belong to a specific socio-economic stratum and live in particular socio-territorial conditions. Therefore, while they 'help' the chief, their patronizing limit – in political and electoral terms – is the sale of their suffrage. While they are not owners nor live in central areas, they cannot become candidates or leaders of a party, thus have no opportunity to earn the tithing, to create fake jobs, to retain parts of the budget for themselves, to give jobs or to purchase votes. Who cares about the color of the ballot if the vote is worth eight hours of work? When it has no price (or nobody sets it), the vote will be free and it will be used as an exchange based on what the citizen prefers. We mean that having no salary, no social assistance, no education and living in periphery positions, the citizen belongs to the less-favored social stratum (material dimension). Also, selling the vote or receiving an electoral visit at home involving some sort of a gift identifies him/her with that same stratum in symbolic terms. Purchasing or, simply, not being a target for the purchase identifies him/her the other way in symbolic terms: a privileged citizen with enough income, educational and work resources to carry out a decent life (material level).

We underline that the patronizing culture affects both privileged and non-privileged citizens: the same actions – patronizing or not – of political participation materially and symbolically identify citizens as belonging to a specific socio-economic level. What matters is to pay attention to which acts correspond to each socio-economic stratum: tell me how you participate politically and I will tell you which socio-economic level you belong to and, in the case of Xico, which part of the territory you live in. It has been checked that the socio-economic levels based on education, income, and work categories match certain ways of political participation, including patronizing ones. Those with a higher income participate to secure their resources; those with a medium income participate in order to obtain new and faster opportunities for social rise. Those with a lower income participate because of hierarchical dependence and their main characteristic is that their almost only chance to *move on* in politics is the economic transaction of their votes.

Therefore, we consider that, together with indicators of income, education, professional category or living *nearby territory*, individual and collective identities are constructed and combined with a multiplicity of cultural features. It can be affirmed that the political behavior in Xico is shown as both socio-economic indicator and socio-territorial belonging not because parties represent interests of class, but because there are well defined spheres of political behavior depending on the socio-economic stratum and the socio-territorial belonging of the individual.

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