

**Thinking Globally, Acting Locally:
The Strategies of Subnational and Transnational Actors in Mexico and Canada
in Response to NAFTA**

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For the purposes of this panel, we examine strategies employed by subnational Canadian and Mexican actors within the context of NAFTA and its aftermath, paying special attention to the development of transnational coalitions among these actors. In turn, we examine the residues of these coalitions, the patterns of continuing relationship and emergent institutions, as strategic conditions for subsequent actors and as elements within emergent North American and global realities.

There are a number of discourses and associated idioms within which we might locate these developments. Each of these suggests a particular reading of the materials, an appropriation of these histories and biographies for the construction of a somewhat different though related understanding. And each of these discourses thus lurks as a latent conversation within the treatment of any more manifest discourse, much as Paz has suggested that the subtext of Cortez and *la chingada* lurks within Mexican vernacular conversation.

Among the discourses and languages within which we might seek significances of these continental developments are those framing the following issues:

- Subnational and transnational groups and coalitions as aspects or conditions of national action.
- The political drama of strategic action, success, and failure, by various subnational and transnational groups and coalitions playing out their interests and commitments within an emerging continental arena.
- This drama of subnational actors and that of nation state actors from the perspective of a particular value, cause, or institution—such as “the market;” “development;” environmental “sustainability;” “democracy;” or the domination, rights, welfare, or empowerment of a particular nation, class, function, or population, whether this be the United States, “finance capital,” a particular indigenous group, or “the subaltern.”
- Network analysis, focusing on the fabric of developing transnational ties among subnational actors (Granovetter 1985; Wellman and Berkowitz 1988).
- The development of relations and institutions of transnational civil society in relation to state and market (Gramsci 1988; Gutiérrez-Háces 1996b; Polanyi 1957), or these concerns as reflected in discussions of “embeddedness” (Evans 1995; Granovetter 1985; Polanyi 1971).

- The linking of these elements of society, state, and market as an emergent continental or global “mode of regulation” and associated “regime of accumulation” (Harvey 1990; Lipietz 1986).
- The expression of national, class, or linguistic/theoretical/cultural “hegemony” within the studied events and structures (Gramsci 1988).
- The interplay of agency and structure within the studied networks and processes.

Using the NAFTA moment as a point of reference, we propose to locate our discussion within a discourse which foregrounds a developing network of transnational ties among subnational Canadian and Mexican actors, examining this shifting structure in terms of transnational civil society, continental or global mode of regulation, and an arena both for dramas of empowerment and for the expression of hegemony. Incipient transnational coalitions among specific Canadian and Mexican actors, such as environmentalist and indigenous groups, provide concrete contexts illuminating the relations among the processes foregrounded by these respective languages. The North American Free Trade Agreement among the three national governments as actors and the outcomes of political struggles by Canadian and Mexican subnational actors attempting to influence that agreement provide a backdrop for our examination.

Our focus on the Canadian and Mexican actors and their relationship is tactical, the relevant ties being at a point of development which facilitates their study, and our resources being limited. The ties of Canadian and Mexican subnational actors with their U.S. counterparts necessarily enter into the narrative; but relative to Canadian-Mexican subnational ties, the typically longer history of Canada-U.S. and Mexico-U.S. subnational links makes the NAFTA moment less revealing of their entailment in the series of process we are attempting to understand here. Also, Canada and Mexico are notably different in terms of the historic nature of “civic society” relative to party, state, and market; and the binational focus enables us to trace the significance of this in relations among subnational actors from these respective contexts and in turn to trace respective implications of transnational coalitions for civil society within these two nations.

Let me begin by explaining the bases of the information I shall be using. I shall then attempt to locate the North American Free Trade Agreement as an historical moment which provides a point of reference for the processes we are examining and, subsequently, to frame these processes within the critical discourses for which they seem most richly significant.

The Platform for Observation

A 1994-95 sabbatical based during the academic year at the Tijuana site of El Colegio de la Frontera Norte and during the adjacent summers at the University of Toronto Center for Urban and Community Studies provided me an opportunity for

reviewing the development of subnational Canadian-Mexican relations prior to NAFTA and a window for observing their evolution during the immediate post-NAFTA period. I monitored press, journals of opinion, topical books, and scholarly conferences in both Mexico and Canada and traced through press and interviews the development of transnational ties and collaborations among scholars, academic institutions, activist NGO's, and other governmental and non-governmental organizations in North America, with special attention to the Canadian-Mexican linkage. Similar but less intense monitoring has continued since 1995.¹ Limits of resources have given the present study a heavy reliance on reading of "serious" journalism and of governmental and academic discourses and on observation of the associated arenas and structures of relationship, especially Mexican-Canadian academic meetings and emergent associations.

Electronic media are clearly important in the formation of the cognitive and cultural bases of the nascent transnational civil society I examine here but have not been a central focus of this study. The increasingly salient coalitions among environmental groups have been studied primarily through secondary sources. My investigation of developing ties at the "popular" level involving indigenous, ethnic, rural, and worker movements has been tentative at best but suggests the importance of the structures and processes which involve these elements both in "resistance" to a continental order increasingly premised on competition among the non-privileged and in attempt to establish "voice" within that order.

NAFTA as an Historical Moment: Nations as Actors

The three states which acted to form NAFTA pursued strategies which reflected both internal political processes and economic realities and a global situation already defined in part by the development of a transnational institutional order resting on inter-state agreements and in part by a system of market exchange, commercial ties, and political coalitions among economic and civic subnational and transnational actors..

One of the members of this panel, Teresina Gutiérrez Haces, been centrally involved in the array of fine work that has already been done on the history of the national level Canadian-Mexican relationship prior to the North American Free Trade Agreement and on the specifics of the national and transnational political processes leading to that agreement. Several central themes emerge in that work:²

¹ See the list at the end of the paper, under Conferences Attended.

² Especially useful in tracing that work are a number of conference proceedings and anthologies, including Daudelin and Dosman (1995); Dickerson and Randall (1991); Dobell and Neufeld (1993); Gutiérrez H. and Vera C. (1994); Haar and Dosman (1993); Hernandez and Sanchez (1993); Mejía and Flores (1994); Sinclair (1992); and Vera Campos (1994). More specific articles, presentations, and monographs are noted in the list of references.

These themes can be summarized as follow:

- The historical moment of the development of NAFTA is that of the disintegration of Post-War US and Soviet economic/political/military hegemonies and the emergence of a global “free trade” regime with constituent regional configurations of especially intense integration (Arrighi 1994, Carruth 1996).
- Competition for global capital, including that of domestic origins, placed a premium on national inclusion in such regional configurations as a way of ensuring access to consumer markets of critical mass, a consideration for each of the North American states (Bueno 1987).
- The East Asian displacement of the United States as the center of global liquidity and financial dynamism seems to be based at least in part in the incorporation of regional low-wage countries into the Japanese sub-contracting system, providing a model for a possible North American strategy (Arrighi 1994).
- The United States has a long history as the primary trading partner of both Canada and Mexico (Alvarez 1994) and, at least for now, continues as the central global military power and the central civilian and military consumer of global commodities.
- European preoccupation with the development of the European Union and with the opening of Eastern Europe essentially dampened both Canadian and Mexican hopes of a “third option” of transatlantic partnership as alternative to national economic isolation on the one hand or more explicit and regulated integration with the US economy on the other.
- Mexican and Canadian dissatisfaction with the historic “hub and spoke” configuration, whereby the US acted as the major trading partner for each of these countries but mediated their involvements with each other, motivated Mexico to seek agreements balancing the US-Canadian Free Trade Agreement of 1989 and motivated Canada to seek inclusion in what became NAFTA in 1994 (Bueno 1987; Eden 1992; Eden and Molot 1992; Gutiérrez-Háces 1992). Each was also attempting to stabilize a relationship involving major components of its economy but subject to somewhat erratic protectionist swings by the United States.
- The NAFTA moment punctuated a global process of decreasing salience of state boundaries in terms of capital and commodity flows and underlined the continuing or accentuated role of the North American state as a regulator of population movements and of citizen demands concerning quality of life().

Through what strategies and with what political outcomes were subnational Canadian and Mexican actors involved in this process? And how did the particular

patterns and residues of their involvement influence the conditions for subsequent involvement by such actors?

NAFTA as an Historical Moment: Participation of Subnational Actors

The political process of the passage of NAFTA in the respective countries was a result of transnational coalitions mobilized at least partially within the multinational corporate structures whose realities foreshadowed the agreement (Crane 1994; Traynor 1992); but this process, like the earlier struggles in Central America, also generated transnational coalitional strategies of voice and resistance among subnational actors and the mobilization of existing transnational organizations and networks in this process. Yet other kinds of subnational actors, especially academics and professionals and their associations, participated in the process leading up to NAFTA—on the basis of professional theoretical understandings and commitments, as part of the global and continental developments of which NAFTA was itself a part, and in anticipation of the post-NAFTA continental order, the weight of these respective factors varying among actors.

The architecture of NAFTA and of the continentalism and globalism of which it is a part is an outgrowth of the transnational institutions of the Post-War era—the International Monetary Fund (IMF), the World Bank, the General Agreement on Trade and Tariffs (GATT), the whole network of trade and financial arrangements among both governments and firms (Browne 1993)—and that architecture represents the vision of the government, business, and academic actors whose careers and intellectual and material investments have been tied to that order. Clearly, this architecture reflects the sensibilities and interests of elements within the U.S. Government and within largely U.S. based institutions of finance and commerce. But governments in both Canada and Mexico also participated actively in the construction of the North American Agreement; and theoreticians in each of the three countries participated in the development and celebration of the neoliberal understandings on which its architecture was based.

Both the support and the opposition to Canadian participation in NAFTA drew on an organizational infrastructure developed earlier around the 1989 U.S.-Canada Free Trade Agreement (FTA). Already in the struggles around that agreement, some of the “Canadian” actors incorporated transnational elements (like multinational corporations); and some of the strategy of Canadian actors involved transnational coalitions. The differences in the forms of involvement in the subsequent NAFTA process by respective Canadian and Mexican actors is related to significant differences in the historic relation between the state and civil society in those two societies (del Castillo 1992a and 1992b).

Corporate actors: Through the 1980's, a coalition involving business, financial, and government elements in Canada and the United States pushed for the bilateral FTA. The most important Canadian nongovernmental actor in that binational coalition was the Business Council on National Issues (BCNI), the membership of which includes some 150 of the largest corporations operating in Canada, approximately a third of

these being subsidiaries of U.S. multinationals (Hernandez and Sanchez 1993; Traynor 1992). The BCNI was again prominent in the subsequent advocacy of NAFTA within Canada, this time joined more actively by the Canadian Associations of Manufacturers and of Exporters, and by the Canadian Chamber of Commerce (Crane 1994). In 1991 in Mexico City the latter organization opened its only office outside of Canada, working closely there with the Consejo Empresarial Mexicano para Asuntos Internacionales (CEMAI) (Hernandez and Sanchez 1993).

Mexican business input into the NAFTA process, like that in Canada, initially involved organizations with close links to the United States, especially the long-standing binational Mexico-U.S. Business Committee (Vega 1995 interview). Ultimately, business input within the negotiation process followed a pattern characteristic of Mexican interest articulation (del Castillo 1992a) in that it was largely evoked and orchestrated by the government and the PRI, resulting however in what is reported to have been a very close liaison between the Mexican NAFTA negotiating team and the selected business representatives. The smaller, formerly protected businesses most vulnerable to the emerging continental and global competition were left largely without voice within these channels, though national level reticence about NAFTA's impact on these sectors and on workers and agriculturalists was expressed by the PRD opposition, Cárdenas even developing an alternative plan for an opening which would include a social contract to protect these more vulnerable groups.

Subnational Governmental Actors: The Canadian Provinces and the Provincial level party organizations were also significant subnational actors in the politics leading to NAFTA. There was substantial initial opposition to NAFTA especially from members of National Democratic Party (NDP) provincial organizations in Ontario, the heartland of Canadian manufacturing potentially threatened by cheaper Mexican labor, and from members in other key provinces across Canada. At the same time, the Ontario Government, like those of British Columbia, Alberta, and Québec, was itself involved in an outreach to Mexico which predated NAFTA (Calisi 1994 interview). The most interesting and pivotal Provincial actor was Québec and its major Provincial parties, all of which strongly supported NAFTA, with Québec's own Ministry of International Affairs establishing trade offices in particular Mexican cities in an effort to establish specific ongoing centers of collaboration and the Québec members of the Federal Parliament providing the critical margin for the passage of NAFTA, as they had for the FTA.

The special meanings of NAFTA within Québec are worth underlining here, as they have given Québec its special role in this phase of North American history (Bakvis 1993). Québécois informants report a very broad support for NAFTA among organized groups within the province (Furlong 1994 interview), with labor being the primary voice of opposition to NAFTA but even more strongly to the earlier bilateral FTA (Denis 1995). Sectoral business reservations leading into the Agreement were addressed through negotiations for government aid for businesses in weaker competitive sectors (Turcotte 1995). Québec support for its vision of continentalism

and NAFTA spans separatists and federalists and rests on considerations which are at once economic, political, and cultural and are grounded in aspirations to realize itself as a “distinct society” within North America (Gougeon 1994). Turcotte argues that

“For the Quebec government, North American free trade was seen as a way to ensure that francophone capital would play a larger role in the continental economy by weakening federal powers to intervene in the economy....The poor opinion of federal economic development policies, which are seen by many as favouring Ontario at the expense of Quebec, effectively reinforced support for NAFTA.” (1995: 243)

Moreover, it is not lost on Québécois cultural nationalists that Mexico is a Latin country sharing a history of Catholicism and even of French political involvement, with elements of the Mexican elite still learning French as their second language.³

An indicator of the commitment to NAFTA across the Québec political spectrum is that in the most recent Provincial election the incumbent anti-separatist Liberals argued that continuation or re-entry in NAFTA would be problematic if Québec were to separate from Canada as advocated by the Parti Québécois. The victorious PQ, on the other hand, assured the electorate that it had implicit understandings with the United States and Mexico that they would welcome a sovereign Québec. Provincial civil servants with whom I have spoken report that a major continuity in their mandate across changes in government has been pursuit and support for NAFTA and its opportunities (Furlong 1994 interview; Grégoire 1995 interview), though the exigencies of the Mexican crisis and the clear centralist Mexican posture relative to the Québec referendum somewhat dampened enthusiasm for the Mexican connection over the past two years. It is interesting to note that as the state becomes less central relative to other institutions of regulation for North America, an “autonomous” state for Québec may become more viable. The abdication of the aspects of sovereignty which so concern Mexican and Anglophone economic and social policy nationalists may be the price of “sovereignty” for Québec (Bissonnette 1995; Blank and Stanley 1993; Lachapelle 1995).

A more centralized Mexican federalism has located Mexican governmental outreach to Canada with the national government (Gutiérrez Haces 1996a). Mexican states and municipalities have long had transnational collaborative links with adjacent U.S. counterparts but have not been active in advocacy at the Federal level or in outreach to non-adjacent States and Provinces in the way that certain of the Canadian Provinces have.

Advocacy NGO's and the Path to NAFTA: We have already noted the central role played in the NAFTA drama by Canadian and Mexican organizations representing coalitions of business interests in support of the agreement and influential in its final form. A number of studies and compilations have traced NGO voice and transnational coalition building in resistance to continentalism/ globalism/neoliberalism and the

³ A Californian doing field work among academics and government functionaries from these two contexts also notes that these are both cultures in which people still smoke cigarette with some passion.

expression of these in NAFTA.⁴ Hernandez and Sanchez (1993) provide especially useful detail on the transnational coalitions involving Canadian and Mexican actors in this process.

The picture which emerges from the various studies shows the resistance to NAFTA in Canada, like the support for it, to be very much grounded in the organizational infrastructure developed in the process of the struggle over the earlier U.S.-Canadian FTA, the coalitional focus building on the earlier Pro-Canada Network (Hernandez and Sanchez 1993) to form what became and continues as the Action Canada Network (ACN), an arena of coordination among a broad array of Canadian labor, nationalist, and social policy organizations in opposition to the free trade agenda as expressed in NAFTA.⁵

In the form of the affiliated trinational Common Frontiers/Fronteras Comunes (Hernandez and Sanchez 1993; Sinclair 1992), the Action Canada Network also reached out to groups sharing common concerns in Mexico, particularly the independent trade union movement (FAT) and other Mexican NGO's. A exchange among 30 Canadian and 60 Mexican groups in 1990 catalyzed the 1991 formation of the Red Mexicana para Acción contra Libre Comercio (RMALC) (Lujan 1995 interview; Sinclair 1992). In addition to the small independent labor movement in Mexico, NAFTA opposition came from organizations involving small business, *campesinos*, and various NGO's organized around economic justice and indigenous rights.

Resistance to the passage of NAFTA was largely ineffective (Ayers 1996), except in exercising some influence in the side agreements regarding the environment and projected impacts on labor; but its passage and the codification of continental political and economic arrangements which it implied provided a newly salient arena for the playing out of previously "domestic" interests, commitments, and divisions (Macdonald 1995; Schwartz 1996). Moreover, certain of the structures generated to express voice and resistance within the emerging continental arena continue as organizational infrastructure of the post-NAFTA period. These structural residues are a focus of our interests here and are complemented by the activities and institutions of academia, certain professions, and the media in contributing to the development of continental relational infrastructure.

Academic and Professional Actors and The Media: Academia, particular professions, and the media have provided platforms for proposals and critiques in the building of a North American free trade regime resting on neoliberal understandings.

⁴ Notable among these are Ayers 1996; Clarke 1992; Dreiling 1994; Fronteras Comunes/CECOPE 1992; Gutiérrez Haces 1996b; Hernandez and Sanchez 1993; Howard 1995a and 1995b; Kirton and Munton 1996; Littlehale 1996; Macdonald 1995; Makuch 1992; Schwartz 1996; Warnock 1994 and 1995.

⁵ Clarke, then a co-chair of ACN summarizes its list of constituent organizations (Hernandez and Sanchez 1993; Sinclair 1992) as a national coalition including leading private and public sector unions and "women's groups, farm associations, nationalist groups, anti-poverty organizations, environmental groups, church networks, senior citizens associations, aboriginal nations, cultural associations, peace networks, student organizations, and professional groups..." (1992)

And organizationally these cultural and professional actors have responded to the entrepreneurial opportunities for constructing and participating in emergent institutions of transnational civil society in North American.

Academics in both Canada and Mexico were among the earliest voices constructing the understandings on which the continental agreements would be based and offering critiques both of the underlying neoliberal understandings and of the particular agreements. In Mexico, the tendency of the state and dominant party to subsume organizations of interest articulation gave special importance to academic and journalistic voices, which have some autonomy from state and party. The resultant debates are reflected in the very extensive attached bibliography. The important thing to note is that in both countries these cultural arenas have been spaces for the relevant debates rather than organs of concerted advocacy of one policy direction or another. However, there is a strong tendency for the debates and conference in these academic settings to participate in rather than to challenge the the neoliberal NAFTA premises. Partially, this may be related to participants attempting to anticipate the professional roles and institutional structures which might thrive within the emergent order at the same time that their discourse and developing transnational relationships participate in the authorship of that order.

The development of Canadian–Mexican academic entrepreneurship and resultant structures is carefully chronicled in the *Canadian Mexicanist Network Newsletter* (CMNN) begun at the University of Calgary in 1990. We can observe there, and in the conferences and collaborations it maps, a process of cross-national coalition formation as particular scholars and institutions collaboratively position themselves to be the official academic interlocutors between the two countries. We can also see here the close involvement of both Canadian and Mexican governments in nurturing this academic expression of transnational civil society. This governmental nurturance takes the form of academic conference participation by Canadian and Mexican federal functionaries and of providing funding for these events, for educational centers with continental or bi-national focus, and for bi-national and trinational research grants. North American governments are joined in these funding activities by foundations, usually based in the United States.

Since 1992, AMEC (Asociación Mexicana de Estudios Canadienses), has linked people studying Canada in various Mexican institutions, thus complementing centers such as UNAM's Centro de Investigaciones Sobre América del Norte (CISAN) based in particular universities and research institutes. A November 1995 conference in Calgary moved the bi-national Canadian Mexicanist Network toward emerging as a counterpart Canadian Association for Mexican Studies. Each of these organizations and centers, moreover, has sponsored bi-national conferences, examining the inter-societal relationship; and the 1994 fiftieth anniversary year of Canadian-Mexican diplomatic relations, following as it did on the signing of NAFTA, saw a blizzard of such conferences and commemorations in both countries. In the process, a cadre is building of academics who have career investments in the construction and study of the

emerging bi-national relationship and its institutions. Within this cadre, national boundaries define the lines neither of intimacy and trust nor of otherness.

To the degree that the organizational and interpersonal infrastructure generated by the NAFTA process survives the Agreement, it becomes part of the order which the agreement establishes.

Subnational and Transnational Actors in the Post-NAFTA Arena

The Legacy of the NAFTA Process: We have already noted the NAFTA moment as punctuating a process of decreasing salience of state boundaries in terms of capital and commodity flows and underlined the continuing or accentuated role of the North American state as a regulator of population movements and of citizen demands concerning quality of life.⁶ As such, it both structured a potential competitive “race to the bottom” among national populations competing for employment (Brecher and Costello 1994) and, as noted, provided a catalyst for transnational citizen coalition in addressing the Agreement as a proximate expression of an emerging global order shaping economic and political conditions in each of the implicated countries.

The coalitions among subnational actors active in the NAFTA process continue as residues of varying strength, together potentially constituting key elements in an emerging North American civil society. Some of these structures of coalition have been elaborated and strengthened in the post-NAFTA period. Growing business, subnational governmental, professional, and academic transnational ties have been among the most conspicuous elements in the developing continental infrastructure (Ayres 1996; Carruth 1996; Kirton and Munton 1996). Moreover, there seems to be substantial continuing activity among certain of the organizations active in the ACN and the RMALC during the NAFTA process (Ayres 1996; Gutiérrez Haces 1996b), with transnational linkages among environmental advocacy NGO’s especially in flower and their environmental agendas meeting with a transnational audience if not with clear success (Dreiling 1994).

What is most interesting, however, is the way in which the structure of the emergent order, of which these relationships are an aspect, shapes opportunities and impediments for particular kinds of coalitions. Specifically, there seem to be major structural impediments to labor coalitions across the involved nations (Littlehale 1996); and there seem to be new opportunities for coalitions between indigenous peoples and environmental advocacy groups (Dreiling 1994; Hitchins 1996) and, less clearly, among indigenous peoples themselves (Schwartz 1996), transnational academic organizations providing some of the space for these coalitional activities. Moreover, organizations of

⁶ Giovanni Arrighi (1994) locates these processes as part of a “transitional” phase within a long cycle of oscillation within global capitalism between geographically centered hegemony and transitional periods dominated by finance capital. It should be noted, however, that NAFTA contrasts with the European Union, which facilitates movement of populations as well as of capital and commodities among states within its boundaries, thus taking on aspects of a “superstate” in a way that NAFTA clearly does not.

women and conferences organized by them have been especially active in addressing direct and indirect downward pressures on social services and the situation of women within the respective countries (M. Cohen 1992 and 1994).

The Role of Class? Coalitions among business and elite groups of the three countries are facilitated by multiple linking institutions of business coordination and by educational arrangements now facilitating exchange or even the education of elites in common institutions. Both of the last two Mexican Presidents have had some of their education in Ivy League institutions, and Woodrow Wilson's Secretary of State, Richard Lansing, long ago advocated this path for coopting Mexican state apparatus to U.S. elite aspirations for the continental order (Howard 1995b). Just as networks of transnational relationship among co-educated elites raise questions of possible emergence of continental class structures, networks of relationships among popular level activist NGO's also raise such questions. Some such "collaboration from below" survives the initial NAFTA process and some has been subsequently elaborated (Ayres 1996; Gutiérrez-Haces 1996:), involving especially the more independent Mexican unions and activist elements within some of the Canadian public employees unions and the Canadian Automobile Workers, the latter having a strong interest in the impact of the Mexican component of the continental auto industry. One example of successful transnational labor collaboration, building on an earlier agreement, was between the independent Frente Autentica Trabajadora (FAT) and United Electrical Workers of America in successfully organizing a General Electric maquiladora in Ciudad Juarez shortly after the initiation of NAFTA. The Canadian Maquila Organizing Project is also active with FAT in this Northern Mexico area (Warnock 1995). But such concerted actions among labor organizations have so far been few.

Three elements of the situation at once make such collaboration vital to the interests of the workers concerned and provide impediments to collaborative organization. First, the official inhibition to the transnational mobility of labor under NAFTA puts workers into competition with each other, the "race to the bottom" as workers are constrained to make concessions to management and to moderate demands for social services in an effort to maintain "competitive" labor and social costs within the continental and global market.⁷ Second, Roman (1995) reminds us that the official constraints to transnational mobility are mechanisms of intimidation for those primarily Mexican workers involved in the *de facto*, often cyclic transnational flows. A final inhibition to "solidarity from below" among workers from these countries is a deep difference in labor organization—Canada having a long tradition of independent trade unions whose closest party relationship is with a party never nationally in power, while dominant Mexican unions are integrated with the dominant party and generally support government policy, sometimes modified for their benefit (Anderson 1994; Bizberg 1994). Students of these relations at the recent Toronto meeting of the Association for Canadian Studies in the United States (ACSUS) were in strong consensus that the developing North American transnational civil society linkages are

⁷ For the implications of the developing free trade regime in Mexico, see Covarrubias V. and Solís Granados (1993) and especially the article by Carrillo, Contreras, and Ramírez in that volume.

not substantially organized around transnational working class solidarity (Ayers 1996; Gutiérrez Haces 1996; Littlehale 1996; Schwartz 1996). This does not mean, however, that voices of labor organizations or of organizations from subaltern spaces are not heard within the emerging arenas. The voices of women's organizations have been noted, and the voices of indigenous peoples are also of note.

Environmentalist and Indigenous North America: Like the downward pressure on wages, the free trade regime if not otherwise regulated places downward pressure on environmental protections as regions compete through reduction of short-term costs for investment from global capital (Makuch 1992; Peón Escalante 1995; Warnock 1995). Environmentalists engaged in the NAFTA process, like labor, were able to influence certain of the side agreements; and the possibility of the incorporation of certain environmental and labor provisions within the agreements for an expanded NAFTA is an item of current struggle. Significantly in this and the broader struggle for environmental protection environmentalists are not in the same kind of inter-regional competition in which labor and regional environments find themselves, as they compete for investment and ultimately for jobs. While environments, like labor rights and privileges, are threatened by the push to "competitiveness" within free trade, environmentalists are not disempowered in the way in the way that labor is by this pressure. Environmentalists as a group are not subject to the loss of their own jobs through resistance to the downward pressures and, in fact, may be encouraged to use their material and political resources in transnational coalition for the maintenance of environmental quality.

A further coalitional element is introduced by the relation of indigenous groups to aspects of the "environment" needing "protection," and there is within the environmentalist sensibility an inclination to look to indigenous peoples as voices of sustainable practices (Traynor 1995), even though there may be a tension in practice between purist environmentalist sensibilities and the use of natural resources for the livelihood of the indigenous peoples with whom they are associated. These complex dynamics encourage transnational coalitions of environmentalist NGO's (Hernandez and Sanchez 1993) and generate a receptiveness to indigenous claims phrased within environmentalist rhetoric and to coalition with such indigenous actors. Academic conferences seem to provide one arena in which such actors come together.

After five centuries, indigenous groups in the North America seem to be gaining new voice by effective use of transnational NGO contacts and transnational media to enlarge and continentalize the arenas of their respective and, in some cases, collaborative struggles (Benedict 1995; Coon-Come 1994; Goodleaf 1994; Nungak 1994; Two-Rivers 1995). The very politics of separatism for Québec are influenced by Cree and, to a lesser extent, Inuit internationally articulated reticence to leave the Canadian state (Coon-Come 1994; Nungak 1994), making indigenous groups major players in the Québec scenario. Québec Inuit, while generally opposing Québec separatism, have welcomed massive hydroelectric development in their area as bringing economic opportunity (Nungak 1994). On the other hand, Cree coalitions with environmental

groups in Canada and the United States and effective use of transnational media seems to have played a part in New York's pulling back from stated willingness to buy additional Québec power and the Québec governments's 1994 suspension of the second phase of the massive Great Whale hydroelectric project on James Bay. More recently, the Government of Canada has used the legal case developed by the Cree in regard to Québec separatism as the basis for Federalist legal strategy in this matter (Hitchins 1996).

The Zapatistas in Chiapas also have been skillful in the use of both international media and transnational NGO ties in pursuit of globally informed domestic objectives addressed in part to the politics of continentalism. The presence of Canadian NGO's in Chiapas and their political leverage on the Canadian government were cited by that government as a major reason that Canada sent a representative to Chiapas in January of 1994 to observe the unfolding of those events and to report on any ways in which they might be involved with NAFTA or other aspects of the Canadian-Mexican relationship. The representative officially judged the Chiapas issues to be strictly domestic (Coghlan 1994). The use of international media and NGO connections by Zapatistas has been clearly conscious (Autonomea 1994). Posters declaring that "Todos somos Marcos" are available in Toronto's Kensington Market, and the Zapatistas are cited by people in Toronto who see themselves as progressive as fellow resisters of United States domination as expressed in continentalism. These resisters of continentalism find themselves seeking alliances at the far end of the continent. In doing so, the arenas of political action and of civil society are in critical senses themselves continentalized.

Reading the Process and Structures of Mexican-Canadian Subnational and Transnational Strategy and Linkage

Karl Polanyi suggested that purely market mechanisms of the sort celebrated within the neo-liberal economic language of NAFTA are in a dynamic tension with the enduring relations and organizations of society, with which they stand in contrast and on which they depend as their institutional context. He saw the ascendancy of market principles within this balance as destructive not only of the political institutions and civil society⁸ which made possible their compromised operation but also of the human spirit and of the sustainability of social and personal life. The current tensions between the demands of "the market" (as articulated by the World Bank, the IMF, the WTO, and the "rescuers of the Mexican economy") and the needs of Mexican people (coping with daily survival under this market "discipline") may bring Polanyi's dynamic tension into especially striking relief. Such tension certainly makes more urgent our

⁸ Polanyi himself (1957) does not distinguish between governmental and "civil" structures in his contrast between "the market" and "society" (non-market). The concept "civil society" is used here to make that distinction among non-market structures. "Civil society" may include organizations such as merchant associations or even corporations or parties which themselves act within either markets or political processes but it does not refer to either market-regulated exchange or to organs of government as such. Our usage here grows out of that proposed by Gramsci (1988).

examination of those structures, the transnational networks and institutions, which potentially constitute transnational civil society within North American, structures which may serve to regulate the market and to articulate non-dominant interests, thus potentially mitigating the consequences of unchecked “market mechanisms.” In providing part of the infrastructure of regulation, voice, and resistance the emergent structure may contribute to conditions that move the continental free trade regime toward longer-term viability, away from the contradictions of its less mitigated forms.

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