

A Failure of Normalization: Transnational Migration,  
Popular Justice and Police Repression  
in the Contemporary Neoliberal Mexican Social Formation

by

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## **Introduction**

This essay is a very preliminary exploration of specific features of contemporary social fields in Mexico, particularly as the struggles in those fields have been altered by the government's pursuit of neoliberal economic policy during the last three sexenios. Neoliberal economic policies increased Mexico's vulnerability to changes in other social fields (both economic and political) and a concomitant acceleration in the pace of social change as actors are confronted by novel situations which cannot be accommodated within the repertoires of existing strategies, developed under different objective conditions. Two well-known features of structural adjustment and neoliberalism are the privatization of state enterprises and fiscal austerity resulting in reduced social investment (education, price supports, state credit programs, etc.). The weakening of corporative links, which historically played important roles in maintaining the extant system of political power, adds new dimensions to social and economic struggle of both rural and urban subalterns. If Foucault's (1977) theory of disciplinary power is reinterpreted in order to eliminate its obvious Eurocentrism (whereby all power assumes a disciplinary form) it is possible to argue, I believe, that Mexico exemplifies a case of disciplinary power in retreat and that violence, such as occurred in the Agua Blanca (Guerrero, 28 June 1996) and Acteal (Chenhalo, Chiapas, December 1997) massacres and the Buenos Aires killings (Mexico City, 8 September 1997), recapitulates features of a feudalized power apparatus that increasingly relies on public (or pseudo-public) displays of force in order to silence a disenchanting citizenry whose identities are increasingly formed on the margins of state control. This, I believe, is one meaning of the oft-heard statement that in signing the NAFTA agreement, Salinas also signed the PRI's death warrant.

The essay, then, examines three reactions to reconfigured social fields, two of which function as active elements in their further transformation: transnational migration, delinquency and police repression, and popular justice. These responses provide little material for the development of progressive political alternatives, but they problematize rule even as they (temporarily) prop it up, because they appear in many circumstances to be the products of subject identities that reject the state's claims to rest its authority on a purported social contract. Delinquency involves a rejection of law, lynching a breakdown in the institutionalized justice system, and transnational migration challenges the state's sovereign control of territory, especially when economic and political decisions affecting relations in rural Mexican communities are made by transmigrants in New York City or California (see Smith forthcoming).

## **Social Fields of Power**

My conception of social field is informed by readings of Pierre Bourdieu and enriched by the work of Eric Wolf, Sidney Mintz and others. Bourdieu conceives of social fields as relatively bounded entities, in which actors who occupy "positions" endowed with differing amounts of "capital" (economic, cultural, and symbolic) struggle with one another within the field to increase their capital or to change the field's rules or boundaries (Bourdieu 1990). The strategies that actors employ are, according to Bourdieu, the products of "generative schemes" or "durable dispositions"--which he calls "habitus"--representing the mental form of the structured fields in which the actors themselves were formed. He notes that habitus is "a model for the production of practices and a system of models for the perception and appreciation of practices. And in both cases its operations express the social position in which it was constructed" (1990:131). By definition social fields are complex and positions multiple meaning that the habituses of social actors occupying those positions differ, even if the overall dominance of one group gives it more

latitude in structuring the field to its advantage and thus shaping the durable dispositions of the field's other occupants. In a somewhat different context William Roseberry (1994:360-361) referenced this when he defined hegemony as the manner in which "the words, images, symbols, forms, organizations, institutions, and movements used by subordinate populations to talk about, understand, confront, accommodate themselves to, or resist their domination are shaped by the process of domination itself." Roseberry opined that, "What hegemony constructs...is not a shared ideology but a common meaningful and material framework for living through, talking about, and acting upon social orders characterized by domination."

In his empirical work Bourdieu explores in great detail the positions, dispositions and rules affecting struggles in specific French intellectual, religious and educational social fields. But as Bourdieu is well aware, social fields are not isolated but tied into one another in local, regional, national and international complexes. Nor are they of equal salience in shaping the contours of a society or the globe. To take one example, Bourdieu maintains that writers and artists may be dominant in the field of cultural production but that they "are dominated in their relations with those who hold political and economic power" (1990:145). In order to analyze fields dynamically, in interaction with one another, we would be advised to harness the Bourdieuan cart to a Wolfian or Mintzian team. In the perspective of Eric Wolf (1982) or Sidney Mintz (1985), social fields (although not referred to as such) are multiple, overlapping, mutually affecting and, at particular historical moments, hierarchically ordered. I think that such a perspective is particularly important now that national economies have become much more "open" and vulnerable to "outside" influences as a consequences of quick, massive movements of commodities, capital, and, to a lesser degree, people.

The "social fields" or "fields of power" approach is less a theory of how groups interact than it is a methodology that helps us think particular problems. To be sure, it comes accompanied by a social ontology, i.e., a general panhistorical vision of the fundamental nature of Society and those who compose it. For Bourdieu social fields are concrete as well as theoretical, they are multiple, and the actors in them are historical products who tend to reproduce in their practical activities the sedimented (structured) history in which they were formed. Thus Bourdieu treats "capital" as a panhistorical category, though recognizing that it assumes different forms in different periods, and he presumes that "struggle" for supremacy within social fields is inescapable, although the forms that struggle may assume cannot be predicted from his genetic field theory. In this sense Bourdieu shares with Foucault a skepticism regarding the possibility of power-free utopias or a society without internal struggle. In his reckoning social fields are necessarily sites of inequality dominated by the group or groups victorious in the last round who seek to fend off challenges from subordinate groups; each group wields the strategic resources (capitals in different amounts and distributions) at its disposals employing internalized strategies, modified, albeit to a limited degree, by subsequent events.

Ultimately, we may decide that Bourdieu has committed the error of proclaiming as the ontological basis of all societies features--domination, struggle, capital--of the specifically capitalist epoch of which he is a product. In some ways Bourdieu's approach reminds me of economic anthropologists of the formalist school who sought to universalize capitalist relationships of wages, profits, rent and so on by "discovering" precursors of them among West Irian Kapaukans (Pospisil), Tikopian Islanders (Firth), coastal New Guineans (Epstein) and other pre-industrial (but not pre-colonial) peoples. However, this potential limitation does not prevent Bourdieu's work from being useful for thinking capitalism; there its utility--particularly

methodological--is much less in question. My task here is to attempt to employ the “field of power” or “social field” approach in order to examine several contemporary phenomena in Mexico: transnational migration, criminality and lynching. I will not, however, carry the argument to the analysis of any localized field situation. I am more interested in understanding how these “phenomena” respond to changes in larger fields, how, in other words, they might be approached through the interaction of fields. The change that would seem to be most important revolves around Mexico’s economic opening--whether referred to as the “neoliberal” or market revolution, globalization or “imperialism,” David Harvey’s preferred substitute for the more egalitarian-sounding and politically unthreatening “globalization.”<sup>1</sup>

### **Neoliberalism**

The “neoliberal” or “market revolution,” was U.S. capital’s answer to the economic crisis that followed a long post-war wave of accumulation built on the Fordist model. The open markets, relatively unfettered movement of capital (and repatriation of profits), reduction or elimination of tariffs, fiscal austerity and other policies associated with structural adjustment and neoliberalism represent important changes in the rules of the international capitalist game and were imposed upon most Latin governments--including the Mexican--in the wake of the 1980s continental debt crisis. Such policies facilitated U.S. capital’s shift from Fordist regimes to “flexible accumulation,” in which production units and labor forces are sited strategically in order to minimize overall production costs and restore profits: a reduced core of well-paid, highly-trained workers in the North; an expensive, mobile force of low-paid, unorganized “routine” workers in the South (Harvey 1989). The incorporation of Mexico into GATT in 1986 and NAFTA in 1994 also opened Mexican markets to U.S. capital, consumer goods and services.<sup>2</sup> Indeed, “technocrats” in the Mexican government have wedded Mexico’s economic future to that of the United States. But rather than a “wedding,” with its ideals of equality (or at least complementarity), the Mexican government would sell the nation as a U.S. *casa chica*--a pleasure ground for U.S. tourists and a petroleum source for U.S. pleasure vehicles. Currently 85 percent of Mexican trade is with the United States; eight of every ten barrels of oil are sold to the United States; and at least 25 percent of intermediate demand products is generated there (Tello 1996: *La Jornada* 1998:26).<sup>3</sup>

Such dependence would be less problematic were it accompanied by economic stability and by greater social and economic equality. The result, however, has been the opposite. Privatization of state-owned enterprise, reduction or elimination of barriers on foreign investment and profit repatriation, and entrance into trade agreements and treaties such as GATT and NAFTA have been accompanied by enormous increases in economic inequality and a weak

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<sup>1</sup> Harvey began a short intervention at a panel treating “globalization” at the 1995 annual meeting of the American Anthropological Association by reading from the Communist Manifesto and concluded his recitation by noting that what others referred to as globalization just seemed like imperialism to him.

<sup>2</sup> John Ross (1998:218-235) treats the consumer invasion as another chapter in the United States’s effort to annex Mexico. However, he also records Mexican resistance to U.S. cultural impositions, and concludes that “the annexation of Mexico can never be accomplished as long as Mexicans remember who they are and what languages they speak” (235).

<sup>3</sup> The coefficient of internationalization (the percentage of imports among intermediate demand products) rose from 11.3 percent in 1982 to 29.3 percent in 1994 (Tello 1996:50).

economy marked by chronic imbalances and in constant danger of sliding into yet another crisis. As various commentators have noted, the peso's current downward slide results from a structural situation not terribly different from that in 1994 characterized by a high level of petroleum dependency (about 30 percent of government revenues), a poorly-capitalized banking system and a chronic trade imbalance shored up by short-term, speculative investment. Problems in Asia or Russia, a decline in international oil prices or a domestic political crisis along with other unforeseeable events can easily trigger another round of crisis events. And each time a crisis occurs or threatens, the President orders up another round of belt-tightening by the masses, leading to further deterioration in the standard of living of the majority (see below). Rather than being inevitable, the current structural situation in which international product and labor market competition is no longer buffered by a "benevolent state," is the product of economic and political struggles won by the "technocrats" and their international backers in the U.S. government, the IMF and elsewhere.

The process benefits the wealthiest ten percent of the Mexican population as well as international investors who suck off increasing proportions of the surplus labor produced in Mexico. Applied to household income, the coefficient of Gini, a generally accepted measure of income dispersion, declined from about .54 in 1963 to .44 in 1984, at which point it reversed course, rising to .47 in 1989 and .49 in 1992 (Fujii and Aguilar 1995:610).<sup>4</sup> While current monetary income of the bottom eighty percent of Mexican households declined over the 1984-1992 period from 50.5 to 45.6 percent of total income (a 9.7 percent decline), that of the top decile increased by 17.5 percent from 32.4 to 38.1 percent (60-611; see Tello 1996:48). Government statistics indicate that in 1994 the Mexico's wealthiest ten percent had increased their share of national income to 41 percent (Córdova y Pérez 1998:10). Between 1982 and 1995, profits rose as the real value of wages fell by 70 percent (Tello 1996:48). Participation in current national income of the poorest 10 percent of the population declined by more than 8 percent from 1.72 percent in 1984 to 1.58 percent in 1992.

The number of Mexicans living in extreme poverty increased 53 percent since Zedillo entered office in 1994, passing from 17 million to the currently-estimated 27 million (up from 22 million in 1995) even as the economy grew.<sup>5</sup> The situation of the majority of Mexicans has deteriorated so much that the government is withholding the results of the most recent National Household Economic Survey carried out in the third quarter of 1996 by the National Statistical and Geographical Institute (Córdova and Pérez 1998).

### **Strategies**

In both urban and rural areas households seek to reduce spending and to compensate for the continuous erosion of income by marshaling additional income sources. One strategy is to pull children out of school and to put them to work as rural wage workers, servants to middle class households, petty vendors or beggars. For instance, the International Labor Organization (ILO) estimates that at least 250,000 Mexico City children work to help out their households (Monge 1998b:9, ). Almost half labor as petty vendors, another third beg. While this strategy may sustain a minimal level of income at the present time, it "has a clear social cost in terms of human capital and is an element that will probably tend to perpetuate poverty and inequality in the future"

<sup>4</sup> A coefficient of Gini of 0.0 means perfect income parity (zero dispersion) while a Gini of 1.0 would mean complete inequality (all the income concentrated in one household).

<sup>5</sup> The extreme poor are those who "lack access to the minimum food basket" (Tello 1996:48).

(Cortés 1995:77). Meanwhile official statistics claim that the number of Mexico City street children doubled between 1992 and 1995 from 6,875 to 13,373 (Monge 1998b:9).

Criminal activity provides a risky alternative route to economic survival. I think that we must consider that much theft and robbery is “subsistence crime,” undertaken by people totally lacking in alternatives. Though well-organized criminal bands perpetrate many bank robberies, many others are the work of unarmed amateurs. An indeterminate number of assaults, theft, robberies (the most rapidly-growing categories, see below) are committed out by very young people who have come to age outside the parameters of disciplinary control. By disciplinary control I refer less to the formal system of rewards and punishments, exercised by parents, teachers and bosses, among others, than to the more subtle relations of body and mind, of practice and routine developed via the processes of surveillance, normalization and examination discussed by Foucault in Discipline and Punish (1977). Foucault analyzes “the disciplines” as a series of procedures for the creation of docile subjects in whom disciplinary routines are internalized as constitutive aspects of the self. The implication of a totalizing disciplinary apparatus characterized by a seamless channeling of power reflected in and through the self is obviously problematic for it leaves no site outside itself from which resistance might originate (Dews 1987). Nor should the scheme be transferred from its European referent and simply applied to Mexico and other Latin American countries, where states have historically lacked the resources and the organization to develop disciplinary institutions to levels they attained in industrialized capitalist nations. Still, it could be argued that a partial development of the disciplines played a role in maintaining social peace, reducing the need for risky, open displays of violence. Neoliberal policies erode the effects of disciplinary procedures by removing subjects-in-information from their influence. Thus the decline of formal sector employment and the reduction of budgets for public health and education distance people from procedures through which class power is normalized and relegates their formation to social fields with different power effects. Of course, as crime increases, especially in the major cities, and the authorities prove unable to curtail violations, it, too, takes its place as a dimension of social fields that provokes responses, among them direct action (lynching) and other forms of citizen “justice.”

People may also respond to the economic crisis provoked by neoliberalism by seeking work in “El Norte,” where economic restructuring and neoliberalism have generated a large demand for low-paying jobs, primarily in the service sector. Mexican migrants to the United States are often subjected to disciplinary regimes somewhat from those in Mexico. Somewhat different fields of power provoke modifications in their operational strategies, which they sometimes seek to introduce in their home communities during visits or return. The impact is potentially much greater when migration persists at high levels over long periods of time, eventually reforming (or contributing to the reformulation of) local power fields. In the following I take up each response in turn and discuss provide, as well, a brief analysis of lynchings in contemporary Mexico.

### **A. Crime and Delinquency**

Crime statistics are notoriously unreliable in Mexico because many, possibly a majority of victims do not report crimes to the authorities, who they often suspect of complicity with the perpetrators. Police at all levels regularly request payment in order to investigate crimes, and even so they solve few of them. In Mexico City only 1.9 percent of crimes reported in 1994 were

solved, rising to 3.6 percent in 1997. For this reason the increases in reported crimes in Mexico City--66 percent in 1995, 13.7 percent in 1996 and 2.7 percent in 1997 (See Table 1)--likely reflect more than a higher incidence of reporting.<sup>6</sup> All categories of crime have risen, though according to official figures, crimes against property, such as burglary, robbery and auto theft, have skyrocketed while rape and homicide have risen only moderately (Quinoñes 1996:A34).<sup>7</sup> For instance, assaults on banks jumped to 413 in 1995 and to 485 in 1996 from an average of 233 annually between 1981-1994 (Favela and Ortíz 1997:62). That offenses against property have increased so much more quickly than crimes against the person evidences a high level of material deprivation; the economic opening has filled the stores with imported goods but denied the vast majority the means of access to them.

Minors commit a growing percentage of infractions. Over the last three years the number of minors--by law those less than eighteen years of age--apprehended by Mexico City police forces and accused of criminal activity rose from 2,973 in 1995 to 5,351 in 1996 and 5,420 in 1997--a three-year increase of 82 percent (Ortiz 1997:56). Almost one in five was less than fifteen years old (56). Youth infractors, many of whom are members of one of Mexico City's estimated 1,300 youth gangs, were implicated in an average of 50 murders, 83 sexual offenses, and 2,668 robberies annually between 1995-1997 (Galán 1997). The growing criminal activity of the "children of the crisis...children precisely of disintegrated families or families lacking any possibility of development," as they are referred to by Pedro Peñaloza, the coordinator of Citizen Participation for the Prevention of Crime of the Capital Government, [coordinador de Participación Ciudadana para la Prevención del Delito del Gobierno Capitalino,] has given rise to a heated discussion about lowering the legal age of adulthood so as to consign older youth infractors to adult prisons (Olayo 1997:57).

The incidence of crime is increasing in the rest of the country as well. In Puebla, Guerrero, Oaxaca, Morelos and elsewhere armed bands frequent rural areas robbing passersby, cars and trucks of merchandise and personal possessions and kidnapping merchants and industrialists or their family members and holding them for ransoms in remote redoubts. In Puebla's southern Mixteca, one of the poorest areas of Mexico and a major sending area of US-bound migrant workers, the state Attorney Generals Office identified seventeen armed gangs in 1995, among them los gatos, el pelón (who wear wigs because they have no hair), y los Bautista, feared because "in every assault or robbery they display weapons used exclusively by the army" (La Jornada de Oriente 1995:5). Ten additional armed groups have been detected along the coast and in the highlands of Chiapas (Villalba Sánchez 1998:7). The small, though historically important, state of Morelos provides another example. According to various reports, bands operating in Morelos kidnapped as many as 1,200 people (350 cases documented) between 1995 and 1997,

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<sup>6</sup> Some journalist cite overall higher levels of increase: 18 percent in 1994, 35 percent in 1995, and 33 percent in 1996 (Preston 1997:A14; Quinoñes 1996:A34). In any case the figures are sombering. Quinones (1997:A34) notes that historically crime in Mexico City rose 3-5 percent annually, commensurate with the population growth rate. Only in 1811-12 and 1911-12, during the war for independence and the Revolution respectively, did Mexico City crime experienced consecutive double digit increases.

<sup>7</sup> Statistics for homocides, car theft, bank robberies and certain other crimes are likely to be relatively accurate. I put little credence in the figures pertaining to "rape" and "robbery of passerby" (transeúnte).

recovering ransoms estimated at 30 million dollars (Castillo 1998:42; Monge 1997:15).<sup>8</sup> Since the wave of kidnapping began in the mid-1990s, dozens of businesspeople have sold their homes and fled the state with their families, usually to San Antonio, Texas (Aranda 1997:18).

The timing of the national crime wave leaves little doubt but that it is associated with the crisis that exploded in December of 1994, when the peso suffered a forty percent devaluation.<sup>9</sup> One consequence of the neoliberal economic opening (see Lustig 1995; Dabat 1995), the 1994 crisis pushed thousands of otherwise law-abiding Mexicans into crime. It also, I believe, placed severe stress on a social fabric rent by the “lost decade” of the 1980s leading to a “failure of normalization,” i.e., the state’s growing abandonment of social spaces crucial to the production of obedient subjects. Children forced to live in the street or to abandon school in order to contribute to household income by begging, washing car windows, selling gum and dozens of other informal sector jobs are formed in the absence of the disciplinary training in the management of time, space and their bodies that schools, religious institutions, and other official and semi-official institutions specialize in, and that help to limit resistance or to guide resistance, when it is unavoidable, into acceptable channels. Where these mechanisms are absent or unavailable, children (and to a lesser degree adults) may internalize practices and develop values and social relations that replicate in many ways those of the larger society but without the respect for authority that accompanies successful socialization. They are formed on a social field that lies on the margins of state control.

### **Police Repression**

The recomposition of social fields is both recognized and ignored in Mexico and other countries where neoliberalism have taken hold. Everyone acknowledges that social fields have changed but government officials almost never analyze the impact of changes in social fields upon the constitution of social subjects. Both in Mexico and the United States neoliberal proponents delink social subjectivities from the practices that shape them--or the practices themselves are decontextualized from the social field of which they are a part. One common result is an exaggerated emphasis on “moral values” and on “family,” as though through force of will alone family could be a protected preserve unaffected by the economic and social turmoil that forms the contemporary context of its reproduction. Hence poverty should be unrelated to the raising of the young; parents should be able to impart the “proper” moral values to their children even though they are unable to provide for their basic material needs without violating the very principles that they would have their progeny uphold. And both parents and children should ignore the inside deals, thefts of public funds, the rake-offs and rip-offs (Raul Salinas, the government bailout of the banks and its current effort to saddle the public with the bill, the Maseca scam, the complicity

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<sup>8</sup> El Financiero reported a total of 592 kidnappings in Mexico during 1995 of which Morelos ranked third (with 59), behind Guerrero (92) and Chiapas (73) (Favela and Ortíz 1997:61). However, many kidnappings are not reported either to the news media or the authorities in order to avoid jeopardizing the victim’s life.

<sup>9</sup> An interesting exercise would involve plotting the incidence of bank robberies against macroeconomic indicators of economic growth or against the percentage of Mexican living in extreme poverty. Assaults on banks increased from 220 in 1981 to 340 in 1982 and varied from 218 (1984) to 290 (1986) during the 1983-1988 period of high inflation and declining real wages. From an average of 172 annually for 1983-1988, they declined to an average of 189 during the 1989-1994 period of (relative) economic recovery before exploding to 413 in 1995 (Favela and Ortíz 1997:62). While many, probably most assaults on banks are carried out by organized gangs, the timing of the increases and decreases suggests that a substantial proportion are “crimes of desperation” conducted by amateurs.



between government officials and narcotraffickers) that abound among the elite even as structural adjustment policies demand that the poor cinch their belts ever tighter. Income redistribution is seldom mentioned as a major problem by the dominant party; the neoliberal rule-of-thumb is that the economic pie must grow larger and then everyone will receive a bigger piece. But as statistics cited earlier demonstrate, this does not usually occur in practice.

Thus the “seven reasons for criminality” given by Interior Minister Francisco Lambastida all focused on deficiencies in the public security apparatus which result in low levels of apprehension and punishment. And all the solutions proposed in the government proposal for a National Program of Public Security involve increases in the number of agents, and improvements in public security infrastructure, training, coordination and information management. But he located the “deepest reasons” for the problem in “a severe crisis of values” deriving not only from economic crisis but from “social decomposition”; Lambastida opined that recuperating levels of security requires “honesty, solidarity, respect for the law and for others, tolerance for ideas and beliefs, social responsibility, esteem and a high regard for work” (Olmos and Vargas 1998:10; de la Vega 1998c:27). The Interior Secretary ignores the fact that values, as a key feature of identity, are formed by relating with others on multiple social fields of power, and that they are very much linked to the rules that actors perceive regulate relations on those fields. He also underestimates the degree to which the government’s legitimacy has been eroded, i.e. that many citizens view government as an anarchic, ruleless terrain of exercises of power where the only value is monetary. Here I wish to describe merely one recent case that that effectively weakened government’s hold on Mexican citizens.

Above I mentioned that the state of Morelos had been the site of approximately 1,200 kidnappings between 1995 and 1997, with a booty estimated at 30 million dollars. In 1994 a group of the State Judicial Police received training from Colombian specialists (See Corro 1997:19-20) and were incorporated as the Anti-kidnapping Unit of the Morelos Judicial Police, under the authority of the State Attorney General’s Office headed by Attorney General Carlos Peredo Merlo.<sup>10</sup> On 27 January 1998 Armando Martínez Salgado, the chief of this “highly-trained” anti-kidnapping police, was detained along with the unit’s commander and one of its agents while attempting to dump the body of kidnap victim Jorge Nava Avilés in Guerrero along the México-Iguala highway. Within a few weeks both Jesús Miyazawa, the head of the Judicial Police, and Attorney General Peredo had been dismissed from their posts and placed under house arrest. After being called into the case, the federal Attorney General’s Office disbanded the Anti-Kidnapping Police and placed its former members under investigation. With the prosecution of Martínez Salgado, Peredo Merlo, and Miyazawa the improbable assumed the order of a fact: the state anti-kidnapping police composed one of Morelos’s principal kidnapping organizations (Aranda 1998). These revelations led to the formation of a broad multi-party and multiorganizational front for the security of Morelos that eventually secured Governor Jorge Carillo Olea’s resignation (technically a permanent leave-of-absence) and his replacement by interim governor Manuel Baud. Several years earlier, in October 1995, state human rights and civic organizations collected evidence that implicated the Judicial Police in kidnapping and pleaded without success for Secretary of State Emilio Chuayffet Chemor and President Ernesto Zedillo to order an independent investigation (Aranda 1998:16).

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<sup>10</sup> Similar groups were formed in other states (Jalisco, Nueva León, Chihuahua), trained by other foreign experts (the U.S. FBI, Israelies, French) (Corro 1997).

Revelations of this nature undermine the government's legitimacy. Whether government corruption and repression are actually more common than in the past--and they certainly "seem" to be--probably matters less than the public's perception that they are, a perception fed by a flood of news of links between narcotrafficers and military officers, corruption and brutality in the Judicial Police, profiteering on the sale of state enterprises, and murderous intrigues within the ruling party. Clinton's "Whitewater" and sex-related problems seem tame by comparison.<sup>11</sup> As Enrique Semo (1998:37) notes, "In a country in which the majority of the citizens consider themselves to benefit from the system, a scandal can distract their attention from important problems without causing much danger.... But in a country like ours, in which the majority of the population feels economically and politically excluded, the blame for a scandal falls upon the government as a whole or upon the system."

Combined with the economic crisis which wreaks havoc on the well-being of the majority of Mexicans, the public perception of an internecine struggle by government officials to divide the public treasury can even serve as a justification for, if not an incentive to, other forms of criminal activity. Paco and Roberto, the former a 27-year-old narcotrafficfer and bank robber, the latter a 29-year-old assailant (married, three children), compared their criminal activity to that of the "authorities" during an interview in the Reclusorio Oriente in 1996 with journalist Ramón C. Márquez. Paco began by blaming criminal activity on the government:

--Look here: the government is guilty of everything that happens to us for several reasons. First, it's not only permitted the brutal enrichment of a group of privileged bastards [*cabrones*], with the consequent impoverishment to the point of misery of the screwed ones [*jodidos*]-but it has displayed its violence publicly with its famous crimes. And the children of the wretched, those who have nothing, go out into the street and form their own government: the gangs. They have to seek through violence that which society has denied them. Among the things that they have been denied is education [and] access to work, but above all they have been denied food. (Márquez 1996:60)

To this Roberto added a commentary about his experiences with the police:

It's not convenient for any cop to detain a delinquent because that would represent a reduction in his earnings. They are on the lookout for those beyond the law, not to apprehend them and attempt their rehabilitation, but to exploit them more and more each day. I wouldn't want to, or perhaps couldn't, estimate how much the criminal classes represent monthly for the private economy of the police. And that's without taking into account their shady businesses. (*idem.*)

In 1994 in response to the growing crime wave in Mexico City, former Mexico City regent Oscar Espinosa Villarreal appointed an active-duty army officer, general Enrique Salgado Cordero, to lead the police force. General Salgado filled the top posts with forty army officers, oversaw the creation of several special police forces to deal with organized youth gangs, among them the "Zorros" and the "Jaguars" (trained by Colombian police), and even placed a battalion of soldiers in the delegation of Ixtapalapa to substitute for police forces (Monge 1997:12; Corro 1997:19-22). When these measures did not prove effective, Salgado ordered a series of controversial large-scale sweeps in high-crime areas. Early operations produced few arrests but

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<sup>11</sup> Indeed, although the new media, following the U.S. lead, gives ample coverage to Clinton's escapades, many Mexican acquaintances seem more amused than shocked by the accusations. Most cannot comprehend how a presidency could be endangered by what they refer to as "a matter of skirts." ["un asunto de faldas."]

numerous complaints to human rights groups of police harassment until the afternoon of 8 September 1997 when elements of the Zorros and Jaguars carried out an operation in the Colonia Buenos Aires during which they took into custody and later murdered six young men.

Testimony in the case revealed that the police picked up the youth following an armed confrontation that left one policeman and one bystander dead. They placed three of their detainees in an ex-Ruta 100 bus, used to transport police to the site, and took them to the Balbuena headquarters. Shortly thereafter, at 6:30 in the evening, policemen drove the prisoners to a dirt road in the colonia Zapotitlán and shot them to death. The bodies of the three, aged seventeen to twenty-one, were found the next day at the bottom of a sand mine with a dozen bullet wounds among them. Several weeks later the decomposing remains of the other three men seized in the operation were discovered in a forested area of Ajusco. The “Buenos Aires” case, as it is known, galvanized public opinion to the false promise of having military personnel involved in internal policing functions and led to the disbanding of the 135-member Jaguar and Zorro forces, the incarceration of fifty-two former agents and three army officers, and the resignation on 4 December of general Salgado following the release of evidence that contradicted testimony in which he attempted to exonerate his fellow army officers (Monge 1997b).<sup>12</sup>

Cauhtemoc Cárdenas took office in December of 1997 as Mexico City’s first popularly-elected mayor and quickly removed all military officers from the police force. Prior to his inauguration many expected Cárdenas to introduce a “Zero Tolerance” policy modeled on that used by Republican Mayor Ralph Guliani in New York City (Sicilia 1997). Guliani’s policy has reduced crime, but at the cost of a significant increase in accusations of police brutality. But as Scilia (1997:41) pointed out and as the Cárdenas administration soon recognized when it decided not to pursue Zero Tolerance, Mexico City’s problems are quite different from those of New York where “criminality is not the child of the disintegration of corrupt power” (*idem*). Instead, Cárdenas called upon his extensive support base to form 55,000 “citizens crime prevention committees” throughout the city (Olayo 1997:57; Gallegos 1998).

### **B. Popular Justice**

As confidence in public authorities declines, more Mexicans take the law into their own hands. The responses vary but all evidence in some fashion the State’s weakening (loss in some instances) control over social space. Lynching, currently on the rise in Mexico, provides just one example. According to Huggins (1991:4), lynching “involves citizens’ actions against another citizen presumed to have committed a crime or violated some social norm.” De Souza Martins (1991:27) refers to it as a form of “secondary violence,” in that “it is “violence against some other act that is defined as criminal or violent.” Lynchings have been best documented in Brazil, where de Souza Martins accumulated data on 268 lynchings and attempted lynchings from selected national newspapers during the 1979-1988 period (average of 27 annually). However, lynchings or a form of vigilante justice with some similarities to them also existed in Northern Ireland, where the Irish Republican Army was pressed to provide police protection in areas under its

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<sup>12</sup> In a surprising declaration, one incarcerated ex-Jaguar declared in his defense, “We are corrupt but we are not killers” (*Reforma* 1997:B1). He went on to complain that their 1,200 peso monthly salary was not sufficient to maintain a family and cover various work-related expenses (shoe shines, washing of motorcycles, etc.): “Where’s it going to come from? Well, from the citizens. We’re corrupt because the citizens are also corrupt, it’s they who offer it [bribes] to us,” he concluded, without however, detailing the circumstances in which those those “offers” were made.

nominal control (Munck 1995), and in revolutionary South Africa where irate citizens in shantytowns and squatters' camps frequently "necklaced" accused delinquents (Scheper-Hughes 1995). Nor should we forget the United States which "has a long history of (largely racist) vigilantism" (Huggins 1991:14). Between 1882 and 1952, there took place a reported 4,730 lynchings of which ninety percent of the victims were African American (Benivides and Fischer 1991:36). The decline of lynchings in the US (to about one annually since the 1950s) is a relatively recent phenomenon.

Lynchings in Latin America occur in many different contexts and display a variety of dynamics (levels of participation, degree of spontaneity as opposed to deliberation).<sup>13</sup> For instance, recent lynchings in Mexico have followed accusations of rape, theft or murder; accusations of witchcraft; and attributions of child theft (Shadow and Rodríguez-Shadow 1991).<sup>14</sup> Despite the variety of circumstances, the frequency of lynchings (and other vigilante actions) appear to be increasing, particularly (though not exclusively) in central and southern states. The U.S. "Mexico Country Report on Human Rights Practices for 1996" stated that lynchings were rising, "primarily in rural communities with limited access to the criminal justice system" and that the national press reported 21 victims between September 1995 and August 1996 (U.S. Department of State 1997). More recently the Regional Human Rights Commission, Mahata Gandhi reported to *La Jornada* that nine lynchings resulting in seventeen deaths had occurred in Oaxaca alone over the last five years; seven lynchings, resulting in fifteen deaths, were carried out in Morelos during the governorship of Jorge Carillo Olea (Guerrero Garro and Gallegos 1998; Zaragoza 1998:52).<sup>15</sup>

Different from Brazil, where lynching is a predominantly urban phenomenon (De Souza 1991; Benevides and Fischer Ferreira 1991), most Mexican lynching occur in rural areas of southern states such as Puebla, Oaxaca and Chiapas where justice officials are notoriously corrupt and ineffective, repressing peasants and popular movements in the service of local bosses

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<sup>13</sup> One important distinction is between "anonymous lynchings," more-or-less spontaneous responses on the part of strangers, and "communal lynchings" which "involve participation by a large part of the population" and which exhibit a highly ritualized form and a degree of coordination "with leadership and a certain degree of planning" (Benevides and Fischer 1991:33-34).

<sup>14</sup> Shadow and Rodríguez-Shadow (1991:43-44) argue that press accounts of a 1985 lynching in San Francisco Coapa, Puebla represent the acts as the productions of an uncivilized "other," in effect adding fuel to a long-standing discourse of otherness that underpins the continuing economic and political "lynching" of rural indigenous Mexicans. In their alternative analysis, the violence is represented as "spontaneous mobilization oriented toward the defense of the community's integrity and of the strategic resources of sociobiological reproduction (the children) before a perceived threat from outside forces" (44).

<sup>15</sup> These figures almost surely understate the phenomenon, since they are shaped by a skewed journalistic vision more likely to report on "successful" lynching--those in which victims died--than "less newsworthy" attempted lynching or lynchings in which the victim was saved or survived the assault. School teachers, priests, and other members of the communities often intervene to plead for the victims life; sometimes angry groups barter with government officials and turn over the accused on the promise that he/she will not be released but will be prosecuted to the full extent of the law. However, unsuccessful lynching, unless they assume spectacular form (the victim stoned and drug through the streets, then turned over to state authorities in a near-death state). are probably underreported.

(caciques) rather than fighting crime.<sup>16</sup> As crime rises in the historically-marginalized south, driven in no small part by an economic policy that continues to drain labor and surplus from the countryside to the cities and then onward to the United States, some citizens respond with direct action.<sup>17</sup>

It is tempting to read in these actions the seeds of a progressive politics. Direct action challenges the authority of the state by substituting for it a seemingly local and popular power. Are we, then, in the presence of a rural Mexican version of the “popular justice” that Foucault (1980) defended against the criticisms of his Maoist opponents? I think not. The debate between Foucault and the Maoists turned around a hypothetical transition to socialism and the advisability of preserving the forms of the bourgeois justice system and the courts but refunctionalizing them to serve the interests of popular classes. Mexico is not in a revolutionary situation however sharply class lines may be drawn, as evidenced by the fact that lynching victims originate from class backgrounds little different from those of their judges and executioners. The victims are often petty thieves, itinerant vendors and asocial peasants. Some of their presumed criminal activities are serious--rape, kidnapping or murder--but others involve petty theft or minor assaults. When the poor lynch the poor rather than attacking the police station, as occurred in a well-publicized case in Trés Arroyos, Argentina in 1989 (Kalmanowiecki 1991), or collectively looting trains of the wheat or corn that they cannot afford to purchase, they reproduce both social relations that oppress as well as a stigmatized discourse on poverty that distinguishes the “honorable” poor who bear their suffering from the “thieves, rapists and murders” who prey on them. The discourse differs little from that of the “culture of poverty” wielded by wealthier groups. Finally, some lynchings, particularly those based on accusations of child theft, are the product of community fears and suspicions fed by press reports of the kidnapping of children for sale to adoption agencies or for use as organ transplant donors. Such fears find a rational basis in the disappearance of an estimated 20,000 Mexican children annually (See Chomsky 1996:20-22).<sup>18</sup>

As a judgment lynching is singular and final. Accused deny the accused the right to a defense and make no effort to scale the punishment to the crime. The only punishment is death (de Souza 1991:24). Without entering into a full-scale analysis, it seems to me that the target of lynching is transformed into a metonymical representation for all that is wrong--the assaults, rapes, thefts, and homicides that went unpunished because of the ineptness, corruption, or collusion of the authorities. In lynching, communities (or segments of them) substitute for the state, occupying the social niches that it has abandoned, but they do so in a way that merely inverts, and in that way preserves, the violence to which they themselves have historically been subjected. If lynching is a metonym for the numerous acts of violence suffered by dozens of

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<sup>16</sup> The statement is based on a study of selected press reports about lynchings from *La Jornada* during the period 1995 to early 1998.

<sup>17</sup> Between 1982 and 1995 México paid 140 billion dollars in interest on its foreign debt (Tello 1996:48). Tello estimated that 1996 interest payments would approximate 17 billion dollars.

<sup>18</sup> I do want to leave room for a more pragmatic vision of lynching, at least in some circumstances. A peasant leader from Oaxaca mentioned that people in the area where he lives had formed a community police in order to deal with escalating crime. He stated that when they caught someone, they killed them. “We are against the death penalty,” he told me, “but if we turn the people over to the police, they will be back on the streets the next day.”

workers and peasants, it is a metaphor for a “utopian” State, now transformed and purified through the “just” action of civilians.

Because it is enacted following the commission of a crime lynching can have only minor preventative impact as a function of the spectacle of the beaten, broken, and occasionally burned body of the victim.<sup>19</sup> Significantly, too, lynching is a popular inscription of the death penalty that most Mexicans, including the principal leaders of all major political parties, oppose. Each “lynching” of a Mexican national in Texas or Florida, following his or her passage through the bourgeois justice system, engenders a national day of mourning in Mexico. It is ironic, then, that a death penalty that is regularly opposed when carried out in the United States, is enacted without due process or the opportunity for the accused to mount a defense with growing regularity in rural (and increasingly urban) areas of Mexico.

On the other hand popular justice does exist in Mexico in more organized and relatively democratic forms. For instance, on the coast and in the mountains of Guerrero, the social space abandoned by the state is being occupied in another manner. Residents of the marginalized rural municipalities of Malintepic and San Luis Acatlán, tired of the personal insecurity and loss of property perpetrated by armed gangs working the unpaved roads in an area in which “the police rarely make an appearance” (Avilés 1997:7), formed in 1995 a 480 member armed police force to provide a twenty-four hour patrol. The Mexican Army gave the integrants two training sessions in the handling of arms and the state governor donated twenty rifles to this unpaid, constabulary force. The size of the force and its representativity (members of three different ethnic groups and numerous grassroots organizations) hopefully will check its being converted into a paramilitary force for exploitation by any individual or political party as has occurred with Peace and Justice and other groups in Chiapas.<sup>20</sup>

Among the most interesting aspects of popular patrols is the manner in which they enforce communal law. The Río Iguala community decided that chicken thieves would have to pay a fifty peso (\$5.75) fine, serve two nights in the local jail and two days of unpaid communal labor. The fine triples with the theft of a turkey--150 pesos, six days of unpaid work and six nights in jail--and climbs steeply with larger animals. Goat theft is punished with a fine of 400 pesos plus 16 days of work and 16 nights in the lockup, while the penalty for the theft of a horse, cow or mule is a year behind bars (Avilés 1997:8).

Several points merit mention. First, the organization represented a broad community initiative as opposed to one impelled from the state capital or from Mexico City. And it is an initiative with historical antecedents in the struggle against regional strongmen that gave birth to a variety of producers’ organizations which, however undercapitalized, provide their members with a marginally better income than possible when the marketing of coffee and other products was monopolized by a few powerful figures. As Avilés notes (8): “In the course of this struggle social organizations were forming that today warehouse coffee and sell it under their own trademark, bottle honey, obtain loans and have even participated in electoral struggles: the Light of the Mountain Union of Ejidos, the Coffee-Corn Society of Social Solidarity, the Regional Peasants

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<sup>19</sup> Analogies with eighteenth century France should be drawn with care. Under royalist power torture was a studied technique, each manipulation of the tools designed to extract a particular response in the contest between inquisitor and the accused or between the executioner and victim. The inquisitor sought to elicit truth, the executioner to exercise to excess the concentrated power of the sovereign for the benefit of the attending public (Foucault 1977).

<sup>20</sup> The communal police is composed of Tlapanecos, Mixtecos and Nahuas (Avilés 1997:7).

Union of the Lower Coast and Mountains, 500 Years of Indigenous Resistance, the Communal Supply Council and the Council of Indigenous Authorities.” In this case state officials ceded social control to local interests which over which they attempt to exercise some authority.

### **C. International Migration**

Criminal activity and responses to it are local, regional and national phenomena, at least in so far as they have been treated here.<sup>21</sup> They unfold on the social fields altered by structural adjustment and neoliberalism. International migration can also be seen as a response to altered social fields. It is possible, I think, that the enactment of neoliberal policies (NAFTA, the changes to Article 27 of the Mexican Constitution) compel growing numbers of people to migrate in order to survive.<sup>22</sup> That is to say that neoliberalism expels people from both countryside and cities; it displaces them forcefully and might for that reason be analyzed as a violation of their human rights. The argument presumes that social structures are unjust when they deny people access to basic needs: food, housing, dignified employment at just wages. Thus about a quarter of Mexico’s indigenous people has fled the countryside for Mexico City, where they live under conditions of enormous suffering and misery, because of the impossibility of surviving in their natal areas (Monge 1998a). Although not mentioned in the slick tourist brochures put out by the government tourist office, Mexico City has become the principal point of concentration of Mexico’s indigenous population.

While this situation deserves close attention and study, the migration that interests me here is not national but international. International migration involves the crossing of borders and entry into a different national space where the rules governing economic and political contests exhibit distinct modalities both as a consequence of the differences between the United States and Mexico (Casteñada 1995) and as a result of the liminal position occupied by a large number of migrants in the United States. For instance, migrants have the chance to earn far more money than they can in Mexico, but only by subjecting themselves to high levels of exploitation. And on crossing the border they enter a social terrain where the influence of the Mexican state is minimal, but upon which their own social status is liminal. Even as they cross one (national) border, others (social, legal) are being erected in order to confine them to particular spaces, both social and geographical.<sup>23</sup>

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<sup>21</sup> A great deal of organized crime is fully transnationalized.

<sup>22</sup> Migration is not an exclusive product of neoliberalism, but its growing importance in Puebla, Oaxaca, Guerrero and other states outside the historic sending areas of western Mexico (Jalisco, Michoacán, San Luis Potosí, Guanajuato and others) is closely tied to the contemporary economic crisis provoked by neoliberal policies. Zapotitlán de Salinas, a community in the southern Mixteca Poblana, had no history of U.S. migration (and little Mexican migration either) prior to 1984 when the first migrant left for “El Norte.” By August of 1998, 30 percent of the community’s adults had, by our estimate, made at least one trip to the United States. U.S. migration began in 1979 in Xoyatla, a rural agencia of Tepeojuma, and in less than a generation fifty percent of the adult population had acquired international migratory experience (72 percent of the males and 28 percent of the females) (Binford 1998).

<sup>23</sup> The result probably depends a great deal on the degree of migrants’ isolation. Goldring (1996b) shows that Zacatecan women living in California experience a considerable degree of freedom while Malkin (1997) demonstrates that the same is not so for migrants residing in poverty in New Rochelle, New York. Also see Buitrago and Villalón (1997) on migrants in labor camps.

Yet as Smith (forthcoming), Goldring (1996a) and others have pointed out, migrants increasingly transcend borders by creating “transnational communities.” If I understand correctly, contemporary transnational communities are composed of dense networks of social relations sustained by means advanced communications and transportation technology (telephones, faxes, video cameras, jet planes) that make it possible to “annihilate space by time” (Harvey 1989). Such communities are neither new nor restricted to Mexicans in the United States (Gledhill 1997); they may form whenever and wherever migration networks link a significant proportion of community members in regular, ongoing relationships between sites in two or more nations (Massey, Goldring and Durand 1994; Goldring 1996a). Perhaps they involve the creation of new social fields, or maybe they can be thought of as the creative, albeit unstable articulation, of two or more fields whose occupants (i.e. those who occupy the positions in them) cross back and forth from one to the other changing identities and strategies according to the needs of the situation. The point is that transnational social fields, whether or not they are accompanied by the creation of viable transnational communities, are “danger zones” for national states, signs of a diminished control, populist (but not radical) counterparts to the cross-border movements of capital (Rouse 1991).<sup>24</sup>

That “danger” has increased, at least for the PRI, since the government granted double nationality in 1997 to Mexicans opting to become U.S. citizens in order to preserve rights that would be denied noncitizens under the recent immigration law that went into effect in October of that year. Double nationality eliminated legal barriers that formerly prevented the extension of the franchise to Mexicans residing in the United States. Perhaps no series of events better reflects the intertwining of fields of power nor the growing role of U.S. migrants in Mexican political and economic affairs. Double nationality has several objects, but among them is the hope that nationalized U.S. citizens of Mexican birth will be encouraged to preserve links with Mexico and take an active role in domestic U.S. politics in the development of economic and social policies favorable to Mexico. On the other hand, extending the vote to some or all Mexicans in the United States (undocumented, documented, nationalized) is problematic for the ruling party, which is responsible for the economic policies that contributed to the migratory movements in the first place. Not surprisingly, in straw polls carried out in the United States migrants have expressed a clear preference for the Revolutionary Democratic Party, expected to make a run at the PRI in 2000. The government finds itself in a quandary since a policy designed to promote national interest (double nationality) set the stage for a possible loss of PRI hegemony (nonresident voting in 2000). The government has much less influence among U.S. resident migrants, whose experiences on somewhat different fields of power frequently lead them to assume much more critical stances towards the ruling party and its political leaders. Not surprisingly, then, the PRD has promised to pull out all stops in order to extend the franchise to nonresidents, while government officials, without overtly opposing the policy, tend to focus on the potential

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<sup>24</sup> Rouse states, “Just as capitalists have responded to the new forms of economic internationalism by establishing transnational corporations, so workers have responded by creating transnational circuits” (1991:14). However, I don’t really grasp the homology. Most capitalist should be pleased by the presence of low wage foreign workers in high wage areas. A more appropriate, and correct, homology would be to see transnational worker organization (unions) as the counterpart to transnational corporations. An example would be the “brief job action” that General Motors workers at the Sao José dos Campos plant in Brazil carried out in June 1997 in solidarity with GM strikers in Flint, Michigan (Glenn 1998:18).



drawbacks and technical problems (Beltrán del Rio 1998a, 1998b). Experts argue that historical experiences in other countries that permit nonresident voting is for a similar distribution of votes within and outside countries (de la Vega 1998). Perhaps these analysts are correct, but I question whether they are taking into consideration the manner in which migrants reconfigure their identities in response to the possibilities and limitations presented by the complex social fields upon which they struggle in the United States and through which they relate to their home communities (transnational in some circumstances) in Mexico. Migration, even the forced variety, loosens (but does not eliminate) relations with the nation state; the boundaries, positions, forms of capital and rules of social fields (economic, political, cultural) in the United States manifest historical particularities that invite comparison with and often criticism of social fields in Mexico.

The granting of the vote to a portion of the more than seven million Mexican-born residents in the United States (more than two million of whom are undocumented) the advent of presidential campaign tours there would represent the high point of a process that has intensified since 1998, when the Mexican government shifted from a policy of “introversion” with respect to its nonresident citizens to one of “state extension” (Sherman cited in Goldring 1997). Through its many consulates and programs such as the Program for Mexican Communities Abroad the government organizes sports clubs, woos investors, brokers conflicts and seeks to mediate relationships between Mexicans authorities and their U.S. constituents (Goldring 1997), all directed toward exercising indirect influence over people who reside on complex fields of power outside the direct influence of the Mexican state.

### **Conclusions:**

The Mexican state, weakened as a consequence of neoliberal economic policies, has ceded control of a great deal of social space both in rural and urban areas. Economic crisis and political disintegration redefine social fields, contributing to the formation of less docile subjectivities. However, as I have attempted to show a decline in docility does not necessarily imply organized challenge to the state predicated on the idea of a collective alternative. Certainly an enormous amount of collective resistance exists in Mexico, but many responses to the crisis are individualized, even if over time they may provoke organized and progressive responses. Lynchings and vigilante justice are increasing, growing numbers of people carry firearms in public, and a public debate has opened around the advisability of instituting the death penalty and lowering the legal age of adulthood from eighteen to sixteen, which would mean the assignment to adult prisons of many youth offenders (Ramírez 1998; Ortiz y Baltazar 1998; Olayo 1997). The PRI/government continues to frame the debate in terms of “social decomposition,” a decline in values and, especially, the need for more laws, more security infrastructure and coordination, better-trained police and a policy of zero tolerance toward criminals. The policy is likely to have little effect on criminal activity, and if it does reduce crime, it will likely do so at the expense of greater not lesser violence, a reduction in citizen rights and a greater militarization of society. Improved security systems seek to discourage crime by increasing the likelihood that efforts to commit illegal activities will be punished, but they do not affect the initial impulse, i.e. the desire or “need” that impels the actions. Rather, a more organized policing will likely result in new strategic responses on the part of the so-called criminal population, just as when auto manufactures invent more sophisticated alarm devices and car thieves respond with novel ways to bypass or interrupt them.

The best way to reduce crime is to provide alternative routes to the satisfaction of the needs for economic, cultural and symbolic capital, that is, to draw current or future lawbreakers away from competing with police on the field of crime and into legitimate economic and social competitions. However, that will only be possible if the potential participants are provided with the resources (capitals) that can be strategically invested in order to win some victories (satisfy some fundamental needs). Neoliberalism, as unfettered capitalism, denies people those resources and compels them to seek alternative strategies. Bourdieu analyzes such responses in terms of the “hysteresis effect.” A hysteresis effect occurs when the contemporary situation (objective structures of the here and now) differ in fundamental ways from those in which subjects acquired practical strategies for maneuvering on the field of power in the course of their formation. The inadequacy of internalized responses to secure desired outcomes (because the social fields in which they are implemented are distinct from those in which they were formed and to which they are more or less adequate) paves the way for alienation, frustration, failure or, alternatively, resistance and adaptation.<sup>25</sup>

A more serious problem, however, involves the formation of new subjects on what we might call criminal social fields, where seizing that which cannot be won legitimately is inscribed as an aspect of one’s durable disposition, modifiable to be sure, but quite difficult to change entirely. The longer the state is able to pursue neoliberal policies, the greater the toll such policies take on the masses, the more youth will be formed on social fields in which illegitimate activities are the norm. The tremendous proliferation of kidnapping bands, some of which employ the most gratuitous forms of violence upon their victims; the growth of narcotrafficers, who employ bullets rather than lower prices to eliminate competition; and the expansion of urban street gangs are products of almost two decades of economic crisis. Until the economic well-being of rural and urban people improves, crime (especially crimes against property) will increase. Instead of stemming the violence, a stricter state policy will augment it. For one effect of neoliberalism is to “de-tach” citizens from the state by weakening or eliminating the social organizations, services and policies that soften the most severe impacts of capitalist development locally, regionally and nationally. Formerly tractable subjects cast off in new directions, some to seize what society promised them but failed to deliver, others to organize collective responses to transform society itself.<sup>26</sup>

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<sup>25</sup> Creative resistance is certainly one response in contemporary Mexico, as the Zapatista Rebellion and the proliferation of human rights and citizens organizations make clear. This paper has mentioned only a few such progressive responses: the Morelos citizens groups which forced out Governor Carillo Olea or the communal police of Rio Iguala, Guerrero.

<sup>26</sup> The Mexican economy finished 1997 having grown 7 percent during the year, a glowing macroeconomic report for President Zedillo, and an apparently positive sign that the ship was on the right course. However, a brief examination of economic figures revealed that Mexico ran a large trade deficit and that the current accounts balance depended on continuous inflows of foreign capital, translating into increasing denationalization of the economy. The Secretary of the Treasury estimated that 10 billion dollars in long term investment would enter Mexico in 1998 (Castellanos 1998a). However, John E. Jelacic, an analyst who works for the U.S. Department of Commerce, stated that, although investors have responded to the government’s restructuring plan, [international funds can again pull out if the political situation deteriorates. “Jelacic also observed that the benefits of economic growth had not reached the poor and middle classes and that “the frustrations and anxieties are spreading throughout the region from Mexico to Argentina” (Castellanos 1998b:17).

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