HORIZONTAL AND VERTICAL RELATIONS AND THE SOCIAL STRUCTURE OF URBAN MEXICO*

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INTRODUCTION

There are two principal approaches to understanding social structure. One approach, exemplified by social class analysis, consists of postulating an ideal model of class positions and then mapping social reality onto this model. The result is a set of structural relationships that explain, or seem to explain, the positions taken by various social groups at different times. This approach is therefore also an interpretation of politics, in the sense that actions and positions are judged relevant or irrelevant to the extent that they match or fail to match the expected behavior of social classes according to the ideal model.

Another approach, to be followed in this paper, consists of looking at the complicated interactions between people at different levels within the power structure. We allow the actors to describe the social structure through their own performance, and through the conceptualizations that they derive from their experiences within the system. Political wisdom, in this perspective, is not necessarily equivalent to an understanding of how the power structure originates, or how it relates to a given model of class domination. In fact, such an understanding can be an obstacle to political wisdom as it is commonly conceived of and appreciated in Mexico. Fundamentally, there is an existing authority structure in Mexico. This authority structure can be altered, subverted, or overthrown; yet there seems to be an underlying assumption among the actors that alternative structures will resemble the present one in most operationally relevant aspects. This Mexican attitude toward social structure, which outsiders may see as "pragmatism" or "cynicism," depending on their sympathies or prejudices, is really plain common sense to members of Mexican society.

I do not intend to explain the origin of this attitude, much less uphold it as an alternate theoretical framework in opposition, say, to the

^{*}Presented at the SSRC workshop on Urbanization in Latin America, 1980; English version by C. Lomnitz. This work was supported by a John Simon Guggenheim fellowship.

Marxist analysis of class structure. It is true, of course, that the metaphor of social structure as a set of horizontal layers, much like a cake, is almost trivially simple compared with the image any Mexican politician must carry in his head. The concern here is not with the relative correctness or validity of images or metaphors, but rather to describe the process by which actors get matched to positions within the existing power structure. Out of an analysis of this process there emerges a model of social structure that reflects the complex political and ideological relations between individuals and their positions in the power system of Mexico.

The social structure of Mexico has been likened to a set of free-standing pyramids, each of which duplicates itself hierarchically like a crystal from top to bottom. Probably, such a metaphor can be reconciled with class analysis, though doubts have been expressed on this subject. It will be suggested here that such a pervasive structural image may reflect the pattern of horizontal and vertical social relations at the interpersonal level. In other words, this metaphor is as much a part of Mexican political culture as is the stratified class model of European political culture. It elicits responses of loyalty, competition, and patterns of exchange. It is a cultural fact of Mexico.

Following a commonly used terminology, I shall define tentatively the following pyramids or "sectors" of the social structure of urban Mexico: (1) the public sector, or state apparatus, including the administrative bureaucracy and the state-owned or state-operated industries and concerns; (2) the labor sector, or organized industrial proletariat; (3) the private sector, which includes the national bourgeoisie, their allies, clients and employees, private business and the independent liberal professions under their respective charters; and (4) the informal or marginal sector, which amounts to about 40 percent of the labor force in the cities (Secretaría de Programación 1979b), and which includes all those which are not comprised in the three "formal" sectors. They are underemployed, self-employed, or informally employed workers without job stability, social security, fringe benefits, minimum wage guarantees, bargaining power, or nationwide organization (Portes 1978, p. 39).

The flow of resources within the system is determined by the interaction of three variables: the direction of the relationship (horizontal or vertical), the kind of resource exchanged (capital, power, labor, information, political loyalty), and the mode of articulation (formal or informal). The first variable generates the basic pyramidal pattern of the structure; the second variable accounts for the existence of specialized sectors handling different kinds of resources; and the third variable explains the basic distinction between the formal and informal segments of urban society.

THE PUBLIC SECTOR

The Mexican political system has been defined as corporative, populist, authoritarian, and patrimonial (Reyna 1977, p. xi; Stevens 1977; Camacho 1980, pp. 23–27; Purcell and Purcell 1977, p. 194; Grindle 1977, p. 5). Corporative centralism in Mexico, which emerged from the fragmentation of power and from the regional struggles that followed the Revolution, is often credited with the implementation of policies of economic development under conditions of political stability. In order to achieve such aims, a corporative regime characteristically employs "'co-optation' of leaders; vertical or sectorial policy compartmentalization; permanent institutionalization of access; 'juridization' or legalization of group conflicts through labor and administrative courts; state technocratic planning and resource allocation; a political culture stressing formalism, consensus and continuous bargaining; symbiotic relations with clientelist and patrimonial practices in certain issue areas and regime levels; periodic but systematic use of physical repression and anticipatory intimidation" (Schmitter 1974, p. 101).³

At the top of the public sector there is a small power elite composed of the president, members of the cabinet, and other high government officials whose political resources are measured by their decision-making power and by the number of dependent officials under their control (Smith 1979, pp. 317–28). Typically, each official is a patron to his subordinates, who depend on him for continued access to power and other resources (Purcell and Purcell 1980, pp. 204–5; Carlos and Anderson 1980, pp. 7–8). Loyalty flows upward to the superior in proportion to the resources dispensed downwards. Because each official is in turn a subordinate to a higher official he may be likened to a broker who deals in political support at his level of the structure (Adams 1970; Wolf 1969, p. 17; Grindle 1977, p. 10). Eventually, the entire sector (allowances made for personal rivalries and conflicting interests of power groups) is committed to the existing political system and shares an ideology that stresses state control as morally right and beneficial to the nation.

However, within the public sector, an official is not just a passive cogwheel transmitting orders from above and information from below. He is a power broker engaged in a permanent process of negotiation for resources in exchange for political support. Thus, each broker also has a network of horizontal relations (colleagues, friends, relatives) who enable him to maneuver at his specific power level or to mobilize resources from other power systems in order to strengthen his bargaining hand (Carlos and Anderson 1980, p. 7).

These horizontal relationships provide the necessary flexibility to the system by making available different kinds of resources at each articulation. Thus, each pyramidal sector specializes in a different type of resource: power, capital, and labor. Exchanges of power against capital, capital against labor, and labor against political support occur continuously at all levels of the system. It is important for a broker in one sector to have friends in the other two.

Some working-class families send their sons and daughters to the university, to become civil servants. Liberal professionals have friends and colleagues in government. There is also some downward mobility among entrepreneurial families, with the result that some of their children and relatives end up in government positions. Labor leaders have sons and relatives in business, and so on. Professional people may move back and forth between jobs in industry and government. Since the state is the largest employer in the country, some of the big labor unions (e.g., the Union of Petroleum Workers or the Union of Electrical Workers) draw most of their membership from federal employees, and their leaders are formally or informally civil servants.

Brokers in one branch of business or government have friends who are brokers in another branch. The accidents of promotion bring such friends into positions where they have access to variable amounts of resources. A wholesale reshuffling of appointments occurs every six years in government; this mechanism brings former peers into positions where one of them commands extensive patronage. Brokers may change jobs in order to maneuver themselves under a patron to their liking or into a stronger bargaining position. Horizontal social contacts, especially kinship contacts, are the primary factors of mobility as they are elsewhere in Latin America, e.g., in Chile (Lomnitz 1971).

The Structure of Groups: The Case of the National University

The internal structure of groups at the National University of Mexico is similar to that described above (Lomnitz 1977, pp. 222–31). At the top there is a leader who generates loyalty. Immediately below there is an inner circle of trusted assistants or leading activists, followed by a second level, and so on. Social proximity to the leader is the main factor for individual ranking and for solidarity within the group. The entire student body, and indeed the university itself, may be thought of as a conglomerate of pyramidal structures (some formal and others informal), which includes faculty, unions, research groups, political action groups, and even delinquent student gangs, all competing for resources, jobs, status, and power within the larger pyramid of the university structure.

Almost from the time of their initial registration, some students embark on a "political life career" independent of the field of study they have nominally chosen (Lomnitz 1977, pp. 315–38). Militant student groups (many of them representing political opposition tendencies) pro-

vide opportunities for the training of political leaders who eventually graduate into public administration. Promotion within student groups depends on loyalty, dedication, and personal charisma. According to Smith (1979, pp. 317–18), up to 70 percent of the top political leadership of Mexico is composed of National University alumni, and "old boys' networks" occur frequently among the upper echelons.

Much the same is true of the professional or technical groups. Able students in science, engineering, medicine, architecture, etc. are spotted by instructors who become their tutors or thesis advisors. Networks based on personal loyalty to a tutor eventually become the backbone of research institutions, state corporations, and technical task forces in the ministries and agencies (Lomnitz 1977; Lomnitz, Mayer and Rees 1979). According to a recent study of one school at the National University of Mexico, nearly 70 percent of the alumni are currently employed by the civil service (Insunza 1978, p. 4). As the National University represents the breeding ground for elites in the public sector, so the various private universities provide the private enterprise sector with the necessary leadership in administration and technological know-how.

The National University is also the main channel of social mobility that provides access to bureaucratic jobs at the lower and middle echelons (López Cámara 1971, p. 95). Clerks, administrators, and technocrats are recruited by officials who supplement their jobs in ministries or federal agencies with part-time teaching positions at the university. This is not considered "moonlighting"—on the contrary, such officials are highly valued as linking the university with the public sector to which it ultimately belongs (Camp 1980).

When students are finally recruited into the bureaucracy they have undergone extensive informal schooling in the mechanics of group membership and in the political subtleties of confrontation and compromise. The more experienced leaders tend to rise to responsible positions and become power brokers within the civil service hierarchy. They award patronage to subordinates, whose lovalty is their main bargaining asset (Zaid 1979, pp. 220–30). The group structures described in the National University are closely duplicated in the ministries or state agencies. Every official, from the secretary and the undersecretaries downward, heads a "team" whose members are bound by personal loyalty. Any member may head his own group at the next lowest hierarchical level. Every group has a vested interest in supporting its leader so as to improve the group's negotiating chances. Grindle pointed out this pattern in her study of a Mexico City federal agency: "organizations offer incentives to individuals in exchange for contributions which advance the interests of the organization or its leadership. In order to acquire the incentives offered them, actors must accomplish certain explicit tasks in their roles as organized members. . . ." Such tasks frequently require access to resources outside the organization proper, which may be obtained through friends: "Exchange in the external environment tends to be both vertical and horizontal" (1977, p. 28). Thus, political support from other segments of the bureaucracy, which cannot normally be negotiated through hierarchical channels, is often the result of a reciprocal exchange between friends.

THE ORGANIZED LABOR SECTOR

The Mexican Constitution of 1917 provides a separate legal status for industrial workers (Article 123, Section A) as distinct from civil servants and other unionized workers in the public sector (Article 123, Section B). They are covered by different social security systems: Instituto Mexicano del Seguro Social (IMSS) for Section A, and Instituto de Seguridad v Servicios Sociales para Trabajadores del Estado (ISSSTE) for Section B. The distinction is based on occupational characteristics: industrial labor vs. white-collar and service personnel. Industrial workers in state enterprises such as PEMEX, the Federal Power Commission (CFE), or the various decentralized concerns are reckoned as industrial labor and their unions are organized under Section A, which provides for unrestricted striking rights as well as union control over hiring and firing. The organized labor sector is therefore adequately defined by the constitutional provisions. Nonlabor unions such as the FSTSE (the Federation of Civil Servants) or SNTE (the National Federation of Teachers), though extremely powerful, are considered a part of the public sector.

The most important labor federation is the Confederación de Trabajadores Mexicanos (CTM), with over 2,500,000 members in 1974 (Zapata 1976, pp. 103–4). The CTM, the largest of about thirty organizations affiliated to the Congreso del Trabajo, is formally a member of the Partido Revolucionario Institucional (PRI).4 Thus, there is an explicit connection between the majority of organized labor and the corporative state. Within the CTM there is a complex and partly overlapping organization of statewide, regional, and local federations based on geographical cohesion, and industry-wide unions on a national and regional level. In any given industrial plant there is a local union headed by a general delegate, with delegates in the various departments of the plant. At a higher level there is a regional section, with an executive committee and a number of commissions. Many workers may be affiliated with more than one industrial union. The language of the union is the language of class struggle and mobilization for better wages and better working conditions, within a nationalistic context: "the economic emancipation of Mexico."

The pyramid of union organization is an integral part of the political apparatus of the nation; hence its dual function as a pressure group

lobbying for greater social benefits and a greater share of the resources for labor, and an apparatus for political control of the working force. Each worker is a client to two patrons: the factory owner, corporate manager, or state enterprise, and the union leader or party boss (Vellinga 1979, pp. 72, 119–25; Stevens 1977; Camacho 1976; Reyna and Miquet 1976).

The Mexican industrial proletariat has become increasingly differentiated as to skills, income, and status. Foremen tend to become a privileged group (Reyna and Miquet 1976, pp. 14–15; Vellinga 1979, p. 58). There is an awareness that industrial labor is privileged as compared to the informal sector. They have a steady job, fringe benefits, and a guaranteed income. At each renewal of contract, they usually succeed in obtaining a raise as well as improved conditions in housing, health, and training. Service workers and workers in the building trades are worse off than the industrial workers; they represent, so to speak, a borderline group between organized labor and the informal sector. At the top of the scale, skilled workers "represent a labor aristocracy often used by patrons as middlemen in their dealings with the workers," and some of them become supervisors on behalf of management (Vellinga 1979, p. 103; Camacho 1976).

The union leadership has become a political bureaucracy headed by the old labor bosses, some of whom have been in power for as long as forty years. The oligarchic model of union organization has permeated all levels of the labor structure from top to bottom. Corruption is said to be endemic. "Labor legislation affords a wide range of opportunities for government intervention in manipulating the unions. On the one hand, the 'white' unions are industry-controlled and resist their incorporation into the official structure: they promote the paternalistic attitudes favored by the private sector. On the other hand, the government uses federations such as CTM. Unions which hold out against affiliation into government-sponsored or industry-sponsored organizations are pressured or co-opted through the affiliation of their leadership into the official party. Leaders who resisted such an affiliation have been unseated, jailed, or murdered. Their political movements have been suppressed and disbanded, or, during the 1950s, taken over by governmentsponsored leadership" (Vellinga 1979, p. 72).

The system uses repression only after all incentives have failed. In the larger private corporations, the management will fire undesirable workers or even close down a plant in the knowledge that any subsequent claims will be settled to their satisfaction at a suitable level. In general, individual workers have no means of redress and tend to shy from any action which has not been approved by the union leadership. The union in effect controls all jobs in the plant. Loyal members are awarded better jobs, less dangerous assignments, more pleasant tasks,

and better shifts. Such practices encourage the passivity and depoliticization of labor. In the long run, a worker needs the support of his section boss to get access even to the fringe benefits he is entitled to (Camacho 1976).

In state-owned enterprises, the management routinely overlooks the misuse of union funds in return for the loyalty of the union leadership. Jobs are sometimes awarded to the highest bidder and union leaders become wealthy businessmen. However, the body of labor legislation and in particular the Courts of Conciliation and Arbitration can be used to keep the bosses in line. Camacho (1976, p. 24) has found that young charismatic leaders, who began their union careers as rebels against the old bosses, were eventually co-opted or liquidated.

However, according to Roxborough (n.d., pp. 10–11), the monolithic nature of the labor system has been exaggerated. He finds the union leadership fragmented and not very powerful as a group; the nature of their control over the membership may vary from one union to another. In general, however, "the CTM leadership has been able to transform itself into a stratum of professional career bureaucrats, perpetually reelected in unrepresentative meetings, and enriching itself by the selling of contracts (to the employers) and the selling of jobs (to the workers). Violence and state intervention in this system is used selectively and probably not very frequently."

Horizontal and Vertical Relations in the Labor Sector

Mexican workers socialize mostly within their extended family; they have little personal contact with co-workers. In Monterrey it was found that only 17 percent of the workers had any daily personal contact with co-workers, while more than 50 percent said they saw their co-workers "never, or very occasionally" outside of working hours. Those who did usually had a small group of friends from their immediate working environment; workers from another plant were befriended very rarely. The same pattern was found with respect to extracurricular activities (beside union membership): only 20 percent participated in any kind of organized activity, and most of them through industry-sponsored sports clubs; only 7 percent of the "activists were involved in political organizations (Vellinga 1979, pp. 196–97).

In the smaller industries, the old pattern of vertical *compadrazgo* still subsists, and patrons are in demand as godfathers. In the larger concerns it is mostly the union leaders, foremen, and supervisors who seek such favors from members of management. As many as 17.4 percent of the godfathers in Vellinga's sample belonged to the middle or upper class (1979, p. 207).

About 30 percent of the union membership have occupied some

elected post on the executive committee or on a commission at one time or another, but few of them become professional union leaders. Typically, a leader begins his career by assiduously attending union meetings. He becomes a union activist by participating, by voting, and mainly by speaking at meetings. Initially he may be elected a section delegate, dealing with personal labor conflicts as between a worker and a foreman or supervisor. A delegate will often mediate between a worker and the executive committee. As a next step in his career, the leader may become a member of a union committee (justice, treasury, vigilance, and so on), serving under the executive committee; from there he may be promoted general secretary of his local union. Vellinga found that these promotions had little to do with rank-and-file support: most workers expressed distrust of the union leadership and were skeptical of their own influence on the decision-making process (1979, p. 210).

Vertical mobility occurs through brokerage. Union leaders are brokers in a double capacity: within the union hierarchy (political brokerage) and between workers and management (economic brokerage). The importance of union brokerage is also seen from the fact that the entire labor sector is upward-mobile: according to Vellinga's survey, more than 50 percent of the sons of working-class parents rise into the "middle class," i.e., become white-collar workers. This intergenerational ascent implies in itself a high degree of contact between the labor sector and the lower levels of the state bureaucracy, or the clerical levels of private enterprise (Vellinga 1979; Schensul 1976, pp. 150–63).

There is a marked similarity, then, between the vertical organization of the labor sector and that of the public sector, while horizontal contacts seem to be largely restricted to the extended family and godparenthood. Close relatives who get jobs in the plant represent the closest horizontal contacts of most workers.

THE PRIVATE SECTOR

The private sector comprises the owners of the means of production (industrialists, bankers), private business and commerce, and the white-collar workers and service workers formally employed in private business, i.e., enjoying some measure of job security and social security. It also comprises the liberal professionals working on their own, associated with professional associations.

Since the late nineteenth century, industrial development has been state-sponsored or state-supported (Wilkie 1967). After the revolution, the Mexican state began to nationalize the energy resources, thus subsidizing energy prices for industry. It also built electric power stations, roads, water supply and communications, and provided a protectionist legal structure designed to benefit local industry and financial

support from the National Finance Corporation (NAFINSA). As far as the state was concerned, the private sector existed for the sole purpose of industrializing the country, particularly towards the production of consumer goods. By 1950, about 88 percent of the consumer goods in Mexico were locally produced (Derossi 1977, Purcell and Purcell 1977, NAFINSA 1971, Mayer 1968, Vernon 1977, Hansen 1978).

Many industrial concerns were initially family businesses that branched out as a family group developed along generational lines (Cinta 1971, Lomnitz and Pérez in preparation, Cordero and Santin 1977). As a result of partnerships and marriage alliances, the original families coalesced into industrial "groups" whose members sit on each other's boards of directors. Large and small concerns are organized hierarchically according to their relative importance and do business with each other. Cordero and Santin (1977, p. 8) were able to identify 131 such groups in the Mexican private industry sector. Each group is normally headed by a senior industrialist with his closest associates according to rank in power and prestige; then come the heads of the smaller concerns. The pattern is repeated within each corporation.

Hence, the private sector is organized along hierarchical lines, not unlike those of the public sector. At the top there are major industrialists who head a small number of well-known business "groups"; the Alfa Group in Monterrey, for instance. Below these leaders one finds successive echelons of businessmen who are related to the leaders as clients, contractors, associates, bankers, and so on. Each of these leaders is also a broker in the sense that he funnels resources (patronage, business, protection) to his associates and employees in exchange for loyalty to the patron and his enterprise.

These structures are duplicated within each industry or enterprise. From the owner or owners downward, the hierarchy comprises a number of steps: directors, managers, vice-presidents, production managers, and so on. The line of command is explicit in each case. The brokerage system extends across class lines into the labor sector, as supervisors and labor leaders transmit the requirements of management downward to the labor force (Valenti Nigrini 1978). In small industries an owner may deal with his workers directly or through a trusted foreman. As the industry grows so does the number of middlemen: vicepresidents, managers, engineers, technicians, union officials, and so on. Ideally (from the point of view of management), the supervisors become the union leaders as well. If the union is "red" (i.e., politically dependent on a structure other than management), the direct line of command becomes fuzzy and co-optation intervenes. However, this is a matter of degree rather than of substance, since negotiation is a feature of the brokerage process in any case.

At a higher level one finds a hierarchy of industries and enter-

prises. Some industries make parts for others, as in the automobile industry (Bennet and Sharpe 1977). Sons or relatives of major industrialists may set up their own industry which sells the entire production to the patron; or they may commercialize a patron's products or act as brokers on his behalf, or process some byproduct such as yoghurt in dairy industries (Lomnitz and Pérez 1978). Our study shows that every major industry or enterprise generates a large number of second-level businesses and provides work for many relatives. A major industrialist may become associated with others in new ventures: one provides the capital and another the know-how, or (as in the housing industry) one provides the real estate and the other the builders and the capital. There is the dependence on financial groups, private or state banks, for those businessmen who are not directly connected with one of the major financial groups in Mexico. There are the ties with chain stores and other commercial outlets, many of which buy from each other and have their own brokerage chains all the way down to the lowliest store clerk.

Formally, the private sector of Mexico is organized into four major business federations: CONCANACO (Federation of National Chambers of Commerce), CONCAMIN (Federation of Chambers of Industries), COPARMEX (Federation of Employers of the Mexican Republic), and CANACINTRA (National Chamber of the "Transformation Industry," or Consumer Goods Industry). Most industrialists and businessmen are members of one or more of these partly overlapping organizations. In 1970 it was reported that members of these associations accounted for more than 50 percent of the total investment in Mexico (Alcazar 1977). The rest was accounted for by investments of multinational corporations and by the state.

The law makes membership in an employers' organization compulsory for all merchants or industrialists having assets in excess of 2,500 pesos. A local group of at least twenty industrialists or fifty merchants form a chamber; the regional distribution of these chambers (as of the unions) is controlled by the Department of Industry and Commerce. Thus, the state keeps a registry of businessmen, who must join their local Chamber of Commerce (or Industry) in order to do business. The law also specifies the organization of the chambers, which is analogous to that of the unions. The active membership of a local chamber must be at least 80 percent Mexican-born.

According to 1978 financial statements of the one hundred largest corporations in Mexico, twenty-nine decentralized state-owned corporations owned 68.3 percent of the total capital. More significantly, among the fifty largest corporations with total assets of 2.3 billion pesos, seventeen large state-owned concerns controlled over 1.6 billion pesos, i.e., 71.5 percent of the assets. These state corporations included PEMEX, the state oil monopoly, largest corporation in Latin America; Banco de

México, the Mexican federal reserve bank; CFE, the national power commission; NAFINSA, the national finance corporation; Teléfonos de México, the telephone company; Altos Hornos de México, the national steel concern; and finance organizations such as Nacional Azucarera, Banobras, Banco de Crédito Rural, Somex, and so on. Among the fifty next prominent corporations (i.e., ranking 51 to 100) there are also important state concerns such as AEROMEXICO (the national airline), Ferrocarriles del Estado (the national railroads), CONASUPO (the national retail chain for low-income groups), and important national corporations in copper, fertilizers, fishing, truck manufacturing, newsprint, petrochemicals, and many others (Ceceña 1980, p. 7a).

Thus the state is not only in a position to threaten private business with financial takeover, it even controls the sources of energy and much of the raw materials needed by private industry. This is the basic fact of life of the business federations that mediate between private capital and the corporate state. Economic policy is the result of these top-level negotiations, which are very complex since there is a great deal of interpenetration between the two sectors: the state owns shares of many private corporations, and government industries continue to operate with considerable private investments.

THE INFORMAL SECTOR

The difference between the informal and the formal sectors in urban Mexico lies not so much in their social structure or relation to the process of production, as in their different modes of articulation with the economic and social resources of the society (Uzzell 1980, p. 40). Job stability, or security of economic roles in general, is more relevant to the sectoral categorization than the actual tasks assigned to individuals within the economic structure. "Stability of employment therefore deserves infinitely more attention than it normally receives from social scientists who base their analyses simply on the amount of income received or the differential distribution of wealth" (Worsley 1978, p. 3). Security means membership in a formal structure. In urban Mexico resources are channeled downwards from the top and loyalty and support are radiated upwards from the base. Such pyramidal structures exist in the ministries, in the corporations, in the unions, and in shantytown action groups (Lomnitz 1977, 1978). The difference lies in the mode of articulation with resources: formal and permanent in some cases and informal in others.

When speaking about "marginality" or "the informal sector" we mean the broad social sector that is excluded from access to organized labor, bureaucratic jobs, and, in general, from stable employment within one of the three formal sectors. Its members do not enjoy the specific benefits of industrialization: social security, stability of income, labor legislation, union membership, public housing, public health, access to institutional loans or credit, and so on. In metropolitan Mexico City the informal or marginal sector is estimated at 35.5 percent of the income-earning population (Secretaría de Programación 1979b, p. 14). The informal sector also includes small family entrepreneurs, who produce goods and provide services adding up to a considerable share of the urban economy, though as a rule they pay neither wages nor taxes. There are also jobbers, labor recruiters, and political brokers or organizers, a kind of "shantytown bourgeoisie" which represents in some ways a social transition between the informal and the formal sectors (Cornelius 1972, Montaño 1976, Eckstein 1978, Tokman 1979).

We have described elsewhere the case of a labor recruiter, informally known as "El Diablo," who had as many as four hundred construction workers in his employment at a given time (Lomnitz 1978). "El Diablo" had an elaborate structure of foremen, "sargeants," and "lieutenants" under his command; yet there were never any written documents such as contracts or receipts between "El Diablo" and the construction company, and certainly there was none between him and his workers. At the height of a job "El Diablo" earned more than the engineer who hired him; but after the job was finished, the engineer continued to draw his salary while "El Diablo" went back to the shanty-town. The pyramidal structure of his labor organization was not formal and it disintegrated as soon as the articulation with resources was broken.

These brokers channel resources from the formal into the informal sector, in exchange for labor, services, and political support. But their mode of articulation is informal and therefore the flow of resources is unstable and intermittent. Shantytown dwellers rely on informal networks of relatives and neighbors, which provide a minimum of security through reciprocal exchange of goods and services, in order to be able to survive (Lomnitz 1978, 1977; Alonso 1980). Such horizontal neighborhood networks are characteristic of shantytowns; but similar forms of reciprocal exchange are also found among all levels in the three formal sectors, where they enhance social mobility and the circulation of resources among social peers.

Thus, the structural features of the informal sector are not essentially different from those of the formal sectors, regarding horizontal and vertical relations. For example, the shantytown networks are also labor pools which can be used by the more enterprising members to organize action sets for unskilled or semi-skilled trades, as in the construction industry. The joint activities of such an action set may attain a certain degree of stability and specialization; then the action set becomes a quasi-group consisting of a leader or patron and his followers or clients. The leader may control valuable resources such as contacts outside

the shantytown, which provide employment or political support. He may eventually become a small businessman, a labor recruiter, or a political organizer. Another example is the widespread use of "maquila" or jobbing in the shantytowns, especially in the needle trades (OIT/INFONAVIT 1976). The shantytown brokers farm out work among the female members of the networks; they require a basic weekly production from each worker. Wages and working conditions are much below the standards required by labor legislation. Thus marginality also means lack of legal protection and vulnerability to all forms of exploitation. The "maquila" broker is not a member of a formal sector, any more than his clients: he has no written contract with the clothing manufacturer and he can be dismissed if he fails to fill his work quota.

The three formal pyramids feed on the existence of the informal sector (Portes 1980). The leadership of the organized labor sector can enforce discipline and cohesion (and maintain its privileges) because of the availability of large masses of unorganized labor who are eager to work at minimum wages and who can be quickly mobilized by shanty-town recruiters. The private sector systematically uses unorganized labor in key industries (construction and garment industries, for example) and as strikebreakers in labor conflicts. The public sector can also manipulate the political support of the "marginals," as when thousands of shantytown dwellers are ferried by bus to participate in mass demonstrations and other public spectacles organized by state organs (Durazo 1980). None of these uses of "marginality" is institutionalized and none of them gives rise to formal brokerage roles.

As Worsley (1978) has pointed out, the existence of a large informal sector has important implications for the question of class structure and the role of the state in developing countries. From the point of view of the society there is little actual difference between the standard of living of a worker in the formal sector and that of a minor civil servant in the bureaucracy. An industrial worker who is a union member and who is covered by social security becomes in fact, if not in name, a member of the middle class. The new exploited class is the informal sector (Portes 1980).

CONCLUSIONS

The conceptual model of the structure of interpersonal and group relationships in urban Mexico that is proposed here entails the following variables: (1) direction of the flow of exchange (horizontal and vertical); (2) kinds of resources exchanged (capital, power, work, loyalty, services, information, and so on);⁷ and (3) mode of articulation within the structure (formal or informal).

Every ego may be seen as placed at the center of a social network

extending in all directions within the social structure. Horizontal bonds are between relatives, friends, and peers or associates at the same hierarchical level. The existence of horizontal bonds conditions, and is conditioned by, the flow of reciprocal exchange in both directions: towards ego and outwards from ego. This flow consists of goods, services, and information. The structure also has a vertical dimension, which we call hierarchy. A vertical bond between ego and a superior or inferior differs fundamentally from the horizontal relationship between peers; it is a patron-client relationship. These vertical relationships are the main channels that distribute the resources of the system throughout the structure: capital and power flow downward, and work and loyalty are suctioned upwards. The asymmetry of the things exchanged conditions the asymmetry of the relationship: individuals receive loyalty and service from their subordinates and render loyalty and service to their superior. As a corollary of these services and these loyalties, they receive material rewards and power from superiors and yield material rewards and power to their subordinates.8 The quantum of material rewards and power retained by ego defines his status as a broker in the structure.

The structures formed by horizontal bonds are reciprocity networks, such as kinship networks, friendship circles, cliques, and other ego-centered social networks. These networks are informal social fields without permanent or well-defined boundaries; they expand or contract according to the flow of exchange between their members. In contrast, the flow of vertical resources tends to create formal groups, quasi-groups, or action groups (Mayer 1968). In urban Mexico these groups have a similar structure or configuration, no matter where or in what part or level of the structure they happen to be found. Each is a pyramid with a leader at the top and clients situated at various levels below the leader, and ranked according to their closeness to the top. The leader is a broker who derives resources from his articulation with the larger structure, and who distributes a share of these resources to each follower according to rank. In return, each client contributes services and loyalty to his superior, according to his closeness to the leader. The flow of loyalty towards the leader determines the social cohesion or solidarity within the group. This solidarity in turn determines the efficiency (political or otherwise) of the group, which enables the leader to derive additional resources from the structure. In order to understand these structures and exchange relations, "it is important to realize that traditional kinship and social exchange ties have been incorporated into exclusive structures and political institutions" (Carlos and Anderson 1980, p. 6).

Several groups located at a similar hierarchical level may be subordinated to the same leader or broker at the next higher level. Leaders at a given level thus have an ambiguous relationship to each other: they are loyal to the same leader and they compete for the same resources. The principle of the organization may be defined as concentrating power at the top and fragmenting it downwards. As the system increases in size it generates more resources and thus the conditions are given for creating more subordinate positions under each leader, more groups under each broker, and eventually more hierarchical levels everywhere within the structure (Adams 1975).

In Mexico there is a vertical segmentation of the structure into sectors according to the kinds of resources generated by the groups. In the public sector the resource generated is political power and in the private sector the resource generated is capital. One sector controls, the other produces. This entails a specialization in terms of the kind of services rendered, the kind of work performed, the expectations attached to roles, the ideology and value systems, and the life styles. Each sector has its preferences in terms of residential neighborhoods, status symbols, entertainment, art forms, public posture, and presentation of self.9

A third pyramid, officially defined as the labor sector, generates the third resource, namely labor. It supplies labor and political loyalty to the other two sectors and is therefore a client to both. Labor is basic to the production of capital and to the generation of political power. The private sector extracts surplus value and the public sector extracts political allegiance. The labor sector is also organized hierarchically and has its own leadership, which serves the dual purpose of exerting negotiating power vis-à-vis the other two sectors (in *stability* of jobs rather than wages) and controlling the labor base which might otherwise represent an element of instability within the system.

Articulation between the three sectors is provided at a formal level by the state: legal and compulsory organizations of capital and labor, formal instances of mediation and conflict-solving as in the National Tripartite Commission, and political mediation at the level of the party (which is really a federation of hierarchies in the public and labor sectors and which alternately confronts and placates the private sector across the negotiating table). But such a system of formal articulations might lead to a society of castes permanently battling each other. Flexibility and fluidity are thus provided by the individual networks of reciprocal exchange that informally cut across hierarchical boundaries between the sectors. These networks circulate resources from one pyramid to another: bureaucratic information towards the private sector; economic information towards the public sector; political support, vital services of a bureaucratic and economic nature, and jobs or other opportunities among members of all networks. It becomes advantageous to have relatives or friends in all three sectors. Industrial workers may have a son or daughter in the civil service or the professions, or they set up a repair shop or service business. Industrialists have sons who become technocrats in the public sector. Politicians become investors or office-holders in private corporations (Aguilar 1979), while private businessmen are appointed to executive positions in state corporations and agencies. Some labor leaders have family connections with construction firms, and may be influential in winning contracts from the public sector. The examples are endless and merely serve to underscore the fact that horizontal networks of relatives and friends provide a web of entangled bonds within and between sectors. If social energy is largely channeled along vertical lines within each sector, lubrication and fluidity in the manipulation of resources is provided largely by these horizontal reciprocal exchanges.

From the point of view of ego, a reciprocity network is not merely a useful mechanism for obtaining certain resources: it is a resource in itself. The network may be mobilized on behalf of ego's job and may enhance his performance, thus making him more valuable to his superior and increasing his prospects for promotion. The entire system benefits from the existence of such contacts of an informal nature, which serve to contain and eliminate sources of conflict at all levels. Political rivalry and infighting are kept within reasonable bounds, and a diffuse tacit solidarity is generated that helps assure the stability of the system.

In the formal sectors, articulation between levels within a pyramidal structure is determined by rules of hierarchy and is sealed by documents such as written contracts (Portes 1980, p. 18). This mode of articulation is decisive: it ensures continuity of employment, social security, fringe benefits, and adequate labor protection. If the articulation is informal, it excludes access to all these guarantees and benefits. Each formal sector is underpinned by informal labor: eventuales or nonunion labor in public and private industry, petty traders and artisans in commerce and the services, shantytown organizers and neighborhood leaders in politics. In 1976 the informal sector in the three metropolitan areas (Mexico City, Monterrey, and Guadalajara) was distributed as follows: 36.2 percent in labor, 23 percent in commerce and 30.2 percent in smallscale production and handicrafts (Secretaría de Programación 1979). These figures fail to reflect the importance of the informal sector in the economy: in the petroleum industry, as in the construction industry, most of the nonclerical labor is done by eventuales. Similarly, a large share of the retail trade is in the hands of unlicensed small tradesmen, and a majority of informal workers are in the service occupations (domestic help, gardeners, janitors, watchmen, waiters, washerwomen, cleaning women, messengers, carriers and so on). Their informal mode of articulation with the three sectors implies that these workers, artisans, and traders have no organization and no representatives who might negotiate on their behalf. Their action groups and quasi-groups are organized according to the pyramidal principle, as in the formal sectors,

but they may be disbanded at will. Leadership is beset with problems of insecurity; hence the brokerage role is not institutionalized.

The distinction between a union member and an *eventual* is not one of culture, skills, or even income: some marginal brokers may earn more than most industrial workers of the formal sector. Yet there is a significant social distinction: marginals who succeed in gaining access to a formal job tend to break away from shantytown networks and to move into a part of town inhabited by members of the formal sector (Lomnitz 1977, pp. 133–34). Access to security of employment means, in a larger sense, their incorporation into the mainstream of modern life as self-defined by the dominant social system and by the state apparatus.

To sum up, the social structure of urban Mexico may be described as a system of domination or authority structure based on pyramidal corporative entities called "sectors." The share of each individual in the resources of the system is determined by his position in the hierarchy and by his mode of articulation. The dominant groups are organized in two competing sectors vying for control of the system, namely the public sector and the private sector; both are organized into hierarchies. Above their rivalry, both sectors (plus the hierarchy of the labor sector) are interested in the maintenance of the system as such: this is expressed in the proliferation of an intricate mesh of social networks based on kinship and friendship, where information, goods, and services are traded along horizontal channels of reciprocity within and between sectors. These horizontal bonds of kinship and friendship represent one of the major resources of the system.

Another way of expressing this finding is saying that a given individual belongs and yields allegiance to two social categories, one horizontal and one vertical. His horizontal allegiance conforms to the metaphor of the social structure in Western urban societies, according to which the social continuum is divided into classes from top to bottom. In urban Mexico this metaphor does not exhaust the complexity of the situation. Class is a useful social category, nevertheless, because horizontal solidarity is connected with reciprocal exchange, and because this form of exchange takes place between social equals. This is as true for shantytown dwellers as it is for college professors or for industrialists. A criterion for class identity in Mexico might be provided by the observation of whether a set of individuals engage in reciprocal exchange of information, goods, and services.

The efficiency of the system as an apparatus of class domination does not mean that class conflict is absent. The purpose of this paper is not to deny the existence of conflict but to show how stability is maintained in spite of the enormous socioeconomic inequalities and contradictions within Mexican society. Obviously, the system is not monolithic since each power broker strives to gain influence and to increase his

share of the resources in competition with other brokers. However, this fragmentation of power can become an element of stability when the formation of horizontal alliances based on common class interests is impeded. One feature of the Mexican political system that discourages such alliances is the complete turnover that occurs every six years in the brokerage structure of the public sector. Every incoming president appoints in fact a new national power structure. Disaffected groups do not join forces but prefer to bide their time since they may gain access to power in the next administration.

Class solidarity and sectional loyalties do exist, but they are conditioned by the flow of exchange, one in the horizontal direction and the other in the vertical direction. Therefore, an individual deprived of vertical resources (as a shantytown dweller) will rely more heavily on class solidarity than an individual who enjoys the trust and protection of a powerful patron. Clients who are formally articulated to the system through competent brokers seldom join protest movements. The existence, at all levels, of horizontal as well as vertical bonds of solidarity explains the importance attributed to politics in the system. Politics in Mexico is the art of manipulating vertical against horizontal solidarities.

NOTES

- 1. See Zaid 1979, Reyna and Weinard 1977, Smith 1979, Purcell and Purcell 1977, and Stevens 1977.
- "Most forms of class analysis of Mexico are not entirely satisfying. . . . Many important groups and factions do not have a class basis that is clear enough to make the observer feel comfortable with the concept of class 'factions." Purcell and Purcell 1980, p. 224.
- 3. Mexico City has by far the largest share of the public sector in the country. In 1976 the federal government included 18 ministries, 123 decentralized agencies, 292 federally owned corporations, 187 official commissions and 160 development trusts, most of them in the capital (Grindle 1977, pp. 2–3). State enterprises such as PEMEX, the national oil monopoly, employ tens of thousands of bureaucrats and an even larger number of unionized workers. At current (1979) reckoning there are four million federal and state employees in Mexico, a figure that includes the armed forces, police forces, and the staffs of many universities (Excelsior 1979, p. 4a).
- 4. For further details see Zapata 1976, Reyna and Miquet 1976, Roxborough and Zapata, 1978, Camacho 1980, Córdova 1979. Some of the other organizations are the Union of Petroleum Workers, the Union of Electrical Power Workers, the Union of Railroad Workers, the Union of Miners, and some of the smaller rival federations such as CROM, CROC, etc. The figures are uncertain, but a total of three million affiliates of the Congreso del Trabajo seems likely for 1975. In 1963, the CTM included 11 "confederations," 131 labor federations, and 1,059 unions—nearly half the unions in the country. Yet, the organized labor sector represents only 22.9 percent of the gainfully employed population according to the 1970 census (Zapata 1976, p. 12).
- 5. We have studied a tamily group of about six hundred persons, the descendants of a single nuclear family, which identifies ideologically with the private sector although it numbers only a relatively small group of really major industrialists (Lomnitz and Perez 1978 and in preparation). Most relatives are administrators, employees, or clients in the family industries and businesses, or have branched out into small businesses of their own. Self-reliance and the virtues of enterprise were stressed in op-

position to civil service. Family business was the norm since kinship provided the element of trust and loyalty an entrepreneur would look for in selecting his partners, associates, and administrators. The entrepreneur became the style-setter for a growing kin group which looked up to him and sought his leadership and protection. A vast network of patron-client relations developed, as family businesses throughout Mexico began to be connected through intermarriage. Each patron was at the same time a broker who provided income, protection, and economic opportunities in exchange for loyalty and prestige. After 1960, the introduction of modern technology, mass production, and mass marketing tended to make family business increasingly obsolete; yet the kinship network continued to operate in a less obvious fashion.

- 6. CONCAMIN, the national federation of industrial chambers, includes sixty local chambers plus fourteen industrial associations (which have a lower standing than a chamber). CANACINTRA, the federation of consumer-goods industries, has a membership of eighteen thousand industrial concerns divided into sixty sections according to the type of industry. COPARMEX is an employers' union, mainly concerned with representing the private sector in matters of labor legislation; in 1970 it had an affiliation of about ten thousand employers, organized in thirty-two local centers. CONCANACO, the Mexican federation of chambers of commerce, includes all taxpaying commercial establishments.
- 7. See also Blau (1964) and Befu (1977, 6:225-58), and Carlos and Anderson (1980).
- 8. For further understanding of brokerage and political clientelism in other contexts, see Schmidt et al. (1977), Greenfield and Strickon (1977), Boissevain (1974), and Eisenstadt and Roniger (1975).
- 9. An example of ideological differences between organized workers and the informal sector can be found in the study of Davis et al. (1980), in "Ideology and Belief System among Working Class in Mexico and Venezuela."

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