Intersectoral crossings: Civil Society leaders and Non-governmental public action from the inside

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Summary: This paper examines the life-work histories of twenty four civil society activists that crossed the boundary of the third sector into the government in Mexico 2000-6). The motivation of the study was to document and analyse the experiences of these 'cross-overs', since, initial anecdotal evidence suggested that many of these individuals were working on the inside to promote progressive reforms. However, the data collected suggests a far less positive picture. It indicates that (a) some of these people were ill-prepared in terms of their strategy for working within government, both in terms of understanding how things worked inside government, and in having no clear mandate from their constituencies or supporters; (b) some also lacked the necessary skills to negotiate and build agendas and support with other actors within government to shape the policy process once inside; (c) that this made them highly vulnerable to 'capture' or immobilisation by interest groups once inside; and (d) that their reputations and relationships with the broader third sector were damaged as a result of their entry into government. By contrast, the evidence suggests that civil society strategies to shape the policy process from outside the government had been more successful in bringing about progressive social change. The paper concludes with reflection on (a) lessons for theorising about civil society and policy change in Mexico and (b) some reflections about civil society and government relationship.

INTRODUCTION

The question this research will contribute to answer is: to what extent social leaders can advance agendas and foster collective action to produce major policy reform when "cross" into government?. To do so, this paper discusses some of the advantages and limitations that civil society[1] leaders face when crossing into government.
The time period of the study is the Mexican society during the period 2000-2006, the transition to its democracy. Before this period, Mexican social movements, groups, and organisations were central in the construction of democracy, and once it was achieved, a number of their leaders crossed into government with the aim to boost social agendas. However little has been discussed about what lessons can be learnt from these crossings, or about leaders´ motivations, limitations and results for the sector as a whole.

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[1] In the other comparative cases developed in this study, David Lewis has used the more neutral term of 'third sector'. However, I preferred to use the concept of Civil Society, not only because it is far more used in Mexico and it was the term the activists identified with; but also because I believe that this concept reflects better the historical moment in which the study was conducted. It also reflects the diversity of organisations that allied during the long-term society's struggle fro democracy and the achievement of a democratic change. I mainly use the concept as presented by Schmitter (1996: 2-3) that stresses that CS is a "compound property…[that] rests in four…behavioural norms (1) dual autonomy; (2) collective action; (3) non-usurpation, (4) civility". I include, therefore, in CS a multitude of social actors, like social movements activists and organisations, of which –for the purpose of this study- I will focus on the organised ones to which I will refer as Civil Society Organizations (CSOs) in which I include NGOs, networks, unions, business chambers and other social processes like neighbourhood action, protests and public opinion (see Cohen and Arato, 2000).

The study originally started with a positive approach to the crossings, mainly since initial anecdotal evidence included some 'success" stories that seemed to give a fairly 'positive' role to the 'cross-over': the idea that the entry of civil society people had 'improved' government in certain ways[2]. We valued the entry of civil society people into government, among other things, for the innovation of policies, the new sense of commitment it could impinge bureaucracy with, and the important contribution to democracy that the fostering of new social agendas could bring. Crossers profiles, especially in terms of capacities and previous achievements seemed to support such a view. However, the actual results based in analysis of the life-histories suggested a far less positive picture.

The paper starts the discussion by arguing that cross-sector movements are related with broader historical, political and social contexts, and can only take place when the evolution of state-civil society relationships has created some bridging, windows of opportunity, or the expectation for acceptable levels of policy partnerships. Then, it presents evidence that indicates that even under this state of affairs, and not existing specific attempts of cooption by government, cross-overs can be "eaten" by the bureaucracy; and argues that there is a permanent tension between leaders´ capacity of agency and their relationality with other agents and structures. Finally, this paper questions whether activists may find it easier to bring about reform through action for policy change from "outside" the government, rather than from within.

This discussion is organised in four parts. First, I present some information about the evolution of the civil society-state relations in Mexico, which need to be understood in the context of longstanding state corporatism. In a second part, the paper shows how the case study was constructed based on a series of life-work history interviews with key individuals who 'crossed over'. In a third part, the paper revises the crossing of society's leaders into government, analysing their motivations, comparative advantages, learning and limits; as well, as the lessons that can be learnt from their experiences. The chapter ends with a conclusion that discusses the paper main contributions and some of the lessons that the Mexican case may teach in terms of non-governmental public action.

COUNTRY BACKGROUND

In the aftermath of the Mexican Revolution, President Cardenas (1934-1940), had a vision of a strong state that could reduce conflict among the groups that were fighting for power. Thus, he developed what became to be known as the *Corporativism.* This was an "organic" understanding of the state as the single leader in the pursuit of the common good, and as the director of all the social, economic and political actors in the

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[2] For example, the Fox government's claim that it would reduce poverty by 6%, was achieved in part under the leadership of an CSOs leader, through the programme called *Oportunidades*. Similarly, INDESOL, directed by several NGO leaders, successfully funded a larger number of CS organisations; NGO personnel at the Secretary of Public Function developed an outstanding programme for social monitoring called *Monitoreo Ciudadano* (Citizen Monitor-ship); and a number of Secretaries such as moved towards more open decision making, evaluation of programmes and implementation to the participation of CS organisations.

nation. By being the sole provider of services the government derived its legitimacy and by providing them discretionally its loyal clientele. This understanding was based into three main components: sectoral identities, clientelism and patronage.

Under this system, all individuals had to be incorporated into one of the sectors, private, labour, peasants or popular, and acquire an identity accordingly. The state, provided for each sector clientele, based on the loyalty and obedience of the sector´s membership. Government paid sectors´ loyalty by granting them special access or control over certain cherished resources, they could use (and sometimes even profit on) as their own patrimony (see Garrido 1989; Lopez Villafañe 1986).
Relations between government and the sector were conducted through a sector representation which converged in the state's party, the PRI[3]. The PRI was also in charge of organise sectors, reward leaders and articulate a functional hierarchy. Thus, unions were organised from the state and faithful leaders were promoted to Congress without losing their identity, making workers feel that their interests were represented. Through them the government attended workers demands and reduced labour conflict, subordinating workers interests to those of the political elite[4] (see Millán, to be published). The *corporativism* permeated also the private sector controlling its organisations[5]. In exchange of their support, the government contained workers demands, conflicts with unions, subsidised specific resources, discretionally managed credits and fiscal supports, and protected loyal enterprises from competence from abroad. In a similar manner peasants were corporativised through the *Confederación Nacional Campesina* (National Confederation of Peasants) through which received land and subsidised agricultural inputs and other resources.

This control over economic actors guaranteed the state (a) a strong intervention in the economy that served to impulse its modernisation project and (b) the possibility of subordinating economy to politics whenever needed.

Similarly to the other sectors, the relation with society passed through the organisations created by the *coorporativism*, and the state assumed the sole responsibility for social integration (Olvera, undated) and monopolised practically all aspects of public life and social action. Since it was through the *corporativism* that social demands were served, organised and regulated, therefore, only the demands of loyal groups, those that had successfully negotiated a place in the political agenda, were the ones that were attended (Natal and Gonzalez, 2002). Thus, attention to social needs was subordinated to the political agenda through clientelism. Social entrepreneurs were politically co-opted, bribed or given the control or special access over certain resources they could use as their own, and when this did not work, repressed or imprisoned. In this manner, *clientelism* and *patroange* were the axis of the relation CS-State.

Moreover, the State also validated the spaces, arenas and contents of public opinion. Throughout the years this control created a culture in which the exercise of voice and

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[3] The PRI is the *Partido de la Revolucion Institucional*, the party that for more than 70 years governed Mexico.
[4] The largest Union in Mexico, the National Confederation of Workers (CTM) signed an agreement of affiliation to the official party, so as to all members of the Union became automatically members of the party.
[5] The main organisations of the private sector that were coopted by the government were, the CONCANACO (National Confederation of Chambers of Commerce) and the CANCAMIN

even citizens´ expressions of interests in public affairs were seen as alien. Furthermore, since the exercise of citizenship passed through one's membership to corporative organisations, the understanding of citizenship came to be equivalent to membership of a particular grouping (see Aguilar, 2002). This was paralleled by an ample nationalist cultural project compounded with a state-controlled educational project, which work to create a national identity that integrated and organised corporative ones.

Therefore, for civil society (CS) things were not encouraging. With a leadership "captured", social action pre-empted (Natal and Gonzalez, 2002), citizens understanding themselves as beneficiaries and objects of public policies, and a controlled public opinion, society's capacity to independently involve herself in community affairs was asphyxiated (see Aguilar, 2002). It is, thus, understandable that Mexican society (a) aligned within the *coporativist* institutional arrangements and (b) that had problems developing independent categories or forms of organization. The burden of this almighty state and the pervasiveness of this logic maintained itself from the late 30s to the late 80s (see Annex 1).

However, slowly but systematically, some groups of Mexican CS took any little opportunity available to fight for the opening up of spaces and for the construction of different forms of social expression and organisation. Thus, several social practices and organisational forms appeared through these years, and though, limited in scope and generally tight to local settings, helped to raise a critical mass that incrementally pressed for democracy.

The first pressures that started to challenge the system appeared in the 1950s. The only other actor capable to act socially, the Catholic Church, sponsored organisations, initially oriented to pastorate action, but that later were informed by the Theology of Liberation[6]. These organisations produced interesting proposals of alternative development and self-help.
In the same period appeared several manifestations of union's dissatisfaction (teachers, doctors and trains workers)[7]. Through several social practices, such as strikes, marches and the like, these movements started to demand for changes in practices within their organisations and the system. These early movements influenced the students of the National University (UNAM), whom in the late 60s revolted and demanded for more democracy. Though this movement was ended with a brutal repression by the government, its influence on the many students that later became CSOs activists, academics and even public servants was to become particularly important.

From the late 60s onwards, civil society exhibited a generalised lack of trust towards government and though some sectors developed, did so with a very low profile and outside state-controlled spaces. During these years augmented the number of social groups interested in issues such as housing, equity, indigenous people, peasants and environmental problems. They had a limited scope of action and did not threaten any government's political or legitimacy capital and therefore, could remain invisible and out of the state interest. By the 1970s, most of these groups became NGOs and started

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[6] These organisations were called *Comunidades Eclesiales de Base*. For some, this type of organizations explains the origin of several social movements, like the Zapatistas in Chiapas (see Krause 1999).
[7] There were also some other non-unions related social movements that pressed for democracy, the most important the "Navismo", started by Dr. Nava, a candidate that was cheated by the PRI in the governor elections in the state of San Luis Potosí.

to network around their interests. The *Pacto Ribereño*, for instance, brought together, for the first time, environmentalists from Mexico City and fisherman from Tabasco (Barba, 1998).

The 70s saw also the appearance of more organised social movements like the *Coordinadora Nacional del Movimiento Urbano Popular* (CONAMUP), and of independent peasant organisations like the *Coordinadora Nacional Plan de Ayala* and the *Central Independiente de Obreros y campesinos*, that challenged the corporativist system and became independent and autonomous organisations. During this period, some symptoms of internal instability also started to appear in Unions, as concerns on salaries, benefits and legal rights, job security and training, raised[8]. The larger unions of electricians, telephonists, and the National University's, among others, started to negotiate with the government independently of the CTM, *Confederacion de Trabajadores de Mexico*, the large workers central (see Reyna, 1979).

THE ECONOMIC CRISIS AND THE FRACTURES OF THE CORPORATIVISM

The social movements of the 60s and 70s, exhibited that the state giving of discretional benefits was not been fully able to calm down some sectors discontent. Thus, unrest started to increase exponentially from 1982 onwards, when the oil-boom ended with a serious economic crisis, an enormous debt and without financial reserves. Devaluation, exponential inflation and the fall of real wages, followed as the whole economy stagnated[9]. Distressed, the government attempted some desperate policies like the nationalisation of the Bank system in 1982. However, the economic collapse and the frantic financial policies that followed troubled the corporativised organisations of private sector, which found very difficult to accept them and distanced from the government.

With a shortage of government resources to recompense their loyal groups, corporative structures like unions, urban or peasant associations, started to face problems to maintain control over their members. As incentives for individuals to remain part of their sector plummeted, several corporativist structures started to fracture.

President De la Madrid (1982-1988), took office in the middle of this turmoil. Trying to guarantee some cohesion around the needed adjustment, convoked a Pact for the Stability and Economic Growth (PECE), which appealing to the nationalism of social and economic actors maintained them under control for a while. In parallel, De la Madrid also launched a draconian structural adjustment, which seriously impacted Unions, Business Chambers and other corporativist structures.
These measures had an important impact on Unions stability. The larger Central of Unions (CTM), for instance, was accused of not serving her membership and several

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[8] These concerns incremented specially after the entrance of Mexico to the GATT. The liberalisation of the economy included, deregulation and the aperture of trade, what implied more competitiveness. An evil effect of this aperture was the contraction of the labour marke that specially affected workers of corporations such as General Motors, Uniroyal, and Kellog´s.

[9] Maxfield (1990), reports that between 1983 and 1986, the GNP felt by 4.5%, and showed an average zero growth between 1983 and 1988. Consequently, real wages decreased an average of 35%, and the share of labour in the total national income plummeted from 46% to 30%. Public investment in education and health suffered a 45% decrease, what added to the shrinking of living standards. For Maxfield, the reduction of standards of living was only comparable to that occurred in the 1910 Revolution.

unions opted for exit and independence, dealing themselves with their companies and the State. Internally, unions started to face complaints about workers' participation in the decision making and democracy[10]. Workers were also concerned with the modernisation projects of the State, especially with the privatisation of several government-enterprises and claimed for a change (see Natal and Gonzalez, 2002). However, Unions were not used to express themselves, and could not fully amplify their workers voice, neither act openly[11] (Zapata, 1995). This reduced their legitimacy and many workers exit, to the point that by the end of the 80s, only 22.4% of Mexican workers were part of a union (see Bizberg, 1990).

In the same manner the two larger private sector federations, one industrial and the other of commerce, faced criticisms for not attending the needs of most of their members and leaders for advancing their own political careers (Hernández, 1989; Story, 1990). Thus, just as Unions did, businessmen preferred to exit and organise themselves in civic organisations[12], in which they could affiliate voluntarily (see Hernandez, 1989). The new organisations discovered the key role that public opinion could play, and thus, allied and work with and through civil organisations and with opposition political parties and more openly defied the system (Millán, 1998).

During this period urban movements grew well-organised and were booming. The middle classes of Mexico City opposed major urban reforms in the late 70s early 80s, lobby government around air pollution, and experienced with neighbourhood self-management strategies to ensure security and good quality services. All these experiences gave them independence, organisational capacity, and more importantly, connectivity.
All these social processes converged when in 1985, the earthquakes that devastated Mexico City, sprung up an unparalleled spontaneous and widespread social participation. In contrast, to the surpassed state agencies and corporativist structures, CSOs, social movements, neighbourhoods and population in general exhibited an impressive capacity of organisation to attend the many problems related with the rescue of victims, health, housing, and so on. This was an important turning-point, since social actors fully realised that they could act collectively and independently from the state. This societal impetus was again put in movement after the 1988 presidential elections when Cardenas, the left candidate, alleged the PRI had again made fraud to favour its candidate, Salinas. From then on, many organisations started to work for democracy and civic culture, openly challenging the system.

Trying to boost markets, President Salinas (1988-1994) first liberalised the economy and then later launched a land reform[13]. Both faced strong rejection by unions, popular groups and many PRI members, who saw them as anti-nationalist and as a betrayal of the Revolutionary pact with its social basis, peasants and workers (see Olvera, undated). Moreover, the state's retreat from its controlling role in economy further reduced its

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[10] Specially in the cases of the Union of the Nuclear Energy industry, and the Union of Telephones of Mexico, the National Telecommunications Giant.
[11] This explains why the more propositive sector of workers tended to organise not in Unions but in Civic Associations. This is the case of the FAT, the Authentic Front of Work, and of the *Unidad Obrera Independiente* (Independent Workers Unity) among others.
[12] See Natal and Gonzalez for more on these organisations as well as Unions.
[13] This was a reform to the article 27 of the Constitution, which cancelled the *ejido* system and allowed peasants to sell their land.

capacity to provide for the corporativised sectors, what fractured even more the corporativism.

Trying to attend for the worst effects of the structural adjustment, Salinas launched a major social development programme called *Solidaridad*, oriented to marginal groups in rural and urban areas. The programme also intended to reinforce the bonding among the PRI-government and their loyal basis, revitalize the President image and attract new groups to the PRI structure. However, though *Solidaridad* gave the government some support and legitimacy, in practice it was not enough to restore the nexus with the corporativist structures.

At the same time, by the 1990s, CSOs had learned that networking made them less vulnerable, give them more voice to promote democratic values and/or of oppose the government, and represented more capacity to negotiate and/or lobby. Thus, we see in this period an increasing number of NGO networks, such as the *Red Mexicana de Acción contra el Libre Comercio*[14] (REMALC) (1990), *Convergencia de Organismos Civiles para la Democracia* (1994), the *Movimiento Ciudadano por la Democracia*, and the *Union de Grupos Ambientalistas* (UGAM) in 1993, among others, all of them key organisations that faced the systems in important areas.

In 1994, over 400 CSOs, such as Convergencia de Organismos Civiles por la Democracia, Movimiento Ciudadano por la Democracia, Christian groups, a large number of technicians and intellectuals and citizens in general, converged to create *Alianza Cívica*, a CSO oriented to the monitoring of elections (Olvera, undated). *Alianza*, went on to expose PRI's mismanagement of the electoral processes, created strong public opinion on this issue, and pressed the government to accept electoral reforms. The government accepted them, not only because of the strong social pressure, but also because it needed more legitimacy for the next election, as the Chiapas guerrilla uprising by the Zapatist Army (EZLN), had called for widespread civic insurrection prior to the 1994 elections.

Though the presidential elections of 1994 run uncontested and the PRI won, it faced a serious internal fragmentation and the elected president, Ernesto Zedillo did not have the full support of his party, neither of the corporativist system. Problems escalated after the economy collapsed in December of 1994, only three months after Zedillo had taken office. As the economy plummeted so did the president's popularity, and the cohesion of the much-weakened corporativist structures. Moreover, Zedillo´s relation with civil society soon deteriorated, while the two major opposition parties consolidated their relations with her. In 1996, for instance, the PAN alliance with civil society in Chihuahua, gave rise to civil resistance to defend democracy.

THE CHANGE TO DEMOCRACY

Under this scenario the 2000 presidential elections took place. The main opposition candidate was Vicente Fox, a charismatic ex-executive of CocaCola, who had through non-traditional politics, became governor of the *Guanajuato* state and later forced his

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[14] See Gallardo, 1993, 1994, and Natal and Gonzalez, 2002, for more on REMALC.

way to become the PAN´s[15] candidate for the presidency. His campaign witnessed a large-scale participation of civil society groups, many of which supported him not because of his own platform but because he represented the opportunity to defeat the PRI. Fox finally won the elections and, prior to the taking of office, organised several "Dialogue Tables", which opened the discussion about the reforms the new government should implement, one of these tables dealt specifically with Civil Society issues. The forum was public and more than 400 CSOs had the opportunity to voice their views and participate in the definition and elaboration of the future policies that will regulate their relation with the state (Villalobos and García, 2002). Once in government, Fox gave clear signs of his intention to work with CS organisations. They were considered as consulters in strategic areas, participation mechanisms were implemented so they could express their views on public policies, and there was an unprecedented participation in the design and planning of policies and programmes. Even the monitoring of several public policies was open to CSOs scrutiny.

However, not all action came from above. Parallel to the new government´s attitude, CS showed the enormous capacity of collective action that had achieved, organising herself in the nationwide group *Poder Ciudadano* (Citizen Power), a network of more than 600 CSOs[16] that developed a national agenda on a series of issues from politics to economics. Moreover, during the Fox administration three central accomplishments were achieved. First, there was a restructuring of the Social Co-Investment Funds into a formal programme, which organised and transparent public funding for government-CSOs collaboration, on the experimentation of alternative programmes, evaluation of public policies and/or research. The second, the new Law for the Access to Information, was a response to a long-running struggle of Mexican CS. The third, the Law for the Fostering of CSOs, that since 1992 several CSOs and academics, such as *Foro de Apoyo Mutuo*, *Convergencia de Organismos Civiles*, CEMEFI, *Fundacion Miguel Aleman*, and the *Universidad Iberoamericana*, had been pushing for. During the Fox administration an intense lobby forced the government and Congress to finally recognise that a new regulatory environment was needed to encourage the work of CS and the initiative was finally approved in December 2002 (Castro y Castro, 1998).

As can be observed, the relation between the federal government and CS radically changed during the Fox administration, and there was a general approval about the way the new administration had conducted the relationship (see Harvard Review of Latin America, 2002). At the state level, however, things were still different, many politicians still did not paid attention to CS and others not only did not foster but even jeopardized social action. Many states' governments still intended to co-opt society's leaders, or repressed them or their organisations, a situation that continued to these days.

A very significant advance in terms of civil society-state relations was that, for the first time in Mexico's history, a president invited a group of CS leaders mainly from organisations related with women development, civic culture and human rights, to collaborate with the federal government (some of them are the informants of this paper). Expectations were raised that their expertise, contacts and knowledge of problems at the local level, could become powerful tools for policy planning and a major shift from

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[15] The right winded, *Partido de Accion Nacional* (Party for Social Action).
[16] The main organisations that conformed *Poder Ciudadano* were *Alianza Cívica, Causa Ciudadana, Rosenblueth* Fundation*, Convergencia de Organizaciones Civiles, Movimiento Ciudadano por la Democracia* (MCD) and the *Red Mexicana Ante el Libre Comercio*.

what had been done in the past. Organisations also expected that these leaders could serve as brokers of many social agendas and that their agency could inaugurate a new way of doing politics. However, Fox's invitation not only reflected his interest in civil society. It also reflected the lack of personnel he could trust in, and the main challenge he had: to work with a bureaucracy that had been traditionally close to the PRI. This is why, soon after to the invitation of social leaders, the new government established the new 'civil service', an attempt to professionalise bureaucracy making it an independent actor that could serve regardless the party in government. This would replace the previous system in which a compliant bureaucracy was subordinated to the ruling PRI party.

Attending to the history of the relations CS-state in Mexico, there are a number of questions that the crossings of activists to the Fox´s administration raise. How did the leaders dealt with the dense PRI bureaucracy?; were they capable of advancing the agendas for which they had been fighting on the civil society side?; were they able, from within the government to bring about collective action of the size they organised outside?; to what extent they did influence policies, by acting as brokers on behalf of disadvantaged section of society and/or seeking to advance broad social causes?. These we will discuss hereafter.

THE STUDY IN MEXICO

The collaboration of social leaders in government tasks is not a new affair. In a number of countries, like the Philippines or the UK, for instance, there have been cycles of crossers that have renewed different areas of public administration (see Lewis, forthcoming). Similarly, in the Latin American region, the intersectoral crossing has also been relatively common, mainly after the fall of dictatorships and the renovation of political leadership. Thus, Argentina, Brazil, Peru, Chile and Uruguay have seen waves of activists crossing over into government. In Mexico, through the corporativism, the PRI-government systematically incorporated union and private sector leaders, as well as social entrepreneurs into different government spheres. There existed also a far more limited number of independent social leaders that crossed to government before Fox. However, despite the importance that crossings may have for the advancement of social agendas and to produce reforms, the study of this phenomena has been practically neglected. One of the few systematic works on this area is the comparative study conducted by David Lewis, which studied the life-histories of crossers in Bangladesh, the Philippines, Pakistan and the UK (see Lewis, forthcoming). Other interesting material is the edited by Basombrio (2005), a compilation of testimonies of CS leaders of Latin America that collaborated with governments of the region.

Intending to contribute to fill the gap we have on this area, here I present the results of a study that run from October 2005 to April 2007, on the crossings of civil society leaders to government[17] during the Fox presidency of Mexico. I collected data on the

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[17] In this document we will use the concept of inter-sector crosses or boundary crosses to refer to the transit that civil society leaders and activists realise when they collaborate with the government becoming an authority or public servant. This is part of Lewis´ understanding that the public and social spheres are not rigid but that exchange individuals that intend to generate processes of change in such spheres. For further discussion on this see (Lewis forthcoming)

experiences motivations, advantages, limitations and achievements of individuals who made a crossing over from civil society to government 2000-2006. My main objective was to learn more about what such boundary-crossing experiences can tell us that add to knowledge about civil society, state and the policy reform process. I also intended to observe how shifts in power opened space for new forms of public action by civil society, in the form of, leaderships, organisation of priorities, agendas and alternative solutions. All these, key factors to understand how non-governmental public action (NGPA) can be exerted and the possibilities that this action has from "inside the government".

To so doing, I undertook a qualitative research study, based on a life-histories methodology, to conduct 24 interviews of activists from civil society organisations who had crossed into government[18]. I first piloted some qualitative interviewing to detect key questions of interest (Glaser and Strauss 1967). Then I did preliminary interviews with crossers throughout the country and at all government levels (federal, regional and local) using 'purposive sampling' (Woodhouse 1998), and finally focused on the sub-group of CSOs leaders that had worked within the Fox administration[19]. With this subgroup, each interview consisted of actually 2-4 encounters. All interviews were granted confidentiality and therefore their names are not disclosed in this document.

I did not intend to interview all society crossers in the Fox administration, but rather, tried to have a balanced sample in terms of gender, age/generation, time in CSO service, brief pass/sustained collaboration within government, and high /lower level positions. All interviewees were recognised CSO activists, some had participated in broader social movements, like women or environment, and others had been active in anti-government social action and some had had links or had even participated even in guerrilla movements. All of them had been part of civil society organisations interested in influencing policy or in lobbying for social change. The cases of study were carefully chosen to include only individuals that went into government either with a *civic logic*, or motivated by a personal reason, i.e., they were offered a good job or a larger income. Therefore, I only studied individuals that had crossed as citizens and not as members of a sector, union or as partisans, for instance. I neither considered individuals coming from organisations that, with a civil society façade, actually were part or have strong linkages with political parties and work for the interests of those parties. However, it is important to highlight that in Mexico, there is a large number of crossers from these types of organisations. I decided to avoid them, since, as discussed in the previous section, the history of Mexico shows that these crossings may still be mark by the corporativism, and therefore, would not be representative of the kind of issues I wanted to observe.

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[18] We thank Dr. David Lewis for his valuable guidance on life-histories methodology and on the general design and organisation of the study. Any wrongdoing is, however, my sole responsibility.
[19] Though, our focus was only the federal government during the Fox administration, the interviews made at other levels allowed us to have more data to compare with. In different regions of Mexico, political elites had different motivations, since some regional governments were still governed by the PRI or by the left party the PRD (Partido de la Revolucion Democractica). This was also the case of local governments. Therefore, we had an interesting mix of cases and problems that allowed us to more easily disaggregate causes and effects and better understand which were the peculiarities of our cases.

CROSSING THE BOUNDARIES OF THE STATE

In this section I will discuss some of the reasons and implications of civil society leader's boundary shifts. I will focus on issues like, leader's motivation, their advantages and limitations vis-à-vis other actors like the bureaucracy; their capacity to brokerage, advance agendas and to produce collective action.

MOTIVATIONS FOR BOUNDARY-CROSSING

The Mexican case indicates that the political orientation of the government, crossers were going to collaborate with, was a central consideration; and that motivation increases in the case of democratic governments with larger legitimacy. However, some leaders may consider this from different points of view. I found, that in terms of motivation, one can observe that Mexican activists that decided to cross to the government, had at least one of these motivations, (i) first, crossing was realised as an opportunity to put forward some agendas they had been fighting for; (ii) second, it represented space and voice for putting forwards important social values to influence government action; finally (iii), it was a pragmatic chance to advance their career.

The first two types of leaders differ in their perception of how reform should/can be achieved[20]. First, there are thus that have an "incremental" perspective of institutional change. These believed that social causes are built by advancing step by step and, therefore, take any opportunity to move forwards. One of our informants put it in this way,

> "…Even when I did not share their views… I weighed up the possibility of advancing some aspects of the agenda [I was concerned with]…, and saw this opportunity – maybe the only one I was going to have in my life!--, as the only way to produce some change…" Informant GF4-19

This comment, in different forms was repeated by many of our interviewees in relation with the specific area they were interested in[21]. It shows how, this type of activists may decide to collaborate in specific programmes or policies with governments that do not necessarily foster civil society or with which they do not have ideological compatibility, for the sake of advancing their cause.

A second group of leaders was composed by those that had a more holistic vision of change and that framed their causes within larger social ideals. This group tended to be integrated by those that had been more collectively involved in the construction of

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[20] Something similar has been reported by Basombrio, 2005

[21] In the Mexico of the PRI, activists stressed how they, though reluctant, accepted an appointment since they felt that it was the only way to advance their cause. They stressed how when conditions are against a cause, the opening of a door, even if that door is open by an autocratic regime, may be perceived as the possibility to introduce some change. This was the case of Julia Caravias, a well know environmental activist, that was named Secretary of the Environment by Mr. Zedillo. This is not exclusive to Mexico, and has happened elsewhere in Latin America. Blondet (2005), for instance, reports how she and other women activists were kin to work in the Ministry of Women and Human Development, of the Fujimory administration, in the late 1990s Peru, since this was the only opportunity they had had to advance their ideals.

various types of common goods and/or in the sustained struggle for democracy within various fronts, like the respect of human rights, gender or greater accountability (see Natal, 2002).

A third group was that of those that decided to cross to advance their careers. For them, rather than idealism, *crossing* meant the opportunity to expand their income or to undertake new professional challenges. However, these incentives should not be minimised, since they raise some more complex questions, such as, when income or professional realisation replace other types of more social oriented 'values'?. These type of informants showed that crossings can also be related (a) to life cycle economic pressures, i.e., when a person starts a family, or sees retirement as a possibility in the immediate future and therefore needs to increase savings; or (b) to professional ambitions, i.e., when a person feels that the NGO world is limited to his/her capacity of innovation or action.

As we discuss in next section, leaders soon found that whichever their motivation, they had certain comparative advantages that were promising in terms of advancing their causes or promoting their careers.

ADVANTAGES OF CROSSERS

The crossing of CS activists during the Fox administration can be traced back to the earlier campaign for Presidency. One particular Presidential candidate Gilberto Rincon, a disabled person, had brought attention to the discrimination of people with "different capacities". He compelled public opinion to pay attention to their situation and to recognise that a disabled person had the right and could even govern the country. After losing, he became the director of the Citizen Commission for Studies Against Discrimination and helped to devise a new and very advanced law on this matter (see for instance, CCED, 2001)[22].

Along with Rincon's example, other factors such as shifts of power, the debt with society and the general lack of trust in the bureaucracy, led Fox to invite a number of civil society activists to collaborate with his government. It was expected in the government spheres that the crossers would open liaisons with other social, economic and political actors and that this would create significant synergies. It was also argued that the *new blood* would help to change the image and culture of public agencies and thereby foster citizens´ confidence. Civil Society had also much expectation that leaders could bring innovation into public service and guarantee that public agendas were closer to society's interest than to those of political elites.

Moreover when these activists came into office they saw themselves as having a series of comparative advantages. Their life-histories showed that most of them had acquired a deep knowledge of specific social problems and demands. They had for long time observed in the field and evaluated where and why policies failed. In a number of cases, as an informant commented

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[22] Something similar happened in Brazil with Alves dos Santos (2005).

"… we have had a life doing what they don't, we have analysed policy – the evolution of policies!-- and know where they failed, we have seen them on the field…. most of us, have even tested out a number of alternative solutions to some of the problems that we were ask to attend to, …of course, when in government, the scope of the attention was far larger, but –at least I felt-- … we were better suited than bureaucrats to improve policy implementation."
Informant GF2-12

This type of comment was not uncommon in our interviews, and leaders were right in feeling this way; since 'civil service' was only established in Mexico in 2003[23], and therefore these leaders had more expertise on a number of policy issues than most bureaucrats. This helped gain them respect and recognition, aided them to put forward alternative solutions and to move ahead uninspired and sclerotic bureaucracies.

Another comparative advantage that activists recognised they had was their independence vis-à-vis partisan elites. They had no loyalty chains with political groups and nor any political favours to pay. Moreover, since most of them were not interested in making a political career themselves they could act with more independence of protocol and of the informal rules of politics. Thus, they could be more aggressive or pushy and interact and negotiate with politicians of different ideologies. Nonetheless, soon they would learn that some of these advantages would become constraints to their action, as I discuss now.

THE DAY AFTER: THE AWAKENING. PUBLIC ACTION AS INSIDER

Soon after taking office, some of the civil society 'cross-overs' realised that there were some issues they had not foreseen and that could complicate their work in forms they had not expected. Thus, several interviewees reported that they had been

"… naïve when accepting the appointment. Many of us were enthusiastic about the possibilities of impulse the things we had been fighting for,…[but] gave little thought to very practical issues… that after revealed their complexities."
Informant GF5-7

A number of crossers recognised they had failed in negotiating (a) the correct office, (b) sufficient authority and, (c) the resources necessaries that would allow them to put forward their agendas effectively. Therefore, these crossers soon found themselves trapped in the 'wrong' Department, or in areas in which they could not profit on their expertise, not push forward their agenda; caught within a wide hierarchy or lacking of funding or of personnel to impulse their *cause*. Several of them reported that, in order to advance their agenda, they had to convince their boss, with whom in some cases, was not even easy to gather. The problem increased at positions lower within the bureaucracy, and was more common at the federal than at the local level. In a number of cases, one of more of these simple reasons explains why leaders did not fulfil the

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[23] Civil Service for the Federal government was anounced April the 10th of 2003, and initiated October 7th of the same year. For more see: María del Carmen Pardo. 2005. 'El servicio profesional de carrera en México', Trabajo presentado en el X Congreso Internacional del CLAD sobre la Reforma del Estado y de la Administración Pública, Santiago, Chile, 18 - 21 Oct. 2005. p.11

expectations of those they represented within civil society and/or why their involvement in government could not produce projects to foster civil society's participation.

Another realization reported by most of them, was related to the demanding of government tasks mainly in terms of time and effort. Leaders found themselves plunged into procedures and practices they had to learn quickly and for which they were largely unprepared. One informant put it in this way:

> "Intending to be responsible I spent hours understanding and learning the procedures, … who should authorise this and that, where and how should I go and ask for this and the other,… how should I report and justify the spending, and so on. Even when I did not had to do it myself, since I had someone to do this for me,… I had to know all this. Otherwise every time I intended to put forwards something, my subordinates came back telling me why they had not… been able to execute my orders. This was my first time in government. I had little time left to anything else." Informant GF1-13

Several activists mention similar stories. Moreover, they also faced problems in terms of 'organisation culture', since most accepted they were more 'action oriented' and not so good at delegating, and therefore, once in office they tended to become too personally involved in innumerable aspects of 'micro-managing'.

In this same vein, was the realization about the complications of communication within the government (official documentation), i.e., the immense paperwork needed to communicate, not to say advance, even the most minimal issue. On the other hand, they realised that though decision-making is incredible slow and approvals and responses to straightforward issues could delay the simplest project; in the every-day practice of government, time passed rapidly in an overwhelming frenzy of "urgent" issues:
> "… things happen very fast… bureaucrats are always "fire-fighting"… everything is urgent and "needed for yesterday"… so you have the feeling that you are always lagging behind… even when I realised we had a problem and that we needed to organise ourselves, I had so little time to think in anything else that I left the opportunity pass." Informant GF2-16

In retrospect, most activists referred how they allowed themselves to be absorbed by the bureaucratic world and its time-demanding activities. As in the previous comment, a number of them stressed that the time and effort they had to devote to learn the new skills and manage around bureaucracy, made them lose sight of their role as members of civil society and loose strategic vision to team up with other CSO leaders, some also in government.

However, leaders´ problems were not only an internal affair; another set of problems came precisely from their mother sector. Crossers report that soon after taking office, they realised that the CSO world had a number of information-related problems: (a) many CSO were misinformed and did not fully know about a series of government policies and programmes; (b) some also assumed that only their organisations´ experience and perceptions were important and/or represented the full policy universe and that it should be, therefore, replicated. (c) Informants also reported that to communicate with organisations, even when they were networked, was not always easy; and that some of them were secretive and managed information strategically. (d)

Several CSO had difficulties in understanding which reforms leaders could produce and which could not, in other words, some CSOs did not fully understood that regulations and procedures of the public administration limited leaders authority and capacities. Most of our informants reported how difficult was for them, to persuade some of their old fellows that not all *the change* they wanted could be rapidly achieved[24].

Another realization most leaders reported, was that at the beginning they were strongly determined to, as part of government (a) fight bureaucratic *modus*, practices and values, which were against theirs and (b) to struggle with procedures they found irrelevant or unproductive. However, they realised that,

> ".. From outside you see things pretty straight forward, but from the inside government, they become blurry…" Informant GF2-6

Informants expressed how complicated it turn to be, not even to fight but just to take a stand on certain complex issues. They reported specifically four areas that conflicted them, (i) work with previous adversaries many of whom they had fought as activists; (ii) the appointment of an incompetent or dishonest bureaucrat[25]; (iii) pronounce in relation of an ambiguous policy, their experience indicate was useless or merely a temporary solution[26]; (iv) take a stand for society when a bureaucrat made an hostile comment or when there was a concrete governmental action that affected a particular organisation[27]. These type of problems constantly worried leaders making them afraid of legitimising political practices contrary to theirs or society's ideals.

Because of all these realizations, soon after taking office a number of leaders awoke with a problematic and incapacitating 'double identity', on one side still as CSO leaders and on the other as public servants. This double identity brought them to face the worst of the two worlds, rejection from bureaucracy and miscommunication with distinct

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[24] It is not that Mexican NGOs were "ignorant". This lack of understanding is related (a) to the fact that many organisations wanted to see changes occurring more rapidly. One has to remind that in the Mexican case, during the PRI administration things operated in a rather different manner. Public servants had more capacity to discretionally transfer funds, invite certain organisations and no others, and introduce new programmes or rules in a clientelist manner without consultation. Public servants were, therefore, perceived as powerful decision makers, a situation that was reversed during the Fox administration in which new accountability and check mechanisms were put to work into the public service. As, the crossers, as well as the new administration, were trying to follow established procedures and go "by the book", this sometimes implied larger time for decision making and the following of tiresome procedures. (b) Many groups within CS expected a mayor and significant shift from existing policies they considered inadequate. However, this not always occurred and many programmes and policies remained the same.
[25] A case that may illustrate this occurred in 2005, when the appointment of the new Secretary of Social Development, considered by many as incompetent, forced a number of crossers to renounce following Mrs. Loría, chairman of the INDESOL. Similarly, in her own testimony Mariclaire Acosta, the Mexican human rights activist that went into the Foreign Affairs Secretary during the Fox administration, describes her own personal struggle to take a position following the appointment of a former Military Justice Pro-Counsellor, accused of corruption and human rights violations, as the nations´ General Attorney (see Acosta 2005: 78).
[26] These concerns may not be exclusive to the Mexican crossers in the Fox period. Basombrio reports very similar concerns described in the testimonies of other crossers of the region (2005).
[27] Within the Fox administration, several crossers reported to have serious problems taking stand in relation with Mrs. Zagun´s launching of her organization "Vamos Mexico". Many saw this new organisation as an useless and asymmetric competitor, particularly in terms of fundraising; and even morewhen her organisation had taken the name of another well known and recognised foundation.

sectors of CS and in some cases even with their own mother organisations[28]. Thus, they felt outcasted from both sides.

LIMITS TO NGPA ACTION

Several of our interviewees reported how as days passed, they found out they could not trust the government personnel around them. Therefore, those that had the possibility to sub-contract their own staff, or at least part of it, looked into the sphere of society or within the academy so as to conform a team of persons loyal to their cause[29]. This "teamwork by ideals", created a new ambiance and motivated parts of the bureaucracy to experiment, share decision-making and work with organisations; but, it also created friction with other civil servants, who wanted to make a career or were used to work in a more secretive manner and tight to more formal procedures. Moreover, uneasiness increased by the end of 2003 because, while bureaucrats were being pressured and reformed through the new professionalised civil service, the cross-overs from civil society were sometimes seen as unfairly gaining key positions 'through the back door'.

Clashes with the bureaucracy were also the result of competing organisational cultures. The newcomers wanted to be accountable and transparent towards society even if it meant exposing internal problems. They were for a more practical communication and procedures and their decisions were based on technical basis. The bureaucrats, on the other hand, used to loyalty chains and lack of accountability, claimed that society leaders did not work as part of the "team". They defended the importance of the existing "prescribed" communication mechanism and procedures and their decisions were grounded on political and legal considerations. In some case, these differences, created tension among serving a cause or a social agenda versus serving the institution they were part of.

Our study suggests that the problems discussed above, generated factions, which competing liaisons transcended the agency and involved larger political groups, vested interests and hidden political parties agendas. All this, in some cases, ended up in blockages by work-colleagues, pressures, dismissals and even collective purges or leavings.

However, not all the relation between crossers and the bureaucracy was a clash of this kind. Most of our interviewees also stated that in the middle of a numb and contentious bureaucracy, they

> ".. were able to detect certain individuals, very capable and ready to serve society, that very much welcomed our changes and teamed up with us."
> Informant GF3-18

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[28] This has also being reported by Pierini (2005). Sain recons some of these problems for the case of Argentina (Sain 2005).

[29] This may not be exclusive to the period studied. It was the case of the administration of Caravias in the Secretary of the Environment. Something similar has been reported for the case of Peru. Rospiglosi also reports how he re-build the police force, teaming-up with former NGO professionals (see Quintana 2005; Sain 2005; Rospiglosi 2005).

This was particularly truth for the case of INDESOL, The National Institute for Social Development, were some teams of collaborators actually "moved" together when the Institute disarticulated herself[30].

But if clashes with the bureaucracy were problematic, for some crossers collisions with their own sector were no less conflictive and far more frustrating. Several interviewees commented they faced allegations, transgression and even ex-communication mainly by some radical organisations and social movements, which saw their *crossing* to the state as a kind of disloyalty. They referred how, for some within the sector, to work for "the power" was a contradiction, and stressed the importance of maintaining independence and the role of CS as a permanent critic from outside[31].
Leaders reported that with those organisations that could not be persuaded they were not "serving the power",

> "…communication tended to be less smooth. Not only because of their critics, but also because,… in general, these type of organisations had a focalised agenda,… many interlocutors acting disarticulated,… and not always showing real intentions to talk." Informant GF1-1

Most crossers referred that this type of more radical organisations rarely proposed alternative solutions to their demands[32]. Analysing the data of our study with the actual groups of organisations crossers worked with, it can be observed that as communication reduced, cooperation curved down.

Other areas of clash were decision-making and implementation. Many CSOs could not always accept that leaders, now as public servants, had a different point of view, and unrealistically wanted them to agree on every single issue[33]. Moreover, some leaders reported that after a while they actually,

> "… felt used by some organisations that approached to ask for special attention or even to see what benefits could they obtain. "Informant GF4-24

Furthermore, some organisations did not understand that, as public servants, leaders were forced to maintain pluralism and to treat competing organisations or even those with different ideology; under the same conditions they granted their own. All these misunderstandings and lack of comprehension, interviewees reported, made them feel constantly and unfavourably evaluated by these demanding social actors, so that to cooperate with them was always a difficult task.

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[30] This has also been reported for Chile (see Dominguez 2005).

[31] This vision, may have some basis in the *corporativist* past of Mexico. Then, for civil society leaders, to accept a position in government meant to become acritical and accept cooptation. This phenomenon is not exclusive to Mexico and has occurred as well in other Latin American countries that have suffered dictatorships or repression as Pierini has highlighted for her own case in Argentina (2005) and Dominguez for Chile (2005).
However, it is important to say that this maniqueist understanding of the relation civil society-government was not the prevailing one. After the fall of the PRI, the majority of organisations welcomed the involvement of CS leaders in government. The problem came afterwards, when some of these organisations felt that they were not delivering to society but rather acting as to put forwards the government agenda.

[32] Activist abilities are not to be minimised. Mariclaire Acosta, reports how, when she was in the Secretary of Foreing Affairs, she turn an aggressive NGO into an ally (Acosta 2005).

[33] This has also been reported by Bianco (2005).

The problems described above, reveal that once in government, a number of activists faced many unforeseen problems both from their mother sector colleagues (among whom they were losing leadership and respect) and from new colleagues in government.

LESSONS FROM INTER-CROSSING IN MEXICO

The above discussion may leave a pessimistic impression about what inter-crossing meant for NGPA in Mexico. However, despite all the problems presented, some leaders managed to make their transit through government very productive. In some governmental agencies, like *Oportunidades* and PROCAMPO[34], inter-crossings did fertilise public administration and gave a new sense of commitment to the agency's bureaucracy. In others, like INDESOL, activists brought innovation to the agency and public agendas became closer to wider civil society and public interests. New attitudes and a spirit of social commitment brought many agencies, even those where there were not activists, to increase their disposition to work with social organisations. More cooperation served, in a number of cases, to homogenise objectives among the government and sectors of CS and helped them to speak similar languages, as happened in the long term relation of environmental and health NGOs with the respective Secretaries. At the federal level the confidence of society in government agencies increased. At regional and local levels, one could observe that, though some governments mainly involved activists to change the image of their administrations, they actually served to unfasten liaisons with other actors. In general one can say that during the period of observation, broadly speaking, important synergies were created.

Nonetheless, risking to lose the trees for the forest, regarding the historical opportunity, the size of the needs, and the convergence of possibilities for impulse new agendas and change, it is my contend that activists and CSOs fall short[35]. Practically all interviewees manifested that, though they were satisfied with their performance in the particular position they had had; as a sector, the global results of their crossings had been meagre for civil society. The explanations for this unsatisfying results, were those discussed above, lack of bargaining capacity when taking office, bureaucratic resistance; miscommunication and little support among the own civil society; as well as shortage of leaders personal abilities to negotiate and persuade bureaucracies, political elites and the diverse actors within civil society with which they had to work with.

Moreover, the advancements achieved in CS-state relations during Fox, faced a serious step back, when in 2006, Mr. Calderon took office. Since Calderon had been narrowly

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[34] *Oportunidades* can be literally translated as Opportunities. It was a programme of the Secretary of Development, directed to the extreme poor, which gave people economic incentives to take their children to school, attend to health care besides a regular food basket, broadly. PROCAMPO was a programme oriented to support peasants and help them with their production. Both, at different moments, were run by Rogelio Gomez a NGO leader, and though he did not actually design them, he was able to run them very well. His previous experience as director of the *Fundacion Vamos* undoubtedly helped him to foster grassroots organisations, to bring motivation and commitment to development bureaucracies and transparency to the programme.

[35] For reasons of space, here we will focus more on the analysis of the general results of the crossings regarding the fostering of civil society. This of course, leaves an important number of successful stories that should be analysed and is certainly unfair to many leaders that did produced significant policy reform in the line of the previous society struggles. We expect to be able to incorporate these cases in future larger analysis.

elected, the losing party PRD[36] (populist left) organised some sectors of society to claim for fraud and mobilized the masses to pressure the new administration. Some organizations, with liaisons with this party, which -in an exercise of democracy-- had been supported by the Fox government, were not quick enough to detach from this claim. Neither were some leaders that, though had been part of the Fox administration, were very slow to publicly react. Therefore, in the eyes of the Calderon administration, leaders and organisations were seen as problematic and 'disloyal'. Calderon, also in contrast with Fox, was a person of his party, and had far more partisan political support and a larger team to full fill bureaucratic posts, what added to the 'civil service' created three years ago, reduced the need of key experts from CS. This helps to explains why the new government was not only not interested in the 'crossing-over' trend, but saw with suspicious many of the reforms initiated by them and dedicated to dismantle and reverse many of the processes of reform initiated cross-over people from the Fox period.

Thus, the experience of Mexican crossers may teach a number of issues for the introduction of reforms and agenda building, such as,

(a) AGENCY CAPACITY
Limited capacity of agency of crossers was, among others the result of two factors, on one hand the result of leaders reduced influence over a number of public policies what make difficult the advancement of certain agendas and therefore limited their capacity to show "results" to their sector; and on the other, of their efforts in avoiding to be discretionary and favour their own fellows vis-à-vis other societal actors. Both things resulted in the weakening of their connections with their social base, what added to incomprehension and opportunistic attitudes of some organisations, inhibited the construction of a collective project. Thus, without social base an activist within government was just an "orphan" civil servant. A solution to this impasse could have been, for crossers, to organise among themselves in a new political grouping; and/or join a political party. Both options crossers did not wanted to explore. Therefore, what our case shows is that, crossers capacity of agency is much affected by a tension between brokerage powers and the avoidance of being discretionary.

(b) COLLECTIVE ACTION
Lack of sufficient collective action may have been the result of a number of issues. First, that some activist crossed to government as an individual decision, rather than as collective one mandated by specific grassroots groups or interests, may explain why some of these leaders had reduced public support. Second, that CSOs have to learn that in a democratic environment one has to be tolerant with others and to have "contingency consent", i.e., to accept that under known and accepted rules one may not always win (see Schmitter, 1996). Third, that the sector in general still has to learn to cooperate and leave opportunistic attitudes and personal differences so as to mature and be able to cooperate.

(c) WHICH ACTORS?.
The study of Mexican crossers, reveals that leaders profiles can actually tell much of the state of Mexican CS. First, of all is the issue of *who* crosses. As referred before, though our intention was always to observe leaders from different sectors of society,

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[36] *Partido de la Revolucion Democratica*

one thing that stands is that most of them, at least before crossing, were part of formal organisations that believed that reform must be achieved through institutional action. Similarly, in most cases, the organisations of origin were membership based CSOs. This tells much about which sector of society was actually represented and about *who* with the new administration was ready to collaborate. Second, another interesting issue our data shows is that during the period studied there was certain split between the outside critics and the incrementalist more pragmatic reformers. Though we did not study this, it is possible that the split had some connections with the division that CS experienced in the 2006, when the PRD claimed electoral fraud. Third, what this research actually highlights is that there is a set of issues related with agenda building, policy reform and implementation, as well as with the planning of future collective strategies that civil society should reflect on. However, contrary to what one could expect, though within the CS there is some discussion on these issues, there is not much public debate on this and the press has little interested on the topic.

(d) SUFFCIENT AUTHORITY.
Other lesson that the life-histories of Mexican crossers reveal is that crossers´ formal education did not made an important difference in terms of their performance as public servants, and in most case neither their CSO field-experience did. The study neither could find a significant difference that could relate performance with distinct ideological backgrounds; nor with a more pragmatic or more ideological stand of leaders; neither could it found evidence relating performance to gender, age or generational differences. What data do suggest is that crossers capacity to foster civil society or to advance social agendas was related with their political abilities (capacity to negotiate), and with the sufficient authority over the needed human or economic resources they controlled to advance their cause. Those that were in this type of positions could foster civil society and more easily find interlocutors and gather support within her.

(e) SUSTAINABILITY OF REFORMS.
 Another issue that we can observe when analysing the data obtained, is that because the bureaucracy knew that leaders and their teams, were not interested in conventional political careers, they tended to see changes as temporary and therefore they did not fully incorporate them into procedures and practices that made them remain institutionalised afterwards. Moreover, in most cases there was little consensus among CSOs on the importance of such changes, nor was developed a proper citizen watch-dog mechanism to monitor whether changes in an agenda or in policy implementation were implemented or sustained. Therefore, most of these changes were filed out as soon as the administration left office, as the dramatic shift that the INDESOL has given illustrates.

CONCLUSIONS

This study has explored the advantages and limitations social leaders have when intending to advance agendas and foster collective action to produce policy reform from inside the government. To do so, this paper observed 24 individuals that had "crossed" into government after the 2000 democratic elections in Mexico. The research was originally inspired by anecdotal evidence that indicated that the involvement of

Mexican CS leaders was bringing innovation and achievements in policy reform. However, after collecting life-work history data it was possible to analyse in more detail the actual results of the crossings, and the evidence began to point in a different, less positive direction.

As we have discussed here, despite some very important exceptions, many boundary crossers did not -in their own opinions—fulfil as a group, the new window of opportunity that was opened by the historical moment presented by the Fox government. They neither met the expectations of some sectors within civil society they were attempting to represent. Not only did the study indicate that several civil society crossers failed to give voice and promote broader civil society 'concerns' (some even seem to have represented no one in particular); but it also found that, once inside, some activists generated dissent and conflict they could not solve. Despite some chief exceptions, many activists therefore failed in taking advantage of the momentum or had not the capabilities, neither the support of bureaucracy or society, to push forward social agendas.

This study has also shown that a number of our informants had an unrealistic view of government and of their abilities to change policy from within. They realised that they had overestimated their potential of working in government, by being naïve about the levels of power, budget or authority that they would have once they were inside. Moreover, the study suggests that some of the civil society people within government became assimilated by the bureaucratic *modus*, and became efficient bureaucrats, detached of any recognisable agenda of civil society. Therefore, they were immobilised once they were inside or vulnerable to 'capture' by the bureaucratic or political culture. Informants, could produce sophisticated analysis on how organisational culture and the density of governmental procedures can be a force difficult to fight[37]. All this explains why, the social background of some of these activists, was not reflected very strongly in their work inside government; what in consequence may explain why, from the outside, the rest of civil society saw their roles as more decorative than practical, and in some cases part of a process of cooptation and legitimisation.

There is sufficient evidence to be sure that this state of affairs was not the result of a deliberate government strategy or of other vested interests, to actively disempower crossers once inside. Though some (mainly at the higher levels) recognised certain bureaucratic confabulations, all crossers agreed these were temporal and "had no teeth", vis-à-vis the power they had derived from their comparative advantages such as, expertise, institutional innovation and management effectiveness. Therefore, our evidence indicates that in a number of cases the lack of bargaining for office, of producing collective action, or to generate political support were simply the result of 'knowledge gaps' among CSO people.

However, not all the blame is to be cast on crossers. First, as discuss above, the clashes with the bureaucracy's organisational culture were not small and in several cases represented a straight-jacket for activists. Second, even more constraining and frustrating, was the lack of support of the third sector, which could not put aside

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[37] A larger study, maybe directed to the bureaucracy, specially to the co-workers of the activists studied, could explore to what extent activists involvement in government and struggle to fight the bureaucratic statuo-quo contributed to transform the existing organisational culture, and how much their actions informed policy planners to include more participatory boards and co-governance forms.

particular interests and reduced the opportunities of collective action. Third, the many inefficient institutions Mexico had and the perception of lack of direction and leadership of the Fox administration were certainly part of the constraining environment crossers faced.

Therefore, a key lesson illustrated by the Mexican case refers to the limits of NGPA capacity in this particular context to produce reform from inside the government. On one hand, it is true that the new teams of activists and academics, without political rights and with strong motivation did cross-fertilise the public service, by fostering of confidence, inter-sector synergies, and by bringing innovation and motivation into bureaucracies. However, on the other hand, in a number of cases (a) leaders lacked a political base, (b) agendas were built without a political discussion and consensus, and (c) bureaucracy knew that leaders and their teams, were not interested in a political career; changes and innovation tended to be seen as temporary, and therefore were not fully incorporated into procedures and practices. Moreover, in most cases there was not much consensus among CS, nor a proper watchdog arrangement to sustain the reforms. This lack of institutionalisation made that the achieved reforms were easily dismissed or removed when the activists left or when the government of Calderon came into power. The Mexican experience suggests that, in order to assure that a reform is sustainable; it needs to be undertaken by a broader political coalition that may include Congress, bureaucracy and some interest groups such as the academy, business and certainly civil society.

In contrast to these accounts of 'insider' efforts by civil society activists to bring about change, the history of outside third sector pressure to bring about reform is much more positive and points to a dynamic civil society sector. The Mexican experience shows that NGPA can be very effective to advance certain social agendas and even important reforms from *outside* the government. Four examples can be briefly discussed.
 The archetypical example is that of *Allianza Civica*, a civic organizations network to support strengthening of the democratic process. This organisation was established to monitor committees in voting wards throughout the country, which was something that at the time not even the opposition parties had the capacity to do. Their continued action exposed and successfully limited PRI's opportunity for electoral malpractice and forced the government to concede in the creation of a civilian-governed Federal Electoral Institute (IFE). Similarly, through a series of campaigns and mobilisations human rights activists exposed rights violations and helped to construct a climate of public opinion that significantly contributed to the creation of the Human Rights Commission. Another successful example of NGPA from the outside was the pressure that, *Alianza Civica*, *Presencia Ciudadana* and later the Oaxaca Group[38], put forward towards the creation of a law for the Right to Information. They systematically exposed the lack of transparency of the government, foster public opinion, lobbied the Congress, and finally persuaded political parties to present a proposal for a new law that was passed on 2002[39]. A similar case that occurred during the period of study was the approval of the Law for the

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[38] These organisations were adding up NGPAs. Since 1994, *Alianza Civica*, with her programme "adopt a civil servant"; then in 1999 *Presencia Ciudadana* and other organizations demanded information to the presidency and to other agencies, and later in 2003 the Oaxaca Group, composed by journalists, academics and activists, bombarded the media and contributed to generate widespread public opinion on the need of the creation of a law for the access of information.
[39] A hybrid agency, The Federal Institute for the Access of Information was also created under the new law.

Fostering of CSOs, a law that had been pushed forward by a number of CSOs for more than ten years, and that after the lobbying made to the Fox administration was finally passed (Castro y Castro, 1998). These four examples are particularly important not only because they show that Mexican CS has produced successful collective action in support of progressive policy change, but also because they show that CS can be relevant to the transformation of institutional life by utilising power exerted from the *outside*. They also illustrate the increased impact that CS can have when using public opinion as a weapon of NGPA. Vis-à-vis the meagre results obtained by crossers from the inside these examples seem to indicate that, at least in the case studied, NGPA is more powerful, has more impact and can be better sustained when exerted from outside the government. More research on this issue is, nevertheless, needed.

Finally, by analysing the life-histories of crossers, this study has also found some key insights that may inform future research on NGPA, some of them are,

(a) The Mexican case indicates that the crossings may be in fact largely triggered by broader historical shifts in power, as that generated by the Mexican transition to democracy. Our study suggests that within these periods, crossings may serve important functions, beyond the crossers' own realization or goals. Further than those discussed above, like innovation, new agendas, unfastening of synergies and new image and more trust to agencies; we could also observe that, in the agencies they served, they were a transitional shelter between the new government and the bureaucracy; and they functioned as a very useful incentive for the bureaucrats to urge them into the civil service. Their return to civil society will also bring insider experience to NGOs, a more realistic leadership, and will reduce the knowledge gaps about government action. All these elements may have a profound impact empowering CS.

(b) Most of the crossers were part of a generation marked by their particular historical experiences and moments. By analysing their life-histories, one can see that their entry into politics was almost a logical progression. Since many of them had a long-standing fought for democracy and development, the arrival of the Fox administration, represented the opportunity they had been fighting for the redefinition of agendas, the exploration of alternative solutions, the reorganization of priorities and the open up of the discussion about the path that the country would follow. Their participation was, thus, considered as an opportunity to boost NGPA. However, it is possible that future generations, even when more pragmatic may be less willing to involve in government tasks and may look for a more outsider forms of cooperation. This will be a line for future academic exploration.

(c) It is important to highlight that in the Mexican case, the crossings analysed here, are just part of a larger and growing process that is helping to build what might be termed a new 'non-traditional politics'. All political parties, for instance, have now CSOs working as part of their structure. Similarly, political entrepreneurs use the façade of CS to gain visibility and remain closer to media. A former secretary of internal affairs, for instance, when not being elected as his party's presidential candidate found refuge directing the Azteca Foundation, one of the two main TV companies. Likewise Mrs. Zagun, Fox's wife, created her foundation *Vamos Mexico*, a social NGO that helped to camouflage her political ambitions. In the 2006 election, the party in power used NGOs to produce TV ads that attack the reputation of one of the competing candidates. These

brief examples illustrate a growing tendency: the pushing of social causes through CSOS as an alternative way of doing politics.

(d) This information help us not only to better understand the constraints crossers face when intending to carry out NGPA from the inside, but also to add information about the "hidden" difficulties CSOs have to cooperate with public servants in general. Most activists recognised that their immersion into government was a useful positive lesson, that made them better understand the real life of public servants and to realise the much troublesome that CSOs can become when public servants want to organise cooperation. Their experiences, they referred, will help to reduce the knowledge gaps leaders had about government action and will surely mean learning for future generations of social entrepreneurs. These experiences may most probably produce a more 'pragmatic' and more politically mature CSOs leadership.

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Annex: Chronology of main events

Date	Event
1917	Mexicans agree on a Constitution
1934-1940	Presidency of Lazaro Cardenas
1950s	Appearance of the *Comunidades Eclesiales de Base,* Catholic Church sponsored organisations that later were informed by the Theology of Liberation.
1950s	Emergence of several Union related social movements, such as those of teachers, doctors, students, trains workers, and others like the democratic struggle of Dr. Nava in San Luis Potosi.
1968	Contra-cultural movement leaded by the students of the National University (UNAM) that ended with a vicious repression by the government.
1970	Presidency of Luis Echeverria (1970-6).
1970s	Unions, students, peasants and other groups within the private sector start to build up autonomous NGOs .
1977	New Electoral Law, the so called *LOPPE*. This was actually the first significant political reform.
1982	Mexican government declares a *moratorium* on debt payments. Devaluation rises and inflation grows exponentially.
1982	Mexican government declares the nationalisation of the Bank
1985	The devastation produced by two major earthquakes sprung up widespread social participation. For the first time a large number of social actors organise independently of the state.
1988	Cuauhtemoc Cardenas, candidate for the presidency alleged fraud and many NGO support his claim. A large number of organisations start to work for democracy and political culture.
1988	President Salinas takes office (1988-1994)
1990s	The North American Free trade Agreement (NAFTA), between Canada, the US and Mexico enters in effect. The *Ejercito Zapatista de Liberación Nacional* (EZLN), the Zapatista Army, an indigenous group of Chiapas revels against the government
1994	A number of networks that will become very influential appear. Some of them are: (1990) *Red Mexicana de Acción contra el Libre Comercio* (REMALC), (1993) *Unión de Grupos Ambientalistas* (UGAM), (1994) *Convergencia de Organismos Civiles la Democracia*,

	(1994) *Movimiento Ciudadano por la Democracia.*
1994	Several society organizations network to create Alianza Civica, an organization with 30 chapters in the 31 states, oriented to the monitoring of elections.
1994	Ernesto Zedillo, a PRI candidate wins the presidential elections closely monitored by a number of civic organizations.
1994	The Tequila effect hits Mexican economy in December.
1996	The PAN alliance with civil society in Chihuahua, gives rise to civil resistance to defend democracy.
2000	The presidential elections saw a major participation of civil society groups. Many of them supported the candidate of the opposition, Vicente Fox.
2000	Prior to the taking of office, Fox organises several "Dialogue Tables", one deals with Civil Society issues. More than 400 society's organisations participate.
2000	Fox creates a special office to coordinate government relation with CS.
2001	Reorganisation of the Social Investment Funds, which transparent public funding for government-NGOs collaboration.
2002	Congress passes the Law for the Right to Information, a long time struggle of Mexican CS.
2002	After ten years the Law for the Fostering of Civil Society Organisations, is approved in Congress. Organisations such as *Foro de Apoyo Mutuo, Convergencia de Organismos Civiles, CEMEFI, Fundacion Miguel Aleman,* and the *Universidad Iberoamericana*, among others had been lobbying for it.
2000-6	A number of activists from civil society are invited to collaborate in the Fox administration.
2006	Presidency of Felipe Calderon starts.