Repenser le travail

DES CONCEPTS NOUVEAUX POUR DES RÉALITÉS TRANSFORMÉES

SOUS LA DIRECTION DE
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PRÉFACE DE GILBERT DE TERSSAC
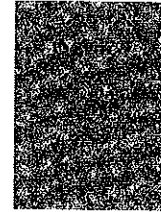
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PRÉFACE

Dans le *Traité de sociologie du travail*, dirigé par Friedmann et Naville (1962), Friedmann concevait le travail comme le moteur de la dynamique sociale et le principe explicatif de l'évolution sociale, « un commun dénominateur et une condition de toute vie humaine en société » et Naville en faisait le « moteur irremplaçable de toutes les formes de la vie sociale ». De telles positions sont-elles tenables 50 ans plus tard ? Rien ne semble remettre en cause fondamentalement cette façon de voir si l'on suit les auteurs de l'ouvrage coordonné par Martine D'Amours, Sid Ahmed Soussi et Diane-Gabrielle Tremblay. Cet ouvrage nous apprend que le travail ne s'exerce plus dans les mêmes conditions matérielles, organisationnelles et salariales et qu'il ne porte plus sur les mêmes objets. Cet ouvrage nous apprend surtout à distinguer des réalités pourtant subsumées sous le même concept de travail : qu'y a-t-il de commun entre le chauffeur de taxi de Buenos Aires et cette avocate de Montréal, entre

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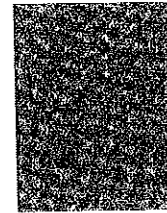
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INFORMALITY, ORGANIZATION, AND COLLECTIVE ACTION

Enrique de la Garza Toledo

The objective of this essay is to take an in-depth look at the broad concept of work, labour relations, and the social construction of occupation (De la Garza Toledo 2006), by introducing the notion of non-classical labour (De la Garza Toledo 2008) and discussing the concept of services, on the basis of an analysis of the Mexican situation. This work will specifically address the "intangible" character of services and its related difficulties, taking into consideration clients and other non-labour actors, the intersections of the arenas of production and reproduction, as well as the law and the impact of work in these kinds of activities upon identity and collective action. The author introduces brief notes in regard to the relationship between the value of merchandise and that of immaterial work. The examples provided are part of an empirical study on specific non-classical occupations which was carried out in Mexico City, focused on temporary and permanent vendors

in the subway (*vagoneros*), taxi drivers, microbus drivers, metrobus (BRT) drivers, as well as employees at Walmart, McDonald's, and call centres, TV extras, and software designers. The empirical affirmations in this article are based on this research, although realities may differ in other contexts. In other words, this chapter does not pretend to present an exhaustive review of the complex realities of non-classical labour; however, it does provide information regarding the types of work that are not necessarily present among classic representations.[1]

1. THE CONCEPT OF WORK

Our definition of work considers not only salaried labour or work that generates products for the market, but all human activity channeled to produce goods or services to satisfy human needs, in which an object of work is transformed using means of production that are operated through work, understood as the interaction of persons (workers) with the object and the means of production and with one another (De la Garza Toledo 2002). The character of a product's value of use does not solely depend upon its physical characteristics, but also on whether or not it is valued, both historically and socially, as a product. The former definition is open to material or immaterial production, i.e. production may generate either objectivized products that are separable from the people who produce them and those who consume them, or products that only exist at the moment of their production and are automatically consumed or incorporated to the subjectivity or corporealness of the consumer (Marx 1974). To consider work and material products as the necessary centrepiece of production and social wealth points to a primitive materialism that we could ironically call "physicalist materialism," thus making implicit the reduction of material goods to physical goods; this interpretation is positioned in a polemic debate belonging to the nineteenth century regarding the relation between matter and consciousness. There is also naturalism in the position that values of use are fundamental and necessarily apply to the physical products required for human subsistence (e.g., food, housing, or clothing). This may have been true during the greater part of human history but changes have occurred to the extent that social wealth has increased and values of product use that did not exist in other eras or that were previously seen as superfluous have become necessary. This is the case of the automobile or certain forms of entertainment such as the movies or television (Boltanski and Chiapello 2002).

In other words, the concept of materiality cannot be reduced to the physical realm; this concept should be clarified to include everything that is objectified, whether physical or symbolic (Lukacs 1975). This definition also departs from extreme constructivist definitions that tend to reduce every reality to the subject's perception, that is to say, to its subjectivity (Potter 1998). While it is true that subjects' visions of what is real are always mediated by prenotions, this does not authorize us to believe that it is only possible to speak of a subject's prenotions or his or her subjectively built imagery (Archer 1997). There is a field in reality for non-conscious thought, which exists and pressures subjects beyond their own conceptions of an object (Alexander 1995). Thus the classical issue of the relation between matter and consciousness has become transformed in the twentieth century in regard to the relations between structures (conscious or unconscious), subjectivities (ways of constructing meaning that include, but are not limited to, culture), and actions (De la Garza Toledo 2006). In this way, the social construction of meaning (an update of the ancient issue of consciousness) cannot be simply seen as an epiphenomenon of materiality; rather, it truly becomes an issue under construction (Berger and Luckmann 1979). In this update, objectivity plays a role in constituting the action, but the relations with objectivity and subjectivity, or the process of constructing meaning, should be investigated without reductionism (De la Garza Toledo 1992). What has been objectified can be crystallized in structures and artefacts that do not determine the action but that do limit, pressure, and channel it; in any case, mediation of subjectivity is essential in order to explain the action (Heller 1997).

Objectified materiality can be something physical (a man-made building that does not only exist at the moment of its creators' practice) and also something symbolic (Schutz 1996). The objectivation of symbols or codes to construct meaning is part of a tradition that is highly valued by sociology and anthropology, starting with Durkheim and his concept of collective consciousness that cannot be reduced to the individual, continuing with Parsons and his idea of a cultural subsystem that clearly differentiates the personality that elapses in subjectivity, to Schutz' socially accepted objective meanings (Schutz 1996). Along these lines, the objectification or social sanction of meanings could be sharpened a bit more through the differentiation among symbols, feelings, and meanings. Meaning could be reserved for those who concretely build the subject in order to understand and act in the correct situation and those who may elapse into social or individual subjectivity (Gurvitsch 1979). But the concrete process of creating meanings for a concrete situation uses cultural codes that are socially acceptable as raw

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1. The case-by-case empirical results can be consulted in De la Garza Toledo (2011).

material; based on these, the subject can reconfigure or reconstruct his or her meanings depending on his/her level of autonomy in regard to dominant cultural forms and on how routine or extraordinary the events are that need to be signified (Cicourel 1974). In other words, one form of objectivation is to assign cultural codes that have a transindividual existence although, as in the case of any other social product, these meanings would eventually need to be updated. These objectified cultural codes can be of different kinds: moral, emotional, cognitive, or aesthetic (De la Garza Toledo 2007).

On the other hand, given that man's relation to the world is symbolic and practical, the objects of labour, the means of production, as well as products and interactions in the workplace are also invested with meaning (De la Garza Toledo 1997). To this extent, the products of work can have different degrees of physical vs. symbolic emphasis but, in the end, all work includes both dimensions throughout all of its phases, as in trade. When we speak of material production, we should consider the generation not only of physical objectified products, but also of objectified symbols, as in software design. By this logic, it would be superficial to say that immaterial production is the generation of knowledge or emotion. Both could be objectified—as are cognitive symbols such as a mathematical formula or socially accepted nationalist emotions—or exist only in the consumer's subjectivity, as in the result of a live concert (Bolton 2006). Moreover, cognitivity and emotionality would only be two of the other fields of meaning; at the very least, the moral and aesthetic fields would also be missing. Marx is more rigorous than Negri (Negri and Hardt 2005) in regard to immaterial work. In his view, the phases of production, circulation, and consumption are compressed into a single act and the product only exists in the subjectivity of the consumer (Marx 1974).

According to this reasoning, the problem of the value of both material and immaterial commodities arises. Value has nothing to do with anything physical, except for certain commodities that would be its form of existence, nor with the value of use, even though value implies the value of use. In pre-mercantile or non-mercantile works, values of use can be created without any value and the same can be said of the value of producing goods or services. In other words, value is not physical; it rather results from a type of social relation to production aimed at generating commodities; if a commodity is not sold, the value does not materialize. According to labour theory of value, the value of a commodity depends on the quantity of work needed to produce it, but this value also must be socially sanctioned on the market. The quantity of incorporated labour

or "labour energy" cannot be assimilated to physics' concept of energy; it implies physical as well as intellectual wear and tear. Currently, this concept of the intellectual dimension of incorporated labour can prove to be insufficient, or it can be deepened through the concept of subjectivity as a process for providing meaning, i.e. deciding, planning, and monitoring from design to execution. From the 1980s if not earlier, it has been known that work puts not only cognition (knowledge of science and practice) into play but also one's emotions, morals, and aesthetic feelings, that influence both how work is carried out and its results, also guiding corporal physical movement (Castells 1999). In this sense, "labour energy" is both corporal-physicality and subjectivity tied to productive tasks in various degrees. The work needed to dig a well with a shovel can require more bodily physical strength than software design; the latter is more of a cognitive symbolic task even though it requires physical activity to write or type. Thus the quantity of work expended always implies both dimensions. The soft factors that influence production, productivity, or quality, such as culture, identity, initiative, and the capacity for teamwork are currently broadly recognized as productive strengths (David and Foray 2002).

To recognize the corporal-physical and subjective aspects of the labour force and incorporated labour means considering that relations with work objects, the means of production, the product, and the interactions at work are all imbued with meanings. The incorporation of physicality and meanings into the product constitutes incorporated labour, which in one form or another needs to be validated on the market. The cost of production as a parameter influences this validation, as does the need for the buyer to have value of use. These also are social needs that depend less on the product's physical characteristics than on how patterns of consumption have occurred and how they are socially valued (Baudrillard 1987). In other words, the value of use also has physical and symbolic dimensions, so the demand for a value of use is related not only to its physical form but also to its symbolism: the value of a food item depends not only upon the quantity of proteins, minerals, etc., but also on its social appreciation, which can vary according to the historical and cultural context and even have different meanings according to class differences. In material production, both forms are objectified; in immaterial production, the consumer's subjectivity is also incorporated at the time of production. This means that defenders of the labour theory of value should not concern themselves with the weight or significance that services have in economies.

2. SERVICES

Modern capitalism began with physical-material production—which does not exclude symbolic production—by textile manufacturers or the mining industry and the modern concept of work revolved around the factory understood as a concentration of salaried workers—with a clear capital/ work relation—in a single physical space and working a different shift than recreational time, using machines and a division of labour. This type of production was the axis of capitalist development until the mid-twentieth century. Economic, social, and labour theories were built focusing on the factory worker, on forms of organization and struggle, on worker demands and rights, and on institutional mediators among companies, unions, and the state (Bouffartigue 1996). However, from the 1950s on, many industrialized economies have evolved into service economies while, in third-world countries, precarious services occupy an important part of the labour force and also represent the better part of the GNP (Cortés 2000). Conventional economists have had no difficulty recognizing this transformation because, under this conception, industrial activities in a restricted sense (manufacturing, extractive industries, electricity, natural gas, and construction) add value, as do the agricultural or service industries, commerce, finance, and even public activities.

From the perspective of a work process, the question is relatively simple because independently of whether or not the labour theory of value excludes the latter activities from the generation of value, work processes exist in each and every production or service; some authors have even defined services as activities that generate intangible products (Castells and Aoyama, 2008). This concept remains simplistic because "intangible" means something that cannot be touched, which refers to only one of our five physical senses. The situation would have been different if observation via all senses (sight, hearing, taste, and smell, in addition to touch) was being considered, because a musical service can be perceived by the ear and a dessert in a restaurant via taste or smell (Zucchetti 2005). Thus, "intangible" does not equate with "not physical" (sound can be very physical); in any case, a tangible thing is a physical object whose form and volume can be perceived by sight and not only by touch, that is to say industrial products.

However, this rudimentary distinction has the following complications:

1. Not only what is generated by industry or agriculture is objectified; objectified intangibles can also exist (e.g., a software program).

2. Services exist in which one part is tangible, such as food in a restaurant. Moreover, tangible production involves many intermediate, intangible operations or phases, such as design, accounting, or communications.

3. Many intangible products can be observed using other senses, such as music at a concert or the change in coordinates of time and space for transporting passengers.

4. The acquisition of tangibles always has an intangible component, like in a beautiful car. This points to the need to turn to concepts that are more precise than tangible or intangible, such as the distinction between production and material labour (objectively) and immaterial labour (subjectively), in such a way that part of what is material is intangible (De la Garza Toledo 2007). This is the case of software design, where the object to be transformed is made of previously objectified symbols or programs; the means of production can be physical, such as a computer, but knowledge itself and the labour force are especially cognitive-subjective; in other words, a programmer's capacity to create a new program that, as a product, is mainly a system of symbols may in turn, as an algorithm, facilitate the solution of certain problems. The interactions with team members, project leaders, and even through a community of programmers who support one another also fall within this category. Although this kind of service does not appear to present challenges with objectively symbolic products, its highly symbolic content calls for rethinking many traditional definitions: work time or time on the job, since a programmer may be thinking about solutions to the program outside of the formal workday; labour relations, when one may communicate with a community of programmers that goes beyond one's group of formal co-workers and can cooperate in finding solutions; programming skills, particularly in terms of cognitive abilities that are not a direct result of formal knowledge; the division of labour and whether or not design operations can be standardized in the way the so-called software engineering methodology pretends it can; the identity by "trade" or "craft" which takes prides in its cognitive capacity, as well as that capacity itself, if it is not reduced to the repetition or the application of scholastic knowledge and if important doses of imagination, intuition, and creativity that cannot be systematized or reduced to routine are involved.

5. Services that imply direct customer attention at the time they are provided, whether face-to-face or virtually through telecommunications, have the property of not existing without the presence of a client. In this sense, part of what is being sold is customer service or treatment, to a degree that this may be the most important commercial dimension for some services. Childcare or nannying implies tangibles (food, cleaning, etc.) and care; in the case of this service, some value the latter more than the former.

6. Non-interactive services with the client, such as television or radio, make up another category.

7. Services where the appropriation of space is critical, such as street vendors, can be intersected with the previous categories:

   a) Such services may be provided in closed spaces, without any contact with the client during production; in open spaces, but only for clients (in restaurants, for example); in spaces that are open to the public but at a fixed location (street vendors); at home; or in no particular point in space (door-to-door sales, taxis).

   b) This problematization of the concept of services has repercussions in terms of contents or the need to broaden concepts in regard to control over work, labour relations, and the social construction of occupation.

3. EXPANDING THE CONCEPTS OF CONTROL, REGULATION, AND LABOUR MARKET

First of all, we will turn to *control* over the work process.[2] This concept became popular in labour sociology in the third quarter of the twentieth century. The underlying image is that of Taylorism, a very controlled work system, compared to a salaried trade or a self-employed craft, or, later, automated work processes. From the 1960s, US political science has greatly influenced the classic concept of control, which was understood in a Weberian manner as the capacity to impose one's will upon another being. To this degree, inputs, machinery and equipment, the distribution

of physical space, time of work, the operations to be carried out, skill levels, knowledge, workforce interactions, culture and subjectivity, as well as labour relations (the entrance and departure from work, promotions, salaries and benefits, training, union affiliation, and unions themselves) could all be controlled. Braverman's perspective brought the discussion to a more general level: in capitalist production, in order to exploit the workers, capital needed to dominate them within the work process. Thus this concept remitted the discussion to the classic issue of political science of power and domination, rather than to control, albeit in the productive process. Power was classically understood as coercion and domination as consensus and, in an extreme case, as hegemony. In general, the arena of power can imply personalized or even abstract imposition under organizational or technical rules. Dominance comes close to legitimacy of command and, in the extreme, to recognition by those who are dominated by the management's intellectual and moral capacity. In other words, it has its roots in the field of culture and subjectivity, in the construction of the meanings of labour and class relations in productive processes that entail cognitive, moral, aesthetic, and sentimental levels, as well as in forms of daily reasoning, summarized in discourse and in non-discursive forms of consciousness. Hegemony, power, and domination in general can all be conceived as social constructions that imply structures of labour processes and, beyond these processes, immediate and mediate interactions and ways of giving meaning to production and other spaces of interaction and levels of reality (Aronowitz 1992).

In other words, power and domination in the labour process can be summarized in constellations such as political favouritism, patrimonialism, caudillism, bureaucratic domination, patriarchy, democracy, dictatorship, oligarchy, etc., which can be operationalized under the general concept of control. But control has to be specified as to the concrete kinds of relations of production that occur: exploitation, self-employment, family hiring, subcontracting, etc. In this path leading from abstract relations of power and domination in the labour process to concrete expressions of control in their different dimensions, the typologies of the debate regarding the labour process—technical control, administrative control, or self-control—may be useful, keeping in mind that all forms of control imply certain egalitarian or hierarchical interactions. These interactions place symbols and symbolic exchange or negotiation into play, which imply formal and informal rules in relations with predetermined structures (Cohen 1996).

Now, in reference to the main types of non-classical work (De la Garza Toledo 2008), the first type (I) is carried out in physical, closed spaces, with or without a wage, but with direct client intervention

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2. The following can be controlled for a job: the schedule and shift, the productive space, the quality and quantity of a product, raw materials, tools and machinery, the method of work, the skill level, the division of labour, training, entrance and exit from the occupation, promotions, the wage or salary, and benefits. In non-classical jobs, control can be exercised by the client, citizens, officials from government agencies, union or trade leaders, the labour community, or political parties.

(for example, on the supermarket floor). The issue of control begins with the control that the employer may exercise and with the workers' ensuing cooperation or resistance. In this dimension, we find the aforementioned aspects related to control in capitalist labour. But the control that the client or the community of workers may exercise to a greater or lesser degree must also be considered. Client control begins as a symbolic pressure for carrying out work in the expected time and space and with the necessary quality. In this type of control, the organizational rules wielded by the client, other broader legislative rules, including commercial law, as well as the right to appeal to ethics mixed with emotions, are all at play. This pressure can turn into interactions, petitions, complaints, or even legal claims, depending on the case, including the use of physical or symbolic force by the client or the worker. Our investigation on this category includes McDonald's and Walmart workers, among whom we found medium to high levels of standardization of tasks; McDonald's and Walmart may be seen as Taylorist work processes for the workers, as well as attempts to "Taylorize" the processes for the client. In fact, the organizational design of management at these companies explicitly refers to the clients "working" in order to receive services. Both employ low-skilled workers (Walmart stockers or cashiers and McDonald's restaurant employees) who receive low wages, meagre benefits, and a great deal of discretional treatment from management; unions do exist, but in Mexico, they are a simulation more than anything else. Control over the work process is much formalized through manuals, supervisors, cameras, the "suspicious client," and the employees themselves. The companies try to install an ideology of belonging to a family, but above all, their processes are highly controlled by the management, seeking to rapidly deactivate any attempt at independent organizing. Struggles to organize at these companies in Mexico have been rare. At one Walmart, negotiations prospered thanks to a corporate union that bargained at a state level; another more independent effort collided with the entire administrative and labour law machinery that backs simulated unions. For these companies, client presence is very important yet it provokes ambivalence: on the one hand, workers seek to provide clients with good services but on the other, clients apply pressure and sometimes even accuse workers of negligence. When a labour struggle has prospered, it has been thanks to worker training or bargaining held outside of the workplace.

The situation is more complex for workers in ambulatory sales of goods and services, taxi drivers, and microbus drivers, who carry out their work in established or mobile sites that are open to interactions with different people on site (type II non-classical work). In the case

of salaried labour, the considerations already expressed for the type I employer-employee relation remain valid but the client-employee relationship needs to be specified. In the case of self-employment, however, the worker does not participate in a labour "contract" per se which can formally be used as a resource, unlike a Social Security beneficiary who can claim a service that was previously agreed upon. On the contrary, in a best-case scenario, more general rules from civil, commercial, and penal law, as well as police and health regulations, are applicable. But what makes work in open territories truly complex is the sometimes unsystematic emergence of actors in the territory that cannot be reduced to a supplier-worker-client relationship; these actors may be transients, police, inspectors, other workers in the same occupation, or leaders of non-union organizations of these kinds of workers or activities. Although the aforementioned subjects' relationships with self-employed workers are not the same as with salaried workers in a classic sense, these relations nevertheless have an impact upon work, the use of territory to carry out work, the time of work, the type of product, profit, and even the very existence of the occupation in question. These interactions, though incidental, are not necessarily extraordinary and patterns can often be established in regard to the type of actor, the type of interaction, the practical and symbolic contents, as well as the kind and frequency of cooperation, negotiation, and conflict. Our investigation in this category includes subway vendors, street vendors, outdoor market salespeople, taxi drivers, microbus drivers, and BRT drivers. Due to the multiplicity of actors involved in their work and the eventuality of many kinds of interventions, these workers have to be on a permanent state of alert, although their main reference for both negotiation and conflict is the government, which acts as a "quasi-employer" who controls the use of public spaces. Workers' organizations are critical for these kinds of negotiations where the government establishes regulations regarding how work is to take place (use of public spaces, workers' registry, shifts, etc.). The main aspect under dispute during conflicts and control is the use of space, whether relatively permanent or in movement throughout the city.

The third kind of non-classical work (type III) occurs in established, closed spaces, whether private or corporate, or sometimes merged with reproductive spaces (as in home-based work), in which precise interactions take place among employers, suppliers, and clients. The control factor has added complexity in these cases due to pressures applied by the family, in addition to the interspaces and contradictions between workspaces and other areas, whether used for eating and personal hygiene, childcare, rest, or entertainment. Additional actors to take into consideration include children, spouses, and relatives who coexist in the workspace or near it

and who demand attention, time and affection, or other kinds of labours, such as domestic chores, to attend to their vital needs. In this category, our investigation included software designers and TV extras in their businesses modalities. These are extreme cases, although both are workers with special virtues in terms of meanings: in the case of software designers, cognitive capacity, and for TV extras, their physical aesthetic image. Both these types of workers are poorly protected, although designers may have higher salaries and may base their job security on their cognitive qualities rather than on their contracting, which approaches a new concept of trade. Extras are all temporary workers, subject to the despotism of their employers who may be unions, personnel agencies, or producers. These workers generally experience a great deal of resentment stemming from the contempt, mistreatment, and low wages they receive, but also due to the frustration of not becoming full-time actors.

In terms of *labour regulations*, this topic has been associated with the emergence of unregulated and unprotected salaried labour since the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. Worker struggles resulted in a body of laws and contracts, among others, to regulate labour relations in terms of wages and benefits, the entrance and exit of workers from employment, working hours, work activities, needed skill levels, climbing the promotional ladder, dispute resolution between capital and work, worker sanctions when norms are breached, internal mobility, versatility, and worker or union participation in decisions pertaining to technological or organizational changes. This legal recognition went beyond relations in the workplace to include recognition of unions, in addition to social security and labour justice institutions, as well as broader linkages among the state, unions, and employer organizations. For a long time, all of this was considered to only be relevant to wage-earning work since in this kind of labour relations, suits can be filed for infringement of worker or company norms, unlike self-employment where, in the absence of an employer, no labour relations are recognized. In a strict sense, a labour relationship can be a relation established between capital and work, starting from the position of employment and extending to state and labour's justice and social security institutions. In broader terms, a labour relationship would not exist without the relations that are established during the work process among different actors who participate in an interested or circumstantial fashion and influence work performance. With this broadened definition of labour relations (Durand 2004) as social interactions, including attributes of practice and exchanges of meanings within determined structures, the actors to be considered are not only those who hire the workforce and those who are hired; depending on the type of work,

a very diverse selection of actors may participate who are not necessarily interested in or dedicated to creating a determined good or service, such as travelling salespeople or inspectors (Jurgens 1995).

In type I of non-classical work (wage earners in established, closed spaces who interact directly with clients), it is worthwhile to take a moment to focus on the client. Frequently, good client service is one of the terms of the labour relationship. For a salaried employee on the floor at a Walmart store or a McDonald's restaurant, the worker's efficient and courteous interaction with the client can be part of formal work regulations. In case of noncompliance with this norm, the client can turn to the company or other regulatory bodies—for example, in healthcare matters—to file a complaint against the worker and even possibly turn to civil or penal law. However, the most interesting aspect is the informal regulations that appeal to the workers' ethics in regard to their sense of customer service, courtesy, or good manners. Depending on the case, feelings of compassion (for people with disabilities) and symbolic or physical pressure from clients who identify with another client's complaint may influence the worker. Client pressure may be backed by the employer's company regulations in terms of starting hour, end of shift, or the inconsistencies in the worker's activity, all of which can be motives for labour disputes. In other words, bureaucratic company rules can be employed by users and thus, in practice, labour regulations acquire a tripartite nature.

More can be said about state-sanctioned sanitary, criminal, or commercial rules that users may appropriate and wield when they receive poor service from a worker. These rules may emanate from trade or political organizations to which the worker belongs or to non-work-related arenas such as transportation, sanitation, public morality, etc. (type II non-classical work) (Lindón 2006).

In other words, there may be complex situations where there is an overlap between formal and informal regulations which contain contradictions but to which actors can appeal in case of violation or in order to gain benefits when receiving future services.

In the case of expanded labour, a concept that possibly summarizes the two former concepts and adds other important elements to them is that of **the social construction of occupation**. Once again, we must look to the origin of the debate on classic salaried labour. For a long time, the concept of employment, understood as the occupation of salaried workers by an employer, has been construed abstractly as the result of the encounter between the labour supply (Marx would say the workforce) and the demand of labour. The key variables that would supposedly explain employment would be the salary and the number of available positions

with regard to the number of job applicants, as well as the number of employers offering jobs (others would extend this analysis to the family as well) (Benería and Roldán 1987). However, in salaried labour, achieving a position of employment may be explained in greater detail. Workforce supply is a type of action undertaken by those who seek employment; like all social actions, it stems from situations that the future worker did not choose, the number of available positions, as well as his or her social networks and own conceptions about work. This supply also stems from a certain structure as regards family, income, hierarchies, conceptions of legitimate work, family networks, friendship, and *compadrazgo*,[3] that often allow access to sources of employment (Barrère-Maurisson 1999). Furthermore, the person offering work or requesting employment has a determined level of education, skills and work experience, gender, ethnicity, and urban or rural and regional origin, and is at a certain stage of his or her life cycle. On the other hand, the persons are situated in macrostructures that can seem invisible to the actor but influence his or her possibilities of employment, such as the context of economic growth or crisis and the structures of the labour market (Bourdieu 1992). In regard to the demand of the workforce, this is related to the company's micro-economy, the product market, sales, investments, exports, and the impact of the macro-economy (inflation, exchange rate, deficits in current accounts). But this demand is also related to the sociotechnical configuration of the company's work process (technology, organization, labour relations, workforce profile, management, and work culture) and the management strategies regarding personnel, labour relations, etc. When a union is present, union hiring policies can also influence decision-making, for example, giving preference to family members of current employees. And we should not forget the restrictions of labour laws, social security regulations, and collective bargaining agreements.

Different subjects with diverse interests are involved in the encounter between labour supply and demand: one is interested in being employed under certain conditions and the other in finding the appropriate worker. But these subjects do not act with complete freedom; they are limited to or propelled by the aforementioned micro-, meso-, and macrostructures. Situated within these structures, the actors conceive of a labour relationship according to their interests, experience, and cultural baggage. In the end, the encounter may be a coincidence between the two parties or a frustrated effort.

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3. Translator's note: *Compadrazgo* refers to the relationship between the parents and godparents of a child in families of Hispanic origin.

In non-classical type I jobs, the most substantial difference with classic jobs is the client's presence in the workplace and the fact that the product or service is generated at the moment of consumption (e.g., a material product is sold and consumed in a restaurant). In other words, the construction of the occupation also depends upon the consumer; even though it is the company, not the consumer, who hires the worker, the worker depends upon the client who is consuming during his or her work activity. In other words, the product market has a direct repercussion on the job. The consumer's preference is not only based on the price and quality of the product but also on personalized customer service, in such a way that in the social production of occupation, labour demand and product demand cannot readily be separated, or at least not viewed in two different phases. Moreover, the client's pressure to provide a quality product or service and appropriate sensibility is not only present at the moment of hiring but lasts throughout the entire labour activity. In other words, the social construction of activity is permanent and can be inhibited by poor working relations with the client or with management. From the client's perspective, the demand for service implies price and quality, but quality includes the warmth of the relationship with the worker and the organization. In some cases, the product may be an action of trade—a purchase in a supermarket, a traditional service at a bank branch—, in others, the product is consumed at the workplace—a hospital, a hotel, a restaurant—, but in all instances, the warmth of the worker's interactions with the client is an integral part of the service provided. This factor may alter product demand and, thus, affect employment.

The social construction of occupation becomes complicated in open spaces for type II salaried or non-salaried workers (Lindón 2006). Product demand directly influences the construction of this type of occupation that immediately depends upon clients. In other words, the product market, which is affected by inflation, the type of product, and the population's income level, is a direct determinant of these occupations. But many other agents can help or hinder the constitution of occupation. First of all, potential non-union trade organizations can facilitate or impede occupation, as can other occupied members of the community or competitors. Secondly, non-labour actors who share the same territory, such as uncompromising or condescending public officials, transients, and local inhabitants—citizens who protest against dirtiness, invasion of public spaces, delinquency, or noise—can also exercise influence. Suppliers of inputs or products for sale are not to be forgotten; they can apply pressure on what is to be offered to the client or on prices. The urban or rural environment, sanitation, labour—when salaried workers

are involved—, and fiscal regulations can influence these constructions of occupation, as can corporate agreements between trade organizations and the government. To this extent, we should not ignore a broad concept of the socio-technical configuration of the work process[4] that considers the client as an important dimension.

In type III non-classical jobs, in which work is carried out in established, closed spaces, in addition to the characteristics mentioned for salaried work and for clients, suppliers, and the product market, the family's material and subjective influence also must be taken into account, due to the possible contradictions between work space and time compared to that needed for family reproduction (Benería and Roldán 1987).

In all instances, the perspective of the subject implies that the structures of work processes, as well as their socio-technical configurations, exercise pressure but do not determine that these pressures will be filtered by the subjectivity of the actors involved and that the construction of controls, regulations or the occupation itself implies decision-making in interaction with other subjects also situated in labour structures or outside of the work arena who are capable of instilling meaning to the work process.

Finally, the issue of standardization or routine is not exclusive to material production; there may be standardization in symbolic work, for example in repeating a show without public interaction or in a software engineer's efforts to standardize program design. However, in its extreme expression, the work of creation-invention carried out by an artist or scientist is less subject to standardization (De la Garza Toledo 2008).

4. IDENTITY

In this section, we will address the issue of constituting collective identities among non-classical workers. The concept of identity was not part of sociology's key arsenal until the 1970s; proximate notions such as Durkheim's collective consciousness, Marx's class consciousness or Weber's ethos do not correspond exactly with this concept (Dubet 1989). Parsons mentions it marginally, unlike clinical psychology, which previously gave importance to collective identity in relation to psychological disorders. The concept of identity became important to sociology in the 1980s, in relation to theories on new social movements that arose in the 1970s

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4. By the socio-technical configuration of work processes, we understand the arrangement composed of the level of technology, the type of work organization, the type of labour relations, the workforce profile, and the management and labour cultures.

(Murga 2006; Di Giacomo 1984). When an explanation for these new social movements—the student movement, feminism, environmentalism—could not be found in the ascription of the members' class, explanations were sought in cultural and subjective arenas, becoming a key concept related not only to social movements but also to mankind's role in postmodern society, linked to the loss of meaning of the present and the future (Castel 2004; De la Garza Toledo 2005). Without arriving at postmodern extremism, starting in the 1990s, theories arose tying the discussion about identity to the flexible operations of labour markets and the fluidity of occupations, in addition to labour and life trajectories that would lead to a loss of identity, particularly for workers (Sennett 2000; Dubet 1999).

In our investigation on non-classical workers, we asked this same question: can workers of this type, in contrast to former industrial workers, identify with one another to generate collective action and organizations based on their work? To answer this question, we first need to take an in-depth look at the concept of collective identity.

Many have idealized the relationship between work and identity from a trade perspective, i.e. a guild or trade of workers who are considered by others and by themselves to possess special capacities for generating a product, which capacities require prolonged informal learning outside the classroom through practice, where the product's uniqueness is a source of pride for its creator. Undoubtedly, this issue was a source of conflict when, following the Industrial Revolution, artisans who had entered the factories and became controlled by machines and, later, by Taylorism and Fordism, socially lost their skills, giving rise to a modern, industrial working class who does not necessarily identify with its trade. At a stage prior to capitalist mechanization, when the production process was not yet a chain of machines but of men, salaried workers could still assert their knowledge and the product's quality still depended upon their capabilities. But with the large-scale production of the twentieth century, this kind of work had disappeared and the standardized and routinized workers, subjugated to a meticulous division of labour, no longer had a reason to feel proud of their work. For this reason, the famous crisis of the workers' identity with the product of their labour is a phenomenon that dates back to the Industrial Revolution and subsequently developed in large companies, over a century ago. Nevertheless, these unskilled workers, who were even less devoted to their product than to their work, were the ones who led the hardest struggles of the worker movement in the twentieth century (Hyman 1996). Their identity was forged not by their

work or their product, but rather by their sense of belonging to a community of workers and, from a negative connotation, to those who had been exploited and worn out by the intensification of labour, which initially had reflected in poor living conditions. This, rather than their trade or profession, was their common factor of identification. In later stages, the sense of identification occurred through their unions or political parties as a means of struggle. In other words, identity with the work as a concrete activity and with the product is not the only factor of importance for generating collective worker action. In fact, in the nineteenth century, this was an obstacle to creating broader identities (for example, a carpenter considered himself to be very different from a blacksmith) and initially led to the creation of craft-specific unions (Melucci 2001). The homogenization brought about by mechanization and the scientific organization of labour helped workers to see one another as similar, but this assessment could not arise magically from the labour structure; rather, it was mediated by processes of abstraction of the differences related to labour practices, in particular worker struggles and ideologies that took root especially when class conflicts arose (De la Garza Toledo 2002).

In other words, work identity as an issue cannot be reduced to a worker's identification with a concrete activity and the product that she or he produces, because what theorists on the identities crisis are actually discussing is the crisis of the current worker movement. To this extent, work identity has to be considered in a broad sense, that is, in relation to a specific productive activity and to the product, much like a trade identity. However, as we were saying, the history of the worker movement is not only that of assaulted trade identities but mainly of non-trade-worker identities who rose up to refuse their working and living conditions, and even in part because they did *not* identify with their work and were forced to sell it in order to survive. In this way, the second dimension of worker identity can be identification with other workers resulting not from the pride of being salaried workers, but from the affronts and offences endured at the hands of forces that are not tied to production. We should also take into account the identity that unions and even worker parties afforded during a certain period, as organizations that struggled and united workers (De la Garza Toledo 1999). In sum, the problem of work and identity should be understood as a work and labour issue. Within this arena, debate should be encouraged—this issue is not settled by addressing the crisis of workers' identity with their work, the trade worker's identity crisis or the artisan's crisis in the advent of capitalism, an anachronistic issue in today's context (Muckenberger 1996).

Norbert Elias states that individual identity cannot be understood without collective identity and that identity is a process, rather than a condition, of abstraction of differences and identification of similarities. In this sense, the sources of identity can be numerous (nation, ethnicity, age group, gender, school, work in a broad sense, etc.) and creating an exhaustive list is not the point. The issue at hand is work-related identity which, as we mentioned previously, becomes the workers' capability to carry out collective action. We will begin by stating that although identity is eventually forged in the realm of subjectivity—identity as a subjective configuration that gives meaning to belonging to a group—, it cannot be disassociated from the practices or structures in which social subjects interact (De la Garza Toledo 2001). As a result of their practices, subjects may reach a determined identity, taking into consideration reflective aspects that are involved as well as others that remain implicit. Identification does not only depend on spaces for determined social relations (school, work, family, city, etc.) but also on the level of abstraction (humanity, nation, class, factory, sector, or trade). To say that identity depends on a subject's role is like considering that these roles could be completely separated; in reality, exterior relationships, structures, and meanings (such as the effect of family dynamics on many jobs) influence identity in a realm or level of abstraction to a greater or lesser degree (De la Garza Toledo 1997). Thus, identity is always "for" something, for work or for school, and there is something spontaneous grounded in daily practice that can be nourished by personal will in the face of these practices. Since identity is a special way of giving meaning to belonging to a social group, the pressure of structures (such as a real drop in salaries or a series of layoffs) and, especially, cultural codes play a role in the identity building process under certain specific circumstances. Different types of codes can exist: they may be cognitive, emotional, moral, or aesthetic; and one can relate through means of formal or daily reasoning. Thus identity is a configuration of these codes which bestow meaning to belonging; as a configuration, identity is not exempt of heterogeneity and contradictions (De la Garza Toledo 2001).

To address these contents in greater depth by considering the creativity of practices and the dimensions of labour identity (work, workers, and organizations), the pre-classic work identity stereotyped the trade worker, who possessed very personalized skills and elements (Paugam 1997). Product quality depended on these qualities of a worker and not on the machines; it was not a standard job and the product was the worker's creation. The worker could feel proud of his or her skills and the creation which he or she shared with other similar workers, giving them a shared

identity and solidarity in their trade. This identity was able to subsist through the mechanization and Taylorization of work because standardization never implied the absence of intervention in the worker's conception; however, when work processes were recomposed under Toyotism and greater worker participation and involvement were proposed, as well as the incorporation of computerized processes or the creation of information and knowledge, some analysts began to reflect on the emergence of modern trades, even though their content was less physical than it had been in the past (Micheli 2006). This is the case of software design, a job that has resisted standardization and depends upon worker abilities that cannot be strictly rationalized or taught. But in the context of the extension of immaterial production, which places the worker in a direct relationship with the client and makes the client indispensable to providing a service, relational components (mostly with the client) and subjective ones (emotions, morals, aesthetics) become essential to the work process and make part of the product itself. To this extent, the value of manual or physical qualities and the handling of tools or machinery is diminished to qualify labour as compared to relational qualities and the generation of emotional, moral, or aesthetic meanings; such is the case, for instance, with elderly or children care or the work of a professor (Reglia 2003; Ritzer 2002; Handy 1986; Holm-Detlev 2005). These dimensions of work have always existed, even within manual or material jobs; the difference lies in the emphasis given to soft components over hard components. An extreme case would be software design, which is eminently symbolic in terms of inputs, process, and product. In this sense, the capacity for establishing relationships and giving rise to certain meanings becomes part of the product market that receives both social and labour recognition and can be a source of worker pride or identity.

One dimension that has not been emphasized in classical forms of work is the use of space. In the classical factory, the use of space is commonly designed by management, for use by different departments of the company where workers should produce. But a problem occurs with jobs where the appropriation of space becomes a means of production of a good or service. These may be private company spaces that are shared with clients, as in the case of self-service stores where stockers and clients wander through and occupy the same space, sometimes interfering with and sometimes supporting one another. Similarly, in home-based work, the same space is shared between the worker and his or her family members, resulting in an interface between production and reproduction, with various situations and degrees of interference or cooperation.

But the most serious case has to do with public space, both for street workers in semi-established positions and for those workers whose labour implies travelling throughout a determined territory, such as taxi drivers, microbus drivers or door-to-door salespeople. For these workers, having access to a public space is a necessary work condition and, in this sense, numerous disputes with very different actors can arise regarding the use of public space—for example, between taxi drivers and traffic police, motorists, pedestrians, or other taxi drivers. In this sense, one could speak of a dispute over public spaces that could bring together certain types of workers in these spaces and become part of their common identity. In this case, workers' pride could come from their capacity for resistance in the face of the impediments from many different opposing actors. Solidarity becomes a necessity; without it, the possibilities for success are significantly diminished—this is the case of subway vendors, street vendors, open-market salespeople, taxi drivers, and microbus drivers. In many non-classical, traditional jobs—street vendor, fire-eater, *franelero*[5]—, the capacity for exercising resistance to daily contingencies on the job could be a source of identity and pride in the face of danger, violence, or arrest. But frequently in non-classical traditional jobs, workers have more freedom than in formalized jobs in terms of the beginning and end of shifts, working methods, days off, etc. Although this does not imply an absence of regulations, which are normally issued by the government or organizations, existing regulations in this arena do not compare to factory regulations. This freedom and the possibility to socialize with clients or neighbours on the job, combining work and leisure, can be positive factors claimed by these kinds of workers compared to factory work, factors that may give them a sense of identity and satisfaction. Even though work can sometimes turn into a competition and a game among these workers or with the local citizenry to demonstrate their superior talents, in the case of a taxi or a microbus driver who, in an imaginary projection of adventure or superhuman powers, shows off extraordinary driving capacities that are praised by the community, this imaginary of power can become another source of identity (Vovelle 1987; Senise 2001). On the other hand, the role of stigmas in these constructions should also be taken into consideration (Goffman 1981). For many workers on the street, a stigma exists among the citizenry that they are dirty individuals, delinquents, and drug addicts. Sometimes this negative stigma is part of their identity as people who are spurned by society; in other cases, it can become a counter-discourse

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5. Translator's note: A *franelero* is a person who waves a rag, or *franela*, to distribute parking spaces on public streets and who watches over parked cars in exchange for tips.

and counter-culture, as for the artisans/street vendors in the Coyoacán neighbourhood of Mexico City, who make and sell handicrafts and who have struggled culturally and politically for acceptance.

Identity does not require face-to-face contact: virtual identities can exist among software designers who will never see each other in person. Also, social movements are not always preceded by a strong identity; identity can emerge during the movement itself (Heller 1985; Habermas 1979).

In sum, the workspace remains a field for socialization and the creation of meanings that can translate into an identity with the job, the community, or worker organizations. The two latter levels are almost always associated with the collective identification of a danger to the workers to be able to carry out their activity or with the identification of an enemy—for street workers, the enemy will almost always be the government; this kind of collective identity can be fostered when the enemy undertakes concrete actions against the source of work. More often than not, this is the spark that triggers collective action. This action can depend upon organizations but it has its own dynamics among the community of workers, as in the case of street vendors. As previously mentioned, this identity is usually not related to the job or to the product—the sale of a certain simple product in the subway is not a source of identity—, but rather to the worker's qualities or skills needed to carry out the job, above all to be able to survive, or to relate to the client—as in the case of a barber, for example. In other words, beyond an identity "with the job," there is an identity "for the job" and, above all, with the community of workers. The absence of a face-to-face relationship—between software designers, taxi or microbus drivers, or salespeople who have never met—is no sufficient reason to annul this type of identity, given that the process of abstraction, although it begins with concrete situations, can rise to non-sensitive levels of observation, creating imaginary scenarios of identity among strangers. This has always been the case: national classic workers' movements did not need face-to-face relations among all of their members; this was not even possible in the case of large companies (Habermas 1981).

Finally, although temporary work has grown, it does not involve the majority of workers, wage earners in particular. In this sense, workers with sinuous, fragmentary labour paths are not the majority. Fractured labour trajectories represent frequent changes between occupations that are not necessarily interrelated. This insecurity of occupation can affect one's identity but is not necessarily an insurmountable obstacle; from within their personal situation of fragmentation and insecurity, migrants from Mexico to the United States have carried out collective actions (Herrera 2006). Student workers at McDonald's in Mexico have not;

however, an unpredictable workers movement has emerged from call centres that seem to depend on young workers who have no plans to remain in this type of employment. The lack of relations among taxi and microbus drivers as they carry out individualized work in open territory does not impede the manifestation of solidarity or collective actions. In the case of microbus drivers, they are almost always subordinated to concessionaries in the battle over routes, although in the past they were able to unionize and carry out important struggles. Taxi drivers, who are predominantly self-employed, face government regulations or competition with other taxi companies. In other words, individualism and competition in these fragile sectors have been incapable of annulling a common identity and collective action (Thompson 1983; Zucchetti 2003).

For the research at hand, in the case of jobs in closed spaces that are open to clients (Walmart and McDonald's), potential collective identity is not related to the generation of a certain product or service; rather, it manifests itself in the micro-support system, in the face of challenges on the job or company pressure, which is more commonly found at McDonald's (young student workers who articulate their identities in different life spaces, work-school-family-youth lifestyle and tastes). In both cases, there are poor working conditions: at McDonald's the vision of the future is mediated by these jobs in transit—while the person finishes school; at Walmart the sophisticated panoptic vision established by the company is important, allowing it to rapidly detect individual unconformities before they become collective. Among software designers and extras, the former have a pride that reminds us of a nineteenth-century trade worker; however, due to their logical capacities, their vision of the future is to set up their own businesses, thus they see their time working for a company as a learning experience. They do not have their own organizations, nor are we aware of collective actions in Mexico, although they do participate in forming virtual communities of designers who provide mutual distant technical support, without any material interest—this is virtual solidarity grounded in pride in their trade. Among TV extras, we observed more of a frustrated pride; they share the glamour of show business with other actors, yet they are rejected rather than appreciated. Combined with job insecurity, they face arbitrariness which helps to forge the frustration and nerve that marks their identity. To date, their collective actions have been limited and easily dismantled.

Finally, in the case of workers who work in open spaces, being subject to multiple pressures and daily contingencies contributes to instilling an idea within these workers that they have a great capacity for labour survival that not every worker possesses. This capacity for resistance, which can include the use of physical violence, is particularly employed

for appropriating a workspace and is the main factor that gives identity to this group of workers. The codes of a "free worker" who is not subject to factory discipline, nor guaranteed certainty in the face of government and organizational regulations, need to be added to this configuration that gives these workers their sense of identity, together with their sociability in the street that allows them to combine work with leisure and fun, as well as their ability to relate to clients. Another factor that comes into play in these codes is frequent stigmatizing by other actors who consider these workers to be crooked, dirty, or delinquent; this translates into symbolic meanings regarding these groups and, on some occasions, in efforts to create a counter-culture counterpart to the official discourse (as with open market vendors in Coyoacán). All of this contributes to an *esprit de corps*, especially in the face of the external threats to their work, superimposed on the competition among these workers, although some carry out the better part of their job working alone (taxi and microbus drivers). In this latter case, we should also consider the drivers' relationship with their machines, as well as their reputed mastery over them and their assumed superiority over other drivers, under a "taking control of the wheel" syndrome that is pervaded with a certain aesthetic and morality.

The importance of these workers' collective action does not lie in the rallies or protests to which they are taken *en masse* by their organizations or other actors, such as the microbus concessionaries, but rather in the fact that they spontaneously and daily act in solidarity with fellow drivers in the face of accidents, disputes with other motorists, or harassment by authorities, all of which are beyond the capacity of organizations and the need for face-to-face recognition among actors.

Turning to the analysis of non-classical workers' organization, salaried workers formally have fictitious unions (Walmart, McDonald's, and call centre employees as well as TV extras in general) or no union at all (software designers). But the most organized sectors are the so-called informal sectors, particularly those whose work is in public spaces. The daily struggle for appropriation of workspaces places pressures on worker identity, solidarity, and organizing. In general, organizations have not arisen at the initiative of the workers, rather of their leaders in relation to governments and political parties; these organizations are highly autocratic. When they do become formalized, they adopt legal status as civil associations[6] or, in rare instances, become unions where the workers

are rather seen as members of the association than as workers properly speaking and are supposedly subjected to the civil code's legal requirements. However, since the civil code does not contemplate anything similar to the title of a union under labour law, a large number of these workers' organizations have distributed workspaces according to their leaders' political influences. These realities imply permanent negotiations between organizational leaders and government authorities in the absence of a clear legal framework. In these negotiations, the government appears as a quasi-employer and agent for public spaces, which are these workers' main means of production. The negotiations often lead to the establishment of worker regulations, including required registry with a government agency or the worker organization, the distribution of available spaces, work hours, etc. Our investigation found the following worker organizations: 12 organizations among subway vendors; 25 main organizations among street vendors in the downtown historical district; 20 among street market vendors in the Coyoacán town centre; 11,400 concessionaries among microbus drivers; in addition to fictitious unions at McDonald's, Walmart, and call centres. These organizations are not characterized by democratic practice; they are commonly informal autocracies that use power in a discretional fashion. Some are considered dubious in their operations by their members, such as the *El Salado* street market; others hold assemblies that are controlled by the leaders; and in a few cases, the workers can express themselves freely, as in some of the organizations in downtown Coyoacán. In general, the workers do not identify with their organizations, although they do consider them necessary for their protection as they mix paternalistic dominion styles with gangsterism.

All of this leads to a more general issue: whether or not these organizations could be considered corporatist. The highest expression of corporatism in Mexico was carried out by unions from the 1940s to the 1980s. It implied a pact between worker organizations and the state to maintain governability, economic growth with certain spillovers for workers, and certain political and economic privileges for leaders. As a result of this pact, the state guaranteed a monopoly on worker representation through legal and extra-legal means, including compulsory union affiliation and the eradication of dissidents, and through control of union leaders and permanent mediation by the state in labour and union conflicts. Corporatism also permeated the political system to the extent that the organizations carried voters and contingents to public events held to support the ruling party. The huge crisis of the 1970s and the restructuring of the state, economy, and industrial relations in the 1980s, as well as increased political plurality in the political system, weakened corporatism but did not abolish it.

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6. Translator's note: In Mexico, civil associations, or ACs by their acronym in Spanish, are one of two legal statuses available for non-profit endeavors. This is the status most appropriate for professional or trade organizing purposes since the other (IAP's) is reserved for strictly charitable purposes.

At the micro level within companies and the meso level in the region or trade, corporatism has learned to coexist with neoliberalism, as well as with the change in political parties in power at a federal level starting in the year 2000. This corporatism has not only existed among unions but also among *campesinos* (peasant farmers) and the urban poor; some even purport it exists within businesses. In the case of "popular" corporatism, this ambiguous term refers to professional or trade organizations, but also to informal-sector and working-class neighbourhood organizations that were formerly gathered together by the PRI political party in the National Confederation of Popular Organizations (CNOP). In the case of organizations analysed under our investigation, we are referring to civil associations (when they are legally registered) composed of non-classical workers, very few of which are unions.

These organizations are not as strictly defined by legislation as unions in terms of their registry and the type of bargaining. A civil association must be registered before a notary public with a minimum of requisites and, in contrast to unions, can coexist with other organizations without having to demonstrate majority membership; moreover, other organizations can also exist and be efficient without the need for a legal registry. The important issue is how they are able to gain strength and influence to carry out negotiations, particularly with government authorities. These negotiations are not subject to legislation; when they occur, they arise through the free will of the parties involved. In other words, state control over the monopoly of representation of non-classical informal workers is more restricted than in the case of unions. This could be the reason why these organizations multiply for each occupation, as in the case of street vendors. However, the state can prefer dealing with some organizations over others and, thus, favour them; this can marginalize alternative leaderships and lead to a privileged relationship of material and political exchange between the government and the organization. For the organization, this means gaining access to the use of public space and other kinds of support for its work; for the government, it signifies certain guarantees of social peace and political support in the context of the presence of other antagonistic organizations or political parties and in times of elections. In other words, for these workers, political control through organizing is possible, although in a more flexible fashion and depending on which party is in power at the moment. As with corporatist unions, the leadership of "informal unions"—as they are called in the Federal District of Mexico's Non-salaried Work Regulations—tends to perpetuate once they are in power, although in a crude fashion,

with their more vertical and violent and less regulated control compared to unions; in this sense, government intervention in the internal workings of these organizations is less frequent.

The extended presence within informal worker organizations of a flexible corporatism that is also more autocratic and less regulated than in unions has repercussions on the forms of collective action. When collective action is convened by these organizations, it can take the shape of *accareo*, which is *en masse* mobilization of the membership to support a certain political party's candidates or to counter some government policies; in these actions, the workers are normally passive entities in the face of their leaders' activism, similar to how some unions operate to this day. But, at times, when the constellation of interests allows, the leadership can convene in defence of the workspace, when threatened by evacuation or substitution by other organizations. In that case, the leader's and workers' interests may coincide. Nevertheless, we should not believe that all mobilizations or confrontations are determined by the workers' organizations, particularly in the case of workers in open public spaces who daily live on a knife's edge; collective action may start in the grassroots, among the membership, in resistance to aggressions, evacuations, or invasions of territory, and later be supported and spread by the organization. This latter expression is the most authentic of labour or worker collective actions.

Finally, we have demonstrated that the possibility and reality of identity, action, and collective organization exist among non-classical workers as regards their work, especially when legal and institutional obstacles are more flexible. This does not mean that workers are in a state of permanent mobilization; this occurs only under special circumstances: in the face of a structural work-based conflict (profit sharing, occupation of space, regulations, competition), with an ignition point where the movement emerges in the face of a true offense or a situation considered unbearable to the group's feelings, morals, or reasoning. This is the case of police aggressions during evacuations, which are seen as humiliating and prepotent acts carried out against humble workers, extortion or illegitimate violence by authorities, favouritism towards other actors, confiscation of merchandise, sexual abuse by company leadership, etc. Under these conditions, structured conflict, whether in the classical capital-work scheme or in a non-classical scheme between government (quasi-employer) and workers or other actors, can unleash work-related collective action. If successful, this action can strengthen identity through myths, epic heroic tales, and a clearer definition of enemies and allies, with components

of cognition, emotions, morals, and even aesthetics and the consolidation of a justificatory, Manichaean discourse that registers in collective memory (De la Garza Toledo 1992; Van Dijk 1997; Sewell 2002).

In other words, a common structural situation underlies classical and non-classical salaried workers' conflicts, identities, and actions: they are direct generators of material goods or services and they live off their work. Without failing to recognize that this is a twilight zone, with this definition we are excluding the owners or proprietors who do not directly generate values of use rather who do so only through their employees. This brings us to the need for a broader definition of working class, one that does not negate the limited concept of proletariat, as sellers of the strength of their labour for capital, with a historical nucleus that has rotated to become workers of the great industry. Here we recognize that, on the better part of the planet today, structural work-related conflicts are no longer related to the great industry, but rather to services, informality, etc.

But this abstract structural situation will need to be specified in the case of Mexico, where 80% of occupied workers live in precarious conditions, with an employer or the state who opposes them and exercises great organizational control over unions. Under these conditions, the actions of classical salaried workers are limited, but the potential and greater potency of non-classical workers are not annulled, particularly those who do not work in formal companies that could be included under the first situation. Corporate organizational controls (such as Walmart's panoptic), together with union corporatist structures for control and permanent state intervention in support of labour peace and a monopoly on corporate representation, constitute an important bridle that curbs workers who have not been educated by worker struggles, given that this is a long-lasting historical phenomenon that needs to hit an even deeper base than when conditions of union freedom and democracy exist. Historical experience in Mexico shows that the classical working class knew how to mobilize to defend its interests from the close of the 1940s through the 1970s. On the other hand, informal non-classical workers have become very conflictive sectors, characterized by rapid mobilization and violent confrontations. They often act under the influence of their leaders or political parties, or of other actors who are also not workers, such as concessionaries in the case of microbus drivers. However, structured conflict persists because the conditions of precarious labour subsist and, although these workers' persistent mobilizations are fragmented, trade-based, and without a broad membership, their backdrop is the existence of an exclusive economic model, with great labour uncertainty and fragility, and at the same time, a political system that oppresses or ignores them. The transition towards this significance

cannot be easy and will require broader events than daily conflicts for survival on the job, but it will not be the first time in history that salaried workers and non-classical workers can create broad-based united fronts, finding common denominators that objectively exist although the subjectivity of the moment shows only fragmentation. In 1954 the formal working class in the tin mines of Bolivia knew how to come together with peasant coca farmers, informal workers from working class neighbourhoods, professional workers, and small-scale producers to carry out the only triumphant workers' revolution in all of Latin America, going beyond their differences and fragmentations. However, such a feat does not happen every day.

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