

# Scholasticism, Liberalism, Revolutionary Nationalism and Neoliberalism in Mexico

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My interest in the workshop stems from my current attempts to sketch out a history of the (loosely) scholastic tradition that I encountered through *ethnographic* research in contemporary west Mexico, including its historical relation to the (statist) liberal tradition about which so many scholars have written. Despite the very different approach and focus of my research, I share the concerns of other workshop participants with:

- setting ‘liberalisms’ in historical context and identifying their relations to a range of other ideologies, especially the ones in my title
- problematizing the supposed division of ‘liberals’ and ‘Catholics’, partly by using scholasticism as a third term—I argue that some versions of Mexican liberalism have shared a scholastic substrate with versions of Mexican Catholicism.

The four historical moments that I attempt to link are the following:

- my west Mexican informants in 2007-10 talked of themselves as inescapably social beings in a way that could be classed as Aristotelian
- the most obvious link of west Mexico to the classical heritage is through the colonial missionaries who drew on the scholastic tradition in envisioning the colonisation of the New World
- some of that heritage was carried forward into the nineteenth century and is evident in important texts such as the *Cartilla Social*, even while spliced with a range of notions identified as ‘liberal’; Carlos Forment has also linked colonial Catholicism to the expansion of voluntary associations in the period
- although the Church has played a key role in transmitting that idea of natural sociality into the twentieth century, my informants sounded very like the Civics textbooks that the secularist Mexican government has sponsored since the 1940s.

Much of my focus is on varieties of civic education and my ethnographic work has included a review of Civics textbooks (as well as participant observation in high-school classrooms). The textbooks included chapters on liberal schemes of individual rights but invariably began with a chapter on the *inescapable sociality of the person*.

I have added a postscript that reflects on the workshop topic by explaining why I do not write of the relation of liberalism and *religion*—‘religion’ itself has arguably been a key category of liberalism.

## Civil sociality in the fieldwork, 2007-10

I conducted the fieldwork in two quite different research sites, less to draw a contrast than to note the common points between them. Zamora is a city of around 170,000 inhabitants, located in the western part of the state of Michoacán but in many ways linked more closely to Guadalajara, the capital of the neighbouring state of Jalisco. Zamora grew dramatically through the twentieth century mainly on the strength of commercial agriculture, which remains a major economic activity. Like much of the continent, the city has seen in the last thirty years an equally dramatic growth in the informal sector and one of my case studies has been of a street-traders' union (and its links to political parties and other organisations). The second site is the small town of Tapalpa, with a population of 8,000, which was in the state of Jalisco and so also closely linked to Guadalajara, and where I had done fieldwork previously (Stack 2012 forthcoming). Because of its proximity to Guadalajara, Tapalpa has become a popular weekend getaway, making tourism the focus of its economy. In Tapalpa, I have focused on an organization called Citizen Power which, in contrast to the traders' union in Zamora, sought mainly to establish political participation in municipal government.

My fieldwork in both sites began with a series of in-depth interviews of a wide range of informants, focusing on understandings of citizenship. I began my interviews with the question: What does it mean to you to be a citizen? One obvious objection to my interviewing methods is that I imposed the term "citizenship" on my informants. That is a risk and it is possible that my informants used "citizenship" in broader terms than they did usually. But it is still significant that they were prepared to do so. My informants did also resist some of the connections that I suggested. When I asked whether government had anything to do with being a citizen, for example, several informants replied that it did not while others were dubious. In other words, I was establishing how far they were prepared to take the term "citizenship".

When I asked my informants what it meant to them to be citizens, my informants sometimes talked of citizenship as a relationship with government, usually of individuals and mediated by rights. In responding thus, as I have argued elsewhere, they drew on a variety of classical liberal ideals about the state protecting the rights of individual citizens, of revolutionary nationalism with its sense of rights as shares in the fruits of Mexican modernity, and of more recent notions of rights including those of human rights that states are obliged to respect whether they like it or not (Stack 2012, forthcoming).

However, many informants were reluctant to reduce citizenship to a relationship with government. Several started by saying that citizenship was defined in law but that ultimately citizens were, unlike hermits, people who lived in society, ideally in a civil way. One example was a Zamoran street trader, Mariana. Mariana was in her 50s with grown-up sons and daughters, some of whom were going through university with her support. She had a cake stall in a good location right by one of Zamora's main churches, which she had got through the leader of the particular street traders' union that controlled the spaces on that block.

*TS: What does it mean to be a citizen?*

*Mariana: For me carrying out my obligations like voting, the obligation to elect our governors, not to create many conflicts in the place where I work, not to leave rubbish around, not to*

*be a disorderly citizen or, how should I say, undisciplined. Someone that creates problems., (...) try to follow the norms that there are everywhere, in neighbourhoods there are also norms and rules, that is for me being a good citizen, working decently.*

*...TS: but do you feel that some are better citizens than others?*

*Mariana... Well yes, for example this neighbour of mine (in the next stall) causes a lot of problems, he spends his time drinking, disrespecting the girls who pass... he is not a good citizen and yet there he is, he has a permit, and when he is drunk he is aggressive toward other traders. It's just that no one tells him, otherwise there would have been a real fight here and just imagine the spectacle.*

*TS And have you all tried to do something about it? Does the union leader not do anything about it?*

*Mariana: Well he said he was going to see that the inspectors were watching him, but the same inspectors come and grab his goods without paying and they leave, that is corruption...*

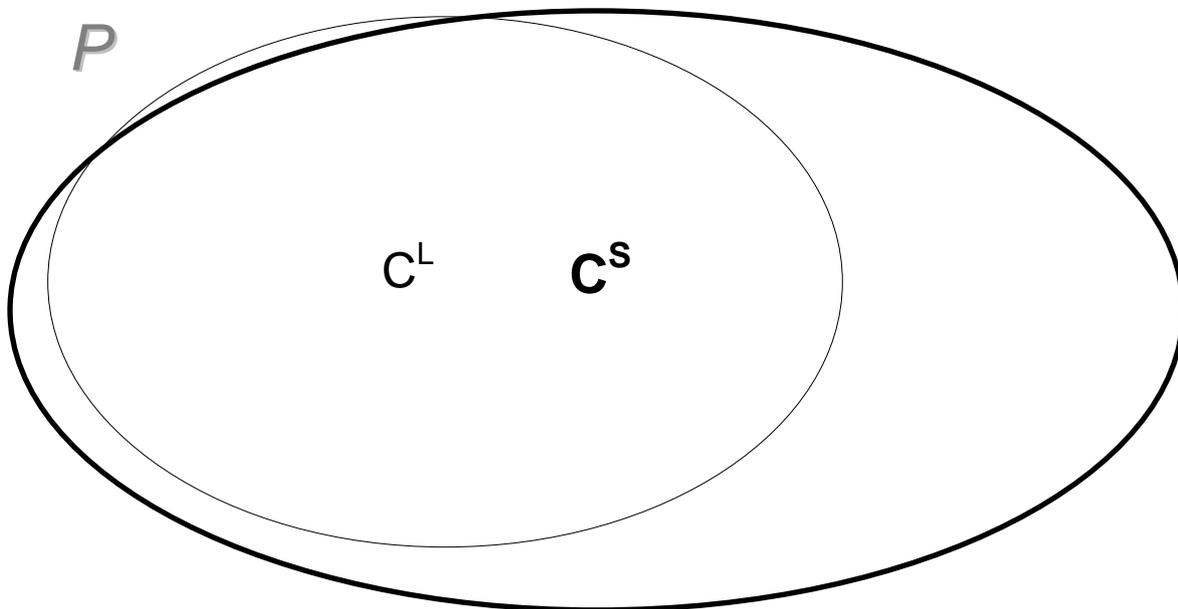
Mariana stressed the obligations or duties of citizens, which included obeying norms and rules and not causing conflicts or being undisciplined or disorderly, both in the neighbourhood in which she lives and in her place of work on the street. She held up as bad citizens her neighbour, for his aggressive and trouble-making character, and the municipal inspectors whom she accused of corruption. Later in the interview she added to the list union leaders, whom she accused of manipulating and taking advantage of traders, as well as of corrupting administrators and politicians.

How did her response compare to other interviewees? Many informants began, unlike Mariana, by mentioning that citizenship was defined in law, but most went on to stress, like Mariana, that being a citizen involved much more than that. Further, many informants insisted that living in society was something one cannot avoid, in contrast to Tocqueville's (1835-40) civility of individuals voluntarily associating. As Ramón, a 35-year old small business-owner in Zamora, put it, living in society is a "condition from which one cannot easily escape". At the same time, my informants were clear that some were better citizens than others – there were good citizens and not-so-good citizens. Good citizens were civil in the sense that, as Mariana indicates, they take care of their obligations and behave with respect to others around them. My term civil sociality is meant to convey that being a citizen, for my informants, combined the inescapable condition of *sociality* with the ideal of trying to live in a *civil* way, as good citizens.

Figure 1 sketches how many informants saw the relation between being a citizen in the eyes of the law ( $C^L$ ) and civil sociality, or being a citizen in the eyes of society ( $C^S$ ). Society supplements the law - being a citizen before society goes beyond what the law requires. Mariana stressed that being a citizen includes the social norms that go beyond legal norms. Although  $C^S$  is often seen as an extension to  $C^L$ , it could also figure as an alternative to it, or go beyond it. What held for being citizens also held for being *good* citizens. The street traders were aware of the tenuous legality of their work on the streets and felt that it might make them bad citizens in the eyes of the law. To compensate, we can see that Mariana claims to act as a good citizen in the eyes of society, in her place of work as much as in her neighbourhood. Even if society could be an alternative ground to law, informants did still stress that *autoridad* (authority or government) was needed to maintain

order in *sociedad* (society). Specifically, I found that government was expected to resolve disputes, at a local level through the municipal president giving audience to the parties in dispute. I will suggest that my informants' civil notion of *autoridad* differed significantly from the notion of *estado de derecho* which is generally attributed to classic liberalism.

Figure 1 C<sup>L</sup> = citizenship in the eyes of the law; C<sup>S</sup> = citizenship in the eyes of society; P = free-wheeling power



The symbol P in Figure 1 stands for free-wheeling, licentious power, which was held to lie beyond what was established in law or upheld as civil and to characterize the bad citizen. It included the ways in which union leaders operated - the Spanish term *líder* usually has a negative association in Mexico - as well as the politicians and government officials with whom *líderes* colluded. Friends who became politicians, for example, were often said to have “lost their ground” and no longer to behave as society expected of them, pursuing their own ends without regard for opinion or morality, forgetting that they were only in office for a few years and so could not escape from *sociedad*. So the idea that municipal presidents should resolve disputes through audience with the interested parties was not necessarily personalistic in the sense, for example, of the patron-client relations about which anthropologists have written, which *would* be an example of uncivil power – a point to which I return. For many informants, the natural locus of the big P was *política*, understood as the self-interested competition of political parties. I asked my interviewees whether they acted as citizens when they went shopping, took part in religious processions, applied for a driving license, voted, and went into politics. I got the most negative response to the last question – very few believed that going into politics had to do with being a citizen. More broadly, my informants often hinted that the big P was behind much of the façade of public life, doubting that others were really bound by the law or civil ideals even if they paid lip service to them. Indeed, many informants were themselves fascinated by such license and talked of it at some length, whether giving stories of politicians or *líderes* whom they knew or still more dramatic tales of the clout of mafia bosses. Many admitted to being complicit, to getting favours from politicians or leaders just as Mariana had got her street space from a leader.

My informants did not simply dismiss the legal definition of citizenship and neither did they dismiss the idea of obeying the law, which they regarded as a sign of a good citizen, but they often

spoke of law as being somehow at odds with the civil. For one thing, although my informants upheld obeying the law as a civil ideal, most of them expressed reservations about just how civil law was in practice. One interviewee complained bitterly, for example, that court officials made him feel that he was being accused when he went to give testimony in a case of theft. But that was just part of a broader feeling, shared by many informants, that there must be more to citizenship, let alone life, than being subjects of Mexican law. Mexicans were far from unfamiliar with being subjects of law, which has a very long history in Mexico. Most accepted the value of having their births registered in the Civil Registry, as well as being entitled to voting cards when they were 18 years old; some had pursued claims through the justice system to some satisfaction; few had any issues with the idea of bearing certain rights as individuals. But my informants spoke of Mexican law as highly bureaucratic, which it was, and as such both individuating and alienating. In the case of the courts, not only did they resent being subject to suspicion, but their individualized voices had no value unless they were consigned to paper in the presence of legal authorities and then filed in dusty archives (from which they seldom returned). It is not surprising that my informants found it difficult to reconcile being in the eyes of law with being in the eyes of society.

I am tempted to conclude that this was simply an *illiberal* view of the person, and indeed to attribute the illiberality of the view to the notorious Catholic hegemony in the region of Zamora (e.g. Arizpe 1989). Preparing for the workshop, however, I have sought to refine the argument, as illustrated in Figure 2, by pointing instead to a ‘scholastic’ substrate—I explain in the next section—that was propagated by the Church but not exclusively so. It was not incompatible, moreover, with certain versions of liberalism. A Zamoran lawyer and ex-city councillor, Andrea, began in a focus group session by saying that society was needed to maintain order, echoing many of my informants, but Andrea then went on to say, unlike other informants, that society needed the framework of a state in which individuals were protected. Andrea reconciled the languages of liberal rights and of civil sociality in the person who is inextricable from society but nevertheless requires protecting as an individual. That said, I think it probably is true that the scholastic substrate is inhospitable ground for some versions or elements of liberalism, including one grounded in a strong version of *estado de derecho* (rule of law) in the sense of a state whose *raison d’être* is to protect citizens’ individual rights (O’Donnell 1999; Aguilar Rivera 2004).

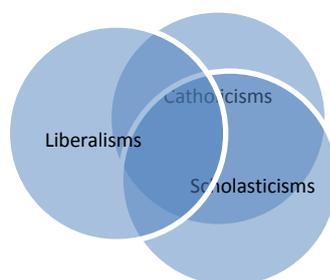


Figure 2

## Civil sociality in historical perspective

Much of my work has concerned what this notion of civil sociality *does* in contemporary Mexico, and I have developed a number of case studies. For example, I have looked at a dispute in Zamora

between a street traders' union and the municipal government, focusing on moments at which both sides drew on the language of civil sociality to try to hold each other to task.

However, I am also concerned to sketch out a history of civil sociality. What follows is, then, a first attempt at the history chapter of the ethnography that I will complete over the next two years. It is only the beginnings of an argument—derived from a mere handful of studies—but I am looking to the workshop to help me develop and substantiate the rudimentary points that I make.

### Scholastic tradition in colonial Mexico

My research assistant Javier Serrano observed that my informants in contemporary Michoacán and Jalisco sounded very Aristotelian; his comment led eventually to my decision to use the slippery term 'scholastic' for the notion of civil sociality that I have outlined. I use scholastic rather than Catholic not least because it is a substrate shared by many who would not see themselves as Catholics and are certainly not part of the Church's hierarchy; it is also only one particular tradition within Catholic thought, one that draws heavily on the ancients and especially Aristotle, and even if it is arguably dominant, scholars have noted that there have been many Catholic liberals even among the clergy. I have also preferred 'scholastic' to terms like 'republican' or 'communitarian' that were used in North American debates in the 1980s and 90s (Sandel 1982). Scholasticism has meant many things, however, including the dialectical method to knowledge, an accent on reason over authority, and the associated tradition of natural law; the aspect of scholasticism that I find relevant—and which perhaps has been longest-lived—is its insistence on the *natural sociality of man*.

What my informants in 2007-10 called "living in society" had clear elements of what the Spanish colonizers in the sixteenth century called "*vivir en policía*", an idea which the colonizers drew from the older Spanish tradition of colonization as well as from Aquinas' (2002) use of Aristotle, which is why I am glossing it loosely as scholastic. There are a number of works on the ideals of Spanish colonization but I draw here mainly on a recent account by Fernando Ramírez Ruíz and Federico Fernández Christlieb (2006). They quote as an example Juan de Solórzano y Pereyra's *Política Indiana* (1930 [1647]) which gives the following account of the city:

Así los mismos Aristóteles y Cícero definen la ciudad, diciendo, ser una perfecta congregación de hombres, que esparcidos antes por chozas en selvas y bosques, se juntaron en uno, mediante lo cual vienen a conseguir los muchos y loables efectos, que en esta vida sociable y política se consiguen, que es sin duda mucho mejor que la solitaria, como lo enseña Santo Tomás.

Solórzano y Pereyra's account was far from simply philosophical, as many scholars have shown (e.g. Low 1993). He is citing Aristotle, Cicero and Aquinas to describe precisely how the native population was resettled from the sixteenth century in an extraordinary attempt to bring into existence what I have called civil sociality.

The resemblance to my informants' account lies in the inevitable sociality that they stress. However, as an aside, their responses to my questions about citizenship shared a second feature with Solórzano y Pereyra: for the most part, they cited as examples of being a citizen ways of conducting oneself *in their towns or cities*, typically by driving a car in a considerate manner. Indeed, one informant in his 40s, an educated resident of Tapalpa, told me that people who lived in the hills

were not really citizens; as he put it, one could hardly ask them to park their donkey in a certain place. They were not subject, as he put it, to the norms and strictures of townsfolk. Several informants also offered as an example of a non-citizen a hermit, echoing precisely what Aquinas had to say on the matter. The earlier Civics textbooks offered a clearly urban model for peasants to live up to; the textbooks up to the present day still refer to the hermit as the only exception to living in society.

## Nineteenth century

During the nineteenth century a number of projects—from Cadiz to the Reforma and beyond—were identified as ‘liberal’. Those projects were not all incompatible, however, with versions of the old scholasticism.

Hale argued in 1968 that Mexican liberals after Independence (and especially from the 1830s) followed their French and Spanish as opposed to English counterparts in stressing the need to build a state strong enough to guarantee citizen rights in the face of corporate privilege, especially that of the Church. After Independence and in the spirit of the Cadiz Constitution, governments were quick to claim that they were emancipating people as citizens from the chains of colonial oppression (and radical liberals went on to cast the Church as an oppressor). As speeches and constitutions proclaimed, people were to be freed from the statuses of Indian, black, mestizo and white and were instead to be all Mexican nationals (Hernández Chávez 1993). Judicial segregation was to be abolished, in particular, and all were supposed to be treated by state institutions as equal.

Scholars have noted that the project was less revolutionary than it might sound, both in principle and in practice. Tamar Herzog (2007) has argued, to begin with, that the Constitución de Cádiz actually reflected very traditional Spanish ideas about what it meant to be a citizen. Moreover, O. Carlos Stoetzer (1979) has, like Ramírez Ruz and Fernández Christlieb, noted the dominance in Spain and its empire of scholastic thought, including Thomas Aquinas’ rendering of Aristotle, championed by Francisco Suárez in sixteenth-century Spain and widely propagated until the eighteenth century in the New World through Jesuit schooling of the elite. In fact, although the Enlightenment *philosophes* are often credited with inspiring the Creole rebels, Stoetzer attributes to the philosophers the grounds on which to challenge the theories of absolute sovereignty developed by Bodin and Hobbes and taken up by the Bourbon monarchs.

Whatever the genealogy of the ideas that inspired the revolutionaries, the new national governments were concerned to create *virtuous* citizens, feeling that the newly nationalized lacked such values as concern for their neighbours and were anxious to impart virtues to them, especially through ambitious and seldom realized plans for education. In the meantime, governments and elites used civic virtues or the absence thereof to condition the equality and autonomy supposed to pertain to citizens as individuals (cf. Barragán 2002; Wilson 2004; Aldeman 2006). Lomnitz (1999) has also noted that Mexican elites became increasingly anxious about the masses, proclaiming on the one hand a vision of educating them while on the other hand restricting the franchise to exclude them and designing schemes for controlling them.

To some extent this is typical of liberalism’s version of freedom or liberty. In an article on nineteenth-century Bolivia, Tristan Platt (2009) quotes Talal Asad to the effect that ‘liberals’ are very careful to define in advance what precisely a ‘free man’ should look like. What is of interest, though, is *the particular ways in which particular versions of liberalism define the person that they want to*

*produce*. It appears that some early nineteenth-century liberals drew on the old scholastic traditions in defining the kind of person that they wanted to produce.

An example is that of the civic catechisms that were developed, especially the widely-used *Cartilla Social* (Gómez de la Cortina 1849) which has been studied by Leticia Mayer (Roldán Vera 2002; Mayer Celis 2006). The most obvious point about the catechisms is that they used a form that had been developed by the Church and on occasion the religious and civic catechisms were contained in the same book. More interestingly, some of the ‘civic’ catechisms used the old language of scholasticism. Mayer argues that the *Cartilla Social* drew together a range of intellectual sources, including Locke, Rousseau and Hobbes, but the following quotation that she reproduces is less suggestive of Locke than of Aquinas:

P. ¿Qué cosa es el hombre?

R. Un hombre dotado de razón y creado para vivir en sociedad.

P. ¿Por qué se dice que fue creado para vivir en sociedad?

R. Porque una de sus primeras necesidades es su propia conservación, y muchas veces no podría alanzarla si viviera solo.

P. ¿Quién le impuso esta necesidad?

R. La naturaleza que la ha convertido en ley.

I propose as a hypothesis that the *Cartilla* as a whole entails a fusion of emerging liberal principles and continuing scholastic tradition.

Leticia Mayer argues that the vision of the *Cartilla social* bore no relation to the reality of early nineteenth century Mexico. However, Carlos Forment (2003) has argued that there were practices that reflected some of the ideas of the period; he also reflects on the *Cartilla social* although he focuses on the “civil associations” of the period. While the French looked to their state and New Englanders to commerce for the making of virtuous citizens, Mexicans took as their creed what he terms “civic Catholicism” by which the individual passions that might lead citizens astray would be tamed by solidarity in *society*. Forment focuses on the increase in nineteenth-century Mexico and Peru of clubs and societies across every sphere but the political, concluding that Mexicans practised the politics of anti-politics, again reminiscent of my informants.

Forment uses the term “civic” or “voluntarist Catholicism” for the idea that humans are perfected in society because of its roots in colonial Catholic thought. The term is also appropriate in that the Church controlled most schooling and much scholarship; I have noted, too, that the education of the period often took the form of catechisms. However, I have preferred the term ‘scholastic’ to avoid the trap of dichotomizing ‘Catholic’ and ‘liberal’ for reasons that other workshop speakers have also indicated; the dichotomy appears to be a legacy of the polemics of the second half of the century, sparked by the anti-clerical policies of radical liberals (not least in the state of Michoacán) as well as the pronouncements of the Vatican stigmatising ‘liberalism’ as an enemy of ‘Catholicism’.

## Post-Mexican Revolution

The regime that emerged from the Mexican Revolution did not so much sweep away what came before it as add a strong sense of entitlement to the fruits of Mexican modernity. Just as the civic catechisms of the early nineteenth century, it is revealing to examine the Civics textbooks that were introduced from the 1940s as part of the *escuela de la unidad nacional* that followed the 'socialist' education promoted by Lázaro Cardenas (De la Peza C. and Corona B. 2000).

My research has included an analysis of the Civics textbooks (not yet completed) which bore three related notions. One was the basic rights guaranteed by the liberal state, by which citizens are equal and autonomous as bearers of *garantías*, understood as the most basic rights that the state must "guarantee" above all else; an *estado de derecho*, usually translated into English as "rule of law" but which he employs more precisely to mean a state that makes good on *garantías*, ensuring in other words that basic rights are enforceable. The corresponding section of the textbooks includes a formal account of the institutions of state.

The second notion was the sense of entitlement (rather than non-negotiable rights) to the fruits of a Mexican modernity that the state was to deliver. This understanding of citizenship was related to the "social rights" that Marshall (2009 [1950]) glossed as "the whole range from a modicum of economic welfare and security to the right to share to the full in the social heritage, and to live the life of a civilized being according to the standards prevailing in the society" (149). Just as Marshall finds that World War II produced a strong sense of entitlement in Europe, the Mexican Revolution (1910-17) gave rise to visions of a state that would deliver modernity to Mexicans, greatly expanding the sense of what people might expect from states. The fruits of modernity were often distributed, like political participation, through the party organizations; for instance, Mexican peasants benefited from spurts of land reform especially in the 1930s and 1970s, receiving lands as collectives (*ejidos*) which were affiliated to the peasant sector of the PRI.

Thirdly, however, the regime continued to sponsor the ideal of civil sociality that I have identified as scholastic. My research assistant Marie-Sophie Beier drew my attention to the fact that the post-Revolutionary government has, in other words, itself invested heavily in notions of civil sociality. My informants were schooled from the 1940s in Civic classes that that encouraged people to be responsible even beyond the reach of law and dissuaded them from being disorderly. She noted, specifically, that the first chapter of most Civics textbooks has stated, ever since the 1940s, that individuals are inextricably part of the society into which they were born, whether at family, community or national level. Very like my informants, the textbooks stressed the importance of orderly conduct in society and the consequences of disorder and irresponsibility. If civil sociality could be considered citizenship beyond the state, it was harnessed by a Mexican state concerned to ensure public order.

## Since 1970s: Plus ça change...?

The last four decades have seen a number of significant shifts in political ideology and yet my informants in 2007-10 still sounded like Aquinas.

## Citizen-ization

Even though my focus is on civil sociality, it is significant that my informants in 2007-10 included it in their answers to my questions about "citizenship" and, as we will see, in some but not all other contexts. My informants were happy to use the term in 2007-10 because they lived through three

decades of what scholars have called the “citizenization” of Mexican society in which both government and many social movements have converged on the language of “citizenship”, mainly in relation to democracy, rights and participation, on which anthropologists have also focused (Tamayo Flores-Alatorre 1997; Torre and Sáiz 2001). It seems the term was used much less before the 1970s; as one elderly informant put it, the only person known as a “citizen” was the municipal president, because his official title was Citizen President. It was used at certain points of the nineteenth century, as Lomnitz (1999) has noted, but the language of citizenship was little used after the Revolution and in fact the 1917 Constitution it appears mainly just in one section, which lists the obligations and prerogatives of the *ciudadano*, of which the most important was still voting and running for office.

That said, the term “citizenship” has a history stretching back millennia, long before the national period that anthropologists have usually associated with citizenship, and has often been used for concepts other than the rights, participation and democracy with which they are associated currently. In fact, if there was little talk of “Mexican citizens” until recently, my informants had long heard talk of the “good citizen”, including in the Civics classes in which they were schooled, which also of course harks back to Aristotle. That is the second reason, then, why my informants included civil sociality in their response to my questions about citizenship, and many of their responses dealt with what made people *good* citizens rather than just citizens. As such, they were reluctant to distinguish between the “citizen” who holds rights in law and the “person” who is irreducibly social, as anthropologists might.

### Neoliberalism

To continue with the focus on Civics teaching, the subject was withdrawn in the 1980s in the first neoliberal wave but was reintroduced with an interesting twist in the 1990s. In Mexico and elsewhere, governments have developed new ways of defining and controlling what lies beyond the state, whether by setting the terms of public-private partnerships in the delivery of services (Paley 2001) or shaping people’s subjectivity such that they take individual responsibility for their lifecourse (Ong 2003). The new textbooks tended to place a greater emphasis on participation as well as responsibility, resonating with government attempts to enlist support in the provision of services to targeted groups and to generate legitimacy by setting up Citizen Councils.

However, they did so even while repeating the lessons of orderly behaviour in community. Some civil society organisations have also combined an emphasis on “participation” and “rights” with older ideas of “society”. For example, I followed an organisation in the Sierra de Tapalpa called Citizen Power, which supplemented the focus of pamphlets and meetings on rights pertaining to individuals with notions of citizenship as living in society. One of the local leaders in Tapalpa, Claudia, gave the following account of what it means to be a citizen:

For me it means a person who enjoys all of their rights and fulfils all of their duties. I don’t agree that you are citizen when you are 18 years old, when you have your voting ID. I associate citizenship with the rights that you have as a person and with the duties that you have before society. Or with the people that you live with. I mean, if a seven- or eight-year old child finds out that there is a trash recycling programme, which is a benefit for everyone, and he joins that and starts to promote it, he is living already as a citizen because he is involved in an issue that affects everyone, of everyone’s welfare, and feels the responsibility

for collaborating. I think *that* is being a citizen, appropriating all the rights and exercising them, making them worth something, and also acquiring the obligations that come with being part of a society.

Like the Civics textbooks, Claudia is proposing a broad notion of participation that is grounded not just in rights but in the inescapable obligations that arise from living in society.

### **Cultura de legalidad: the new new governance**

Civil sociality has for long been juxtaposed to law, although in ways that have varied and changed. A few recent studies have suggested that the language of law is increasing in importance – the current President often calls for rule of law for example – but that social actors on all sides only on occasions hold themselves and others to law. For example, Fix-Fierro and López Ayllón (2002) note that historically few social actors were much concerned for acting within a legal framework in Mexico, but argue that in four contexts in the 1990s – electoral disputes, the Chiapas uprising, the El Barzón protest, and the UNAM student strike – actors did at times legitimate their actions in terms of legality and indeed had recourse to law, although not consistently. Moreover, a new generation of Civics textbooks has placed more emphasis on individual ethical judgement, as well as on creating a “culture of legality” which played up individual responsibility in the eyes of the law (Cielo Canales and Arce Conde 2010). What is new is not the value given to law - law has been valued for centuries – but the attempt to *ground* civil sociality in law and the legal subject. Government wants to use Civics teaching to get people to make people responsible as individuals, to see themselves as potential litigants or accused, just as it insists in public speeches on the need to achieve an *estado de derecho* (rule of law) to which all would be subject as individuals (Yeh 2010).

However, my fieldwork shows that civil sociality remains an important language despite government’s turn to the language of law. Government has no monopoly, firstly, in that civil sociality can also get used *against* government, to hold government to account, and at least in that sense it could be said to create the conditions for effective rights-bearing (Stack 2011). Secondly, there are strains of civil sociality other than that of Civics teaching, as is suggested by the Catholic overtones that I have mentioned. Indeed, the Church has remained an important sponsor, continuing to rework older notions of the person and government in the face of liberals’ insistence on the autonomous individual guaranteed by the (sovereign) state (Hernández Madrid 1999).

### **Liberation Theology**

The Church’s reworking of the scholastic Church legacy has gone in different directions, even between the two dioceses in which I conducted research. The Diocese of Zamora has envisioned society in terms of the family and more broadly of the organic relation between sectors, under threat from modernity, as put forward in the 1891 papal encyclical *Rerum Novarum* (Hernández Madrid 1999). In recent years, the diocese has used the Thomist language of unjust government and living in society in order to protest electoral fraud, such as in a letter written by bishop and clergy after electoral fraud in 1986:

Shame on those who issue unjust laws and with their decrees organize oppression... (Isaiah 10, 1-2). This word of God disapproves of all sin that destroys human co-habitation (*convivencia humana*), because instead of truth and justice, lies and fraud triumph (Hernández Madrid 1999).

The civic ideal was also upheld by the Mexican Church. For example, Lourdes Arizpe (1989) recorded a priest in Zamora complaining about the weakness of moral and civic teachings in schools. But the diocese has resisted the teachings of the Second Vatican Council and of the Latin American Bishops' Conferences with their "option for the poor" and stimulus for lay leadership as a basis for engaging with a "society" considered far from "perfect" (Hernández Madrid 1999). The Diocese of Ciudad Guzmán in which the Sierra de Tapalpa is situated has endeavoured since the 1970s to implant the Council's vision of lay initiative for social justice, and Citizen Power grew out of the pastoral groups that were key to the Council's vision, while being run out of the Jesuit University of Guadalajara (Vázquez 1997).

Despite the influence of Liberation Theology, my informants in the Sierra de Tapalpa stressed as much as in Zamora that "being a good citizen" is connected to "being a good Catholic" in that they involve a similar commitment and responsibility to the society in which one lives. Moreover, what I have glossed as the big P of licentious power (see Figure 2) was almost always pitched by my informants, in both dioceses, as the *libertinaje* that stood in contrast to true *libertad*.

## Conclusions

I have argued that scholasticism—or at least, the natural sociality of man—was in my fieldwork a substrate or important element with a long tradition. It may not be incompatible with liberalism or at least it gets spliced together with certain versions of liberalism. Neither is it reducible to Catholicism. The Church is an important sponsor of it but so is the 'secular' Mexican state in its Civics textbooks.

I have conducted comparative fieldwork in the East Bay Area of California, where I did find, by contrast, a sense of individualism that was less common in Mexico and that seemed to gel better with the liberal idea of the autonomous subject of the law, which may help to explain why both Anglos and Mexicans expressed respect for the law but Anglos *identified with* the law to a greater extent, seeing themselves often as potential litigants. The Anglos had a strong sense of service to community but it was a "service" measured in portions of individual time and money that were "volunteered" to a "community" that was largely external to them and from which they could remove themselves. In a focus group that I organised in an East Bay public library, a Mexican-born activist responded to talk of volunteering by Anglo leaders by arguing in Mexico participation in community groups arose simply from the unavoidable experience of living in society (Stack 2012, forthcoming).<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Individualism has become a source of anxiety for certain US theorists, who have sometimes linked it to reliance on the state. Bellah (1985) is critical of an individualism that limited the ability of even leftist movements to formulate a broad vision for society; Putnam (2001) is concerned less with individualism but, as Aguilar Rivera notes, with the decline in individuals associating in Tocquevillian fashion. Closer to my informants in Mexico is Michael Sandel (1996) who expresses frustration with the liberal vision of individuals claiming rights on a (neutral) state; underlying the liberal vision is, Sandel claims, a concept of "persons as free and independent selves, unencumbered with moral or civic ties that they have not chosen" (6) (Dagger 1999). He insists on the need to recover an older, republican sense of self-government which requires more than just participation in (state) politics:

It requires a knowledge of public affairs, but also a sense of belonging, a concern for the whole, a moral bond with the community whose fate is at stake. To share in self-rule therefore requires that citizens possess, or come to acquire, certain qualities of character, or civic virtues (6).

## Postscript: Problematizing the category of 'religion'

I have been careful to write of 'Catholicism' and not 'religion' even though the workshop description calls for us to consider the relationship between 'religion, public life and the state'. Critical scholars such as Fitzgerald (2007) and Asad (2003) have noted that 'religion' is itself a concept of the modern state and specifically of the liberal state. The modern state demands of citizens, I argue, that they adopt a particular posture toward what it defines as religion. That posture has varied from state to state, however, and there has always been resistance to it. What follows is highly schematic but gives an indication of my approach. It is based on a volume on *Modernity and the Category of Religion* that I am currently co-editing with Tim Fitzgerald and Naomi Goldenberg.

### A proper stance toward religion

#### States defining "religion"

What was billed as a separation of church and state was part of a broader process by which the state marked off a religious domain from the domains over which it made a direct claim. The medieval state and church divided their respective jurisdictions into temporal and spiritual, not wholly unlike the way in which states divided their territorial jurisdictions from each other. In other words, medieval state and church were not dissimilar institutions which, as a result, needed to mark their boundaries from each other. Indeed, they needed to mark their boundaries because the boundary was by no means clear. As Fitzgerald has argued, the temporal and spiritual bled into each other, formed a continuum.

By the nineteenth century, however, the modern state was not just redrawing the medieval boundaries with churches but marking out "religion" as a domain of life essentially different from other domains. In fact, the 'religious' domain became a kind of black box *into* which states put not just church institutions but a range of dispositions and attitudes, especially those known as beliefs. States left out of the black box a range of practices and principles that had been linked in some way to churches – as most things were. Liberty, equality and fraternity were examples of values developed historically within the church but which the modern state chose to leave out of the religious domain.

States ascribed to "religion" something of a Jekyll and Hyde character. The Jekyll face of religion was that which helped to deliver the social integration and public morality which were prized by states. (The most recent modality has been the neoliberal praise of "faith-based" communities.) The Hyde face of religion was that which gives rise to conservatism, on the one hand, and on the other hand to extremism and violence—it was a zone of excess (Cavanaugh 2009). That has resulted in the surveillance of groups who mix religion and politics as well as a suspicion of those held to mix religion with the other domains that the state was busy mapping out. In the process, it defined state law as hegemonic and, from the nineteenth century, the economy as a domain in which the state might intervene (or not) and society as a question to be addressed (or not).

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Theorists such as Sandel as well as my Anglo informants tended to situate the self in relation to more or less bounded "communities" or "traditions" while my Mexican informants had, as we have seen, a more open-ended vision of "society". However, my informants do agree with Sandel on the inadequacy of participation in politics and legal status and the need to cultivate virtues as an aspect of what might be termed self-government.

## States defining citizens and the proper stance

### *Redefining citizens*

At the same time as states were forging the modern idea of religion, they were busy reworking notions of what it meant to be a citizen. The idea of the citizen was older than religion and had been carried forward from the ancient world into medieval Europe (Heater 2004). But it has gone through many permutations and combinations in the process. Like religion, the citizen has been reshaped by the modern state. The early modern citizen was (especially in England) a bearer of certain freedoms by virtue of being a member of an urban corporation, while usually being at the same time a subject of a monarch that authorised the corporation in the first place, such as in the royal charters granted to cities (Gordon and Stack 2007).

The modern state, instead of granting corporate status to cities of which some residents were citizens, chose to universalize citizenship such that anyone in national territory and/or with the appropriate bloodlines could be a citizen (even if it ended up recreating many of the older distinctions between classes of citizens and between citizens and non-citizens). As such, the state could make demands *directly* of citizens, who were now citizens not of the corporation but of the state itself. Indeed, by the late nineteenth century it made all sorts of demands on people that had not previously been conceivable. It expected of citizens that they receive an education as well as being economically productive, subjecting themselves to health regulations, and that certain categories of citizen should participate in politics in an appropriate way.

### **Proper stance to religion**

#### *State demands on citizens*

Among the many demands that states could make on 'citizens' was that they take a 'proper' stance toward what states had already defined as 'religion'. It set out, to begin with, a finite set of proper stances, for example in the census, both of what counted as a religion that citizens might have as well as what other positions were possible, for example atheist and agnostic.

The state was also concerned to teach people through schools that were, in many cases, not themselves to be religious, what religion is. In the UK, for example, the state ruled that Religious Education was to be taught in all schools – not just faith schools – thus setting out for citizens what a religion was, in the state's eyes, and what place it should have. The state was also concerned to judge the stances that people took toward religion through a justice system that was, like schools, not itself religious. Judges would decide, for example, whether an accused person had been motivated by religion in committing a crime. The state would decide, in the first place, through the politics that was not religious, what is and is not religious, as well as what the appropriate stance for citizens was to take to religion.

#### *Religious freedom*

Citizens' proper stance toward religion has been generally dressed up as "religious freedom". Religious freedom was, to begin with, the freedom to choose among the proper stances recognized by the state. It was also to do things within the religious domain that contravened the usual norms. An example is allowing churches to discriminate by gender and sexuality when hiring. It also allowed citizens to do certain things with religion outside the religious domain. Some states will allow citizens to wear religious symbols at school or in the workplace, for example.

In other words, religious freedom was defined in a way to be highly constrained. The state decided in the first place what was considered a religion and what the appropriate stances towards it were. Within the religious sphere, it decided what exceptions it could make – a recent example are the controversies over Catholic adoption agencies – as well as where the religious sphere stops and states. It also defined what practices that it defined as religious were nevertheless permissible outside the religious sphere.

### **Mexican variations on the theme**

States at different times and places define the proper relation in different ways, however, and Mexico differs in some respects from the countries that are usually studied. Mexico's first constitution in 1824 established Catholicism as the "one true religion". However, by mid-nineteenth century radical liberals were identifying the Catholic Church as the enemy of national progress.

Governments in the years after the Mexican Revolution (1910-17) took a much bolder anti-clerical line. There was not the wholesale persecution of the Soviet Union but, like in France, church buildings became federal property (thus excluding the church from the property market) and priests federal employees. Priests were second-class citizens in that they were not allowed to vote much less run for office. Indeed, they were not allowed to wear clerical garb nor to conduct ceremonies outside church premises. The church was ruled out of education – although priests and nuns do teach in and run schools, the church cannot own schools. The state fostered the growth of Protestant churches as a rival to Catholic hegemony.

However, state policy was not just anti-Catholic; by the late twentieth century, at least, the state identified religion generically as an issue for political participation. It did so successfully in that politicians often accused each other of sounding religious. Moreover, the World Values Survey has found that a similar percentage of US and Mexican citizens place their trust in churches – well above any state institutions; however, while in the US a similar percentage admit to taking their political attitudes from their churches, only 29% of Mexicans polled admitted to the same. In a similar vein, when informants talked of citizenship as participation in politics, they tended to see religion as an issue for citizenship, feeling (unlike my US informants) that religion was best left out of politics.

It is not just state projects that vary, though; people resist state projects in different ways and with varying success. In my Mexican projects I found it is true both of state definitions of citizens as well as of religion and the proper relation between them. When I asked my Mexican informants what it meant to them to be "citizens", some did define citizenship as a relationship with states, especially that of claiming rights on states. However, as I have observed, many were reluctant to reduce citizenship to a relationship with states, replying instead that citizens were, unlike hermits, people who lived in society, ideally in a civil way. When they talked of citizenship as civil sociality, they did not see religion as an issue for being a citizen. As I have mentioned, several saw a close connection, when I asked, between being a good citizen and being a good Catholic. Certainly they saw no essential difference between the two. In so doing, they drew on the scholastic tradition that I have outlined, in which society and not the state is the *sine qua non* of citizenship and which resists the liberal premise that politics, religion and the economy are essentially different spheres of life.

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