

Zacatecan Migrants: the exercising of their political rights

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Resumen

Este texto ofrece un primer análisis de la experiencia de los zacatecanos emigrados en relación a sus derechos políticos, en especial la representación política y el sufragio. Se busca contribuir a la investigación en el campo de la ciencia política, en la medida en que se ponen en debate las nociones de ciudadanía y residencia conferidas al territorio. Los emigrados zacatecanos, sin duda, constituyen un importante estudio de caso para nuestro cometido, dado su peso en número como pobladores habituales principalmente de los Estados Unidos.

Abstract

This paper provides a first analysis of the experience of Zacatecan emigrants in relation to their political rights, especially with respect to political representation and suffrage. We seek to contribute to research in the field of political science, as the notions of citizenship and residence conferred the territory are put to discussion. The Zacatecan emigrants undoubtedly constitute an important case study for our task, given their weight in numbers as regular habitants of the United States.

Palabras clave / Key words

Migrantes zacatecanos, sufragio transnacional, derechos políticos/Zacatecan migrants, transnational suffrage, political rights

Introduction

Population mobility is a phenomenon that forces us to rethink the definition of citizenship confined to nation states; that is to say, because the condition of citizenship is understood based on legal access to civil rights conferred by the membership of a country.

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The majority of migrants are then not able to exercise their political rights, either because they do not reside in their country or because in the country of destination they do not hold the status of citizen. Regardless of the fact that many countries include in their legislation the right of their nationals to vote being outside their country, it is also true that there are much less countries that allow foreigners to vote in the internal elections, even when they are residents. To exercise political rights means to take part in the process of decision-making, or to take a stand on power and performance, moreover, it means to have a mechanism of defense against that power. And in the case of immigrants, there are usually no channels to defend themselves or to influence decision-making. This limitation, of course, reduces the possibility to question laws and the existing social institutions; and, on the other hand, it becomes a topic of great challenge for social and political research.

Mexico has a large number of emigrants living mainly in the United States. Indeed, migrants are not homogeneous, coupled with changes in the migratory and mobility patterns. On this matter, Soyza, some years ago, made a critical observation: "The guest worker experience attests to a shift in global discourse and models of citizenship across two phases of immigration in the twentieth century. The model of national citizenship, anchored in territorialized notions of cultural belonging, was dominant during the period of massive migration at the turn of the century, when immigrants were expected to be molded into national citizens. The recent guest worker experience reflects a time when national citizenship is losing ground to a more universal model of membership, anchored in deterritorialized notions of person's rights" (Soysal, 1994:3).

In this paper we give voice to Zacatecan emigrants, with the intention to expand knowledge on their constitutional interests and possibilities to exercise their rights abroad. First, we present data concerning their homeland (Zacatecas), and then we show information obtained through interviews held with a group of migrants, in order to gain specific details on their interest on party-political issues in Mexico or at their current domicile. It was also of our concern to be aware of their opinion over representatives and city officials. Finally, we confront the subjective opinions with the objectives electoral results.

Zacatecas, a case of study

Zacatecas is one of the Mexican states most characterized by its high rate of emigration to the USA. It is for this reason there exists a struggle for Mexican emigrants to exercise their political rights from abroad, beginning in 1929 (Martínez, 2003:104), though it was not until 2003 when the Political Constitution of the state of Zacatecas was reformed, allowing citizens of binational residency to vote and contend in local elections, which lead to the

reform of the state's electoral law. This law became known as 'Ley Migrante' (the migrant act), despite it not permitting immigrant residents of Zacatecas to vote within the state.

The approval of 'Ley Migrante' marks an important step towards political rights for emigrants and its realization puts Zacatecas on the vanguard of the matter. However, since its approval there have been no major advances, marking a failure to move on democratization. It is worth mentioning certain facts and figures to convey the magnitude of this area of study. According to the webpage of the electoral institute of the state of Zacatecas (IEEZ) the nominal voters' register in 2010 showed 1,107,323 individuals, whilst the electoral roll itself came in at 1,112,407 citizens. The final register lists 164,846 more names than the 2010 census suggested were 18 years old or over.

The exact number of Zacatecas living abroad is unknown. However, according to information provided by the local executive commission to the Federal Electoral Institute (IFE) in Zacatecas in the *Verificación nacional muestral* 2011 by the federal voters' register we find that 6.3% of those changing their address to one abroad went unreported amongst those registered to vote on the 30th September 2011, which represented 73,477 citizens out of the 1,116,314 registered (table 33, p 73). Those registered as 03 were 108,877 of which 34.93% or 38,030 had moved to another country (table 110, p. 151) whilst the number registered as moving abroad was 37,116 (table 101, p.141). Nevertheless, there are reasons to believe that these figures underestimate the number of Zacatecas living outside of Mexico.

The National Institute of Statistics, Geography and Informatics (INEGI) counted 1,490,668 individuals living in Zacatecas in the 2010 Population Census, of which 942, 477 or 63.2% were 18 or older, that is to say of an age at which they could legally exercise their right to vote. The 2005 census counted a total population of 1,367, 692 and estimated that a further 508,924 individuals born in Zacatecas were currently living in the USA, which represents 37.2% of the state's residents (CONAPO, 2005:139).

In relation to the Mexican population living in the United States, compared to those born and raised there and other immigrant minorities, we see a huge disparity; a level of education which generally does not surpass high school, low income (on average US\$15,000 less per year less than natives and other immigrants), a low proportion of the population with citizenship (20%), greater poverty (around half of the poorest immigrants are Mexican), a greater lack of or difficulty in accessing healthcare (53% lack medical insurance), a higher number of inhabitants per household (3.9 people, compared to an average of 2.9 in the rest of the immigrant population and 2.5 among natives) and greater heterogeneity among members of a household, with regard to relationship, income and migratory status (CONAPO, 2005).

This information is important when investigating the level of interest and the possibilities of Zacatecan immigrants in the United States being able to participate in elections in their home state, even when, for them specifically, we lack the exact statistics regarding the problems mentioned in the previous paragraph, which is to say that, the reform deals with people who for the most part, given their poor quality of life, would be more concerned with participating in the improvement of their situation in their country of residence, and with less material possibilities of doing so in their country of origin, beyond any desire to exercise their political rights, notably voting and standing in elections, and are too complex or expensive for the individual migrant.

According to information reported on the Bank of Mexico's web page¹, between 2003 and 2011 the state of Zacatecas received US\$5,244.6 million in remittances for families, an average of US\$582.7 million per year. Through *Programa 3x1* (The 3 for 1 Program), which funds work in migrant communities through investment from migrant societies, local, state and federal government, in the period from 2004 to 2009 created 1,993 projects at a cost of 1,187,368,109 pesos (which includes 182 student grants), and spending 60.3%² on improvements to high ways and streets, construction and repair of churches, and community and social services.

The organization of migrant clubs in the USA and Mexico enhanced their political standing, and due to the reform of electoral law in Zacatecas, these clubs had the possibility to nominate candidates to the post of municipal president, trustees and at least two councilors to each level of legislature. Although the new electoral law does not give the migrant clubs any privileges in the nomination of candidates, with whom they are affiliated, they are more closely linked with representatives of the political parties in Zacatecas, who have greater opportunities to compete for nomination in the aforementioned posts.

This essay will offer an analysis of the possible "widening" of political rights available to citizens living abroad that we may be able to see from the changed electoral law. Fieldwork was conducted via a telephone poll of Zacatecas residents living in the USA and through in-depth interviews with three binational representatives regarding their experience and feelings towards the issue of voting as migrants³. The authors have presented the interviews based

¹ Banco de México, Remesas:

<http://www.banxico.org.mx/SieInternet/consultarDirectorioInternetAction.do?accion=consultarCuadro&idCuadro=CE100§or=1&locale=es> Last viewed 12/07/12.

²Estimates come from the webpage of *Programa 3x1* in Zacatecas State, Estadísticas: http://programa3x1.zacatecas.gob.mx/?F=prog3x1&_f=main&t=4. Last viewed 11/5/12.

³The authors of this chapter personally interviews 3 migrant representatives in order to gather information and opinions. It is worth mentioning that there have been 6 binational individuals elected to legislature since the reform of Electoral act in Zacatecas in 2003. Those interviewed were Sebastián Martínez Carrillo and Luis Rigoberto Castañeda Espinoza, representatives in the LIX Legislatura, 2007-2010, and Pablo Rodríguez Rodarte, who was a representative in LX Legislatura, 2010-2013. These interviews took place on 15/12/11, 16/1/12 and 14/2/12 respectively, in the city of Zacatecas.

on a series of questions put to migrants selected as representatives of the community, and their responses. A telephone survey of 34⁴ people was also conducted, with the intention of finding information from a subnational level, within the context of investigation into transnational suffrage.

Survey of migrants abroad

This section will provide the information gathered from interviewees from Zacatecas from all 14 municipalities of the state living in ten different US states, of which 21 were men and 17 women, with an average of 8.8 years of education and all retaining Mexican citizenship and none ever having lived anywhere but Mexico and the United States. Although five had obtained American citizenship, only three had taken part in elections in the USA. Without exception, none had voted in Mexican elections from the USA despite almost half having moved there between 2000 and 2008, and only 15% having moved there before 1990.

Fifty-nine percent of those interviewed said that they 'sometimes' followed current Mexican politics, predominantly through television, but also via family and the radio, the second and third most common means of following events. None claimed to follow political events through a migrant association, which is supported by the fact that none belonged to any such group. The same number of people who 'sometimes' followed Mexican politics also followed American politics, through television coverage (70%), the radio (35%), through family members (15%) or the internet (15%). It is worth noting that the media through which those interviewed followed events were not exclusive, as those who followed both Mexican and American politics through radio, the internet or family also followed them through television.

A higher percentage claimed to feel more a part of the United States than of Mexico (38% against 23%), although paradoxically 88% thought they should have the right to vote in their country of origin whilst only 82% thought they should be able to vote in elections in their country of residence. When asked in which country they felt more integrated those who responded that they felt more at home in the USA argued it was because 'I understand the law a little more' or because 'I have more opportunities here', or even 'because in Mexico we're not taken into consideration' or 'my country doesn't have anything to offer me'.

⁴This was carried out in February and April 2011 with the assistance of undergraduate students from the Law school of the Autonomous University of Zacatecas (UAZ) who had relatives in the United States. To gather this information we only engaged with those who volunteered to take part. We received replies from migrants originally from 14 different municipalities. In doing this we managed to achieve a certain level of random selection, but it is impossible to determine the exact level of representation and statistical error. It was not limited exclusively to the migrant clubs because we also sought to portray the opinion of those Zacatecasans living in the USA who were not part of a political organisation. The questionnaire used was the same as that employed by the "Sufragio Transnacional" Project headed by Dr. Gustavo Ernesto Emmerich, but in order to portray certain aspects specific to Zacatecas, additional questions were included.

In the first two responses their sense of integration is explained by what they have found in the United States; in the two that follow what they have not found in Mexico.

A significant pro-integration response towards Mexico was 'I believe no one feels better than in the place where they are from'. Largely we found the responses of those who felt ambiguous towards their integration to be roughly as follows.

- "I'm integrated into my own country but I'm trying to be integrated to this one as well."
- "I'm not sure, as there's work here, but I'm always thinking about going back."
- "I'm trying to integrate myself here, but I still identify more as Mexican."
- "No, in fact every day I feel a greater distance between me and my home, and the United States."
- "I feel more integrated here [in the USA], principally because of the employment opportunities and wages that I've earned. But I still want to be a part of or return to my country and contribute economically to Mexico, as I don't want to become any less integrated there. I want to be part of both communities equally."
- "Th[the USA] is my country, Mexico is just a connection with my family."

Seventynine percent of respondents did not know that in every local election two migrant representatives can be elected or that migrants could be chosen mayors, and among those interviewed there was a feeling of disappointment with the local level of representation, or in other words, they felt unrepresented by the current representatives, despite 85% wanting to vote from abroad in state and municipal elections.

In response to the question 'How would you feel if you were able to vote from overseas?' the response that was repeated over again was 'taken into consideration'.

On a similar theme we heard responses such as:

- 'satisfaction at being able to choose'
- 'Very important'
- 'good as I would feel that through the vote I would be helping my family and my countrymen'
- 'It would make me feel good because in this way I'd be able to choose or punish the representative I didn't want, and it would also be a recognition of my economic contributions to my country and its economic stability'

However, these responses are puzzling when those interviewed claim that they would feel better if they were able to vote in local elections but do not realize they're able to but those who are aware of the opportunity do not bother to vote. We encountered far less responses that were pessimistic or incredulous:

- 'in all honesty I don't believe that they would allow it and equally I don't think it would benefit me, but in fact wouldn't hurt me either'
- 'I'm indifferent, because even if I could vote nothing would change'
- 'It doesn't make any difference as in any case I won't be able to miss work just to vote in the elections of my home country'

In the last answer the migrant assumed it would be necessary to miss work to vote, rather than sending a ballot card when they were not at work. This is indicative of problems of regarding information surrounding the voting process, or more specifically a lack of information.

Facing the possibility of the founding of a migrant party in Mexico, we must consider that this would serve to increase the level of institutional representation. Reactions to this proposal were equally discordant, although there was a predominance of those who believed it would be useful in the defense of their interests in the United States, rather than in Mexico. We approached the question as 'what do you think of the formation of a party for the representation of migrants in Mexico? And the responses were as follows:

- 'It would help us more as illegal immigrants and would mean we were considered more in everything'
- 'It would be great as it would give us more support here'
- 'I don't believe in anything like that. There are a lot of groups like that here, and despite good intentions they have not achieved much, and furthermore I don't think that there could be or has been any interest in helping us'
- 'It would be great as they would support all of us migrants in the USA and it could be a great benefit for everyone.'
- 'perhaps via that we could have more influence here'
- 'In my opinion we're all migrants and we all need support in whatever country we're in'

Those who thought the proposal of forming a party of migrants viable expressed views such as;

- 'It would be better because we could vote from afar and know who our legal representatives were.'
- 'It would be good because even we migrants would have a voice and a vote.'

- 'It would cultivate better participation'
- 'They'd have to take us into account as they always forget about us.'
- 'It would be good to be able to participate and be better integrated.'
- 'It'd be good, to be able to participate or express my opinions about decisions in my home country.'
- 'A good idea that would create a greater connection with Mexicans abroad'
- 'It would be excellent to have power in your municipality or state in order to get responses to our demands'

Critics of the idea of a migrant party responded as follows;

- 'Generally no one who is part of the government is any use'
- 'I don't think it would change anything, it would only be supported by certain groups. I don't think I'd feel represented by them.'
- 'I don't believe in the idea, I wouldn't help me at all.'
- 'Mexican politicians and their corruption and arrogance anger me so much sometimes.'
- 'It'll be a fruitless idea, as, to start with it would have to be that the majority of migrants could move freely between countries and most of the time it would have to happen outside of Mexico, and the party would lack enough power to have any influence. It just wouldn't work'.

Up until now we have included the most relevant responses from the survey of Mexican migrants living in the USA, which have suggested that political rights, even though they have been given the legal stamp of approval, the exercise of them has been negligible. We will continue in the next section to look at interviews with migrants who have been elected to the office of representative.

Representation: More than just seats and city officials

A migrant candidate according to the Electoral Act of the State of Zacatecas (2003) is defined as '...one who seeks to occupy public office through popular election, who is of Zacatecan citizenship and binational residence', and also defined by 'the assumption that the person in question simultaneously possesses his own residence abroad and at the same time one in state territory, maintaining home, family and interests within the state' (Article 5).

Their integration into state legislative will be '... eighteen representatives [elected] by relative majority vote, half through the system of uninominal electoral districts, and twelve through proportional representation, according to the system of party lists elected in a single electoral process. Of this final group two must be migrants or binational at the time of election' (Article 51).

Anticipating the two migrant seats in Zacatecas' local congress and the possibility of having this type of representation in other municipalities came under partisan alternation in the state in the 1998 elections, when the Institutional Revolutionary Party (PRI) lost the election of governor to the Democratic Revolution Party's (PRD) candidate Ricardo Monreal Ávila.

The electoral struggle in Zacatecas spilled over into the United states, mostly concentrated in California, where the priorities and political activism of migrant leaders was divided, manifesting in a split in migrant support, with a group favoring the PRI candidate, and the rest favoring the opposition candidate, from the PRD. Among those migrant leaders supporting the PRI we found Rigoberto Castañeda, who would eventually become a binational representative in the PRI's LIX Legislative from 2007 to 2010 and director of the State Institute of Migration in the current government (2010-2016). The other side featured Francisco Javier Gonzalez, leader of the Zacatecan Civic Front (Frente Cívico Zacatecano).

The migrant leaders' activism mostly took the form of organizing clubs, founded in the 1980s, with the objective of speeding up remittances for social and cultural uses in their home towns, which extended into the electoral sphere as the clubs had such a significant presence on state territory. The prominence of organized migrants tended to materialize in a rise in political representation. Their organization (the clubs) proved to be the best way to communicate and expand the platforms of those competing for public office, in addition to using their organizational capacity to influence election results in Zacatecas, and at the same time gaining wider recognition from local politicians as a result of the strength of these migrant clubs.

Once Ricardo Monreal had won the election for Governor in 1998, migrants continued to exert pressure on local politicians to reform the Electoral Act of Zacatecas and gain a greater influence for migrants in local government.

Although there was resistance, that gave way to pressure from migrants organizations, as many in Zacatecas state as in the United States. According to Sebastián Martínez Carrillo, who was a binational representative in the LIX Legislative from 2007 to 2010, the reform was headed by those migrants who backed the PRI, the opposition party during the Monreal years. Rigoberto Castañeda accepts that 'during the 1998 elections we were consolidated as a PRI group'. That is to say, a group consolidated in their interest in participating in local politics and in gaining representation.

In assigning representatives by proportional representation, migrant and binational candidates were assigned by the two parties who gained the largest percentages of the vote, except when a party won in the eighteen

uninominal districts by relative majority, in which case the first and second minority parties assigned the representatives, since no party can have more than eighteen representatives.

Because migrant candidates are subordinate to the political parties, according to the electoral process, they and their organizations are susceptible to being caught up in party interests, making the idea of migrant representation questionable.

With respect to candidate selection, those representatives and ex-representatives interviewed, Rigoberto Castañeda, Pablo Rodríguez Rodarte y Sebastián Martínez, recognized that the process is one that is subject to the state committees of individual political parties.

Interviewer: How was the selection of party list migrant candidates carried out?

Rigoberto Castañeda: The parties were the ones who looked at their profiles and who were going to give their support. So those are the party list candidates, they're party choices, not those of the migrant federations.'

The decision regarding who will represent the migrants can be made by the national party, which is how Representative Pablo Rodríguez Rodarte was selected, which, moreover outweighed his previous career at the National Action Party (PAN), despite not being a member of any migrant association, unlike his rivals in the election.

Indeed, those who competed against Pablo Rodríguez Rodarte for candidacy in the 2010 election included Maria Dolores González Sánchez, a member of the Federation of Zacatecan clubs of Texas, who had been a federal representative elected by proportional representation for PAN in the Legislative LX who enjoyed a significant career within the party, including the role of state representative in Texas. Another was J. Guadalupe Gómez who had been president of the Federation of Zacatecan Migrant Clubs of Southern California from 2001 to 2003, though in interview Pablo Rodríguez said the decision to favor him was made by PAN at a national level. Even without being a member of any migrant organization, he benefitted from a long party career, to which he had belonged since the 1980s. He had worked on Manuel Clouthier's presidential campaign in 1988, had been a federal representative in 1997, a state political councilor and the reserve candidate in the binational representative elections in 2004.

Sebastián Martínez's response to the question regarding candidate selection, based on his own experience, was:

'There's a common perception that it's the current government who assigns the candidate, but I think one has to look at the political career of the migrants in question, it's not as simple as just saying 'I'm going to assign you to the role because I say so.' Obviously it's understood by our peers that we're organized, but there are also migrants who aren't organized and also have rights.'

Faced with the questions why the reform only extended to a party list system, and a fixed number of candidates and why the vote had not been extended to abroad Rigoberto Castañeda responded: 'Well, how do you vote? With a voter registration card. We don't have that tool there'. This answer demonstrates the complete ignorance of the possibilities of voting from abroad that are acknowledged by the Mexican Political Constitution, among these the postal vote.

Rigoberto Castañeda identified a lack of willingness on a local level to allow overseas votes for Zacatecans stating that, 'The willingness of the parties to create any initiative along these lines simply hadn't existed.'

Interviewer: *Did the migrants support the two selections?*

Castañeda: No, I don't think so. Now we have representation, there are those who say that they should be taken away. I have to say no, they have to give us another, that the 3 majority parties are represented. [Regarding the possibility of voting from the USA] it hasn't been dealt with. It has been talked about but nothing has materialized. The representatives of the state congress [haven't done anything]. [Interviewer: Who has to instigate this?] Those [in the USA] at the grass roots level.

Interviewer: *Why hasn't the right to vote from abroad been exercised?*

Castañeda: 'It's a process, according to Sebastián Martínez, it has to be fought for. The local political classes fear migrant participation. We live in two countries so we have to think about the politics of both.'

To the same question Pablo Rodríguez, representative in the 2010-2013 LX Legislative responded, 'I've been talking with the presidents of the migrant club federations regarding Zacatecans being able to vote in local elections. But they can't because they don't have registered voters identification.'

Sebastián Martínez holds the same opinion of the possibility of the vote from abroad:

'Before beginning to spend money on promoting the vote we must spend it on registering voters and giving them their identification. If it's been spent on other things there, why aren't people registered? Of course, they're afraid. One of my proposals was voting online.'

The aforementioned electoral law does not allow overseas voting but rather only at the polling station in the corresponding section and district of Zacatecas, demonstrating the eligibility of the voter and when the citizen registered to vote. This makes the vote much more difficult, if not impossible, for Zacatecan emigrants.

Pablo Rodríguez understood this is as:

'If you leave the country, the country you relocate to is bound to be of greater concern to you. What concerns people is that they are given their papers to work there. They don't care if the Governor of Zacatecas, or a candidate, visits them. Why should it? They're not going to come back. If you went undocumented and had spent twenty years there, what is there to go back to? It is better that I bring my family. They want to get citizenship and residency and work.'

Although he does add, 'however if a migrant candidate does win, in this case, we know this migrant is going to continue to do public works in their municipality.'

Rigoberto Castañeda's view is no different, although he explains how and where those in question are coming from:

'The job they have there in order to survive and send their dollars to their relatives is their primary concern. Afterwards, when you affiliate yourself with a federation of migrant clubs, it's a question of wanting to work for your community. And after a while, well, there are political interests in taking up positions. It's not everyone, it's just some Zacatecans who are part of the movement, they would like to take up a position of political influence, but the vast majority are preoccupied by the situation where they are and with their families, their own projects.'

Adding to this, one must consider the lack of incentives for migrants to vote in the Zacatecan electoral system, one which is required to function as a means of improving the living conditions of the population. As we know it is not its actual function, and it is difficult to achieve such a task under the conditions of economic underdevelopment prevalent throughout the country.

The impression of those representatives interviewed is that Zacatecan migrants in the United States place more importance on political affairs there because that is where their jobs are and this is the most important thing to them, while the projects driven by the representatives of the committees of the local Zacatecan legislative, in reality have limited scope. As it can be seen political representation from official seats seems to be very limited in the face of the

world of problems that migrants face, previously in their country of origin and later in the country to which they relocate.

Electoral procedure and results: the Migrants Representatives

In this section we will continue with in-depth interviews with elected representatives. The authors do not intend to show in any concrete way the extent of procedures and results of the integration of the migrant representatives into the three Zacatecan legislatures that were revealed.

We asked Rigoberto Castañeda, *‘In order to move from being a candidate to a representative what did you have to demonstrate besides having property in the United States and Zacatecas?’*

He responded *‘Nothing, I had to show a copy of my American passport or green card, and that was enough.’*

Regarding the demonstration of binationality by the candidates, carried out by the use of the Consular Identification Card (Matrícula Consular, also known as the MCA), identification that is granted by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs through Mexican consulates in the United States and as the U.S. passport or Green Card, which demonstrates citizenship in that country. The person who aspires to occupy a position of representative, mayor, councilor or trustee, must also have their voter card and be enrolled in the national electoral roll.

Moreover, although the law does not establish any guidelines for campaigning abroad, political parties and candidates in fact go to the United States to campaign, primarily through meetings, parties and conferences with members of migrant clubs, which are mostly found in California, Texas, Illinois and Colorado.

According to the information provided by the IEEZ those acting as candidates for the post of local binational representative were:

2004 Election

PARTIDO ACCIÓN NACIONAL (NATIONAL ACTION PARTY)	Candidate: Ma. Dolores González Sánchez Alternate: Pablo Rodríguez Rodarte
COALICIÓN “ALIANZA POR ZACATECAS” (COALITION “ALLIANCE FOR ZACATECAS”)	Candidate: Román Cabral Bañuelos Alternate: Luis Rigoberto Castañeda Espinoza

PARTIDO DE LA REVOLUCIÓN DEMOCRÁTICA (DEMOCRATIC REVOLUTION PARTY)	Candidate: Manuel de Jesús de la Cruz Ramírez Alternate: Pascual Castellón Reyes
CONVERGENCIA PARTIDO POLÍTICO NACIONAL (NATIONAL POLITICAL CONVERGENCE PARTY)	Candidate: Hilario Flores Castañeda Alternate: José Guadalupe Cabral Bermúdez

2007 Election

PARTIDO ACCIÓN NACIONAL (NATIONAL ACTION PARTY)	Candidate: José Guadalupe Rodríguez Campos Alternate: Jesús Villalobos López
PARTIDO REVOLUCIONARIO INSTITUCIONAL (INSTITUTIONAL REVOLUTION PARTY)	Candidate: Luis Rigoberto Castañeda Espinoza
COALICIÓN “ALIANZA POR ZACATECAS” (COALITION “ALLIANCE FOR ZACATECAS”)	Candidate: Sebastián Martínez Carrillo Alternate: Verónica Adacrid Espinoza Medina
PARTIDO DEL TRABAJO (LABOUR PARTY)	Candidate: Maurilio Mota Hernández Alternate: Ricardo Oaxaca Barrera
PARTIDO VERDE ECOLOGISTA DE MÉXICO (THE GREEN ECOLOGIST PARTY OF MEXICO)	Alternate: Ignacio de Lara González
PARTIDO NUEVA ALIANZA (THE NEW ALLIANCE PARTY)	Candidate: Alejo Gutiérrez Sifuentes Alternate: César Gustavo Espinoza Villegas
ALTERNATIVA SOCIALDEMÓCRATA Y CAMPESINA (THE SOCIAL DEMOCRAT AND CAMPESINOS ALTERNATIVE)	Candidate: Albino Ramírez Campos Alternate: J. Abel Rodríguez Ramírez

2010 Election

PARTIDO ACCIÓN NACIONAL (NATIONAL ACTION PARTY)	Candidate: Pablo Rodríguez Rodarte Alternate: Crispin Barajas Venegas
COALICIÓN “ALIANZA PRIMERO ZACATECAS” (COALITION- “ THE ZACATECAS FIRST ALLIANCE”)	Candidate: Felipe Cabral Soto Alternate: Rafael Hurtado Bueno
COALICIÓN “ZACATECAS NOS UNE” (COALITION- “ZACATECAS UNITES US”)	Candidate: Ma. Esthela Beltrán Díaz Alternate: Elizandra Enriquez Ñiguez
PARTIDO DEL TRABAJO (LABOUR PARTY)	Candidate: J. Guadalupe Hernández Ríos Alternate: Álvaro Jacobo Pérez

According to information provided by the IEEZ, binational candidates were not registered to run for municipal president, trustees or councilors in the 2004, 2007 or 2010 elections. However, in the city of Fresnillo, in the 2010-2013 term, there is a councilor who has dual citizenship, Armando Juarez Gonzalez, who was elected through a system of relative majority.

Despite this, according to Representative Pablo Rodríguez, several municipalities are implementing the role of ‘migrant councilman’ without them

actually being so, i.e. designating one of the council as councilor simply to attend to demands of that sector of the region and visit organizations in the United States in order to be fully aware of the problems of migrants originally from the municipality.

The difficulties in carrying out a genuine representation of the interests of Zacatecan citizens living abroad is reinforced by the types of commissions through which migrant legislators are integrated into legislative bodies, as illustrated in the following table:

Binational representatives by party, commission and legislative.

<i>Legislative</i>	<i>Representative</i>	<i>Party</i>	<i>Commission</i>
LVIII 2004-2007	Manuel de Jesús de la Cruz Ramírez	PRD	<u>Chairman of the Committee on Migration and International Agreements, Secretary of Undeveloped and Unused Land Commission</u>
	Román Cabral Bañuelos	PRI	<u>Chairman of the Children, Youth and Sports commission, Secretary of the Committee for Public Works and Urban Development, Secretary of the Committee on Migration and International Agreements, the Secretary to the Commission for Labor and Social Welfare, a member of the Committee on Internal Arrangements and Policy Coordination</u>
LIX 2007-2010	Sebastián Martínez Carrillo	PRD	<u>Chairman of the Board for Publishing, Communication and Broadcasting, Secretary of the Committee on Migration and International Agreements.</u>
	Luis Rigoberto Castañeda Espinoza	PRI	<u>Chairman of the Committee on Migration and International Agreements, Secretary of the Committee on Health and Welfare, Secretary of the Board for Publishing, Communication and Broadcasting.</u>
LX 2010-2013	María Esthela Beltrán Díaz	PRD	<u>Chair of the Committee on Migration Issues, Secretary of the Commission for Social Development and Public Participation, Secretary of the Commission on Human Rights, Secretary of Undeveloped and Unused Land Commission</u>
	Pablo Rodríguez Rodarte	PAN	<u>Chairman of the Committee on Health and Welfare, Secretary of the Commission on Producers and Industries, Secretary of the Committee on Migration.</u>

Source: Based on information obtained from the website of the Chamber of Representatives of Zacatecas: <http://www.congresozac.gob.mx/>

One might think that the very existence of the Migrant Affairs Committee would enable the binational representatives to properly represent migrant issues. However, in the opinion of the authors, in order to advance a binational agenda and the interests of migrant citizens, it is not enough to focus on migrant clubs as they have been doing so far. It is noteworthy that two of the binational representatives interviewed who came from US migrant federations, faced serious problems in securing the participation of the organizations from which they hailed. According to Rigoberto Castañeda: 'I came from the Southern Californian Federation, but I could never push through such a closed situation'.

At the time of the interview Sebastián Martínez no longer belonged to the organization to which he was affiliated before becoming a representative, and had affiliated himself to another, which he hoped to promote within the PRD.

Regarding the question, ‘who did you feel you represented?’ the migrant representatives responded as follows:

Sebastián Martínez: ‘You can’t cover everything... you shouldn’t talk about the real possibilities of representing someone until you’ve been in that position.’

Rigoberto Castañeda: ‘From the beginning I understood that the position was with PRI, the party list nomination was with PRI.’

Interviewer: But you were a binational candidate.

Castañeda: But the position was with PRI, my position was to defend their agreements, but I was very clear that I had two responsibilities; the first was to defend PRI position and the second, to give my attention to the entirety of the Zacatecan migrant population, regardless of their political affiliations. I attended to those around Northern California, Chicago and Texas.’

Pablo Rodríguez’s response is very similar, inclined towards first defending the interests of the party who appointed him, PAN. They all feel they represent migrants but recognize that in their day to day legislative work they are caught up in partisan dynamics, which probably explains the migrant organizations in the United States ‘ complaints, as mentioned above.

Final Considerations

In this paper, we have given a voice to the key players and alleged beneficiaries of electoral reforms in the state of Zacatecas. Despite the acknowledged advances, bureaucratic aspects of the process act as potential constraints on the achievement of better democratic performance in the political institutions and an increase in the political rights of migrants.

In what follows, we debate on the positions which stand out as the most relevant, in promoting the following steps for the relations between popular representatives and migrants as starting point for generating consensus and change with respect to the constitution and the electoral act, which:

- Does not allowing voting from abroad or giving foreigners the vote, only the vote of the citizens residing in the state of Zacatecas;
- Does not allow to campaigning abroad, at least not officially;

Makes it a condition of vote casting to vote in the constituency which corresponds to one's home address, almost automatically removing the possibility of Zacatecans abroad voting, regardless of whether they have voter cards or are on the electoral roll, as in order to be able to vote they have to return to Zacatecas, and to this end the Act fails to offer any additional incentive, making the act of voting something far too costly for these types of citizens. In this way the realization of the right to vote is unequal, as it's more difficult –almost impossible- for an expatriate than for a citizen who finds themselves in Zacatecan territory.

- Has it that practical advances in the election of migrant citizens remain subordinate to party issues, and, at least in the case of representatives, with the number of representatives remaining fixed at 2 per legislature.
- Equally, has it that the exclusivity of political parties in registering binational candidates benefits, for the most part, citizens who are part of a migrant organization, as the party policy incentivizes the appointment of someone who is guaranteed a greater number of votes by their presence in such an organization. In this way a binational citizen who does not belong to such an organization has less chance of being appointed.
- Excludes those Zacatecans who reside abroad and are neither in possession of a voter's card nor on the electoral roll from the right to vote or run for office.
- States in Article 7 of the Electoral Law of the State of Zacatecas, which to vote in elections is both a right and an obligation of the state's citizens, but this is difficult to carry out in practice for the thousands of Zacatecans who find themselves living abroad.
- Does not permit a binational Zacatecan to run for Governor. While in the election of migrant representatives, councilors, trustees and mayors the length of residence prior to election day, need only be 6 months, in compliance to Article 116 of the Mexican Constitution, though for the post of Governor it must be at least five years prior to election day. This invites us to reflect on why an executive position at that level is not open to competition from individuals with dual citizenship or binational residence.

Until now, the 2003 reform of the Zacatecan constitution and the Electoral Act, considered at the time as a means to gradually expand political and electoral inclusion, remains stalled in the proverbial gate of the state, and have failed to advance to any great extent.

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