

Big Ideas. ABC Radio National 621

6 June 2010

“Rethinking good governance and transparency: the China/Latin America/US triangle”

Guests

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Publications

Title: *The Politics of Trust: China's Relations with Cuba and Mexico*

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Publisher: Duke University Press

Transcript from Adrian Hearn

I'd like to begin by relating to you **a scene that I observed** in the Mexican city of Tijuana just over a year ago. This is how I recorded it in my diary:

The shards of glass are sprayed over the floor, the chairs, the keyboard of the computer, and the map of China that doubles as a work surface. Three booking agents and two assistants were on duty at 4:30pm when the brick shattered the window of the “China Tour” travel agency in Tijuana’s business district. Now, at 6pm, they are sitting in a row before their manager and two representatives of the Chinese Association of Tijuana. Willy [the owner of the business] seems surprisingly dignified as he turns to me: “Now do you see? This is what I was telling you about: it’s been happening more and more to Chinese businesses. Is it because our employees are Chinese? When these things happen we try to hold our heads high and carry on **without** retaliating, and without drawing attention to ourselves. You’re the social scientist, so you tell me, what’s going on? Have we done something wrong?”

At that moment I felt useless, but I also felt compelled to come up with some answers. What **was** going on here? And **how** might situations like this be avoided in future? Was there **anything** useful that I **could** contribute as a social scientist?

In this lecture I want to try to answer these questions. And I’ll suggest that a **key element both of the problem and of the solution** is the concept of transparency.

I’ll begin with some **conceptual reflections** on transparency as it applies to the globalization of governance, and in particular China’s international expansion. This will lead me to argue, by way of examples from Cuba, Mexico, and China, that the concept of **transparency is not universal**; rather, it means different things to different people, living in different cultures. Finally I’ll come back to Tijuana and attempt to **make some sense** of the problems faced by businesses like the China Tour travel agency.

The “rise”, or “re-emergence”, of China in the global economy has been accompanied by strong criticisms of its conduct, prominent among which that its overseas operations **lack transparency**. Alongside concerns about the **opacity** of China’s state-operated industrial ventures, businesses **like the China Tour travel agency** stand accused of advancing their commercial and strategic interests through **informal personal connections** in the Chinese diaspora rather than **legally regulated** institutional channels. This practice is viewed by critics – from Mexico City to Washington D.C. - as **inimical** to the **principle of transparency** in international trade.

As a tenet of global governance, transparency constitutes part of a **broad agenda of state retrenchment** and demonstrable adherence to the rules of market exchange.

A critical aim of this global agenda is to **diminish the reach of the state** in civic affairs and social services, and compensate through the expansion of the **private sector** and the growth of **civil society**. While the privatization of state enterprises and social services follows a **relatively clear** set of procedures, the inflation of civil society – and precisely what **functions** civil society supposed to **fill** – are less clear. For political scientist Mark Warren, civil society should ideally develop into a: “democratic ecology of associations”.

This vision is supported and advocated by prominent scholars like Francis Fukuyama and Robert Putnam, who argue that the **key to democratic participation** in any context is a robust civil society constituted by independent clubs and groupings, whose **internal solidarity, trust, and social capital** equip them for civic advocacy and engagement.

But despite the conceptual notoriety of Fukuyama, and Bill Clinton’s respect for Putnam, there is a problem with this Neo-Tocquevillian formulation: that is, there is **nothing inherently democratic or transparent** about trust, social capital, and community solidarity.

In fact, these supposed “qualities” have been shown under some conditions (the quintessential example being Nazi Germany) to **propagate exclusionary ideologies** in the public sphere and generate what Alejandro Portes calls “downward spiralling norms” that inhibit group members from forging external linkages and from **sharing information** outside of their community.

This is particularly the case when **ethnic friction and economic disparities** (whether real or imagined) provide a basis for the entrenchment of inter-group divisions. Civil society is founded on collective trust, but this trust tends to **compartmentalize** and fracture society at large, and it therefore produces conflict as readily as cooperation. In short, there is **nothing about civil society** that is inherently democratic or transparent.

Mexico throws light on this problem, because under NAFTA, the country has witnessed the rapid **privatization** of state enterprises, the **reduction** of state funding for social services, and **the expansion** of civil society to address resulting needs. Civil society has consolidated in Mexico around **specific interest groups**, including **women’s** associations, **indigenous** unions, **religious** congregations, trade unions trying **deal with competition**

from China, and increasingly **immigrant communities** committed to creating economic opportunities for their members while shielding them from hostility.

China's expanding international reach **maps onto Mexico's shifting civic landscape unevenly** through intensifying economic and cultural points of contact. The streamlining of government capacities in China's health, housing, and social services is **far less resolute than in Mexico**, and the Chinese private sector continues to rely on Communist Party approvals and government provision of licenses, public goods, infrastructure, and strategic intelligence.

Within this model, the Foreign Ministry's Overseas Chinese Affairs Office has become an **important resource** for Chinese officials and businesspeople seeking to **advance** commercial initiatives in foreign markets, and **support** the socio-economic ascendance of overseas Chinese associations in emerging civil societies around the world.

In Mexico, the diasporic connections propelled by China's rise have **consolidated in civic spaces** previously occupied by the state. Opportunities for cultural exchange, tourism, and the **sale of Chinese manufactured products** have inspired the thickening of **formal and informal commercial ties between the two countries**. While the exploitation of these **ties is praised in the Chinese media**; it is **attacked** in **Mexican** newspapers, radio, and television broadcasts; and by people I interviewed, who expressed **patent anxiety about the threat China poses** to their economy. This anxiety is deepened by perceptions of **unfair competition** infused in exclusive, **non-transparent Chinese business relationships**.

Confronted with sometimes violent **accusations of foul play**, Mexico's **Chinese Ethnic Associations** have **protected their communities** with economic assistance and mutual aid activities. But this preference for **customary solutions inside the community** rather than **official legal mechanisms** that extend **throughout society** has been widely perceived as **further evidence of self-segregation**, and has perpetuated a vicious circle of **[hands]** external hostility and internal protectionism.

Obscuring opportunities for dialogue and reconciliation, every turn of this circle demonstrates how **community trust and social capital**, widely considered to be **collective societal assets** in the consolidation of democratic civil society, are **collective** to only a limited degree and **transparent only within these limits**. This **vicious circle** has become a growing international challenge as linkages and relationships thicken between a rising China and its diaspora communities, and it is now more important than ever that the international community find ways to deal with it.

So, to summarise my argument so far, since the end of the Cold War two things have happened: **First**, governments around the world, in the name of **democracy and transparency**, have ceded administrative space to the private and non-state sectors. And **second**, this space has been filled relatively quickly by civil society actors, including Chinese diaspora communities, which with the help of the Chinese government, have set up firms to **import Chinese products** and to service travel to and from China.

The **results** of this dual process vary from country to country, but in Mexico, where economic competition with China is severe, the growing prominence of the Chinese community - and its personal ties with the Mainland - are **attacked** for their **perceived lack of transparency**.

The concept of transparency then, has been used both to **promote the expansion of civil society** at the expense of the state, but also to attack the consequences of this process. So let's now look in more detail at this ambiguous concept.

The word **transparency** seems to be on everybody's lips these days. The President of Venezuela, Hugo Chávez, recently stated that his country's collaboration with China in the **oil and space satellite industries** has allowed him to pursue what he calls (**quote**) "a battle of ideas - with efficiency and transparency".

Similarly, in **2009**, **Cuba's** state-run newspaper *Granma* described the Castro government's deepening partnership with China as (**quote**) "[An] example of **Transparency and Pacific Cooperation**". This cooperation is largely industrial, and it has followed a distinctive 2-stage model: **first**, the sale of Chinese manufactured goods to Cuba – starting with bicycles and electric fans in the 1990s, and advancing more recently to refrigerators, buses, and locomotives; **and second**, the **manufacture** of these products on site in Cuba in **Chinese-designed factories**. The only feasible way to **produce these items** with imported components and get them to markets both domestically, and eventually overseas, is to develop, **at all once**, the transport sector, the docks, the rail system, and the roads. Chinese enterprises are heavily involved in all of these.

Clearly the integration of multiple industrial sectors, and the progression from import to domestic manufacture of consumer and capital goods require both **a high level of administrative coordination** and **long time horizons**. It is **not reasonable to expect** that **either of these requirements would find support** in the open competition and quarterly reports of the private sector. It is **reasonable to expect**, though, that open competition and quarterly reports **will** form the basis of conventional Western **assessments of transparency**. The Cuban claim that these initiatives **are transparent** rests on the idea that the aims of an industrial project **are publicly laid out at the outset** and **clearly accomplished**. **How** exactly this happens is apparently not an issue because when the Chinese government sets up a factory **no money actually changes hands**. Just like an Australian private firm might argue, what it does **internally** with its own resources is nobody else's business.

Political philosophies about **the managerial boundaries of the state and the level of detail** that state enterprises should **publicly disclose** vary widely around the world. These are **one** set of factors that shape perceptions of transparency.

For the Cuban state the coordination of distinct industrial sectors is part of a **broader comprehensive approach** to regulation. This approach is also evident in civic governance, and Havana's Chinatown is a good example.

For over 100 years Cuba's Chinese community has endured, and to an extent resisted, state attempts to **regulate and contain** its economic **autonomy**. Even the Socialist revolution of 1959 and a decade of state interventions in Chinatown **could not bring the district** completely under the hegemony of Fidel Castro's government. Despite the exodus of Chinese entrepreneurs to the United States in the 1960s, the Chinese Associations of Havana were strong enough to **retain control** of their economic interests, especially their restaurants.

These businesses maintained autonomy from the state by **employing customary lines of informal commerce** with food producers in the countryside that date back to the early 20th century. These informal structures **persist to this day**, and have recently expanded to include a **robust network of unregistered trade** in everything from DVDs to kitchen appliances.

In 2006, the Cuban government took **its most assertive stand yet against this illicit trade**, officially **placing Chinatown** under the control of the Government of Old Havana. This has meant new anti-corruption measures for book-keeping, financial disclosure, and taxation. And all this in the name of *perfeccionamiento* (or *increasing perfection*), and you've guessed it: *transparencia!*

This push for transparency has been **guided**, then, by an official preoccupation with **socialist unity and regulation**, and has produced a **particular set of outcomes**, including **new patronage** relationships between local government officials and **informal leaders** in the Chinese community. So here **again**: political philosophy has motivated a **certain kind of transparency** and produced a **unique set of outcomes**.

Contrasting with Cuban political philosophy and **its interpretation of transparency** are the policy briefs of Washington D.C. institutions like the Woodrow Wilson Center, which warns Latin America to **beware** of the **labour and environmental standards** of Chinese enterprises', and (**quote**) "[their] **lack of transparency** in dealing with national governments" (Cesarín 2007:22). Similarly, the testimony before Congress of an official from the Inter-American Dialogue cautions that (**quote**) "Communist China is **hardly a force for greater transparency**" (Erikson 2008:6).

While the **interpretation** of transparency used by **these** institutions appears to be more "conventional" and even "universal" than the Cuban version, it is worth remembering that **this** interpretation is **also shaped by a unique political history**. The Watergate scandal and the exposure of Lockheed's bribery of the Japanese Prime Minister and Prince Bernhard of Belgium motivated a **crisis of U.S. public morality in the 1970s, and led to the Foreign Corrupt Practices Act** of 1977. As a result, for 20 years U.S. businesses **resented** having to be **more transparent** than their foreign competitors. Kenneth Abbot and Duncan Snidal have argued that this resentment was the **underlying motivation** for President Clinton and a group of powerful U.S. business leaders to approach the OECD in the mid 1990s. What they achieved was **truly revolutionary**: the 1997 OECD Anti-Bribery Convention, which binds all OECD members to **new standards** of transparency.

As in Cuba, specific sensitivities and values in the United States have produced a **particular kind** of transparency. **This** version is **quantifiable** in tables, like Transparency International's Bribe Payers Perception Index and Corruption Perceptions Index. **This** transparency can therefore rank countries on a scale of good and bad global citizens.

As a result of this, **Chinese** officials have argued that **transparency** is **in fact** a U.S.-led **political tactic**. After all, China achieved the **rather dismal ranking** of second last place on the Bribe Payers Index, coming in at 29th – outdone only by India.

The President of the Export-Import Bank of China hit back in March 2010, boldly stating that: **(quote)**: “Western countries should set an example in **making public** the resources they have grabbed in Africa in the past 400 years. Only after **that** can we come to the issue of **China's** transparency.”

Analysing U.S. criticism of Cuban transparency, Mao Xianglin of the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences has written that: **(quote)** “These requirements **not only contravene** the internationally recognized norms of non-interference in others' internal affairs, but also carry a **hidden attempt at forcing Cuba** onto a capitalist road” **(end quote)**. The point was driven home by a Chinese official at strategy briefing last year in Washington, when he was asked by the Brookings Institution's Deputy Director of Foreign Policy if China is willing to: **come to the table to promote transparency** and good governance in Latin America. His response was both **pragmatic and revealing**: **(quote)** “We are interested in trade, and **not** in political interference.”

To summarise the argument so far, then, **the way** the concept of transparency is **understood** depends on the **context** in which it is **deployed**. I want to **return** now to Mexico, and **how the issue of transparency** has become a **serious problem** for Chinese communities resident there.

Deeply embedded in Chinese Mexican historical lore is **the painful arrival of the first group of Chinese people** in the Valley of Mexicali in 1908. Abandoning the copper mines of Sonora in search of opportunities in Mexicali, 160 Chinese workers sailed across the Gulf of California to San Felipe, and were **advised to walk** the remaining 194 kilometers across the state of Baja California to their destination.

After three days in 52 degrees Celsius, they became **disoriented in the desert** without a compass, and **began to die of thirst and exhaustion, leaving only a handful** to reach the township of Mexicali. The desert where they perished came to be widely known as the *Sierra de los Chinos*, or *El Chinero* by locals, who report that those willing to visit this place of **tragedy and sorrow** have found coins and other objects abandoned by the Chinese pioneers. According to the former director of the Chinese Association of Mexicali, Eduardo Auyón, **(quote)** “it is said that when clouds gather over *El Chinero*, you can still hear their voices **screaming for water**”.

The Chinese community did well **economically** in Northern Mexico, but socially its hardships only worsened. In the early 1930s, the Great Depression sent **thousands of**

unemployed Mexicans home from the United States, and the relatively affluent Chinese community became the target of their anger. An anti-Chinese movement led by the notorious *Pro-Race Committees* used the slogan “Mexico for Mexicans” to **prohibit Chinese-Mexican intermarriage**, to force Chinese **businesses to close**, and by the mid 1930s, to **expel almost ten thousand** Chinese people from the country. According to the census of 1940, they left behind only 5,000 Chinese people in Mexico, and were sent with their Mexican wives and children to Macao and Hong Kong, where poverty and bureaucratic complications dashed their hopes of return.

Media headlines like “*Pinche Chinos*” (Damned Chinese) and “Fourteen reasons not to buy Chinese products this Christmas” **would not be out of place** in the Mexican newspapers of the 1930s. These, however, are **the titles of two recent** Mexican websites.

Almost all industries, from traditional handicrafts and textiles to the export-oriented assembly sector, have **complained to the Mexican government** about the lack of protection against the flood of low-priced products arriving from China, and the loss of employment due to low wages in Chinese factories. The export processing *maquiladora* sector alone saw the **loss of over 25,000 jobs between 2001 and 2003**, a period whose bitterness was intensified by **China’s displacement of Mexico** as the second largest global exporter to the United States.

Mexico is China’s **largest** Latin American export destination: of the 15 billion dollars of annual Sino-Mexican bilateral trade, **over 11 billion is made up of Chinese exports to Mexico**. One study calculates that for **every dollar** worth of goods Mexico exports to China, it **imports \$31** worth of goods **from** China. The **media** reports that some 60 percent of clothing sold in Mexico today is imported illegally from China, and Mexican **artisans** claim that their sales have diminished by 70 to 80 percent due to Chinese piracy.

It is not surprising, then that **a recent poll found that 52 percent** of Mexicans identify China as a “source of unfair competition”, and that according to the Assistant Minister for Economic Relations, (**quote**) “the vision of China as a threat to the Mexican economy is getting stronger every day.”

Several unemployed production line workers I spoke with were convinced that Chinese **immigrants and descendents** are **responsible for Mexico’s diminishing productivity and competitiveness** as local producers are squeezed out of the market. They **connected the Chinese Mexican ethnic Associations** with a **range of illegal activities**, such as using bribery and **secretive** personal connections to dodge import tariffs.

In truth, the Chinese community in Mexico **has little** to do with the **illegal trafficking of manufactured goods**. This activity is more accurately associated with **unscrupulous customs officials and distributors on Mexico’s Southern border with Guatemala**. Nevertheless, the Chinese Mexican community and its ethnic Associations in Tijuana and Mexicali are an easy scapegoat, and they have **even been accused in the media of people smuggling**, including providing safe haven for Islamic terrorists on their way to the United States.

This is **not to deny** that people smuggling **exists**; it does, and the *maquiladora* factories of Northern Mexico are **evidence of this**. Hundreds of **employees are contracted in rural China as so-called “technicians”, but end up living onsite** in these factories, where they are **prohibited from interacting** with Mexicans, **and** have **limited access** to medical attention. Like the Chinese immigrants of the early 20th century, they arrive in Mexico with the hope of **earning a respectable living**, but soon find themselves - as one report puts it - “practically living in slavery.”

Accusations about lack of transparency **legitimately apply** to such situations, but the Chinese associations have no direct involvement. What Mr. Auyón - who I mentioned earlier - and others like him **are involved in** is actually much simpler.

Auyón has been personally recognized by President Hu Jintao for his **loyalty to China**, and has been made one of the 32 so-called “Onsite Assessors” for the Government’s Overseas Chinese Affairs Office. His responsibilities include organizing **trade fairs in Mexico** that serve to **introduce [hand] suppliers and investors from Mainland China to [hand] distributors** and industry leaders in the local Chinese community. He also leads follow-up visits for **Chinese Mexican** entrepreneurs to Beijing, Shanghai, and Guangzhou. Providing this nexus for bilateral trade, together with the related visas, advertising, and matchmaking, have made Auyón a key node of contact for entrepreneurs from both sides.

According to Auyón, **quote:**

The important thing is security. Some Chinese businesses have shipped their products **over**, only to find that **the market has turned against them** because of exaggerated media reports about product safety and competition with Mexican producers. As an Assessor I am responsible for selecting **trustworthy clients** in the Chinese community who will follow through with their commitments. This has worked very well for us with electrodomestics, for example a new line of Chinese air conditioner that is strong enough for the Mexicali heat (interview, 7th October 2008). **(end quote)**

I wanted to **gauge local perceptions** of these activities, and of the Chinese community in general, so I conducted a survey among my students at the Autonomous University of Baja California, where I taught in 2008.

The consensus of my students was that the Chinese community is rather secretive, and unwilling to integrate into its surroundings. But also that there is a lot of ignorance among Mexicans about Chinese people, which has fuelled this perception of secrecy. [They also said Mexicans are looked down on by U.S. and so they pass it on].

Interestingly, this perspective is **mirrored** on internet sites, in radio broadcasts, and newspaper articles that decry the **opportunistic and non-transparent nature of Chinese business activities**. According to Mexican sociologist Jorge Gómez Izquierdo, the language and the anxieties of the 1930s are back. As he puts it **(quote):**

Prejudice comes to us from a past era, in which the Chinese community in Mexico was the **object of resent, jealousy, and violent assault**... Mexican social perceptions of China and its people have reappeared. **Prejudice and ignorance**, as always, go hand in hand when mobilization draws on the formation of phobias... The racist hostility toward “the Chinaman” is not new in our country. **(end quote)**.

This **selective recycling of history** is based on an emotionally charged, fundamental sociological problem: how to **balance the right to local autonomy** and privacy within social groups **with the need for cohesion** and flow of information in society.

When opponents of Chinese businesses in Mexico **accuse their owners** of refusing to integrate into Mexican society, they draw strength and legitimacy from this **universally charged sensibility**. But they also draw on **locally charged sensibilities** by evoking the collective historical memory of the 1930s narrative about excessive ethnic solidarity and a **lack of open trading** in the Chinese community. This **recycling of history** is what Sherry Ortner calls the **enactment of a cultural schema**: that is, the conscious **revival and manipulation** of historically entrenched ideas to reinforce contemporary opinions and arguments.

In this case, local history has combined with the universal sociological conflict between **group autonomy and the flow of information in society**. The result is the re-packaging of past tensions and conflicts in the contemporary catchphrase: **transparency**.

Before concluding let me summarise: Transparency has risen to prominence in the post-Cold War era as a **tool for shifting the balance** of societal regulation from state to private and civil society actors. It stems from a universal sociological problem and is therefore **global reality**, but it is **also a local reality** that is **shaped by different political histories and cultural sensibilities**.

I'd like to **conclude with some reflections on what global and local measures might help to avoid** scenarios like the assault on the China Tour Travel Agency in Tijuana.

To break the vicious circle of **external hostility and internal protectionism** that surrounds the Chinese community of Northern Mexico would **require some creativity both within** the community **and** outside of it.

What is needed is what Nan Lin calls “bridging individuals”: people whose ties and loyalties are **fluid enough** to permit them to move between groups.

In Mexicali and Tijuana respectively, **Eduardo Auyón and Willy Liu of China Tour** are natural candidates, and there are signs that they **are beginning to reach out** beyond their communities. In 2008 Liu organised Tijuana's **first ever China day**, converting the city centre into an exposition of Chinese food, music, martial arts, and theatre. In Mexicali Auyón released a documentary film about the local Chinese community, and **had it distributed** in Baja California's universities, libraries, and museums.

These are **important steps**, but they are not enough. To transcend such entrenched cultural barriers will require a commitment **not only to forging new relationships** outside of the **reference group**, but also a willingness to **distance oneself, when necessary, from** internal community **loyalties and customs**.

40 years ago the sociologist Mark Granovetter recognized the **benefit** of this **dual commitment** as what he called: “the strength of weak ties”. Weak ties to one’s community, he argued, are more **fluid and adaptable** than strong ones.

In this light, Auyón’s business fairs would do well (as Francis Fukuyama might say) to **expand their radius** of participation. I couldn’t help noticing that the only Mexicans involved in these commercial events were of Chinese descent. As my students pointed out, the success of such events has provoked **jealousy** in the **non-Chinese** community. These tensions **would diminish** if restrictions on participation were eased, and local Mexican businesses and clients **were allowed in**.

As for the China Tour travel agency, some weeks after the brick came through the window, I realised that **something had been missing** from the crime scene: **POLICE**. The owner of the agency had turned **instead** to the customary **protection and support** structures of the Chinese Association of Tijuana. While his desire to avoid drawing public attention to ethnic hostility is understandable; negative situations like this **carry with them** an opportunity to engage outwardly.

But bridges are **rarely built** in one direction. One might ask what the Mexican government is **doing to improve** its country’s economic and cultural relationship with China and the resident Chinese community.

Starting in 2005, Michoacán became the first of 9 Mexican states to **offer scholarships** for local students to train in China. Resulting programs, though, have made some fundamental errors. Rather than **encouraging interaction with their Chinese peers**, students are often sent in **large groups to live together** in Mexican residence halls – complete with Mexican restaurants. Opportunities for domestic home-stays, placement with local roommates, independent research projects, and internships with local businesses and community organizations have in most cases **been overlooked**. Mexican students in Beijing told me that the **scholarships they are on** function largely as propaganda for Mexican politicians eager to convince their electorates that **they are doing something** about the so-called ‘China threat’. Clearly, then, there are important opportunities for **improving these global bridges to accommodate the flow of information** in both directions.

I have argued that there are several factors leading to **different understandings of transparency**, and **questions** about its meaning. One is political **philosophy**, and the **level of detail** that state-endorsed transparency **demand**s: if a Chinese enterprise establishes a washing machine factory in Havana, for instance, **to what extent** should contracts for securing materials, labour, and quality control **be openly disclosed** to citizens?

Another factor shaping **understandings** of transparency is political **history**. A moralistic preoccupation in the U.S. public sphere after Watergate subjected national businesses to strict anti-corruption laws. The **endorsement** of these laws by the OECD has led to a global understanding of transparency that is **quantifiable**. This clashes with the **unquantifiable view** of business told to me by the Director General of the Chinese Community of Tijuana: **(quote)** “business and trust are two hands of the same person”. Or as the anthropologist Pal Nyiri quotes a Chinese leader in Europe, “trade contacts are cultural contacts” **(end quote)**. In light of **these** views, it seems somewhat ridiculous to try to separate out and quantify how **trust** enters into **business**.

Another factor is **cultural** history: The Chinese communities of Havana, Tijuana, and Mexicali have all survived **discrimination** over time through strong internal solidarity and trust. In Mexico, this discrimination is being revived. As they become more **assertive civil society actors**, to what degree should demands that their economic activities be more open and transparent **accommodate** customary mutual aid practices and internal privacy?

The **inconvenient truth** that encompasses these problems is that **civil society itself is not transparent**. Conservative scholars like Putnam and Fukuyama recommend to policymakers that civil society should be **built up** from trust and social capital within community groups. As I have argued, though, this trust is often private and confined **within** groups rather than extending **between** them, and can therefore be **socially divisive**.

Cultural bridges may provide some **relief** from this problem, but they **won't solve it**. A solution would require us to recognise that transparency is still an **immature** concept. Its sudden popularity should caution us against treating it as **inherently beneficial** and **universally virtuous** when in reality it **may be used for dubious ends**. These include imposing political philosophies that **restrict the potentially positive capacities** of the state (and we looked at the example of long term-planning and cross-industry integration). Transparency has also been used, as in Mexico, to perpetuate Orientalist stereotypes about the closed nature of the Chinese community and its **supposed (but in fact unsubstantiated)** involvement in smuggling of both products and people.

In conclusion, then, transparency is infused with **cultural** values, **political** agendas, and **historical** memories. If we fail to recognise this, then transparency will be as likely to **cloud** our vision as it is to **clear** it.

Thank you. **[End]**