



Globalization in Rural Mexico: Three Decades of Change

Frances Abrahamer Rothstein

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When the ever-intensifying global marketplace "modernizes" rural communities, who stands to gain? Can local residents most impacted by changes to their social fabric ever recover or even identify what has been lost?

Frances Abrahamer Rothstein uses thirty years of sustained anthropological fieldwork in the rural Mexican community of San Cosme Mazatecochco to showcase globalization's complexities and contradictions.

Rothstein's lucid work chronicles the changes in production, consumption, and social relations during three distinct periods: the Mexican "miracle," when economic development fueled mobility for a large segment of the population, including San Cosme's worker-peasants; the lost decade of the 1980s, when much of what had been gained was lost; and the recent period of trade liberalization and globalization, considered by many in Mexico and beyond as a panacea and a disaster at the same time.

After Mexico's textile industry decline in the late 1980s, some families of former textile workers in San Cosme opened home workshops—*talleres*—and a small-scale, textile-based economy took root. These families, who managed to prosper through their own trade and industry, demonstrate that those who rely on consumer demand for their livelihood need not always follow the dictate of the marketplace, but rather can position themselves assertively to influence alternative economic possibilities held close to their culture.

Employing rich ethnography and broad analysis, Rothstein focuses on how everyday life has been transformed by these processes, but shows also how important continuities with the past persist. She strikes a delicate balance between firmly grounded scientific study and a deep compassion for the subjects of her work, while challenging contemporary views of globalization and consumption.

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