CIVIL SOCIETY,
THE DEMOCRATISING FACTOR OF MEXICO?

José Ángel García Velázquez*

Summary: I. *Introduction: civil society and democracy*. II. *The public sphere as theoretical framework*. III. *Civil society in Mexico, a brief context*. IV. *Civil society and democracy, evolving together?* V. *Conclusions*. VI. *Annex*. VII. *Bibliography*.

I. Introduction: civil society and democracy

Democracy and civil society are two highly contested notions, concepts, if not conditions. Both are evolving conceptualisations and notions that acquire different meanings in relation to the context in which they are applied. Hence, although this chapter does not attempt to resolve the theoretical disputes surrounding them; it does provide working definitions to provide clarity and coherence to the arguments made on relation to the specific analysis of civil society as a democratising factor in Mexico.

Regarding the former, *democracy*, many studies have focused on its *procedural* condition: contested and regular elections, free party competition, a generalised —although not *universal*— suffrage and majority rule. However, this approach provides a limited scope for a complete analysis on the causes, conditions and consequences of democracy. In fact, the use of the procedural view could actually conduct to the mischaracterisation of democracy if notions of equality, freedom and participation are left out of discussion. In other words, as implied by Sergio Aguayo and explicitly stated by Bromley, Curtice and Seyd (Bromley *et al.* 2004); democracy is more than elec-

* José Ángel García is a PhD researcher and Associate Tutor at the Politics Department of the University of Sheffield. His research interests include democratisation, policy making, and public security analysis. He is currently an Associate Fellow at The Crick Centre. Prior to his Doctoral studies José Ángel completes a BA in International Relations at UDLA (Mexico) and a MA in Governance and Public Policy (University of Sheffield).

toral processes (Buss, 2011). More explicitly, voting for elected legislators is important, but it is a peculiar idea of democracy which supposes that this is either the unique, or the most important act of self-government that citizens can take (Lever, 2009). Taking this into account this work builds on the *substantial* definition of democracy. This conceptualisation refers to democracy as the system where members of society take decisions that shape their destiny jointly, with equal rights and opportunities of participation, and without arbitrarily imposed constraints on debate (Scholte, 2001). This is precisely why scholars like Scholte consider that civil society is now regarded as a way to enhance public participation, consultation, transparency and accountability; all vital components of any democratic regime (Scholte, 2001: 16).

Like *democracy, civil society* has known many meanings in different places and times. In fact, as noticed by Tejeda (Tejeda, 2014), as the conceptualisation and reality of "civil society" has been changing through time and history, it might be easier to define "what it does not entail". Notwithstanding this, overall, it can be argued, *civil society* functions as "the sphere of intermediation between the state and the basic fundamentals of society" (Civicus, 2011: 19). It is *the moral structure of democracy*, Reyes argues (Reyes, 2013). For others, an *organised* civil society represents the chance for minorities and disadvantaged groups to argue their case in a *democratic* scenario that does not work for all the people (Grant, 1995: 160). In the case of Mexico, *civil society* is currently associated to a "non-profit sector", organized under certain level of institutionalism (but which can or cannot be formally registered), functioning as a self-governed body, with a voluntary membership and which main objective is to *alter* or *reform* laws and to contribute to public life (Cohen & Arato, 1992; Reyes, 2013). More importantly, it is a sector that, working within the social and civil spheres —arguably and in FUSDA and Reyes' words (Reyes, 2013; FUSDA, 2009: 24), does not look to obtain political power, neither to be part of the State, and where the government does not have a monopoly on their managerial decisions. Going further, there is not specific definition of civil society organisation in the mexican context. Building on this, then, a Civil Society Organisation (CSO) is defined as a non-profit organization, not part of the government, where self-autonomous actors voluntarily join forces to act collectively and influence the formulation and implementation of public policy (*i.e.* any set of authoritative decisions taken by any of or all the three branches of government) (FUSDA, 2009: 26). Thus, whilst in the english political thought of the XVIII century *civil society* was associated with the state, contemporary conceptualisations tend to establish clear boundaries between it and the state. Considering a non-profit actor, but also a non-

state one, *civil society* is regarded as the agent that imposes limits or controls over the state, even more, a political actor of disruption and dissent (Scholte, 2001). Hence, for the correct functioning of the state and civic-democratic evolution, Perez-Díaz, Castells and Villarreal argue, there are, and should be clear boundaries between civil society and government (Perez-Díaz, 1978: 32; Castells, 2008: 78; Villarreal n.d.).

Considering civil society as the natural terrain of consensus and communication, Tejeda argues, it should differentiate itself from *the* governmental, *the* coercive and *the* repressive; it should be the actor in charge of containing and disarticulating the State's brutality and prepotent character (Tejeda, 2014: 135-148). Notwithstanding Tejeda's arguments detailing the need for having a civil society clearly differentiated from the State, state and civil society are not —and should not be— alienated from each other. Democracy and civil society are two interrelated and mutually reinforcing notions; one cannot exist without the other. In Gramsci's words, the political and civil society are not two separated spheres; both comprise an organic unity as both are elements of the modern society (FUSDA, 2009: 24). Even within their specific spheres of action; the actors involved, relations and flow of resources between them mutually transform and transfer new actors, attitudes and rules of interaction across them (Perez & Díaz, 1978: 55). While civil society provides the economic contributions, manpower and required civil obedience for the correct functioning of the State apparatus; the State provides economic policies, public works, social services, etc. The problem is, it is argued, "the people" has been reduced to "a group of spectators whose intrusion in fundamental political questions has being minimized" as their participation in political processes has been gradually reduced to none or to one of minor importance circumscribed to electoral times (Dahlgren, 2000; Perez-Díaz, 1978: 8, 33, 58).

Considering Dahlgren and Perez-Díaz's arguments, and Bromley, Curtice, and Seyd's work on democracy and participation in Britain (Bromley *et al.*, 2004), this chapter depicts civil society's (dis)engagement from politics in Mexico and its connection to the country's democratic development. Building on Habermas' *public sphere* theory, this work reflects on the importance of civil society as the basis and legitimating factor of any democratic government. Making use of data from Mexico's National Surveys on Political Culture and Citizen Practices (ENCUP), the most complete historical surveys on political participation, this work argues that citizens remain interested and willing to engage in political practices. However, the level of citizens' interest is not translated into political participation and, in those cases where citizens' political involvement does occur, it does not

take place in the most effective way. Hence, the limited participation of civil society in political processes is both, a consequence and cause of Mexico's limited democratic development, if not stagnation.

II. THE PUBLIC SPHERE AS THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

The need for citizens' political participation as a key element of a democratic regime has been historically recognised. When stating that *man is by nature a political animal* Aristotle also acknowledged the fact that every citizen achieves the highest sense of purpose to the *polis* by means of the fullest possible engagement in it. Cicero envisaged the notion of a *res-publica*, where the political involvement of *the* people residing in the state's domain impacted on the discussion and implementation of ideals of justice, equality and democracy. Moreover, Gramsci understood politics as the process based on actively engaged and informed citizens, rather than manipulated subjects to be deployed at the whim of the elite. Contemporary political scientists continue to acknowledge the importance of forums for political engagement in the development of modern societies (Martin & Swank, 2012; Callan, 2003; Castells, 2008). Thus, the notion of a "public sphere" where citizens obtain, analyse and discuss information to decide on those matters of their interest, to then affect public policies is the result and a vital part of "modernity"; more specifically, of the emergence of the nation-state and the evolving universal norms of citizenship and political rights.

The *public sphere*, considered by Kant a *method of enlightenment* (Habermas, 1989: 104), emerges as the link between communities and polities (Nitoiu, 2013; Hall *et al.*, 1978; Linklater, 2007), as an extra political arena between civil society, elites and the power structure of the state (Eriksen, 2005: 42; Taylor, 2008: 89). It is where members of the society understand themselves to form an association —not constituted by its political structure— to deliberate, discuss and engage in matters of *common interest*, to produce *a common mind* or public opinion about them (Taylor, 2008: 83), and 'exercise formal (election of governments) and informal (pressure of public opinion) control over the state' (Curran, 1993: 36; Nieminen, 2008: 67; Castells, 2008: 78; Jacobs & Townsley 2011: 54). The public sphere, however, entails more than putting the state in touch with the needs of the society and vice versa. The public sphere emerges when 'ordinary' people are allowed to become involved in making decisions about how a country should be run (McKee, 2005). More importantly, it is "the vital linkage between social movements

and transformative politics, between civic discourse and an engaged citizenry, and between an emancipatory vision and emergent forms of self-governance" (Boggs, 2000). The public sphere is, hence, a "central feature" of any democracy', a promoter of good and accountable governance (Nitoiu, 2013; Trenz, 2008).

For there to be an effective public sphere, though, a main condition needs to be met. In order for a decision to be valid, it must be ensured that everyone affected by it can accept the consequences of its observance (Bessant, 2014). Therefore; people should be able to openly participate in debates which, according to Vreese, must be facilitated by the government (Habermas, 1989: 83). Once this is achieved, for them to monitor, critically evaluate the government and, more importantly, convince of the rightness of their demands and affect policy making, citizens, in the public sphere of civil society, should not only identify the problems, but amplify their pressure, thematize them in a convincing and influential way, and furnish them with possible solutions. They should dramatize them in such a way that these can be taken up, dealt with by parliamentary complexes, and trigger the support of the political sphere to their demands. In other words, citizens should appeal to their equals and champion common sense against or in pro of technocrats and bureaucrats (Moffitt & Tormey, 2014: 391).

It is clear, then, that in order for democracy to develop, even subsist, there should be certain element of citizens' participation in political procedures. Voting is an essential feature of a democratic regime, but it is only one of the conditions and underpinnings of democracy. As noticed by the Council on Foreign Relations, accountability, transparency, human rights protection, economic development and many other aspects represent the essence of democracy. Regime legitimacy, political equality, and an inclusive and accessible political system are, though, some of the pillars of democracy. The problem is, however, what happens when there is no active, even less engaged civil society? Or when the channels of social and socio-political interaction seem to be inexistent or are considered to be inefficient? More importantly, when the limited participative civil society is unable to have an impact on the democratic improvement?

Building on the premise that democracy cannot flourish without an active, participative and representative society, the public sphere, thus, not only represents one of the best theoretical approaches for the study of the roots of any democratisation process, but the most suitable framework to assess the characteristics, evolution and potential impact of civil society as a democratising factor in Mexico.

III. Civil society in Mexico, a brief context

An organised civil society, in the form of Civil Society Organisations (CSOs) has been present in Mexico for many decades now. In this vein, the first autonomous (social) organizations to appear in the country were the higher education institutions, and the charitable organisations of the catholic Church during the 1960s. However, it was not until late 1980s, when Mexico experienced three critical socio-political events, that civil society began to have a more noticeable and pronounced presence in the public sphere. In 1982, a severe economic crisis forced the government to reduce subsidies and its involvement in the provision of public services. In 1985, Mexico City suffered an earthquake of a magnitude of 8.1 Richter, killing between 6,000 and 10,000 people (SPSS, n.d.), and triggering solidarity between mexicans. And in 1988, in the context of the federal elections, different protests took place against an alleged electoral fraud, political corruption, social inequality and government opacity. All of this began to give civil society more visibility, legitimization and, to a certain extent, channels for negotiation with the government to achieve more public impact, governmental funding and democratic impulse. In fact, by the 1990s, it was possible to notice the existence of different "clusters" of CSOs working on different areas: *a*) opposing electoral frauds, therefore fighting for democracy; *b*) a peace process in Chiapas, a region with indigenous aspirations for autonomy —although not independence— during the middle 1990s; *c*) legal recognition of the CSOs, and *d*) the negative consequences of the North American Free Trade Agreement. Consequently, and due to the negative socio-economic scenario that prevailed during the end of president Carlos Salinas' "sexenio", CSOs started to became legitimate actors capable of influencing public opinion, debating with the government, and leading society in the pursuit of a more democratic environment. Thus, from 1991 to 2000, Mexico witnessed what has been the largest development of civil society organisations, with more than 50% of the still existing ones being created in that decade (FUSDA, 2009: 31).

As it occurred during the democratisation processes of different Latin American countries (Hipsher, 1998: 153); in Mexico, socio-political activists, taking advantage of the country's "transition to democracy" of 2000, began to demand for the provision of more social rights, including better education, urban services, and the prosecution of human rights abuses. As the Partido Accion Nacional (PAN) wanted to mark a difference between the PRI's previous regime and its new democratic potential, Vicente Fox's administration (2000-2006) promoted the development of CSOs to the point of the

creation and promotion of a national pact ("Pacto de Chapultepec") for the socio-political development of Mexico, an agreement between international development organizations (UNDP), Mexico's Federal government and more than 400 academics, businessmen, and citizens' representatives. Consequently, constituencies that were previously represented by *social movements* became now part of a larger number of *civil society organisations* intended to support "the" "public interest", particularly in the fields of freedom of information, human rights and state of law. Notwithstanding the important advances during Fox's presidency, and despite the fact that former president Calderon and the current administration of president Peña Nieto have publicly supported the reconstruction of —what both have called the— "social fabric" through a more direct interaction and collaboration with society; reality seems to be different. As noticed by Reyes, the presence and potentiation of civil society is still facing "a period of nebulosity", as Mexico is still far away from achieving "the minimal precepts of citizenship and democracy" (Reyes, 2013: 113).
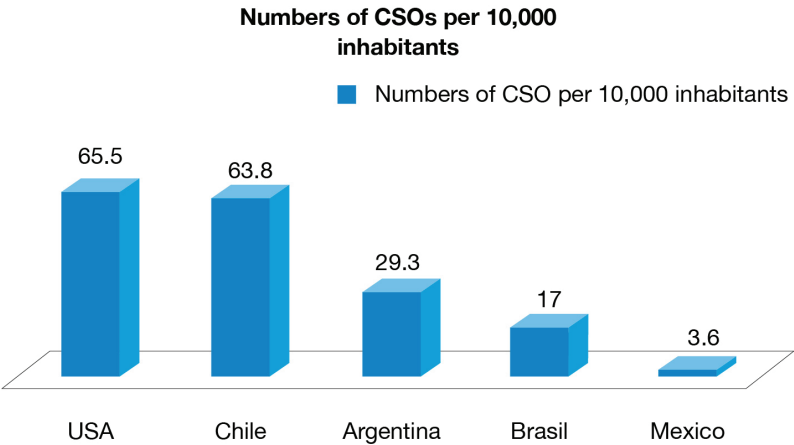
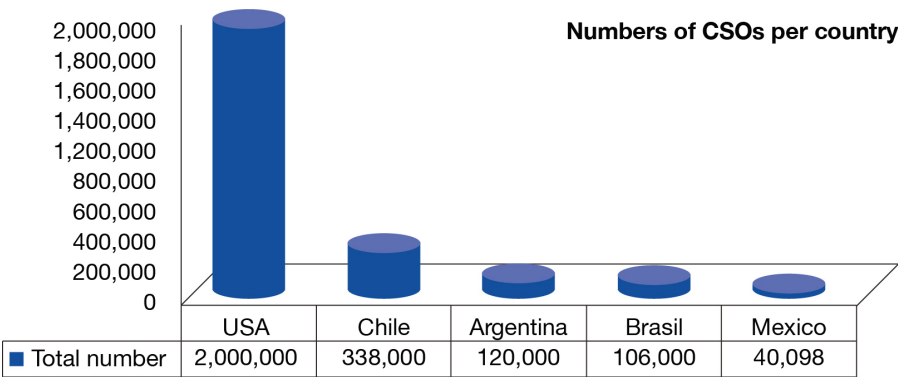## IV. CIVIL SOCIETY AND DEMOCRACY, EVOLVING TOGETHER?

In the last three governmental administrations different efforts have been made to continue incentivising citizens' political involvement and participation *de jure*. For instance, in 2004 the government enacted the "Federal Law for the Promotion of the Activities Conducted by the Organizations of Civil Society" which intends to "favour the coordination between governmental dependencies and federal government entities" (Congreso, 2012). In an effort to "create an *interactive* communication bridge between civil society and the Secretary of Foreign Affairs", the Secretary has created a web portal where citizens can submit their queries and suggestions(SRE, n.d.). Nevertheless, governmental initiatives are *de facto* inefficient in promoting a closer and more direct civil participation.

According to a governmental report, in 2008, 72% of the governmental agencies did not have any area in charge of promoting citizens' participation in their sphere of work, and of the remaining 28%, only 3.8% of them provided certain type of funding for CSOs to conduct evaluation programmes. Furthermore, only 11% of all the agencies allowed social actors to observe their decision making processes, and solely 10% involved them in the process (CITCC, 2008). What is worse, some of the most effective ones, at least in the area of provision of justice, have ceased to exist. One of the most notorious cases is the creation and elimination of the Citizens' Participation Council within the General Prosecutor's Office (PGR). Created in 2002, the Council was responsible for "i) analysing, proposing and evaluating the programmes,
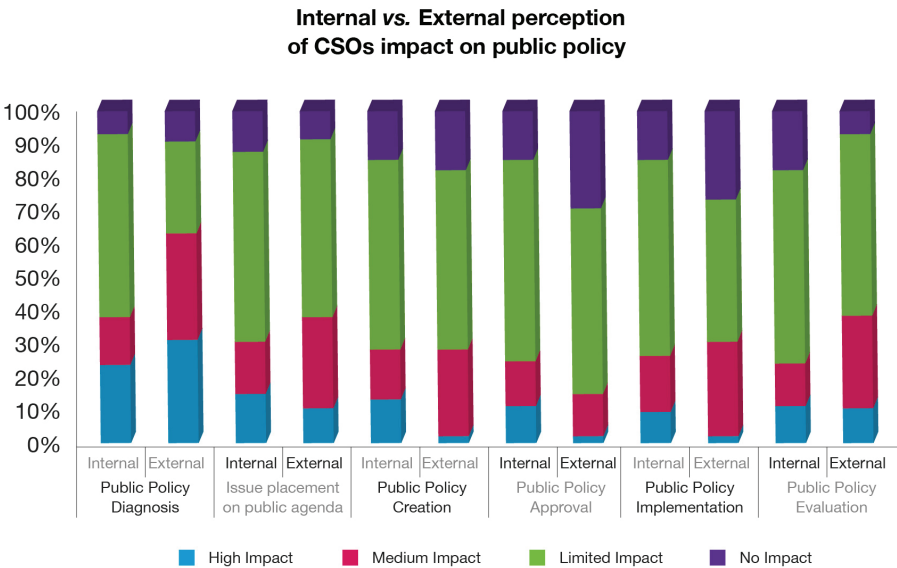
strategies and actions related to the institution; ii) promoting citizens' participation within the PGR, and iii) evaluating the National Programme of Provision of Law" (PGR, 2002). Despite its achievements, including the creation of the National Centre for Telephonic Attention and the National Citizens Net to Combat Delinquency (Presidencia, 2006), the Council was abolished in 2013 under the argument of the need for a "more efficient and transparent use of public resources" (PGR, 2013). By prioritising financial considerations over the development of more inclusive and transparent practices; the PGR called into question the government's commitment towards the empowerment of civil society and democratisation. Cases like this not only have contributed to the social delegitimisation of governmental institutions, they have consequentially constrained the development of a more participative and democratic society. A fact that can be noticed in a twofold way, as a *collective*, in terms of the limited number of CSOs in the country; and in an *individual* manner expressed through citizens' political disentanglement and low level of active participation in political processes.

Regarding the former, according to the Federal Registry of Civil Society Organizations (SIRFOSC), it is estimated there are currently between 20,000 and 35,000 CSOs in the country (INDESOL, 2013). Although this figure may seem high, the development of CSOs in Mexico is still low when compared to other countries As noticed in graphs 1 and 2, while in Mexico there are only 3.6 CSOs per each 10,000 citizens; in the United States there are more than 65. More importantly, according to the last available figures there are only 50 CSOs, among think tanks, NGOs and academic institutions, working on the issue of crime and violence in Mexico (OECD & IMCO, 2012: 39).

Numbers of CSOs per 10,000 inhabitants

■ Numbers of CSO per 10,000 inhabitants

Numbers of CSOs per country

|	USA	Chile	Argentina	Brasil	Mexico
■ Total number	2,000,000	338,000	120,000	106,000	40,098

It is perhaps due to the limited number of CSOs across the country, that CSOs themselves perceive they have a limited 28% of effectiveness in public policy. More importantly, as a consequence of the restricted access to the decision making corridors, CSOs are perceived to be more effective in public policy *diagnosis* and *provision of information*, whilst less effective in public policy *creation*, *approval* and *implementation*. Hence, as noticed by Reyes and Olvera, even though in 2000 Mexico experienced its democratization (in the strict meaning of alternation of power), civil society remains considering itself fragile and lacking political influence (Reyes, 2013; Olvera, 2002).

Internal *vs.* External perception of CSOs impact on public policy

Legend: High Impact, Medium Impact, Limited Impact, No Impact

Categories: Public Policy Diagnosis (Internal/External), Issue placement on public agenda (Internal/External), Public Policy Creation (Internal/External), Public Policy Approval (Internal/External), Public Policy Implementation (Internal/External), Public Policy Evaluation (Internal/External)

Regarding the latter —*individually*, the disentanglement between citizens and political institutions has contributed to the worsening of the society's democratic culture, as the prevailing citizens' democratic values, attitudes, and level of political interest do not facilitate the consolidation of an influential civil society. To begin with, the established channels for socio-political interaction and the promotion of democracy have proved not to be working efficiently. Although in 2001, 68% of the population was of the opinion that *the people* should promote a change in law if it was considered unfair; and a similar percentage thought it had "something to say" about the government's actions (Gobernación, 2001), data demonstrates their concerns remained unheard. According to different surveys, only 9% of mexicans had spoken with a *local* (being state or municipal) public servant, and even less, 3%, had done it with a *federal* public servant (Gobernación, 2001; INEGI, 2003; INEGI/SEGOB, 2008). However, the lack of interaction between government and citizens is not the only constrain to democratic advancement in Mexico.

The level of civil engagement in socio-political activities outside the governmental sphere is limited as well. In 2001, *a)* participating in public demonstrations and blockades was the preferred method to demonstrate inconformity for 40.33% of the population; *b) joining a social organisation* for 28.68%, and *c) promoting a public servant's destitution* for 16.71%. Nevertheless, only 8% of the respondents had actually attended a citizens' organisation meeting and even less, 6%, had participated in political demonstrations, at least in between 2008 and 2001(Gobernación, 2001). In 2008, the most popular way of protest among citizens, that of *unite with other people*, was conducted by a maximum of 22% of the population. Even the level of political participation of those who are already members of at least one CSO is quite low. As noticed by "CIVICUS Snapshot of civil society in Mexico 2012" report only 30% of the CSOs' membership has signed a petition, 13% participated in peaceful demonstrations and 3% taken part in boycotts. More worrying is the fact that 34% of the CSOs' members acknowledged they would never engage in petitions, 43% would not take part in demonstrations and 53% would not engage in boycotts. A political disengagement reinforced by the fact that from all the types of reunions and meetings (neighbour meetings, church reunions, unions' gatherings, etc.); citizens' meetings were regarded as the least important by the population (Gobernación 2001). Reflecting on Habermas' theory, the lack of a critical and participative society, represented by the low percentage of citizens actively involved in the above mentioned activities, undermines the society's formal and informal control over the state of which Curran, Nieminen, Habermas and others talk about (Curran, 1993: 36; Nieminen, 2008: 67; Castells, 2008: 78; Jacobs & Townsley, 2011: 54; Verovsek, 2012).

More importantly, McKee's point on the usefulness of the public sphere as the space where "ordinary" people are allowed to become involved in making decisions about how a country should be run (McKee, 2005) seems not to occur in the Mexican case. Proof of this is that in 2012, 78% of mexicans wanted the government to submit the important decisions to popular vote but, when asked a similar question, 74% considered citizens elect governments to take the important decisions (INEGI, 2003).

**Preferred option to demostrate public discontent (acording to level of income)**
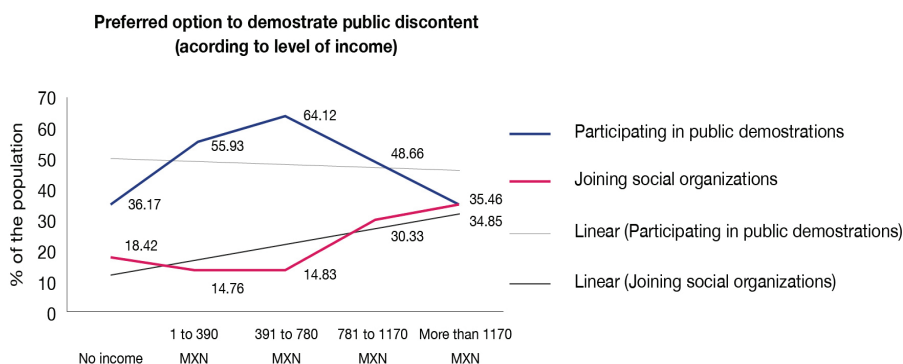
Going further, different from developed socio-political scenarios, including the United States, the United Kingdom, Netherlands and Italy, where people with higher levels of education and income are more prone to be "protesters"; in Mexico, the level of participation in public demonstrations and blockades diminishes with higher levels of income. Hence, rather than an inclusive and unitary public opinion able of triggering a consensual policy decision or change, as the public sphere theory suggests, the disconnected demands and methods of protest across civil society actors, make of it a weak political agent in Mexico. Building on this it is the opinion of this work that the problem is not so much one of an absence of citizen's political participation, but one of a deficit in the type of participation (Lara, n.d.).

Despite political activism does occur in Mexico, as thousands of citizens participate in a multiplicity of activities to express their socio-political concerns and demands; it does not take place in the most efficient possible way. Although it would be expected that the level of citizens' participation on political activities corresponded to their perceived level of effectiveness, evidence reveals this is not the case. In order to demonstrate this, this work collated and analysed the information from the more than 12,000 interviews from the 2001 and 2008 ENCUP surveys to create a *civil-political effectiveness index*. Buil-

ding on both *i)* figures on perceptions of effectiveness of political involvement, and *ii)* level of citizens' political participation, this *index* not only provides useful comparative information on changes in citizens' political culture; it also permits the identification of potential ways for achieving a better and more efficient political activism. The *index*, then, collates different information:

i) Political activity.

ii) % Yes participants: indicating the % of citizens' that have participated in the political activity.

iii) % Citizens considering it useful, which:
   a. For 2001 it is formed by the % of citizens considering the political activity "a lot" and "a little" useful based, it is argued, on a mix of their perceptions and factual knowledge.
   b. For 2008 it is formed by the % of citizens considering the political activity "a lot" and "to a certain extent" useful based, it is argued, on a mix of their perceptions and factual knowledge.

iv) % Citizens considering it not useful at all, which:
   a. For 2001 it is formed by "not useful all" answer.
   b. For 2008 it is formed by "a little" and "not useful at all" answers

v) Variation: entailing % of citizens considering each activity useful minus the % of citizens considering it not useful at all.

vi) Civil-political effectiveness index: denoting the rank give to each activity according to the variation column, where 1 is the most effective, and 14 the less effective.
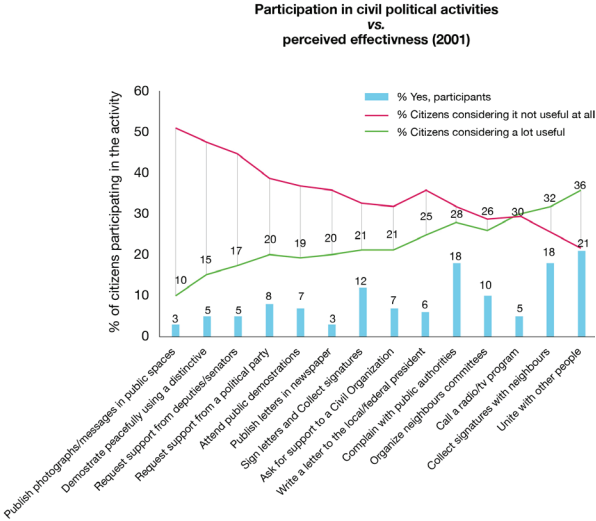

SOURCE: Author's own elaboration with information from (Gobernación, 2001).

Political Activity	2001					
	% Yes	% A lot	%A little	% Not useful at all	Variation	Index
Unite with other people facing the same problem	21	36	41	22	55	1
Collect signatures with neighbours	18	32	42	26	48	2
Organize neighbours committees	10	26	44	29	41	3
Call a radio/TV program	5	30	39	30	39	4
Complain with public authorities	18	28	40	32	36	5
Ask for support from a Civil Organization	7	21	45	32	34	6
Sign letters and Collect signatures	12	21	45	33	33	7
Public letters in newspapers	3	20	43	36	27	8
Write a letter to the local authorities/President	6	25	38	36	27	9
Attend public demonstrations	7	19	42	37	24	10
Request support from a political party	8	20	40	39	21	11
Request support from deputies/senators	5	17	37	45	9	12
Demostrate peacefully using a distinctive	5	15	36	48	3	13
Publish photograps and messages in public spaces	3	10	37	51	-4	14

SOURCE: Author's own elaboration with information from (Gobernación, 2001).

To begin with, the data shows that the level of social distrust in political institutions and actors continues aggravating. Whilst in 2001, 18% of the population *complained with public authorities* and 8% *wrote a letter to a local or the federal president* in an attempt to find a solution to the communities' problems; by 2008 this social-governmental interaction considerably diminished (Refer to annex). Less than a decade after the first ENCUP (2001), a similar percentage of citizens (16.7%) complained with authorities to try to solve its problems, but only 3.5% of them look for the president as a viable alternative to do it. Surprisingly, by 2012 the number of people writing to the pre-

sident increased to 9%, and more than 27% complained to the authorities to attempt to solve a problem. Nevertheless, citizens' political trust in the current policy-making process continues being low. A fact that is noticeable in the limited % of citizens contacting deputies or senators for solving a social problem. From 2011 to 2012, this type of political participation has remained as one of the lowest 5; a fact highly connected to citizens' views on deputies' work signalling that —from the society's point of view— deputies are more interested in their political parties' and own objectives rather than the citizens' needs.

When proposing a law, what do deputies focus more on...?
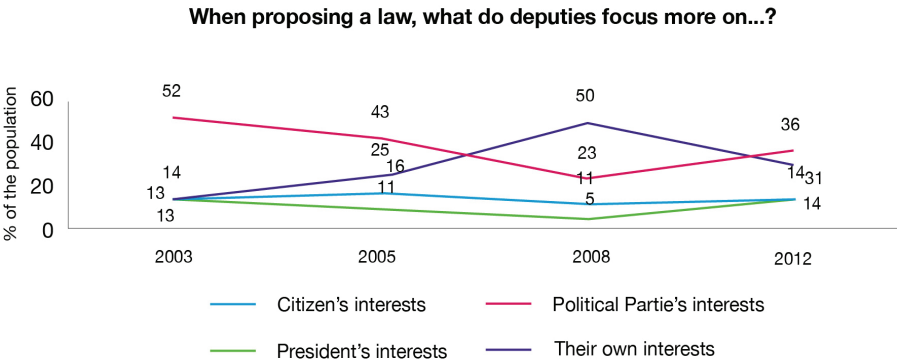
Secondly, but equally important, the *index* demonstrates the existence of important discrepancies between *i*) the perceived level of effectiveness of each political activity, and *ii*) the level of citizens' participation. Two main cases exemplify this condition. In 2001 citizens considered that the 3rd most effective political action to solve a community's problem (see the *variation column*) was to Call a radio / TV programme. Notwithstanding this, the level of citizens' participation in that activity was the 3rd lowest among 13 others. With more citizens focusing on what were perceived as less effective activities that year (for instance, signing a letter and collecting signatures and requesting support from a political party*)*; civil society as a whole lost the effectiveness it could have achieved by having approached the media instead that year. A condition of ineffectiveness that became more notorious in 2008 (refer to annex).

Different from 2001, in 2008 more people considered citizens' involvement in political activities to be ineffective, than people regarding it as useful in the solution of the community's problem. More importantly, some of the most relevant citizens' political efforts continued being used in a non-ef-

fective way. Despite *publishing letters in newspapers* being regarded as one of the most effective ways to trigger the solution of a community's problem (rank #3), this action had the lowest level of civil participation that year, with only 1.7% of citizens doing it. In fact, more people (3.5%) wrote a letter to the local authorities/president, even though it was regarded as the least effective way to solve a problem (rank #14). Regarding 2012, although there is no available data on citizens' perceptions of effectiveness, it is possible to notice two main changes. Firstly, the level of citizens' political participation has experienced an important increase, denoting the development of a more participative democracy. Secondly, through the analysis of the level of citizens' participation, it is possible to notice that society has moved from a more *spectator* to a more *hands on* role regarding political activism, as, for instance, signing letters and asking for support from Civil Society Organisations have become two of the most important activities in terms of number people involved on them.

V. Conclusions

In 2000 Mexico became a country with democratic elections where citizens, in free and equal socio-political conditions, voted for an alternation in power. Nevertheless, democracy is more than elections. In fact, citizens' confidence in institutions, and their level of political engagement and participation are a better indicator of a country's democratic advancement.

Despite the establishment of mechanisms for socio-political participation, these have proved to be insufficient or inadequate. Citizens' involvement in the decision making process of governmental agencies, even as spectators, continues to be extremely restricted which, consequentially, has worsened the level of citizens' political disengagement and cynicism. As the main channels of communication and interaction between citizens and government remain blocked; institutions become more illegitimate. More importantly, with a society demanding *from*, but not actively engaging *on* the political processes, the appearance of a certain form of self-governance of which Boggs talks about, and the civil reconstruction of the social-fabric of which the current Mexican government talks about, seems an unfeasible objective in the short term. Hence, the limited participation of civil society in political processes is both, a consequence and cause of Mexico's limited democratic development, if not stagnation.

VI. Annex

Political Activity	2008						2012
	% Yes	% A lot	% To a certain exent	% A little	% Not useful at all	Varia-tion	% Yes
Unite with other people facing the same problem	2	21.6	30.7	34.1	12.5	5.7	5.93
Collect signatures with neighbours	4.5	17.6	30.2	43.7	7.5	-3.4	7.49
Organize neighbours committees	5	18.6	31.8	32.7	16.4	1.3	8.52
Call a radio/tv program	9.3	18.7	31	39.1	10.8	-0.2	11.45
Complain with public authorities	1.7	18.7	37.3	25.3	18.7	12	7.27
Ask for support from a Civil Organization	10.4	19	29.5	33.7	17.5	-2.7	13.54
Sign letters and Collect signatures	9.9	21.6	33	37.2	8	9.4	14.85
Public letters in newspapers	6.7	15.4	32.8	38.2	13.7	-3.7	15.94
Write a letter to the local authorities/President	3.5	20.6	23.2	34.2	21.3	-11.7	8.92
Attend public demostrations	7.8	18.7	36.7	36.4	8.2	10.8	NA
Request support from a political party	16.2	17	31.5	34.3	17	-2.8	27.21
Request support from deputies/senators	3.9	17.8	33.1	36.7	10.7	3.5	7.43
Demostate peacefully using a distinctive	13.6	19.2	34.3	36.1	10	7.4	NA
Publish photograps and messages in public spaces	22.4	28.1	37.5	29.4	4.2	31.5	34.32

VI). Bibliography

AZUELA, M. (2013), *Primera cumbre ciudadana para construir un México pacífico y justo*, Mexico City, Universidad Nacional Autonoma de Mexico.

BESSANT, J. (2014), "The political in the age of the digital: Propositions for Empirical Investigation", *Politics*, vol. 34, núm 1.

BOGGS, C. (2000), *The End of Politics*, New York, The Guilford Press.

BROMLEY, C. *et al.* (2004), *Is Britain Facing a Crisis of Democracy?*, available at: *http://www.crest.ox.ac.uk/papers/p106.pdf.*

BUSS, T. (2011), "Reclaiming Mexico's Democracy", *Berkeley Review of Latin American Studies*, Spring 2011, available at: *http://clas.berkeley.edu/research/mexico-reclaiming-mexicos-democracy.*

CALLAN, E. (2003), *Creating Citizens: Political Education and Liberal Democracy*, Oxford, Oxford University Press.

CASTELLS, M. (2008), "The New Public Sphere: Global Civil Society, Communication Networks, and Global Governance", *Annals*, 616.

CITCC (2008), *Participación ciudadana… ¿para qué? hacia una política de participación ciudadana en el gobierno federal*, available at: *http://www.oic.sep.gob.mx/portal3/doc/Participacion ciudadana.pdf.*

CIVICUS (2011), *A Snapshot of Civil Society in Mexico, Analytical Report on the CIVICUS Civil Society Index.*

COHEN, J. & ARATO, A. (1992), *Civil Society and Political Theory*, Cambridge MA, MIT Press.

CONGRESO (2012), *Ley Federal de Fomento a las Actividades realizadas por Organizaciones de la Sociedad Civil*, Mexico City, Congreso General de los Estados Unidos Mexicanos, available at: *http://www.diputados.gob.mx/LeyesBiblio/pdf/266.pdf.*

CURRAN, J. (1993), "Rethinking the Media as a Public Sphere", in Dahlgren, P. & C. Sparks, C. (eds.), *Communication and Citizenship: Journalism and the Public Sphere*, London, Routledge.

DAHLGREN, P. (2000), *Television and the Public Sphere: Citizenship, Democracy and the Media*, London, SAGE Publications.

DAVIS, D. (2010), "The Political and Economic Origins of Violence and Insecurity in Contemporary Latin America: Past Trajectories and Future Prospects", in DESMOND, A. & GOLDSTEIN, D. (eds.), *Violent Democracies in Latin America*, Durham, Duke University Press.

ERIKSEN, E. (2005), "An Emerging European Public Sphere", *European Journal of Social Theory*, vol. 8, núm. 3.

FUSDA (2009), "Las organizaciones de la sociedad civil", *Sociedad en Movimiento*, available at: *http://www.fusda.org/Revista16/Revista1LASORGANIZACIO-NESDELASOCIEDADCIVIL.pdf.*

GRANT, W. (1995), *Pressure Groups, Politics and Democracy in Britain*, 2nd editio., Hertfordshire, Harvester Wheatsheaf.

HABERMAS, J. (1989), *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere*, Great Britain, Polity Press.

HALL, S. *et al.* (1978), *Policing the Crisis*, YOUNG, J. & WALTON, P. (eds.), London, The Macmillan Press Ltd.

HIPSHER, P. (1998), "Democratic Transitions as Protest Cycles: Social Movement Dynamis in Democratizing Latin America", in MEYER, D. & TARROW, S. (eds.), *The Social Movement Society*, Oxford, Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, Inc.

INDESOL (2013), *SCP Register of Beneficiaries*, available at: *http://www.indesol.gob.mx/en/web_indesol/Registro.*

INEGI (2003), *ENCUP 2003*, Mexico City.

——— (2012), *Resultados Quinta ENCUP 2012 (Excel).*

——— SEGOB (2008), *ENCUP 2008: resultados de la Encuesta Nacional sobre Cultura Política y Prácticas Ciudadanas.*

JACOBS, R. & TOWNSLEY, E. (2011), *The Space of Opinion, Media Intellectuals and the Public Sphere*, New York, Oxford University Press.

LARA, M.A. (n. d.), "Effective participation in Latin America: from extralegal to legal mobilization. The challenges ahead", *Razón y Palabra*, available at: *www.razonypalabra.org.mx.*

LEVER, A. (2009), "Democracy and judicial review: are they really incompatible? *Perspectives on politics*", available at: *http://eprints.lse.ac.uk/23097/1/Democracy_and_judicial_review(LSERO).pdf.*

LINKLATER, A. (2007), "Public Spheres and Civilizing Processes", *Theory, Culture & Society*, *24(4)*, available at: *http://tcs.sagepub.com/cgi/doi/10.1177/0263276407080091* [Accessed March 11, 2013].

MARTIN, C. & SWANK, D. (2012), *The Political Construction of Business Interests: Coordination,Growth and Equality*, New York, Cambridge University Press.

MCKEE, A. (2005), *The Public Sphere: An introduction*, New York, Cambridge University Press.

MOFFITT, B. & TORMEY, S. (2014), "Rethinking populism: Politics, Mediatization and Political Style", *Political Studies*, 62.

NIEMINEN, H. (2008), "Social networks and the European Public Sphere", in BODEJBERG, I. and MADSEN, P. (eds.), *Media, Democracy and European Culture*, Bristol, Intellect.

NITOIU, C. (2013), "The European Public Sphere: Myth, Reality or Aspiration?", *Political Studies Review*, 11.

OECD & IMCO (2012), *Stregthening Evdence-Bsed Policy Making on Security and Justice in Mexico.*

OLVERA, A. (2002), *Democracia y sociedad civil en México: lecciones y tareas*, available at: *http://revistas.bancomext.gob.mx/rce/magazines/24/5/olve0502.pdf.*

PEREZ-DÍAZ, V. (1978), *State, Bureaucracy and Civil Society*, Hong Kong, The Macmillan Press Ltd.

PGR (2013), Acuerdo A/011/13 del Procurador General de la República por el que se abrogan los acuerdos A/037/02, A/096/09, A/012/11 y A/111/12, available at: *http://dof.gob.mx/nota_detalle.php?codigo=5294970&fecha=26/03/2013.*

——— (2002), Acuerdo número A/037/02 del Procurador General de la República, por el que se crea el Consejo de Participación Ciudadana de la Procuraduría General de la República y se establecen las reglas para su organización y funcionamiento, Mexico City, available at: *http://dof.gob.mx/nota_detalle.php?codigo=734567&fecha=19/04/2002.*

PRESIDENCIA (2006), *Toma de protesta al consejo de participación ciudadana de la procuraduría general de la república 2006-2007*, available at: *http://fox.presidencia.*

gob.mx/actividades/?contenido=24790.

Reyes, L. (2013), "La ciudadanía en Mexico. Un breve recuento histórico", *POLIS*, vol. 9, núm. 2.

Scholte, J. (2001), *Civil Society and Democracy in Global Governance,* available at: *http://wrap.warwick.ac.uk/2060/1/WRAP_Scholte_wp6501.pdf.*

Secretaría de Gobernación (2001), *ENCUP 2001, Resumen de resultados,* available at: *http://www.encup.gob.mx/work/models/Encup/Resource/20/1/images/resumen2001.pdf.*

SPPS, *Los terremotos de 1985,* available at: *http://www.spps.gob.mx/avisos/1120-los-terremotos-de-1985.html* [Accessed April 4, 2013].

SRE, Portal de Participación Social de la Secretaría de Relaciones Exteriores, available at: *http://participacionsocial.sre.gob.mx/index.php* [Accessed March 3, 2015].

Taylor, C. (2008), *Modern Social Imaginaries,* Durham, N.C., Duke University Press.

Tejeda, J. (2014), "Las dimensiones de la sociedad civil", *POLIS*, vol. 10, núm. 1.

Trenz, H. (2008), "The Unknown player in European Integration", in Bonderbjerg, I. & Madsen, P. (eds.), *Media, Democracy and European Culture*, Bristol, Intellect.

Verovsek, P. (2012), "Meeting Principles and Lifeworlds Halfway: Jurgen Habermas on the Future of Europe", *Political Studies*, 60.

Villarreal, M., *Participación ciudadana y políticas públicas*, available at: *https://www.academia.edu/202715/Participaci%C3%B3n_ciudadana_y_pol%C3%ADticas_p%C3%BAblicas?login=jgarcia2@sheffield.ac.uk&email_was_taken=true.*