

*From the Zócalo to the Polis? The Globalization of Western Democracy
and the Reformulation of the Public Sphere in Mexico*

Patricia M. Martin
Ph.D. Candidate, Department of Geography
University of Colorado, Boulder

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How many people belong? For example, in the Plural Pact there are about 40 people; in Feminist Millenium, Nuevo León, there are five people; and Catholics for the Right to Decide, well, there's me, here in Nuevo León. So, there are a few people, but because of that we haven't been interested in massive work, I mean, no. One of these people, for example, is a local congressional deputy, and that deputy, if she wants, can bring together 3000 people, but that doesn't interest us. Now, if you have someone who writes in the newspaper, for me that is enough. If suddenly, you are invited to give a conference (lecture), like recently, we just gave a lecture to 600, 700 people, gynecologists, talking about emergency contraceptives. From the gynecologists' community. Why would you want a lot of people? And the gynecologists committed to support emergency contraceptives. Why would you want more people? And one person coordinated all of that. A doctor. So, it is not really a mass movement, its a movement based in specific strategy.

- (Interview, Feminist Organization, Monterey).

...Gramsci studies the formation of organizations that place themselves against state structures, which is civil society. It is a euphemistic manner to effectively say who govern and who are the governed.

- (Interview, state official, Oaxaca)

I. Introduction:

On July 2, 2000 landmark presidential elections were held in Mexico, ushering in, for the first time in 71 years, a winning candidate from an opposition party. This event brought to an end one of the longest standing one-party political regimes of the 20th Century. Such an event seems to definitely prove, beyond a shadow of a doubt, that Mexico is finally on the road to democracy – an eventuality that many Mexicanist scholars had been reluctant to predict, given the seemingly endless tenacity of the Partido Revolucionario Institucional, Mexico's historic ruling party [eg., Cornelius, 1999 #72]. Nonetheless, in an era when the production of spectacle on a grand scale, through resources provided by the media, through the process of image marketing, through the internet, through spin-masters located in high-tech/nocratic institutions (the vast technologies of a quasi-authoritarian state), the elections in Mexico also had an aspect of being large scale neoliberal modernist production [Larrain, 1999 #86]. To some degree the elections were staged or produced by the national state. In this sense, it is not clear what kind of evidence they provide for democracy, and instead appear to resonate with a moment of what could be called forced democratization (or democratization forced along a certain path). The sense of disbelief that such a form of produced democracy generates is captured well by the perspective that a taxi driver shared with me. He suggested that the elections represented, '*el dedazo de las urnas*,' which in somewhat less colorful English suggests a continuity with the traditional process of handpicking a presidential successor. Just this time, this process happened through the ballot boxes. At some level, the democratic transition represented through the elections was clearly negotiated. This is not at all surprising for as Karl (Karl 1996) argues, the vast majority of democratic transitions in Latin America have occurred through the establishment of elite level 'foundational pacts.' Thus, despite such a definitive step towards democratization, the Mexican elections were also marked by an ambiguity of *significance* that introduces doubts about *the kind of change* represented by the electoral victory of an opposition party. In keeping with this, we must from the outset dispense with the notion that democratic elections and the results they generate are ever 'transparent,' or that one can easily read 'the will of the people' in an straightforward manner through elections results.

During the year 2000 I spent 11 months in two locations in Mexico, Oaxaca and Monterrey, respectively. The research that I conducted sought to confront the ambiguity encased in democracy in contemporary, global times. In both sites I conducted a series of

72 open ended interviews with individuals located in diverse political, public positions such as political parties, the government, the media, NGOs, and the church (35 in Oaxaca; 37 in Monterrey). Through the information gathered in these interviews and other supporting materials, I sought to examine the shifting spatial architecture of politics in Mexico. In so doing, I have hoped to demonstrate how reading politics through space might highlight the degree to which ‘democratization’ signals a politics of greater inclusion or a new politics of exclusion.

This paper represents specific intervention within this broader research project. Here I take up the notion of autonomous, multiple public spheres in order to ask questions about the nature and quality of political change in Mexico. I posit that examining nature and existence of autonomous, multiple public spheres provide a critical tool for evaluating the depth of democracy. Such an approach accesses questions of plurality, participation, difference, and substantive outcomes in struggles over political, economic and cultural rights. In the next section of this paper, I will provide an overview of differing theoretical understandings of ‘the public’ in relationship to democracy. In so doing I follow some feminist political scholars to argue that the existence of autonomous public spheres is one crucial measure for a more substantive kind of democracy. In the latter sections of the paper, I move to the political contexts of Oaxaca and Monterrey to trace the reconstitution of political space in each location. In particular, I highlight the position of organizations within civil society in relationship to the state in order to make inferences about the existence of autonomous public spheres.

II. Democracy and the Public Sphere: New Autonomous Political Spaces?

Numerous definitions of the public and the private have circulated throughout Western modernity and each has differing histories and intellectual lineages. Weintraub (Weintraub 1995) (287) highlights, for example, four major kinds of uses of the public/private distinction. Selya Benhabib (Benhabib 1998), on the other hand, traces three different political understandings of publicity. While all definitions of the public have political implications, this paper is interested in how the public is understood in an explicitly political sense. Following Benhabib (Benhabib 1998), I will briefly summarize three major ways in which the concept of a public sphere is invoked in Western political thought.

The first is the liberal economic model that understands the division between public and private as related to state administration and market economy (Weintraub 1995). In this particular view, human beings are posited as individuals pursuing their self interests both within civil society and the market (Jaggar 1988). In this particular understanding the ‘public’ is coterminous with the state and represents the sphere where a rational and just order can be established so that private individuals can best pursue their interests; liberal democracy is perceived at best representing this kind of order. Individuals are free to associate in political parties and interest groups in order to pursue specific interests vis-a-vis the state. Politics in this view is often about a just distribution of resources (Young 1990) and therefore have a strong juridical aspect (Benhabib 1998). Rationality, neutrality, and impartiality are central values (Young 1990) (Benhabib 1998). As Pateman [Pateman, 1989 #154] has argued in critiquing the social contract theorists of the 18th Century, liberal democracy can also represent a curiously apolitical model of politics, where citizens ‘give up’ their political power to the sovereignty of the state; in response, she advocates an alternative model of politics where citizens can consistently act upon and renew their political power.

The second model of the public that informs politics builds on a republican or classical understanding of ‘the polis’ where public political space is represented by citizens gathered in political community to debate the common good (*res publica*). The writings of Hannah Arendt (Arendt 1958) have been central in outlining this particular vision of citizenship and the public (Benhabib 1998). While this model is often lauded in theory, some political theorists make the argument - tinged with nostalgia - that it is impossible for scale or scope of modern democracy (Bobbio 1987) (Dahl 1989). In addition, one of the major critiques that often leveled against the notion of political community as political public is the strict adherence to the search for the *common* good and the implicit homogeneity of the group of citizens making a decision (a situation where the community placed above the individual). Both of these aspects can lead to exclusionary practices if an issue is not seen - a priori - as of common concern to all.

The third major current in political theory that informs an understanding of the public derives from Habermas’s account of the bourgeois public sphere. Here is one description of his conception of the autonomous public sphere of politics:

It designates a theater in modern societies in which political participation is enacted through the medium of talk. It is a space in which citizens deliberate about their common affairs, hence an institutionalized arena of discursive interaction. This arena is conceptually

distinct from the state; it is a site for the production and circulation of discourses that can in principle be critical of the state. The public sphere in Habermas's sense is also conceptually distinct from the official-economy; it is not an arena of market relations but rather one of discursive relations, a theater for debating and deliberating rather than buying and selling. Thus, this concept of the public sphere permits us to keep in view the distinctions between state apparatuses, economic markets, and democratic associations, distinctions that are essential to democratic theory (Fraser 1997)(p. 70).

Although Habermas himself writes a classical story of declension vis-a-vis the public sphere (Fraser 1995), feminist and critical political theorists have sought to engage and reformulate the notion of an autonomous public sphere as an essential political resource in contemporary society. Benhabib, for example, (Benhabib 1998) (91) argues for both a critique and a “dialectical alliance” between feminist theory and Habermas's notion of the public sphere.

Landes (Landes 1998) writes, moreover:

Habermas's construction of the public sphere had a singular advantage for feminists; it freed politics from the iron grasp of the state which, by virtue of the long denial of the franchise to women and their rare status as public officials, effectively defined the public in masculine terms. The concept of the public sphere was suffused with a spirit of openness that feminists found inviting. (Landes 1998) (197)

The reasons for this “eclectic affinity” between feminist political theory and the notion of autonomous public spheres are multiple. First, unlike the civic republican model, the notion of a public sphere resonates more strongly with the conditions of politics under modernity where broad and diverse kinds of participation arise within multiple, socially differentiated spaces. In keeping with this, Fraser (Fraser 1995) suggests that, rather than thinking of a homogenous and unified sphere, a metaphor of plural, multiple, and overlapping public spheres is more apt. Moreover, for societies traversed by systemic inequalities (like Mexico) Fraser provides the notion of a ‘subaltern counter-publics’ as vital spaces from which marginalized groups formulate public critique and discourse. Benhabib (Benhabib 1998) on the other hand has focused on Habermas's discourse ethic in an autonomous democratic public sphere. Such a ethic allows the introduction of mutual respect, sharing of perspectives, and egalitarian reciprocity. Thus, when viewed through the lens of autonomous public spheres, democracy is not reduced to juridical procedure or outcome as is the tendency in liberalism and as model it is more inclusive than civic republicanism.

These critical reformulations of autonomous public spheres suggest that the nature and boundaries of these spaces is open to contestation; any evaluation, therefore, of public spheres must be contextualized. This is certainly true in Latin America, given the long

standing patterns of political instability. As Radcliffe (Radcliffe 1999) argues, recent patterns of democratization under neoliberal economic conditions have led to rapid reconstitution of the lines between public/private spheres and state/society relationships. The outcome is a set of highly heterogeneous spaces – shaped as much by the global movement of capital and labor, as by the retreat of authoritarian military regimes.

In the case of Mexico, throughout the 20th Century, the post-revolutionary state garnered a kind of authoritarian control over the public sphere (Robles Gil 1998). This authoritarian legacy is still palpable, and organized civil society (*‘la sociedad civil’*) in Mexico is often understood as being a sphere of political opposition to the state subject to policing. Given this politicized and unbalanced institutional terrain, a discourse of democracy that is state centric can tell us very little about the recomposition of politics. Instead, the discourse of ‘liberal democracy’ may provide the means for the state to maintain control over the scope of ‘the public’. This circumstance may be partially receding under conditions of neo-liberal modernity, as the state becomes privatized. However, this only suggests even more strongly that the construction of spaces of participation outside of the state *and* market are fundamental to the construction of a democratic society in Mexico.

Evaluating the existence of multiple ‘autonomous publics spheres’ in Oaxaca and Monterrey is a difficult task. In part, this is because the notion of a ‘public sphere’ is itself highly abstract. In order to approach such an examination, I have to make inferences from the architecture of power in each location and the political practices that are linked to that architecture of power (see Staeheli and Mitchell forthcoming). Given the restraints of space, I will pay particular attention to the relationship between the state and organized civil society (NGOs).

III. *Mapping public sphere in Oaxaca and Monterrey*

It is time to sum up. An enormous social and cultural change that created a plural Mexico; the need that such diversity express itself and that it have a place in the world of the government; electoral reforms that have channeled and accommodated that diversity in the institutions of the country; elections that strengthen the political parties and parties that give meaning to the elections, that give live to the hope for the freedom to vote; parties that organize public life, debate, the legislative process, that are installed in the different institutions of the state, the need for a state architecture that is effective and functional at the same time that it receives and assimilates political plurality.

This story of phenomena and of elements has only one response: democracy.
(Jose Woldenberg K., President of the General Advisory Council of the Federal Elections Institute) (Woldenberg K. 2000) (p. 17) (translation mine).

The above perspective on the process of democratization in Mexico, articulated by José Woldenberg, the president of the Federal Elections Institute, presents a particular narrative on the changing relationship between ‘state’ and ‘citizens.’ This narrative resonates with a modernizationist account, whereby socioeconomic change in Mexico, which has led to a plural society, has created the conditions that demand democracy. The differentiation of society has created a diverse set of interests and needs; these interests and needs are channeled into and find expression through political parties. In short, this account speaks of the creation of a liberal democratic state, where diverse interest groups pressure the government through democratic means in order to shape public policy, and to inform and influence the distribution of public resources. He argues that the evidence for this thesis that is born out by the high degree of electoral competition during the 2000 presidential campaign that existed between national political parties that span a political spectrum.

If we shift however, to the more localized, and more grounded terrains of Monterrey and Oaxaca, and interrogate political change in both locations from the more critical lens of ‘autonomous public spheres,’ new questions arise about the nature of political change in both locations (which in turn asks questions about the nature of democratization at the national level). This suggests, furthermore, that the discourse of liberal democracy does not provide a critical enough edge to understand redrawing of lines of power within the process of democratization in Mexico. While I may be getting ahead of myself, what can be seen is the development of two political sub-regimes, one where authoritarianism persists, and another where private (business) interests have occupied the public sphere in a manner that fosters a novel politics of exclusion. While both political sub-regimes are distinct (and at the national level create the illusion of political plurality), the kind of power that characterizes the linkage between the government and oppositional political spaces is one that borders on the coercive. In this sense, the construction of public, political spaces autonomous from the state is a highly politicized and fragile process.

III.A. *Public Spheres in Oaxaca?*

Actors – Institutions		
	<i>Historical</i>	<i>Present</i>
1	Partido Revolucionario Institucional (PRI) (media, universities, peasant organizations, government programs)	
2	Railroad Workers; Catholic Church - liberation theology; Liga 16 de Septiembre (urban guerrillas); Partido Comunista Mexicano; student movements; colonos	Teachers Union (SNTE); PAN; PRD; CEPCO; priests; FOOCO; NGOs (human rights; community development; women; environment; democracy; children)

Figure 1.1 Institutions Structuring Political Space in Oaxaca
Coding: 1 moving towards center; 2 marginalized

Characteristics (How the Public World has been Described)		
<i>Continuing</i>	<i>Descending</i>	<i>Ascending</i>
<i>Party of the State; Patterns of Cooptation</i> <i>Social circumstance – Oaxaca more left; manipulation by PRI; media control</i>	<i>Urban conflict (unions, students, land invaders)</i>	<i>Pluralism in Cities; Conflict between Urban and Rural; Hostile relationship to NGOs; Opposition Political Parties/Complex relationship between social movements – NGOs – Political Parties; Private Initiative; fragmentation of NGO's</i>

Figure 1.2 Characterizations of the Public World

Themes
Usos y Costumbres; PROGRESA; la Ley Quesillo

Figure 1.3 Themes that Appeared as Public Issues

In the estimation of many of the people I interviewed, the state government in Oaxaca maintains an authoritarian control over politics. As a result, stories of corruption and political manipulation abound. This control extends into places such as the public university system, where the government allegedly pays students, known as ‘porros’ to serve as government informants and to create political movements within the university. This control extends into the countryside through government programs such as PRONASOL, PROCAMPO and PROGRESA, which can serve as mechanisms through which to buy

votes. This authoritarian control extends into the media; the control over the media is exacted through various means. The most obvious derives from the fact that the government sells the newsprint to newspapers at a subsidized price. A second practice derives from the fact that the government serves as the largest advertiser for newspapers. Frequently this occurs through the practice of *gacetillas*, where newspapers are paid to run political advertisements as news articles (Keenan 1997) (need to verify both for Oaxaca). According to many sources, there exists no rule of law in Oaxaca; thus coercion and violence also serve the power of the state. The case that demonstrates this most clearly at the present time is that provided by the *Loxicha* indigenous group. The Loxicha comprise 26 communities in the southern mountains of Oaxaca. In 1996 the government linked members of the Loxicha with the EPR (Popular Revolutionary Army), a guerrilla group that staged attacks in several locations throughout Mexico on August 28th and 29th of the same year. Since then, the Loxicha region has been increasingly militarized through the establishment of military check points. Furthermore, 138 members of the Loxicha communities were arrested without corresponding evidence, and confessions were extracted under coercion (claims of torture) (<http://www.loxicha.org/>). While some of these individuals were subsequently released, the political conflict has not been resolved in any kind of a transparent, legal manner. The continual threat of violence in Oaxaca is also demonstrated by a rather casual remark in one of my interviews about the practice of kidnapping, suggesting that it is a potential threat to people involved in political organizations:

No, I think it is good, and it has provided a source of strength, I think that for us, as organizations, to know that we are strong, that we have allies in a given problem... For example, organizations on the Coast with the hurricane, there we are offering support. Or one was robbed, well we cooperate with the basics of a computer, we'll buy it for you. Or they kidnap a member of an organization, well we go and we denounce it.

There have been a variety of challenges on a variety of fronts to this control over political space in Oaxaca, including for opposition political parties. Here, however, I will speak specifically about two efforts to create different kinds of public political spaces, the first is the creation of alternative indigenous municipal political regimes, respecting the practices of '*usos y costumbres*'. The second is through organizations that exist within civil society.

One major challenge to the authoritarian nature of the state government has come through the establishment of indigenous ‘*usos y costumbres*’ as an alternative electoral mechanism at the municipal level. In short, elections by ‘*usos y costumbres*’ in municipalities allow for elections that do not follow a party regime (where candidates must be nominated by parties), but rather according to the ‘traditional’ customs of the village/pueblo/ municipality. While *usos y costumbres* encompasses a range of practices, in politics this most particularly includes a direct vote (not secret) through a community assembly. Often these direct votes occur once every year, rather than every three years, which is the standard tenure for a municipal president in Mexico. One of the other major politicized aspects of *usos y costumbres* is the fact that in some villages, women do not participate in the voting procedure (some argue that it violates human rights). In 1995, 412 out of 570 municipalities in Oaxaca opted for elections by *usos y costumbres*. The number increased in 1998 by 6 to 418. While this number is high, in 1998 it accounted for approximately 34% of the population of Oaxaca and reflects the rural/urban political split in Oaxaca. The law providing for this change in electoral procedure was passed in August of 1995, and was modified in 1998. While some argue that this has no direct relationship to the *Zapatista* rebellion, (i.e., it was in process before), undoubtedly the indigenous rebellion in Chiapas helped to spur on its passage. Indeed, the indigenous law in Oaxaca bears great resemblance to the San Andres Accords that resulted from the conflict in Chiapas. The San Andres Accords were signed by the Mexican national government, though they were never implemented. This legislation in Oaxaca is part of a broader movement to protect and revive indigenous cultural and communal autonomy. If this project is brought to fruition, than it would signal the construction of radically different kinds of political spaces outside of the sphere of the state.

The second major arena of political challenge to the state comes from organizations within civil society, in particular NGOs. These organizations have a high profile in Oaxaca; a directory produced in 2000 places the count at 209 (Oaxaca 2000). This may be due in part to their connection with the global flow of international agencies, funding agencies, and to foreign researchers. It is also due to withdrawal of state subsidies from the countryside, the intense struggle over the meaning of underdevelopment/development; and the struggle for the expansion of cultural, ecological, and political rights. While there are fractures among the NGO community, they share a broad concern for issues of social justice. I found

only one NGO in Oaxaca that may have been clearly aligned with the political right. In this sense, the NGOs that I spoke with generally held a critical and oppositional stance to the government. In the context of concern about development, the environment, and the expansion of social, cultural and political rights, NGOs in Oaxaca have developed decision making capacities and policies of programmatic action to concretely pursue a broad range of goals, at least for the constituents they represent.

The development of an alternative forms of doing politics and pursuing ‘development’ from within civil society has been clearly articulated among some of the civil society organizations in Oaxaca, as exemplified by the “Proyecto Para Oaxaca.” “Proyecto Para Oaxaca” is a working document written by a coalition of NGOs (12 NGOs) in Oaxaca. This document bridges the movement for indigenous municipal political autonomy – and alternative spaces of action of NGOs. In light of the continuing economic, political, and cultural marginalization and impoverishment of many social groups and communities in Oaxaca, this project is organized to foment social, political, cultural regeneration among communities and groups in Oaxaca. As articulated by the document, the route for accomplishing this, however, is not by accessing government resources – rather by finding alternative routes/creating alternative forms of governance and development outside of the scope of government. In the introduction, the document states,

...We need to dismantle inefficient and corrupt bureaucracies, but instead of privatizing State functions, as is being done, *we will seek to socialize them; leave them in the hands of the people*, as political bodies are returned to an adequate scale...We will reserve some well defined general functions at the level of the entire society, for political bodies that retain a true democratic style, where they govern by obeying. *Instead of a situation where the civil sphere is constructed as a residual space, (that which the state has not absorbed for itself), we want that the general functions of government appear residual.* (Oaxaca 2000), 25 (emphasis mine).

The state apparatus in Oaxaca is clearly hostile to NGOs. Evidence for this comes from several places. A representative of the state government provided the following analysis, in response to my questions about the presence and strength of NGOs in Oaxaca. This representative began by defining an NGO for me:

...It is a non-governmental organization that provides a counter position to the state organization. First, yes there are NGOs, and they are important, their movements in Oaxaca. However, in Oaxaca, few NGOs are independent of the political parties... There is a German professor...who says that the NGOs are in truth, clubs for the unoccupied...

In my estimation, these words reflect a general, overt hostility towards organized civil society, by viewing civil society as a ‘counter position’ to the state, and by suggesting that NGOs are “clubs for the unoccupied”. This hostility is further evidenced, however, by the passage of legislation that sought to bring NGOs under state control in Oaxaca with the passage of the *Decreto Número 312*, the “*Ley de Instituciones de Asistencia, Promoción Humana y Desarrollo Social Privadas del Estado de Oaxaca*” (Law of Private Institutions of Assistance, and Human and Social Development of in the State of Oaxaca) on November 4th, 1995. This decree was alternatively dubbed as the “La Ley Quesillo” by the civil society organizations who stood in opposition to it. Quesillo is the name of a Oaxacan cheese; the name apparently reflects that fact that the law was rapidly created, but that it will melt with heat (Robles Gil 1998). Some of the key components of the law include the creation of a state oversight committee, the president of which was to be selected by the governor. This committee was granted the ability to authorize the creation, modification, and demise of ‘private’ social service organization (understood as covering the scope of civil society organizations). Further, a percentage of the gross income (0.6%) (Robles Gil 1998, 231) raised by such institutions was to be channeled to the state oversight committee to fund its operation. Furthermore, the committee would be allowed to visit private associations at anytime to conduct an audit. According to Robles Gil (1998), *Decreto 312* was a close copy to legislation that had been passed in the Distrito Federal (Mexico City) in order to modernize the ‘Junta de Asistencia Privada,’ a governance organism that linked private charity organizations, the catholic church, and the government (Robles Gil 1998). Thus, this legislation forms part of a larger debate in Mexico about the notion of ‘public interest,’ who represents “the public interest,” and who gets to determine its meaning. As a result of mobilization at numerous scales, the “Quesillo” Law have never been put into effect, though it remains on the books in Oaxaca.

What does this brief overview suggest about the existence of autonomous public spheres in Oaxaca? There are several issues that I would like to highlight. First, I think it is difficult to speak at the local level of any kind of a clear space of public dialog – within the government or without. I found little evidence of local issues that had sparked some kind of public debate. Institutions that stand in opposition to the state are not clearly or primarily involved opinion formation – speech/discourse is not a clear means of pursuing/practicing politics. This is not to say that organizations don’t confront the governor or the state; they

do. Rather, there are few institutionalized spaces where such speech can be mediated in a public manner. Local organizations in Oaxaca do engage in speech activities among themselves, and at other scales as they meet with national and international students, investigators, NGOs, and the press (outside of the state, there is an interesting ongoing discussion of intercultural dialog). At the local level, institutions that stand in opposition to the state may have aspects of what Fraser [Fraser, 1995 #161] calls ‘strong publics.’ By this, I mean that they garner and establish decision making capacities for their particular constituents rather than lobbying the government to effect change. For example, NGOs establish alternative educational opportunities, alternate forms of health care, revolving loans programs, they negotiate prices for buying and selling coffee, they create productive activities to sustain life projects for youth. Within this context, and again resonating with the indigenous movement in Oaxaca, autonomy in a strong sense is one key thread moving throughout civil society discourse. Furthermore, because of the project orientation of organized civil society in Oaxaca, NGO’s tend to construct a social base working with grass-roots constituencies. In this environment, organized civil society has embarked on the creation and experimentation of substantive democratic practices outside of the official public sphere of the government.

IIIB. *Public Spheres in Monterrey*

Public Spheres – Monterrey

<i>Actors – Institutions</i>		
	<i>Ascending</i>	<i>Descending</i>
1	FNSI, CCINLAC, Group of 10, PAN, political parties, private universities, media, Opus Dei, Legionarios de Cristo, CANACO; citizens; professional associations	PRI, PRI institutions (CROC, CTM, CNOP),
2	NGOs: (debtor’s; human rights; AIDS, feminist movement, environment) Mormons, women in political parties, gays, handicapped, indigenous peoples/migrants, nurses, Jesuits, PRD	FAT, Fundidora, student movement, teachers union, disappeared; Tierra y Libertad; colonos, teachers union, intellectuals

Figure 1.4 Public Sphere Actors and Institutions
Coding: 1 moving towards center; 2 marginalized

Characteristics (How the Public World has been Described)	
<i>Ascending</i>	<i>Descending</i>
Business – government relationship; securing transparency in electoral process; Government parties don't have social base, NGOs represent middle class, patterns of repression – streets, media; media – lack of ethics; repetition of class struggle – but new forms of access and benefits; no authentic unions; relationship between government – business; few spaces for citizens; populist media; debate/discussion in Congress; lack of a counter weight; new forms of access and exclusion	Populist governments; PRI/PAN played different roles in NL than at national level; guerilla, dirty war; end of corporatist

Figure 1.5 How Interviewees Characterized the Public Sphere

Themes	
<i>Central</i>	<i>Marginalized</i>
Public services, abortion, elections; Fundidora, government, corruption; religion (Virgin de Guadalupe); army; gender; family violence	Human rights (prisoners' rights), disappeared, feminism; ecology, homosexuality

Figure 1.6 Themes Mentioned as Public Issues

In Nuevo León, a governor from the Partido Accion Nacional was elected in 1997; this followed electoral victories by opposition parties (primarily the PAN, but also the PRD and the PT) in municipalities in the Monterrey metropolitan area. In this context, a strong discourse of '*alternancia*' (the change of political party in power) as a clear sign of democratization has evolved. As a result, the government itself in Monterrey/Nuevo Leon is placed very much at the center of the discourse of democracy. There are, however, aspects of this evolution in the political arena in Nuevo León that cast the quality of such political transformation in doubt. First, many individuals who are critical of the current government suggest that the victory of the PAN signals a greater concentration of power in Nuevo León, by unifying the political and economic classes. Indeed, the economic elite in Monterrey have capitalized well on Mexico's engagement with economic globalization

(article from *Proceso*). Traditionally, the business class of Monterrey remained at some distance to the political leadership under the PRI (Garza 2000) (Nuncio 1992). As several individuals signaled, the beginning of the shift in this relationship can be traced, however, to the kidnapping and death of Don Eugenio Garza Sada in 1974 by urban guerrillas. He was a leading businessman in Monterrey (and Mexico) and founder of the Tecnológico de Monterrey. According to many sources, after this event, there has been a conscious effort on the part of the business class to assume a more prominent role in politics and to utterly destroy all remnants of the left. The second element that casts doubt on substance of 'alternancia' as signaling greater democratization in Nuevo León, is the rumor that according to several individuals, the initial PAN victory in municipality of Monterrey (1994) was fraudulent, and was the outcome of one of the political concessions made by Mexican President Carlos Salinas de Gortari in order to 'demonstrate' that Mexico was indeed democratizing. As a local congressional deputy representative told me,

...For example, when Acción Nacional enters here, in Nuevo León, they enter with a 'conciertación.' Why? Because they win apparently, an election that they didn't win. That is when Jesus Hinojosa arrives here as mayor...Salinas, by command...grabs a mapamundi and says, well, we are going to divide up, to meet a prerequisite, so he gives away certain points...

On the positive side, there are also accounts of less corruption on the part of the state government. One organization in Nuevo Leon that has been working in conjunction with the Zapatistas noted, for example, a real shift in the state government's attitude toward their work when the PAN government assumed control from the PRI in 1997. The power of the PAN exemplifies synergy between several kinds of spheres. These include elite business (financial, industrial, commercial), conservative elements of the catholic church, with representation in Catholic organizations such as *Opus Dei*, and *Legionarios de Cristo* (Legionnaires of Christ) and the media, most notably the newspaper, *El Norte*.

NGOs in Monterrey have a different character than they do in Oaxaca. Their profile is not as high and they are much fewer in number (approx. 30). This may be due to several reasons which include: first, less international linkages (via funding and research); second, there is less of a concern about 'development' in Monterrey (given the fact that Monterrey is assumed to be developed and wealthy); third, given the context of 'alternancia' and political party competition, civil society is not seen as the main bastion of democracy, thus there is less political space for NGOs; fourth, given the strength of the public and private university

system in Nuevo Leon, NGOs are not the primary producers of alternative political, economic and social knowledge. With the exception of *El Barzon*, NGOs also tend to be less institutionalized than they are in Oaxaca. By this I mean that organizations don't necessarily have dedicated office space or staff, funding is primarily local through donations, and the work is often voluntary. Individuals who work with NGOs frequently hold other jobs. The issues and strategies are seen as 'strategic' rather than popular (see the quote at the beginning of this paper). Major issues that NGOs encompass in Monterrey include human rights, debtors movement, citizenship, consumer rights (telephone/natural gas); gender/women's rights; people with HIV/AIDS, the environment (urban kind of environmentalism). Thus the issues that NGOs address lie on a different kind of axis than those of Oaxaca, and represent a differing kind of engagement with global modernity. It is clear, for example, that 'development' is not one of the fundamental issues. Poverty is not even an issue, although consumer rights is, however. NGOs in Monterrey also seem to more broadly span the ideological horizon. I spoke with NGOs, including a specifically anti-feminist organization, that were clearly aligned ideologically with the PAN, for example.

In Monterrey, similar to Oaxaca, there was also an attempt to pass a legislation regulating the role of civil society organizations in 1999. This suggests that there are degrees of continuity between the PRI and PAN governance (when in government), particularly in relationship to an organized civil society. The purpose of the law, according to one person I interviewed in Monterrey was the following:

“...also last year in the state congress they tried to pass a law – as you know, the majority are PANistas – a law of citizen participation. And if you see the proposed law of citizen participation, it is full of controls, full of sanctions. They demand, in this proposed law, that citizen organizations, or non-governmental organizations or civil organizations present an annual report, either to the municipal president, or the governor, with which, if they do not agree, the organization will be sanctioned. They ask as well that all social organizations register in a (padron/registry) created by them...Thankfully, until now, although its not certain that it won't pass, it has been approved. It was so absurd that even some PANistas said, 'it can't be.'...” (Interview, ONG representative, Monterrey)

Despite this striking parallel with Oaxaca, the case of Monterrey does differ. As the above quote indicates, the law was discussed and defeated in congress – suggesting in the least that the local congress is a space of political debate, where outcomes are not foregone conclusions.

In Monterrey there have been several specific issues that have galvanized the local community a way that clearly delineates political lines and the fractures between and among

different kinds of social and political constituents. One instance that I will point to here is the political controversy that developed around Parque Fundidora (see photo beginning of Chapter); this controversy was highly charged and demonstrated the lines between inclusive and exclusive politics.

‘Parque Fundidora’ is a 114 hectare park in the center of the municipality of Monterrey. Parque Fundidora was the oldest steel iron foundry established in Latin America and thus established Monterrey as one of the industrial capitals in Latin America. In this light, the historical significance and symbolic nature of this park cannot be overemphasized. The political history around the park is, however, complex. In the late 1960’s the workers’ union at Fundidora became increasingly radicalized and independent, and held links with the Mexican Communist Party (PCM). This union is mythical in Monterrey (and Latin America) for its militancy, leftist leanings, and yet independence. According to one interviewee, this independence began ‘to bother increasingly’ the business elite in Monterrey. In the 70’s the steel mill was nationalized and in the 1980’s the mill was finally closed under the Presidency of Miguel de la Madrid. When the mill was closed, a presidential decree specified that a park of ‘public utility’ should be created in its place. This decree specified that there was to be a park and a technological museum with exhibits. Subsequently, the national government passed control of the park to the State government of Nuevo Leon. With this transfer, the space of the park began to acquire private commercial and service functions. The park now houses - in a nightmarish collection of American global modernity - a Holiday Inn, a ‘Auditorio Coca-Cola,’ ‘Plaza Sesamo’ (a private amusement park with the theme of Sesame Street), and CINTERMEX – an International Trade Center. In a prime example of post-industrial remodeling, moreover, a public movie theater has been created in one of the old factory spaces.

During the 2000, plans of creating a motor car racetrack within the park area surfaced (CART Grand Prix Racing). It was this particular plan that mobilized certain segments of civil society in Monterrey against the state government. The major complaints that organizations lodged against the plans to build a race track included: a lack of legitimacy because constructing a race track countered the original purpose of the park (public utility); the fact that state resources would be used to construct the race track; and thirdly, that the state government had not acted in a transparent manner. Information such as permits, licenses, environmental impact studies had not been made public. Approximately 25

organizations from civil society pursued a range of activities to try to stop the construction of the racetrack. These included dialog with the government, *habius corpus* (??), and attempts to get media coverage (which was extraordinarily one-sided). In the words of one person, commenting on the situation, “they were destroying that which should have been history. Serious. You ruin the city and the citizens, given its industrial origin.” The same person later commented “what is behind this is money and power. Period. This new expansion of capital; that which has been called globalization which means to appropriate everything that can be appropriated.” In light of similar trends with other important parks in the area surrounding Monterrey, this person laments, that “there will be no more public space.” The racetrack was under construction when I left Monterrey in November 2000, and held its inaugural race in the spring of 2001.

What kind of evaluation regarding the existence of multiple, autonomous public spheres in Monterrey might these very brief comments suggest? First, it is clear that the political context in Monterrey is radically different than that of Oaxaca. Without a doubt, there are autonomous political spheres within Monterrey that respond to specific issues through the production of counter discourses (abortion legislation was another key issue that sparked debate, for example, in 1999). In this sense, democratization has clearly shifted the terrain of politics. It is not clear, however, that this signals a politics of greater inclusion. While the generation of opinion is seen as a viable political strategy by civil society organizations at the local level, certain key activists and organizations are continuously censored and excluded from segments of the media (in addition, the police has broken up protests on the street). Thus the ability of actors speaking from non-commodified autonomous public spheres to actually make alternative perspectives public is questionable. Thus, it may be feasible to imagine the existence of weak, subaltern counter publics within the context of Monterrey. Given the reconcentration of power, however, these publics are highly marginalized and fragile.

Tentative Conclusions:

Without a doubt democratization under conditions of globalization has brought about greater political diversity within Mexico. A variety of new social and political actors and institutions are involved in the attempt to shape the nature of democracy in that country. Whether this diversity is being effectively channeled or addressed through the

development of a democratic political and institutional infrastructure is another matter. If we compare the political terrains of Oaxaca and Monterrey we find a greater variety of political forms of exclusion, rather than inclusion. Reflecting the contrasting political economic contexts of each location, segments of organized civil society have responded to this circumstance in quite different ways. In Oaxaca, organized civil society pursues the construction of substantive political, economic, and social rights in spaces autonomous from the state; local autonomy is a primarily organizing concept and signals a move toward the construction of strong, local, autonomous publics. In Monterrey, on the other hand, organized civil society views themselves as enmeshed within the politics of globalized modernity; from that position they are engaged with counter-hegemonic opinion formation. This suggests the construction of autonomous yet weak publics. In this regard, each location represents alternative paths and alternative experiments with the construction of democratic practice. It remains clear, however, that these efforts must be able to partially confront the exclusionary practices of the respective local states in order lead to a substantive process of democratization in Mexico.

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(need to add Pateman, Cornelius, and Larrain).