

Old debts, no accounts Building the right to belong to this world¹

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“Detrás de nuestro rostro negro, detrás de nuestra voz armada, detrás de nuestro innombrable nombre, detrás de los nosotros que ustedes ven, detrás estamos ustedes, detrás estamos los mismos hombres y mujeres simples y ordinarios que se repiten en todas las razas, se pintan de todos los colores, se hablan en todas las lenguas y se viven en todos los lugares”²

Words of welcome from the EZLN General Command during the inauguration act of the “First Intercontinental Encounter for Humanity and against Neoliberalism”.

Introduction

During these past years we have witnessed and participated in deep social changes. The development of digital technology and in general, of communication has contributed as never before to draw humanity closer. We have seen the crumbling of the Soviet block, of the Eastern European socialist governments, and the end of the cold war. We have also witnessed the rising in some regions of the planet of dangerous tendencies towards cultural overlapping. State reform and the neoliberal economic model, in hegemony today, has modified on its own the actual scenarios. Entire countries and millions of human beings have been abandoned to their fate in a world that tends to be more and more excluding.

Thanks to globalization the world seems to open up, but at the same time, to close. It opens in terms of what could mean knowledge of others, of their culture (past and present).and meanwhile the feeling of world citizenship grows, of the us as a total, of the recognition of the world as a whole. It closes with regard to the growth of inequality worldwide.

We have an increasing feeling of belonging to a world that, on the other hand, results highly excluding. In spite of this, the development of civil society and that of the citizenship feeling could be announcing a new scenario that is beginning to be built, where the gap between cultural belonging and social exclusion tends to close more everyday.

Visible Frontiers, Invisible Passages: Globalization, Culture and Democracy

For many of us who, being from different countries, lived the cold war, its disappearance is a relief. Looking back, there seems to be no justifiable reason to have reached heights of danger as menacing as that. And many of us ask ourselves: how could have we gone this far? (as we did with the rise of fascism in Europe that lead to World War II or as we have done with the criminal bombing against civilians in different wars or conflicts that have taken place after 1945). How have we permitted things to have gone this far? Why did it happen. What mechanisms were played so that once again the overflow of human misery and its irreversible secuelae on nature and on the lives of others was permitted?

Even though the end of the conflict between east and west has meant a desaceleration in military climbing, it is difficult to be totally optimistic when nuclear arsenals still exist in the world. And so does the appetite of some countries who want to modernize and use them as ways of intimidation against their neighbors.

None the less, in spite the fact that the end of the cold war and the fall of Berlin’s wall are

to be sure, two of the more significant happenings of this end of the century, this in themselves have not meant the happy triumph of capitalism or even less have they signified one step towards a better world for most of us. This is said in the sense of optimism that this events triggered leading some people to announce that the liberal capitalist civilization was the absolute end of history.

On the other hand, to think about the triumph or consolidation of national freedom movements seems an unreachable utopia. At least as we have known and understood them during the 25 years that followed the triumph of the Cuban Revolution.

Cuba's Revolution, that compelled inspiration and was a reference for many in Latin-America, has ceased to be the example it was during several decades in regard to the strategy that the left had to follow, in order to obtain the power and from there install a more juster society.

The world during that time, Che Guevara's in Cuba or Bolivia, Carlos Fonseca's Nicaragua, Ana María's El Salvador, or the world of numerous guerrillas that were born during that time in Latin America is not today's world. And the way of obtaining power is not the same either. This in part is due to the fact that power (political power that is) is a little more dilute among society than it was before. In regard to this last issue, Fidel Castro recently stated that he would not recommend an armed fight. He stated that "in this time where the world has globalized (...) struggles must have an universal character where the masses and social consciousness play a decisive role".³ I think that this, expressed through the development of multiple civil organizations, is what we are observing at a world scale.

We could state, that this globalized world we are living in at the turn of the century, is featured by a closer contact among those of us who live in it, thanks to the development of informatics, and technology. This also, as a paradox has separated us.

In cultural terms we could say that the feeling of world citizenship is growing every day. That our ownership feeling is not only about a specific local geographic site, anywhere from a hometown to a continent, it also includes the planet as a whole. Advances in technology in the last two decades have revolutionized the media, have made humanity be closer than ever. It is obvious that now at days it is easier to know what is going in the world compared with 20 years ago. This closeness not only has an influential effect on cultural consuming features, it is also constructed and reconstructed through the intertwining of multiple nets that exist worldwide, many of which are born from common interests or needs among individuals that could be separated thousand of miles apart.

It is true that we can not deny the existence of extreme cultural overlapping phenomena, and the fundamentalist tendencies in some parts of the world; like the ex Yugoslavia and Afghanistan.⁴ But these seem to be the less. In many other situations, the come back of the community (as a consequence of the weakening of the traditional role that the state has played as an agent of national adherence) has not produced extreme overlaid. Rather, it has led to the recognition of the existence of a wide plural variety of cultures in the numerous human societies. This has permitted us to become in contact with a great amount of cultural views and local realities (not only the national ones), and we are able to perceive the living existence of a great cultural mosaic in constant recreation of which we are also actors.

The world instead of shutting itself out, is opened up, and the explanations that value the phenomena of cultural globalization, seen from the view point of cultural imperialism, or becoming too "gringo" like, has less followers everyday. To this respect, Francis Pisani has distinguished two positions: one that parts from a single scheme were the model of US society is

extended, and another were there is room for variety and exchange, were the main issue is the worlds that open up.⁵ A more candid third focus is the constructing of a lone cultural being on the whole planet. This statement has already being criticized, among others, by Alain Touraine who states that: “the seducing idea of a world *melting pot* that would convert us into the citizens of a united world does not deserve either the enthusiasm or insults it receives so often...”⁶

If this cultural blender has not reached its goal as a creator of a single and only one culture (not even in a country like US), we can not believe it can be done on a world scale, were many cultures exist and their symbolic models are deep down (like roots from an old tree) in times and historic circumstances that result unaprehensible.

Anthropological studies specialized in the approach of local realities have shown us -an infinite number of times- that this spaces are far away from being totally homogeneous. They have made it clear that the manifestations of cultural variety are not only seen among human conglomerates but also in their interior; that this is not a single world, but several, were multiple faces and mentalities, interests and rivalries exist. Where we can find rich, poor and those in total misery. We can also find numerous streams of external cultural elements, that in more or less measure, are embodied by the people in a kind of communion that transforms them in a permanent way.⁷

The existence of this cultural diversity does not have to deny the common worries or the development of the feeling of world citizenship, in part due to a growing interest in environmental problems. This problems become a matter of global dimensions. This, for example, is the case, of the preoccupation that exists about phenomena such as the overheating of the Earth, changes in the ozone layer, and, among others, dose concerning the effects of nuclear radiation or toxic spills into the oceans.

Global-type worries are not reduced only to those concerning our environment. Economy (deeply knitted with power and politics), particularly the neoliberal model, keeps many people busy and preoccupied: not only businessmen and government but also those who have suffered the cost of macroestructural adjustments. In regard to this last group think, for example, about recent events that, without government or official backup, have been able to gather people of all continents and obtain the attention of many more.

We can mention, among many other issues, both intercontinental encounters convocated by the EZLN, one in July-August of 1996 in Chiapas, and the second one in July of 1997 in Spain. People gathered from several countries that culturally speaking could have very little in common. The opening ceremony speaks for itself

Today, thousands of different roads that come from different continents are here, in the mountains of southeastern Mexico, to bond their steps.

Today, thousands of words from five continents are quieted here, in the mountains of southeastern Mexico, to listen to one another and to hear themselves.

Today, thousands of fights from five continents are fought here, in the mountains of southeastern Mexico, for life and against death.

Today, thousands of colors of five continents are painted here, in the mountains of southeastern Mexico, to announce a tomorrow where acceptance and tolerance exist.

Today, thousands of hearts of five continents are lived here, in the mountains of southeastern Mexico, for humanity and against neoliberalism.

Today, thousands of human beings from five continents shout their own “it’s enough” here, in the mountains of southeastern Mexico. They shout its enough of conformism, enough of doing nothing, of cynicism, of egoism converted into a modern god.

Today, thousands of small worlds of five continents practice a principal here, in the mountains of southeastern Mexico. The principal of constructing a new and good world, that is, a world where are worlds are held.

Today, thousands of men and women of five continents begin here, in the mountains of southeastern Mexico, the first Intercontinental Encounter for Humanity and against Neoliberalism.

Brothers and sisters from all the world:

Welcome to the mountains of southeastern Mexico.

Welcome to this corner of the world where we are all equal because we are different.⁸

The development of the feeling of world citizenship is also due, on the other hand, to our reference and interest for others, and in a certain way to the widening of our own identities. Contact with this cultural plurality whose fountains arrive through multiple ways (for example cable TV, internet, movies and documentaries, VCR's and migratory movements, etc.) has provoked that through its recognition, societies tend to become more tolerant each day. The respect to difference is, by itself, one step ahead towards the individual transformation oriented to the development of more democratic daily practices.

None-the-less, the paradox of all this consist in the divorce that exist between the growing possibilities of having access to the culture and knowledge of the world and its inhabitants, regarding the increasing differences of material wellbeing on a worldwide basis. We have a growing feeling of belonging to a world that, on the other hand, is highly excluding and were the so called "transition towards democracy" featured by the slow opening of spaces to participate politically has not been able to translate into a widening of a substantial democracy; that is to say, in the growth of wellbeing and in the encouragement of more equal relations.

Inequality Growth

Despite worldwide advances in respect to health and education, these have proven to be uneven among countries and within them. Parallel to this, the existent gap between rich and poor has gained great proportions. Recent information published by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) signaled that today 86% of the world income is in the hands of the 20% wealthy population of the world. And 1.1% in the hands of the poorer 20%. 1300 million individuals survive on less than one dollar a day, that is one of every four inhabitants living in the world today.⁹ The 1996 Human Development Yearly Report elaborated by the UNDP informs that the world is living an accelerated polarization phase: today 70 underdeveloped countries have an income lower than what they had during the 1960-1970 period. This organization states that the difference of income between industrialized and underdeveloped countries has tripled between 1960 and 1993, passing from \$5.7 billion dollars to \$15.4 billion dollars.¹⁰

The majority of these excluded, live in the ex-colonies (and neo-colonies) that were appropriated in great measure by the powerful capitalist countries of today. As Eduardo Galeano points out, by those ex-colonies that in the international work division would specialize in loosing.¹¹

A few years back, one used to refer to the Latin-America lost decade. By this, we gave reference to the economic backing up that was lived during the eighties, and to the expansion of social inequality among the inhabitants of that subcontinent. The century is about to finish, practically nobody uses this concept anymore, mainly because many of the features of that decade are still present.

This could be explained in great part, by the enforcement of the neoliberal economic

model, in response to the crises to foreign debt and the exhaustion of the development model of substitute importation that was standard until then. This has modified substantially not only the world relations of production and labor, but also those that traditionally were held between society and state in Latin-America.

Along this period the mayor part of the economic indicators of social wellbeing fell. The prescriptions of the World Bank and other international finance organisms that have been imposed to the countries of that region (each one colored by the individual style of the government in turn)¹² have magnified poverty. The neoliberal restructuring that has being operating is characterized mainly by commercial liberalization, devaluation adjustments, the reduction of public expenditure, the privatization of the majority of state companies, the elimination of barriers to foreign investment, the elimination of aids and non productive credits, tax reforms and, among other things, the weakening of unions and the cheapening of salaries as the principal attraction for investment. The latter has meant bankruptcy of many small and middle firms, and increasing loss of the power acquiring wages,¹³ unemployment, public insecurity and, among other things, the scandalous growth of informal economy.¹⁴

The United Nations Economic Commission for Latin America (CEPAL) has calculated that up to 1997, the number of poor people in the subcontinent was around 210 million.¹⁵ This demonstrates who mainly has had to pay the cost of the macro economic adjustments put to practice.

We must make clear, none-the-less, that this sums have to be evaluated with caution, because these rise and fall according to analysts parameters. For the World Bank, according to which one is poor if one perceives less than one dollar a day, there existed in 1990, 133 million people living in poverty. On the other hand, the estimate done by the UNDP (that counts those who do not have a permanent income, rights to access free public services and aids, educational levels, and free time for education, leisure and rest) was, in 1990, 271 million Latin-Americans; that is to say, 61.8% of its population. Sum that represents more than 100% of that recognized by the World Bank.¹⁶

Paradoxically, today that the region as a whole lives an ambiance of major ideological and political plurality (always with the restraints pertaining the representative democracy) social unevenness has grown in an alarming way. That is why, in the face of an excluding and authoritative economic model, it becomes important to make research about the alternatives from below that could be building up. That is to say, in how through the construction of citizenship (local cultural or worldwide), the people build their right to belong to this world.

Limits of “democracy transition” in Latin America

Studies on the so called “democracy transition” in Latin-America have usually been limited to discussions that deal with the disappearance of dictatorships or military regimens, the opening of the electoral game to the political parties and a bigger transparency at the time of elections, as well as to the respect of electoral outcomes.

The truth is, that recent experiences in Latin America of electoral processes have permitted us to see that democratic issues can not be seen only in relation to the execution of the self-named “exemplary elections “ (for many of us still a cause of envy) or to the “satisfactory elections” (that only satisfy a few).

In spite of all this, it would be unjust to state that the changes in Latin- America during the last 30 years have meant little for democracy. How could we ignore the value of the fact of the

disappearance, at least till now, of the authoritarian regimens, typical of the sixties and seventies that were characterized, among other actions, by the closure that was imposed on the democratic spaces existing in the countries of this area?

How can we underestimate the significance of the fact that nowadays these countries are governed by civil authorities? The positive meaning of this facts cannot be argued.

Not because of this it can be presumed (although some governments would do so) that we have reached the ideal or “almost perfectible” (according to confessions of the modest politicians) democratic order.

How could we dissociate the issues pertaining politics from those regarding the economy when in the real world these spheres are not separated? How can we isolate the politic-politics from the issue of the economy policies, that is seen among other ways in the disparity of distribution and concentration of income? This is why we state that democracy issues are not associated only with the representative democracy field. It is in this sense, and no other, that we can talk about the unsatisfactory feeling that democracy has reached in our countries nowadays.

Redemocratization lived recently in Latin America, was obtained mainly through the representative democratic road. This, as mentioned by Atilio Borón, lead many to think that this opening was enough “to dissolve in the air certain structural capitalism problems”.¹⁷ Contrary to this, as it was exemplified before, the economic situation of large social sectors tended to deteriorate even more.

The big question pointed out by Borón is “consider to what point democracy can consolidate and progress in a picture of generalized sinking into poverty like the one that is now affecting the newborn south-American democracies, and that is eating up the substantive citizenship of the majorities, precisely when its political emancipation is being praised”.¹⁸ We congratulate ourselves with the electoral results, but we deny the possibility of changing the course of economic policy. Government and multinational finance organism speeches (that have given impulse to the neoliberal reform policy) are immovable in this respect.¹⁹

These kind of reflections have lead many to question the romantic vision of democracy, which seems to have forgotten that more that one third of Latin-American population is outside the market and the growth benefits of the actual economic development model. Figures that should be taken with reserve because in some countries like Brazil, Guatemala, Haiti, Honduras, Nicaragua and Venezuela poverty reaches more than 70% of its population.²⁰ What can be said about Mexico where, according to World Bank data, 32% of its population lives with less than one dollar daily, but 75% of its population suffers some degree of poverty.²¹ A nation, like many others, where economic adjustments have deepened the inequality in the distribution of income.²²

Voting does not necessarily mean to choose, and much less to be represented by those who, as opposed to the majority of the votants, can be considered as citizens. How can we talk about citizenship when the poverty and undernourishment level does not let us speak about political conscience? When to suffrage can mean the response to TV stimuli²³ or to other type of interventions that, with the manipulation of hunger or planted terror in the non fertile land of poverty, purchase or kidnap the vote?

What viability at a median term can the model of economic development have, that because of its individualistic nature (orientated mainly to the adquisition of fast profits) shows itself to be excluding political and socialwise and environmentally not sustainable?

What possibility in democratic terms can a formal representation system have, where the

supposedly represented are absent from the sphere of decision and where, in fact many of these are contrary to their own interests?

Is it possible (and even more so now with the widening margins and the loss of economic and political autonomy of the national states) to think in the existence of a harmonic relation between democracy, economic growth and social equity?

Are we advancing towards the construction of a new development model that does not leave abandoned to its fate, almost 70% of the world population that lives in the ex-colonies (and neo-colonies) that were appropriated in Africa, America and Asia, in good part by the flourishing developed capitalist countries of today?

The trend, at least from a global standpoint, does not seem to go in that direction, as Norbert Lechner has pointed out for Latin-American countries, “...they face the following problem: on one side their social economic development depends on a competitive insertion in the most dynamic fields of the world market; on the other hand the opening towards the exterior deepens even more, the already serious social unevenness into the interior of the Latin American society”.²⁴

How can it be thought, in an alternative and integral processes of economic development without the advance capitalist countries assuming their responsibility and changing, in consequence, their actual patterns of consume and their economic and commercial relation with the other countries?

Without any doubt, a good part of these answers will have to come from another source (of those silenced, of those without a face, of the simple and ordinary women and men); that is to say from the discourse (seen as a transformation practice) of the others, of those that in all the corners in the planet -in contrast to the professionals of formal politics- have not received in an authentic way the benefits of this type of practice; that is to say, the majority.

This is why it is important to glimpse the way the civil society has been responding and the alternatives that in this direction it has been building

Citizenship Building and Democracy from Below

Maybe it has been from the world of urban social movements where there has been more advances, in academic terms, in the study of the affairs between government and territorial based social organizations. At least in the sense of worrying about what the building of political participation alternatives from below could mean.²⁵

Castells has pointed out that the citizen movements in the world developed in the sixties and seventies derived from three axis of fundamental problems: 1) The struggle for goods and services without which millions of people could not have had access to the right to live in the city. 2) The construction of a cultural and social identity territorially based, and, 3) The idea of local autonomy, democratic forms of reconstruction in the exercise of power, and the state administration based on the capacity of the citizens participation, the presence or state organism from a local level and the confirmation of autonomy regarding administration.²⁶

Local spaces have always played an important role in the participation and construction of citizenship. This has been more marked recently due to state reforms that have proposed changes in relation to the different spheres of governmental power. Globalization has tended to thin national state's cohesion role, and also some of its functions. As Borja and Castells have mentioned: “on one hand, their competitions are not enough to control global movements and their organization is most of the time too stiff to adapt itself to the constant changes of the world

system. On the other hand, the plurality of territorial and cultural identities that want to be represented by the national states enhance processes that are increasingly conflictive and, in the end tend to make illegitimate the idea of national representation".²⁷ In this conditions -the authors point out- local and regional governments are emerging worldwide, like more flexible entities, bonded to their identities, potentially capable of negotiating a continuing adaptation to variable geometry of power flowage.²⁸

Through the constitution of local association nets, it is possible to put more pressure on central or federal governments so they will decentralize mayor resources to the localities. And also, this type of associations at a national or continental level could enhance benefits with multiple potentials.

On this, the development and encouragement of citizen participation and it's organization is important, but in a direct and an autonomous way: without control, without manipulation on part of the local government authorities.

As Jelin has pointed out, the practice of citizenship and that of the struggles that go along with it, in it's road towards the restoration of it's rights, bears experiences that "involve the reconstruction of state institutions and the transformation of civil society institutions. It also implies the dilapidation of antidemocratic forms in employing power (authoritarian, corporative and or based on pure force), and also a change in rules that govern the distribution of power, the recognition of rights in actual standing and the legitimacy of social actors".²⁹ It implies the transformation of submission attitudes into real citizen claims and practices, because citizenship has to do with the abolition of privileges and with the creation and defense of universal rights.³⁰

It is worthwhile to ask ourselves about the ways in how from below alternatives of democratic participation of substantial type could be being created, or the ways in which these could be recreating our representative democracy, and also about the coexistence of both of these, and, in all case, -following Fernando Mires- with basis on such coexistence, the possibility that "a potential order of another policy could be rising",³¹ the construction of another democracy were we can all fit.

The "other" policy -subcomander Marcos points out-

seeks a way to organize itself to "turn around" political parties policy logic, it seeks to construct a new connection of the nation with it's parts (...) politics today are a question of privileged few, to democratize it does not mean enlarging this groups or change them for others, but to free the kidnapping policy in which it is supported by the politicians and "taking it below", towards who should command and in who sovereignty reigns: the citizens. The zapatist's "command obeying", implies this turnabout of politics and it is a process, not a decree. It is, to say with zapatist's "modesty", a revolution that makes a revolution possible.³²

All seems to indicate -Pablo González Casanova points out- "that the construction of the actual new world implies the construction of a new world parting from civil society, the world of a democracy for everyone, plural, participative and representative. Beyond the classic concepts of reform or revolution (...) from the civil society made from many civil societies, it will be constructed, defended and it will implant the right to construct a world that is more just and free".³³

From the different disciplines that form part of the human and social sciences it looks more worrisome every time to account for this type of phenomena; much of which has to do with the study of the coming and going movements between the local and the global in the construction of citizenship. In how to glimpse how the daily efforts of those who intend to invent their own history, could be, at the same time, the foundations of a new world being constructed.

- ¹ I would like thank Irma L. Ceja for her aid in translating this paper.
- ² “Detrás de nosotros estamos ustedes”. Words of welcome from the EZLN General Command in the voice of Mayor Ana María during the inauguration act of the “First Intercontinental Encounter for Humanity and against Neoliberalism”. July 27, 1996. Taken from *Crónicas Intergalácticas EZLN. Primer Encuentro Intercontinental por la Humanidad y contra el Neoliberalismo. Chiapas, México, 1996*. México: Planeta Tierra, 1997 (segunda edición), p.25
- ³ *La Jornada*, México, May 21, 1998, p. 13.
- ⁴ A few days ago Afghanistan’s Government gave the population a two week term to destroy TV sets, antennas, tapes and VCRs that had survived the prohibition that is imposed upon its use since a year and a half ago. This Measure was ordered by the Ministry for Promotion of Virtue and Vice Suppression and its execution was performed by the Religious Police of that country. Taken from Pedro Miguel. “Un país contra la tele”. *La Jornada*, México, July 14, 1998, p. 36.
- ⁵ *La Jornada*, México, July 8, 1998, p. 25.
- ⁶ Alain Touraine. *¿Podremos vivir juntos? Iguales y diferentes*. Buenos Aires: Fondo de Cultura Económica, 1997, p. 10.
- ⁷ Jorge Ceja Martínez. *Andar haciendo política. La democracia desde abajo y el vínculo local -global en el caso del PRONASOL*. Guadalajara: El Colegio de Jalisco-Universidad de Guadalajara, 1997.
- ⁸ “Detrás de nosotros estamos ustedes”. *Op. cit.* Pp. 27-28.
- ⁹ *La Jornada*, México, June 21, 1997, p. 1.
Based on data taken from *Forbes* magazine in its July 28, 1997 edition. It is clearly perceived the huge contrast between the income of the richest and poorest in the planet. Just the wealth of the first sixty multimillionaires (of its list of 200 people) was excessively superior to the income estimated with which 25% of the poorest population of the planet will survive during 1998.
- ¹⁰ *La Jornada*, México, July 12, 1996, p. 57.
- ¹¹ Eduardo Galeno. *Las venas abiertas de América Latina*. México : Siglo XXI Editores, 1986, (cuadrigesimaséptima edición).
- ¹² The World Bank recently stated that Mexico has obstacles that do not allow the healthy development of the financial system. Such as the inefficiency of the Judicial System, corruption and the scarce commitment to make law be respected. *La Jornada*, México, June 30, 1998, p. 1.
- ¹³ Take for example Mexico’s case. According to studies performed by the Centro de Análisis Multidisciplinario de la Facultad de Economía de la Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México, between December 1987 and April 1998 the cumulative loss of the purchase power of the minimum wage was 72.2%. During President Ernesto Zedillo’s administration the minimum wage has lost 41.2% of its purchasing capacity. *La Jornada*, México, May 28, 1998, p. 24.
- ¹⁴ According to estimates of the International Work Organization, 84% of the new jobs that were created in Latin America between 1990 and 1995 belonged to the informal sector.
- ¹⁵ CEPAL/ONU. *La brecha de la equidad. América Latina, el Caribe y la Cumbre Social*. Santiago, 1997.
- ¹⁶ Julio Boltvink’s information cited by Rosalba Carrasco and Francisco Hernández. “Tres visiones de la pobreza en América Latina”. *La Jornada*, México, October 4, 1993, p. 51.
- ¹⁷ Atilio Borón. “La transición hacia la democracia en América Latina: problemas y perspectivas”. México: *El Colegio de México-Centro de Estudios Sociológicos*, 1993, p. 121.
- ¹⁸ *Ibid.* p. 122.
- ¹⁹ Lawrence Summers, Treasure subsecretary of the United States of America who visited Mexico after federal elections took place on July 6, 1997, -where parties opposed to Partido Revolucionario Institucional won the majority in the congress and, with Cuauhtémoc Cárdenas, the government of the Federal District-, commented to that respect that Mexico had reached its adulthood with regard to the democracy issue, but that it should avoid changes in its economic policies.
- ²⁰ Gabriela Selser. “Pobreza en América Latina. Otra década perdida”. *El Día Latinoamericano*, México: núm. 119, October 4, 1993. p. 4.
- ²¹ *La Jornada*, México, July 12, 1998, p. 1.

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- ²² The Banco de México has pointed out how of the 16 millions 195 711 bank accounts that existed in the country up to June of 1997, 44.9% of these (7 million 271 942 bank accounts) had an average of deposits for 229 pesos (little more than \$20 US dollars), 0.23% of the total of the money put in the banks. On the other hand, 40, 959 bank accounts, that is to say 0.25% of the total of existing accounts, concentrated 68.3% of the national bank deposits. Just the personal fortune of Mexican Carlos Slim (6.6 billion dollars, according to *Forbes* magazine) is equal to the combined income of 17 million of poor Mexicans. Taken from *La Jornada*, Mexico, July 12, 1998, p. 4; and *Memoria* magazine, núm. 113, July 1998, p. 52.
- ²³ Francisco Zapata. “Democracia, corporativismo, elecciones y desigualdad social en América Latina”. *Modernización económica*, pp. 11-35.
- ²⁴ Norbert Lechner. “El debate Estado y mercado”. *Nueva Sociedad*. Caracas: Editorial Nueva Sociedad, núm. 121, September-October, 1992, p. 84.
- ²⁵ Even though at times “desde abajo” (from below) and “de los de abajo” (of the ones below) is used indistinctly, it is not always that way. Pablo González Casanova in the “Por qué la democracia de los de abajo”, preface that he makes for the book *La democracia de los de abajo en México* (coordinated by Jorge Alonso and Juan Manuel Ramírez Sáiz) points out to this regard that “los de abajo” and “de los de abajo” are two expressions similar and different. Both involve a democracy project with the people. Only that in the first case, the desire to build a democracy from below is accentuated and it intends to construct it in all the country starting from below. In the second case, what is punctuated, is the construction of democracy inside the own peoples organization and from there, at the same time or immediately after, it is sought to construct government and state democracy”. Mexico: La Jornada Ediciones/ Consejo Electoral del Estado de Jalisco/Centro de Investigaciones Interdisciplinarias en Humanidades de la UNAM, 1997, p. 9.
- Personally I prefer to use the concept “desde abajo” because I consider that “de los de abajo” can imply a more classicist tone (even beyond that which the same authors that use the concept would wish). I consider that when talking about the construction of democracy from below we consider a study object that sails past a universe limited by its social class. Because it permits us to talk about actors on a local scale, where resources and different levels of power and interests could coexist inside the social classes. “Desde abajo” are the political and social relations that are constructed daily among the actors (individuals, neighbor organizations, town quarters, the church, bureaucracy, political parties, etc.) in a specific territorial space: micro, local or from a region not isolated or independent of the global.
- ²⁶ Manuel Castells. “Lo local y lo global. El papel de los movimientos vecinales en el Nuevo Orden Mundial”. *El Salvador en construcción*. San Salvador: Editorial Ámbitos de la Democracia, núm. 11, August 1993, pp. 6-20.
- ²⁷ Jordi Borja y Manuel Castells. *Local y Global. La gestión de las ciudades en la era de la información*. Madrid: United Nations for Human Settlements (Habitat) y Editorial Taurus, 1997, p. 31.
- ²⁸ *Idem*.
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