Mexico and the global problematic: power relations, knowledge and communication in neoliberal Mexico
Gómez-Llata Cázares, E.G.

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Chapter Six

NEOLIBERAL MEXICO: POLITICS OF COMMUNICATION

This chapter presents the main political, economic, and cultural developments of the last three decades in Mexico, and demonstrates how individuals, organisations, and institutions have participated in these processes. Special emphasis is placed on communication technologies. The intention is to describe the strategies employed by different social assemblages to reach their aims in contemporary Mexico. This information will be useful to correlate processes and assemblages, and in this form allow important understanding about the current state of affairs in Mexico. The chapter is divided into four sections: 1) The End of Nationalism; 2) The Lost Decade; 3) Rampant Neoliberalism; and 4) New Millennium: Lost Decade II.

The End of Nationalism

During the 1970s the political turmoil in the Middle East and the use of oil as a weapon in the Israeli-Arab conflict affected the international price of oil (1). This situation translated into great benefits for the Mexican oil industry and the national economy until 1980, when oil prices began to drop dramatically. To understand this properly, it is worthwhile to explain the period preceding this shift.

Luis Echeverría, a president known for his populist politics, had increased both public and private national debt during the final years of his administration, taking the external debt of the country from a rather manageable 6,000 million dollars in 1970 to a crushing 20,000 million dollars at the end of his presidential period in 1976. Moreover, unemployment and other circumstances such as social and political repression also took place, which put Mexico in a fragile economic and political situation before the arrival of José López Portillo to the Mexican presidency in 1976.

López Portillo ‘inherited’ a country which was not in its best financial and political shape. Nevertheless, he took over the presidential office when the possibility to apply different economic policies to stabilise the Mexican economy were increasing, especially propelled by the economic potential of high international oil prices and a recently discovered oil source in the Gulf of Mexico in 1976 (the Cantarell Field). During most of López Portillo’s presidency (1976 and 1982) Mexico enjoyed great economic growth propelled by beneficial conditions in the international oil market and the international political disputes around it. López Portillo decided to rely on these circumstances to sustain his administration and its expenses with the expectation that the wealth created by oil exports would continue indefinitely. At some point, his discourse became inflamed.
by a political rhetoric and demagoguery notorious for its exaggerated tone. Sentences such as “prepare to manage abundance” became commonplace in his annual State of the Nation address, while oil prices maintained high rates to the end of the 1970s.

In this political context of the 1970s, the commercial radio and television industry grew in importance and notoriety. In 1973, Telesistema Mexicano, the Mexican media company in charge of three channels for open national television, purchased Channel 8, a state owned television channel dedicated to cultural communication. The merger formed the powerful media group Televisión Vía Satélite (Televisa) (Satellite Television). This media group was important in Mexico for its social reach and content distribution, but also for its capacity for program production. This rendered it superior to public television and radio, producing the internationally acknowledged Mexican soap operas. In comparison to a rather underdeveloped public media with its inconspicuous programming, Televisa managed to grow steadily, also providing the iconographic popular idols that shaped the identity of Mexican popular culture in the second part of the twentieth century. Furthermore, in 1974 Televisa was granted the definitive concession to operate the first cable network television system in Mexico: Cablevisión. This concession only operated in Mexico City, but increased the amount of television channels owned and managed by Televisa.

The relations between Televisa and the Mexican government, however, were not unproblematic. In 1969 the government of President Díaz Ordaz had set a twenty-five per cent tax over the profits made by Telesistema Mexicano. In this regard, it is important to mention that the radio electric spectrum (RES) is part of the public domain and therefore must be administrated by the state, which expects economic reciprocity when the RES is economically exploited by private entities. During the period of President Díaz Ordaz, however, it was believed that technological developments should be stimulated without being hindered by taxation, therefore the regulation was not fully enforced. The chairs of Televisa approached the government with the expectation of formulating a more convenient tax law, which would ultimately represent the economic interests of both parties. Televisa and the government reached an agreement and renegotiated the proposed taxation: the government agreed to suspend Televisa’s economic payments on the condition that Televisa gave up 12.5 per cent of the total broadcast time for government purposes. This 12.5 per cent of ‘government owned’ broadcast time, also known as fiscal time, sealed the merger of interests between private media and government. Looking carefully, this was a strategy to dispossess the public from the economic profit made by the use of the RES. This resulted in the control of media in Mexico, and represents the creation of a mass media broadcast and infrastructure in the interests of the government.

This fiscal time became an essential part of Luis Echeverría’s project for the Subsecretaria
de Radio Disfusión (Sub-Ministry for Radio Broadcasting) created in 1970. This organisation, a sub-secretariat of the Ministry of Communications, was in charge of the production of radio and television programs broadcasted during the so-called fiscal time, as well as in other governmental ‘spaces’ in government owned radio and television. In 1977, with López Portillo as president, this entity changed into Dirección General de Radio, Televisión y Cinematografía (RTC) (General Directorate of Radio, Television and Cinematography), and became an organ under the supervision of the Secretaría de Gobernación (Ministry of the Interior). The RTC, no longer responsible for programs production, became the organ in charge of censoring the contents in radio, cinema, and television, both public and private.

In the long run, one could say that these developments resulted in rather negative management and poor administration during López Portillo’s presidency over communication technologies’ potential. López Portillo’s formulation of the role of the government in regard to communication showed a true involution when compared to former administrations. In spite of their own problems, some public concerns about mass media had been placed ‘on the table,’ and politically worked out. One example is the fiscal time agreement, understood as a means of reciprocity with the public domain by the private television broadcasters for their use of the RES and the economic benefits gained. A clear sign of the decomposition in the government’s orientation towards the potential of communication technologies was the appointment of López Portillo’s sister, Margarita López Portillo, as the RTC’s director in 1977. Margarita López Portillo’s mission was very much focused on protecting her brother, the president, from any negative treatment or opinion via private or public broadcast stations. However, after decades of an authoritarian regime, the most common practice with regard to journalism in Mexico was and still is self-censorship.

The distinction made by the government between language and technology (the technolinguistic social assemblage) and the changes it reveals during the period between 1976 and 1982, opened a heated debate around media uses and utility, which eventually would produce a bifurcation of opinions into two opposite positions with regard to the public media apparatuses, in particular concerning the situation of public (state owned) television. There was the position advocated by the establishment of a system of national television, which was expected to compete with the private media, namely with the growing Televisa group. The opposition to this was based on a proposal that aspired to set public (state owned) media as entirely independent from private media. The American media model inspired the former position, while the latter came close to the British model embodied by the BBC (2).

The positions were rather clear-cut. Luis de Llano Palmer supported the private oriented
model, expounding the importance of advertisements and commercialisation, not only for private television, but also for channels belonging to state television. Not surprisingly, the model that de Llano was endorsing at the time also seemed to represent some sort of competition to Televisa. One of the major advantages in this model rested on the proposal to establish a state owned channel which would be self-sufficient, and would not have to rely on federal budgets and subsidies.

On the other side was Pablo Marantes, currently a professor of Political Sciences at the National University in Mexico, who supported the position of a state owned public television network. The aims of such a model and the objectives of a state owned television network diverged significantly from the views of commercial broadcasting. The conviction was that a state owned medium of communication had to be supported financially by the state as a mechanism to avoid dependency on commercial forces, and thus was a means to self-regulate the intellectual, ideological, social, and cultural contents of public television. Contrary to the views of Luis de Llano, Pablo Marantes fostered the conviction that since state media had a different aim than that of commercial media, its system of administration and operability needed to fulfil very specific aims beyond mere entertainment. As a criticism to Televisa, Marantes claimed that an agenda with overt entertainment purposes and dependent on advertising would compromise the integrity of public media by filling its transmission spaces with programming that nevertheless effectively attracted large audiences.

This debate is best exemplified by the way in which Channel 13, a public (state owned) channel, was managed. During that same time period, Carmen Millán was the Director of Channel 13, Luis de Llano Palmer was Sub-Director of Production, and Marantes Sub-Director of Administration. This line up of divergent positions inflamed a dispute over the proper orientation for Channel 13, which was not definitively resolved. Later on, Marantes and de Llano Palmer were removed from their charges. De Llano Palmer was sent to another parallel government office appointed to develop a television and radio production facility the so-called Pronarte, while Marantes became director of Channel 11, another state owned channel. The situation of Channel 13 remained vague until 1982, when Marantes briefly returned as Director just before he took charge of Corporación Mexicana de Radio y Television S.A. (Mexican Corporation for Radio and Television), a position granted by president Miguel de la Madrid. In 1983 it became evident that the many changes within Channel 13 had an underlying motive: to commercialise the orientation of the channel as a way to make it self-sufficient. This effort was undermined by widespread corruption and ambiguity in its administration, something that ultimately led to its failure, forcing a deep restructuring of state owned media.

The relation between Mexican society at large and the technolinguistic social assemblage
reveals some meaningful interactions and technology and language differentiations during this time. The first example of this type of relation, made by interpersonal networks other than those pertaining to the private sector or governments, was Radio Huayacocotla, a radio station concentrated on education, in particular for primary schools in impoverished areas of the state of Veracruz. This initiative was sponsored and organised by a group of Jesuit educators under the association *Fomento Cultural y Educativo A.C.* (Cultural and Educational Foundation). Nonetheless, the first project for a communitarian radio was *Radio Teocelo*. First launched in 1965, this station initially transmitted its programs in the coffee plantations in the central region of Veracruz for two to four hours on a daily basis. The initiative originated when a small group of inhabitants from the rural town of Teocelo became interested in the use of radio for local communication and information. Together they created a civil association known as *Centro de Promoción Social y Cultural A.C.* (CEPROSOC – Centre for Social and Cultural Promotion), creating the project known as *Radio Cultural* (Cultural Radio), later renamed *Radio Teocelo*, aired on the radio station XEYT. During the early 1970s, CEPROSOC encountered difficulties in keeping up transmission; in particular, lack of money and proper equipment prevented the XEYT station from remaining on air. This caused the Ministry of Communication to issue a ‘warning’ that forced the station to either normalise its situation or face extinction. Antonio Homero Jiménez, one of the founders of CEPROSOC, was determined to avoid the disappearance of XEYT.

Homero Jiménez eventually contacted *Fomento Cultural y Educativo A.C.*, the organisation affiliated with *Radio Huayacocotla*, which had relevant contacts with the government. Jiménez used this contact as a way to avoid cancellation of the permission of XEYT. At this time, XEYT changed its name to *Radio Cultural Campesina* (Peasant Cultural Radio), a name that reflected an audience composed primarily of the peasantry population in the region. This change, together with the donation of upgraded equipment, enabled the station to increase its transmission potential from two to fourteen hours per day. The situation facilitated the station to exert greater impact on the local population while guaranteeing its survival by integrating the population that benefited from the program, who began to actively participate and cooperate with the project.

The success of the merger, the *synthesis* between CEPROSOC and *Fomento Cultural y Educativo*, materialised in the formation of an assemblage known as *Asociación Veracruzana de Comunicadores Populares A.C.* (AVERCOP – Association of Popular Communication of Veracruz). Despite the importance and novelty of the AVERCOP project in Mexico, and considering the urgent need for this type of communication provision and forums, AVERCOP was a small oasis in a desert of commercial and officially co-opted mediums of communication, while *Radio Teocelo* reached just a small audience. It took considerable time for this type of initiative to
influence other community radio broadcasters in other regions of the country, and multiply the population of social assemblages in the form of communitarian radio stations.

The Lost Decade
At this point we have to make a detour and return to the administration of López Portillo. As said previously, prior to the economic and financial crack up, the income from oil revenue and international credit certainly translated into substantial advancements in some fields. One of these fields was employment – between 1977 and 1982 approximately two million jobs were created – while electricity supplies doubled. This echoed a vigorous annual increase in the industrial gross domestic product (GDP) of nine per cent. But this ‘bright side’ of López Portillo’s nationalist project was overshadowed by what would become the worst economic crisis that Mexico had so far experienced.

The problems for his administration began in 1980, when the errors of economic strategies based on oil revenues started to become evident. But it was not until 1982, at the end of his presidential period, that the crisis became unavoidable. Staggering inflation, which made the Mexican peso plummet from twelve pesos per dollar to more than one hundred pesos per dollar, sent the Mexican state into severe economic crisis. The weakening of the Mexican state due to this crisis is considered the legacy of López Portillo’s corrupt administration (3), which is also known as the last of the ‘nationalist’ presidential administrations of Mexico.

When the price of oil began to drop in 1980, the enormous debt acquired by the Mexican government revealed its true proportions. During the years of oil abundance Mexico was considered a credit subject for the US and other international financial institutions, with millions of dollars injected via investment into Mexico, the famous petrodollars. However, productive investments were neglected and unplanned, something that led to a political vacuum, and to the industrial and political corruption so akin to López Portillo’s administration. To give a clear idea about the cost and dimension of the problem, in 1977 the external national debt added up to 22,000 million dollars, which rose to 76,000 million dollars in 1982. The ‘lost decade’ of the 1980s in Mexico is marked by the external debt crisis promoted from both inside and outside Mexico (the latter associated in particular to the Volker Shock of 1981, where the US raised interest on all its foreign loans to a crushing 21 per cent). Mexican politics and the shape of the exterior relations of Mexico as a country in the international arena were largely determined by this debt (Harvey: 2007).

On 1 September 1982, President José López Portillo presented his last annual State of the Nation address (Informe de Gobierno) to the Mexican Congress. That day, López Portillo publicly announced the nationalisation of the banking system in Mexico. This economic-political decision
was an interlude to one of the most poignant economic crises in Mexico’s modern history. The underlying economic condition that led up to this was the bankruptcy of the Mexican economy. The instability of international oil prices, in combination with the inefficient political administration prevalent in Mexico at the time, contributed to a chain of events that left the country in a precarious situation. The bank nationalisation in 1982 was a palliative solution to the crisis, and an attempt to prevent the so-called *saca dolares* (4) (‘dollar smugglers’) from transferring much of the national (and private) wealth out of the country and ‘disappearing’ it into foreign bank accounts.

Miguel de la Madrid, López Portillo’s secretary of budget and planning and successor as president, faced a country immersed in an extremely delicate social, political, and economic environment when he took office in December 1982. The economic crisis that struck Mexico at the end of López Portillo’s administration in the early 1980s, which is commonly attributed to widespread corruption, negligent policies, and generalised profligacy, presented extremely high demands for the incoming president. With enormous external debt, oil prices dropping dramatically, and the PRI experiencing its lowest rates of acceptance, it seemed to herald imminent social crisis. This crisis would ultimately result in a cycle of social upheavals and political violence that intensified the experience of the global problematic in Mexico.

In order to control the economic crisis of 1982, de la Madrid shifted from the nationalist model of development and administration towards neoliberal policies characterised by cuts in public expenses, the reduction of the state apparatus, and the opening up of the internal market to international competition, much to the dismay of nationalist counterparts accustomed to state protection. Miguel de la Madrid implemented some of the first political and economic systems to endorse a decrease in state influence over political and industrial agendas. As part of these policies, state companies and assets began to be dismantled, privatised, or restructured. At the same time Mexico entered the GATT (5).

For de la Madrid’s administration, economic change reflected drastic reductions in public investments and other expenses as a measure to repay the already exorbitant external debt. In a tragic chain of events that only made matters worse, on the morning of September 19, 1985, a powerful earthquake struck Mexico City, devastating large areas of the city, especially the historical city centre, and leaving the capital and the entire country facing an aftermath of tremendous proportions. After the disaster unleashed by the earthquake, the local and federal governments were unable to provide the necessary relief to the affected population. The government’s notorious incapacity to act in coherence with the tragedy pushed society at large to realise urgent aid by itself. Unpaid, untrained, and unorganised, Mexican society did what the government could not: dealing with the emergency and starting the reconstruction (Wolfgang Sachs: 1999).
On the economic front, in 1986 Mexican oil prices dropped a dramatic 50 per cent, leaving de la Madrid’s government unable to engage in any serious programs for recovery. Forced by these extreme conditions, de la Madrid decided to give in to the international interests of Washington: the IMF, the World Bank, and the US treasury. In order to renegotiate the external debt, de la Madrid’s administration fell under the control of international financial institutions. The implications of this went beyond mere compromised budget assignations for internal expenditure to initiate what has come to be known as the first technocratic administration in Mexico. Not surprisingly, the dire straits undergone by Mexican populations during the 1980s produced what has been termed the lost decade; a decade characterised by virtually no economic growth and paralysed markets with rampant unemployment rates. This would lead to the uneasy 1990s with all its violent social uprisings, increasing crime rates, notorious political assassinations and all sorts of national scandals.

As a result of the dire crisis in 1982, the population began to develop a growing resistance to the political system it had inherited from the Revolution of 1910, namely the PRI. During the late 1970s the revolutionary model began to show signs of exhaustion, and the particular socio-political conditions of the decade made it clear that it had to change, reform its precepts, or disappear. As mentioned before, during de la Madrid’s term – or as it is known in Mexico, sexenio (6) – economic growth came to a halt, real income dropped by 40 per cent, annual inflation rose to a staggering 160 per cent, and a great deal of government jobs were lost without the private sector replacing them. Unsurprisingly, signs of the national crisis began to show their effects inside the PRI. One of these signs was the creation of a new political party Partido de la Revolución Democrática or PRD (Democratic Revolution Party) in 1987. This party represented an internal division within the monolithic party system born in 1910.

The candidates in the presidential election in 1988 were Carlos Salinas de Gortari for the PRI, Cuahutémoc Cárdenas for the PRD, and Manuel Clouthier for Partido Acción Nacional or PAN (National Action Party). Salinas was assigned as candidate for the presidential election by President de la Madrid by the dedazo (7), a known practice in Mexican politics and particularly within the PRI party system, where the outgoing president selects his successor. Contrary to previous presidential elections, when public sentiments had been relatively peaceful, public discontent rose, producing strong political opposition against the government and in particular against the PRI. The stronger contender was Cuahutémoc Cárdenas, the political and moral leader of the new PRD, while Manuel Clouthier, the representative of the conservative PAN, also enjoyed support. Despite the fact that the final result of the 1988 presidential election reflected a meagre triumph for the PRI party, the population and the opposition became aware, and acknowledged, that this triumph had been the result of a cynical electoral fraud conducted by the PRI state system. In
the end, Salinas took office in December 1988.

With Carlos Salinas in office, one of the main aims of his interpersonal networks of economic experts working for government institutions became the reinforcement of very specific policies supposed to make government industries and assets more efficient, while attempting to diminish the ‘size’ and the importance of the state within the national economy. This new political agenda represented great challenges for Mexico, including, of course, the state owned public communication infrastructure. The first signs of the impact of this turn in economic orientation within the Mexican government were formulated by Miguel de la Madrid in 1985, and it impacted the identity of the technolinguistic social assemblage in Mexico.

**Rampant Neoliberalism**

Salinas’ first political and economic ‘moves,’ in addition to the negotiations with the PAN and PRD to cover up the electoral fraud, were sophisticated, allowing him to enforce his economic program and state reforms, many of them with a neoliberal profile. An example of his policies is the case of privatisation. In 1988, at the end of de la Madrid’s administration, the Mexican state owned more than 1,000 companies. This number declined to only 70 companies in 1993, at the end of Salinas’ presidency. The rationale behind Salinas’ privatisation program was to make profits from selling off expensive or inefficient state owned companies in order to acquire the necessary resources to finance and subsidise poignant economic and social needs that had risen after decades of economic stagnation (e.g. *Solidaridad*, a government program to support impoverished areas).

At the beginning of Salinas’ administration, the situation appeared to be pointing towards rapid and much needed progress; annual inflation was reduced from more than 100 per cent to less than 3 per cent in 1993, growth increased from less than 1 per cent between 1985 and 1988, to 3 per cent between 1989 and 1993. The message behind these facts and figures was clear: Salinas was handling the political and economic crisis that emerged in the late 1980s, in particular during the 1988 electoral fraud, in relatively effective ways. His administrations proclaimed a complete success both nationally and internationally. The external debt was renegotiated to manageable levels; agreement over NAFTA (8) was ratified and set on track, and an apparently successful privatisation program created economic revenue that stabilised the Mexican economy and attracted foreign investors and international financial capital. Mexico returned to the international scenario with a renewed sense of stability.

Nevertheless, and with the advantage of hindsight, this apparent success was nothing more than an illusion. As had happened before with López Portillo’s presidency, this illusionary path towards rapid development came to a bitter end during the last year of Salinas’ presidency. The first
sign of the emerging process of instability was the uprising of the *Ejército Zapatista de Liberación Nacional* (EZLN – National Liberation Zapatista Army) on December 31, 1993, hours before NAFTA came into effect. The uprising was an open protest against the neoliberal system endorsed by Salinas and the technocratic revolution behind him. The reforms made by the Salinas administration in the Mexican political Constitution, in articles 27 about land property and 123 about labour rights, to accommodate the requirements of the new NAFTA agreements, justified the unrest.

Furthermore, a few weeks before Salinas left office in January 1994, economic crisis once again became unavoidable and undeniable. This crisis, which grew to global proportions, was at least as serious as the one of 1982, receiving the appellative *el error de Diciembre* (the December mistake) (9). The crisis was propelled by national as well as international events. Internal turmoil and instability were complemented by internationally high interest rates and the taking away of immense financial resources from Mexican institutions due to the uncertain conditions, all in a matter of weeks. This financial phenomenon was similar in its effect to the one produced by *saca dolares* during the 1982 economic crisis.

The characteristic feeling of optimism that reigned during Salinas’ administration turned into disappointment and distress. On January 1, 1994, the armed forces of the EZLN took over military bases and government offices in the southern state of Chiapas. The apparent peace and development portrayed by Salinas’ discourse was exposed as fallacious and chimerical. Mexico was not ‘at peace,’ and the whole neoliberal project was scrutinised, especially as the Zapatistas’ claim for social justice resonated greatly within society at large.

The EZLN uprising was not, however, the only political problem to destabilise Mexico in Salinas’ last year in office. Two political assassinations contributed to real crisis inside the Mexican political assemblage that was apparently renewed and consolidated with the PRD as political opposition. On March 23, 1994, Luis Donaldo Colosio Murrieta (the presidential candidate for the PRI) was assassinated in Tijuana during his presidential campaign. Colosio Murrieta had been appointed (or rather chosen by the traditional *dedazo presidencial*, which, despite some democratic evolution within the party during the 1990s, was still exercised by Salinas) to become Salinas’ successor. Without a clear motive and without a clearly identified culprit for this murder, many theories have pointed in the direction of particular powerful PRI political groups or interpersonal networks within the PRI party assemblage.

The signs of instability were compounded months later with a series of political assassinations that only worsened an already unstable political environment. On September 28, 1994, a second political assassination shocked Mexico again; this time the victim was Salinas’
brother in law José Francisco Ruiz Massieu, who was serving as the Secretary General of the PRI party. Ruiz Massieu’s assassination was also never fully clarified, but was attributed to Salinas’ brother Raul Salinas de Gortari. Latter he was sentenced to prison by Salinas’ successor Ernesto Zedillo Ponce de León.

The investigations of the assassinations were contaminated with irregularities and oddities. After the assassination of Ruiz Massieu, Carlos Salinas de Gortari ordered the attorney general of Mexico and brother of José Francisco Ruiz Massieu, Mario Ruiz Massieu, to command the investigation of the assassination. Soon after, Mario Ruiz Massieu began to accuse those high up in the hierarchy of the PRI party of organising the killing of his brother. Eventually, a fierce legal persecution against Mario Ruiz Massieu began to accuse him of money laundering related to the drug mafias in Mexico; subsequently he left the country, initially for Spain, though he was detained in New Jersey by US authorities and put under domiciliary arrest. Months later he committed suicide.

The demise of the Ruiz Massieu brothers and the murder of Luis Donaldo Colosio are two of the darkest episodes in Mexican political history, principally because it made visible the struggle at the top of the political power chain in Mexico. One of the issues is that the government (as a social assemblage) systematically reproduces or generates instability in other Mexican assemblages. This uncertainty affects differentiated social assemblages in various ways, but in particular those in its proximity, for example the police and the military (10), are strongly implicated.

During Salinas’ privatisation spree, two of the most important state owned companies were sold: the Instituto Mexicano de la Televisión (IMEVISION) and the telephone monopoly Teléfonos de México (Telmex). The privatisation of these two important state owned companies was surrounded by unclear negotiations and a lack of transparency. Furthermore, as we will see further in this chapter, the privatisation of IMEVISION, renamed TV Azteca, together with Televisa, formed a duopoly of giant privately owned media companies in Mexico, constituting an authentic anti-market environment in terms of mass media management.

This brings us back to 1985, when Miguel de la Madrid created the Instituto Mexicano de la Televisión (IMEVISION) or Mexican Institute for Television, which included Channels 13, 7, and 22, as well as three additional channels in the northern states of Chihuahua and Nuevo León. Here it is important to mention that Channel 11 (a public channel) was not integrated into this program, but instead remained within the Instituto Politécnico Nacional (IPN – National Polytechnic Institute) for its non-commercial operation.

Ricardo Salinas Pliego, a relatively unknown figure at that time and the heir to Salinas y Rocha’s fortune, took a central role in the privatisation of IMEVISION. In 1993, the year that
Carlos Salinas de Gortari announced its privatisation, Ricardo Salinas Pliego with *Radio Televisora del Centro* (Central Radio Television) offered 645 million dollars for IMEVISION. This transaction, which apparently had been a publicly announced commission, was allegedly fraught with corruption, an allegation not uncommon for many other privatisations. Nevertheless, the privatisation of IMEVISION was completed in 1993. Channels 7 and 13 became part of *TV Azteca*. As a result of its incursion in the Mexican media market, in 2006 *TV Azteca* was managing 179 television stations broadcasting in Mexico, USA, and Central and South America, becoming one of the influential poles in the Mexican television duopoly. This strategy produced a great deal of economic revenue that remained under the control of private interests.

Civil society was not inactive while the privatisation of state television took place. *LaNeta* is a civil organisation created in 1991 as an electronic communication service for non-government, non-profit organisations. *LaNeta* became the first Internet server in Mexico that was not administered by the state or by universities. Since 1993, *LaNeta* has been a member of the Association for Progressive Communications (APC). *LaNeta* is APC’s representative in Mexico, linking Mexican NGOs to similar international organisations abroad. *LaNeta* began to work with very simple equipment and was fuelled by the enthusiasm of a small group of experts in communication technologies and a few civil society organisations. It was not until 1994 that *LaNeta* became an Internet provider for civil society, an event that coincided with the Zapatista rebellion in Chiapas.

In an interview with Olinca Marino, the general manager of *LaNeta*, some significant details of *LaNeta*’s historical development shed light onto its consolidation and significance during the 1990s (11). Following Marino’s argument, *LaNeta* is the product of a combination of technical expertise and the need that civil society had for more efficient coordination, organisation, and communication. In the early 1990s *LaNeta* offered a group of civil organisations the possibility of connection to the Internet, which at that point in time was still in an embryonic phase. This technical capacity allowed civil society and its organisations to improve their planning skills and strengthen their intercommunication. In 1993 *LaNeta* became a member of the APC, something that enabled activities with a global profile to take place within a program that had the possibility of participating in virtual conferences where organisations around the world could discuss topics simultaneously.

The importance and potential of *LaNeta* as a server became evident in 1994, at the onset of the Zapatista uprising in Chiapas. In spite of its sympathy for the movement, *LaNeta* nevertheless did not claim its support in an overt manner. Paraphrasing Olinca Marino in this regard, it is noteworthy that civil society at the time already had the basic structures in place to mobilise its
resources and support for certain social movements. The role of LaNeta centred on the facilitation, distribution, and exchange of information among these civil organisations. It was not directly supportive of any of the social movements in particular, but instead provided the technical means to enable the exchange of information among them.

The Zapatistas took advantage of these new communication technologies, in particular the Internet, to highlight the situation and publicly announce their claims. At a later stage, civil organisations that sympathised with the movement distributed the information among other organisations and to the public via LaNeta. The results obtained were substantial, impressive, and relatively effective, at least in political terms. The success of the Zapatistas in using new communication technologies and the support and active involvement of civil society assisted by LaNeta’s technical infrastructure is considered a success for organised civil society in Mexico.

The effects of this communicative mobilisation were characterised by Manuel Castells as the first electronic revolution in history (Castells: 2000). After the experience of the Zapatista movement, and the entry of commercial use of Internet technologies in Mexico, LaNeta faced a moment of change, shifting from its sole aim of enabling connectivity to providing a variety of services and utilities. Under the increasingly commercialised panorama of the Internet, LaNeta was determined to remain a non-profit and non-commercial Internet server. It became known for its rather particular profile as a connector among organisations, that made it stand out from other Internet services available in Mexico, in particular those commercial services provided by Carlos Slim Helú with Telmex and the Vargas family with MVS (Multivision). Furthermore, in 1996 LaNeta manifested its interest in actively supporting peasants and indigenous organisations with insufficient knowledge or technical resources to generate electronic contents. Training and the creation of websites are among the most important activities of LaNeta and its contribution to the strengthening of Mexican civil society.

Despite the national turmoil triggered by the Zapatistas and the political and economic instability that Mexico was in at the time, the PRI won the 1994 presidential elections in an electoral process that, strangely enough, was considered rather ‘clean.’ Under Zedillo’s presidency, economic discipline was at the top of the agenda; his administration worked closely with international financial institutions, in particular with what is known as the Washington Consensus: the IMF, World Bank, and the US Treasury. Not without difficulties, the crisis raging after Salinas left office was nevertheless stabilised, but at the cost of larger economic polarisation. Not surprisingly, society at large was again the main bearer of the political and economic instability.

One example of this is the FOBAPROA or Fondo Bancario de Protección al Ahorro (Bank Fund to Protect Savings), later on renamed IPAB or Instituto de Proteccion de Ahorro Bancario
(Institution for the Protection of Banking Savings). This economic arrangement transferred the debts of private companies, accumulated by credit, to taxpayers; a similar solution to the one adopted by the Obama administration in the US during the 2008 economic crisis. Despite this, it is more generally admitted that Zedillo’s presidency was the first in several decades to manage the state administration in such a way that no major problems or renewed economic crises developed during the next six years, and especially during the presidential transition of 2000. Despite these apparent achievements, which earned Zedillo’s administration recognition as a ‘plateau of stability’ and a period of decreased corruption, there remained several unanswered questions. For instance, the social unrest that had appeared during Salinas’ last months in office remained entrenched and unresolved. This provoked various social and political movements and groups to harshly criticise Zedillo’s neoliberal policies and pernicious omissions. The criticism was targeted against the support of macro-economic figures instead of concentrating on the regional and local economies and problems. A variety of social organisations launched stark critiques against Zedillo’s administration for its disregard of the micro-economic realm.

Moreover, dubious episodes during Zedillo’s administration include the investigations against Raul Salinas de Gortari (as mentioned above), and the massacres at Aguas Blancas on 28 June 1995 (12) and Acteal on 22 December 1997 (13). While Zedillo has never officially been considered directly responsible for these events, he is nonetheless criticised for a lack of political determination and will to persecute and prosecute the groups responsible for these massacres. Furthermore, his administration has also been accused of carrying out ‘low intensity warfare’ against specific sectors of Mexican society. Such lack of justice was not new in Mexico, but the fact that Zedillo was not able to improve this situation cost him a significant amount of credibility. Nevertheless, and contrary to his predecessors, Zedillo managed to deliver the country in relatively stable condition to Vicente Fox, his successor in the presidential office. In doing so, he also made possible the so-called alternacia democrática in Mexico.

It was in this decade (the 1990s) of rampant neoliberalism, characterised by the privatisation of revenue and the socialisation of loss and debt (Jalife-Rahme: 2007), that the private sector increased its power and influence in the communicational and social fields. Televisa and TV Azteca consolidated their duopoly regarding television broadcasting and programming production, while the state owned media showed slow development and poor protection of its minimum possessions in the field. For example, even though Channel 11 was the most productive in social and cultural terms of the state owned media assets, it still did not have national coverage. The 1990s was also a decade where civil society showed very important changes, with the Internet and a more intensive use of community radio marking great advancements and important effects, as seen with the LaNeta
Internet server. The participation of society throughout mass media and new communication technologies increased and enabled sectors of society at large to become a more important protagonist in the political and social development of the country.

It was in this period that civil society consolidated and found alternative ways, such as participatory democracy, to manifest and channel its voice. In certain ways, Mexico began to fulfil democratic needs that were impossible to reach in the past. Despite the fact that this democratic change was not the result of the desires present in the government or private sector, civil society found its way amidst a neoliberal political environment thanks to the enthusiasm and interest of people who were acting to make a more democratic system at the personal scale in Mexico.

The communicative panorama in Mexico has certainly become much more complex after the inception of new communication technologies in the social realm. If radio and television accounted for most of the communicative infrastructure and the possibilities for communication at large during the 1970s and 1980s, the 1990s were characterised by the consistent implementation of Internet technologies, something that also triggered new attitudes, a variety of possibilities, and new forms of communication with heightened interactive features. It was not until the turn of the millennium, however, that the communicative panorama really diversified and evolved enormously, opening up more alternative and creative ways of communication for all sectors of society. The state and the private sectors greatly benefited from these technological developments, but it can be argued that it was civil society that really improved its capacities and possibilities for communication.

New Millennium: The Lost Decade II

In the year 2000 a new paradigm appeared within Mexican history. For the first time in over seventy years, Mexicans elected a candidate who did not belong to the PRI party. As we know, Vicente Fox, the presidential candidate for the conservative Partido Acción Nacional (PAN), won the 2000 presidential election. Zedillo, allegedly not without a certain degree of pressure, accepted his party’s defeat publicly on national television. The general sentiment in Mexico during the turn of the millennium was one of great expectancy and hope. Citizens were prepared and ready to participate in the ‘evolution’ of the country towards new and improved prospects for development after Zedillo managed to hand over a country in relative stability, something that differed from the last presidential transitions marked by crises and tensions.

The political situation in Mexico in the year 2000 was thus apparently changed with the arrival of fresh politics incarnated in Fox’s electoral campaign. However, later it was realised that the neoliberal practices within the Mexican government begun by the PRI were in fact only
radicalised and strengthened under Fox and the PAN. The political project that prioritised the market and economy as the means to achieve Mexican development was further enforced, regardless of the social cost. The idea that a neoliberal agenda would halt political and economic instability and socio-economic polarisation was, however, not always shared by important sectors of the Mexican population. The general disappointment started to manifest rather soon in Fox’s administration and, similar to other presidencies, the initial optimism and faith rapidly turned into disappointment and recrimination until he left office enmeshed in scandals of corruption and negligence in 2006.

Vicente Fox fulfilled the expected profile of the presidential candidate that represents the entrepreneurs and conservative sectors of the Mexican population. As a former CEO for the Coca-Cola Company in Mexico, and as a landowner and agricultural producer, Fox appeared to have the necessary ingredients to thrust Mexico into a period of economic growth and development. Fox’s project was based on a successful democratic transition for neoliberal Mexico. In order to achieve this goal he relied on a stable economy that would protect family patrimony and invest a great deal of effort in generating human capital (14). For Vicente Fox, a stable economy would ideally lead to development, and the focus on human capital would bring equality, which would be translated into more and better opportunities, especially for those who had less. He also stressed the issue of human rights, something that would eventually lead to diplomatic problems and disputes, as was the case with the Mexican vote against Cuba at the United Nations 2004.

In spite of all the ‘good intentions’ and high aspirations of Fox’s administration, his term was also fraught with failure. His democratic commitment, as well as the status of human rights in Mexico, remained either unfulfilled or limited. Additionally, Fox’s attitudes and actions against the leftist candidate during the 2006 presidential campaign, PRD’s Andrés Manuel López Obrador, exemplified the downside in the democratic front. Furthermore, despite his talk of human rights elsewhere, the deterioration of human rights in Mexico itself may be exemplified by rather tragic events, particularly during the last years of his administration, among them the case of Atenco (15) and Oaxaca (16).

The first disappointment in Fox’s administration was his political inability to pursue and achieve the necessary and urgent structural reforms required by the Mexican state; reform of the fiscal system, the pension system, and energy reform, among several others, were all necessary to achieve the most important objectives for Mexico at the beginning of the millennium. He also displayed a political incapacity to deal with an opposing congress. Vicente Fox was criticised for his lack of vision to exercise power. In Mexico, the power structure – the presidential institutional organisation – was designed to centre political power on the presidential figure. Despite the fact that
Vicente Fox was able to exercise this power, in the long run it appeared as though he was using this prerogative for the wrong causes. He engaged in the 2006 electoral process while he was still president in a way that triggered significant criticism and suspicion, and applied his presidential power in the passing of several laws that have been considered if not corrupt at least polemic. The signature in Waco, Texas of ASPAN (Alianza para la Seguridad y la Prosperidad de América del Norte or Security and Prosperity Partnership of North America) in 2004 and the new law for radio and television, the so-called Ley Televisa, approved by the Senate in 2006, are such cases.

As far as political and electoral processes go, Fox has been criticised for his overt efforts to debunk and discredit his political opponent Andrés Manuel López Obrador. The debate over these efforts, which were not ‘legal’ in all instances, can be traced back to the attempted ‘legal’ application of the desafuero of López Obrador during his term as the governor of Mexico City. The idea of desafuero is the reversal of the constitutional fuero enjoyed by popular elected politicians in Mexico, which limits and sometimes paralyses the normal course of law. It can only be disabled by the Mexican Congress, in particular the Deputies or Low Chamber. In this context, it is important to remark that any politician that is subjected to this desafuero procedure may face legal prosecution, as any other citizen. Under such circumstances, any politician awaiting sentence cannot practice his/her political rights, for instance to participate in any popular vote, including the presidential election.

Who is López Obrador?
In December 2000, López Obrador was elected as Mexico City’s major, or governor. His administration focused on the most vulnerable sector of the population: the young, the elderly, and the urban poor. His popularity increased rapidly because of the success of some of the social programs he proposed, but also because of a series of construction projects he initiated within Mexico City, in particular new urban and traffic infrastructure. The popular support that he was gaining, however, also produced parallel suspicion and unrest among some of the more powerful interpersonal networks of Mexican political society, especially those associated with the conservative groups of the PAN, power groups such as media tycoons, and other influential entrepreneurs, all of whom disregarded López Obrador because of his leftist affiliations.

The moment that López Obrador announced his candidacy for the presidential election in 2006, attacks against him began, promoted by the abovementioned interest groups and backed up by the executive power of Vicente Fox. This confrontation became the root of a political crisis that started with the desafuero procedure and ended up in one of the most dubious and disappointing presidential elections Mexico has ever had. The main outcome of this process was the further
polarisation of Mexican society, not in economic but in political terms, a degree of political polarisation that had not been seen in Mexico since the time of revolutionary conflict.

**Desafuero and Political Polarisation**

In June 2003, López Obrador began his defence against the so-called *juicio de procedencia*, a type of trial that eventually lead to his *desafuero* later that same year. Rafael Macedo de la Concha, Mexico’s attorney general, solicited the *juicio de procedencia*. The attorney general succeeded in prosecuting López Obrador’s *desafuero* after the PRI and PAN politically negotiated his destitution. The effective removal of López Obrador generated a huge reaction from diverse sectors of Mexican society at large, in part because of the obviously illegitimate political aim behind the judicial process. The resistance and popular nonconformity expressed in massive social mobilisations against this political manoeuvre forced Vicente Fox to publicly announce the suspension of the *desafuero* against López Obrador in April 2005 (17). This allowed López Obrador to compete in the presidential election the following year, much to the dismay of the powerful conservative interpersonal networks, organisations, and groups participating in the attacks.

Unfortunately, the conflict and polarisation between these political and economic groups did not cease, and was in fact worsened during the electoral campaign of 2006, a campaign that was characterised by exaggerated statements against López Obrador’s policies and ‘style.’ The mass media also played an important role in this campaign to undermine his public image by shaping the collective beliefs of the Mexican audience against him. So-called ‘video scandals’ (18) against the city government, the *desafuero*, and an intensive mass media campaign leading up to the election certainly diminished the popularity of López Obrador. This did not lead him to waver in his position, and on the dawn of the elections he still felt certain to win despite the interpersonal networks and organisations entrenched in the Mexican executive, legislative, judicial, and industrial power structures.

The final result of the electoral campaign spurred heated debate and conflict, and only days later the presidential ‘race’ was still ‘too close to call.’ The deadlock ended when the highest tribunal in Mexico recognised that Felipe Calderón, the candidate for the PAN, had officially won the election with the minimal difference of 0.5 per cent of the votes. The presidential election was allegedly tainted by irregularities, and serious claims of electoral fraud were made across the country. The dim memories of past electoral fraud emerged, reminding the population of the notorious 1988 election that cost Cuauhtémoc Cárdenas the presidency. Eventually, amidst a chaotic Low Chamber, on 1 December 2006 Felipe Calderón took position as the Mexican president. Members of the PRD threatened to obstruct Calderón’s presidential inauguration, a
situation that was as scandalous as it was embarrassing.

López Obrador engaged in massive public protests and refused to recognise the new government as legitimate. In fact, after the tribunal announced its verdict, López Obrador and those supporting him organised the *Convención Nacional Democrática* (National Democratic Convention), one of the most important organisations created early in López Obrador’s national social movement. In November 2006, this *Convención* declared him as the ‘legitimate’ president of Mexico. Despite the difficulties on both sides of the electoral struggle, both López Obrador and Calderón held their own share of public support, a division that has not been settled to date, and which renders the political future of Mexico as rather uncertain and polarised.

*Decretazo*

After this interlude of political disparities, we must return to the administration of Vicente Fox. The Fox administration, despite its notorious political discrepancies, was even more polemic in terms of communication. The suspicion that President Vicente Fox was in ‘complicity’ with the mass media tycoons and other power groups in Mexico emerged from the sudden passing of a presidential decree on October 10, 2002. In this legal change to the law, Vicente Fox almost completely exonerated the private media groups from their fiscal time obligations. As explained earlier, fiscal time was the product of the negotiation between Televisa and the government of Díaz Ordaz in relation to the reciprocity that the Mexican state expected from the commercial exploitation of the RES. After the presidential decree – termed the *decretazo* (19) – however, no other type of compensation or reposition was implemented. Televisa, TV Azteca, and private radio broadcasters were exempted from all payments.

The decree of 2002 reduced fiscal time by 90 per cent in the case of television and by 80 per cent in the case of radio. The space available for the Mexican government was reduced from the agreed upon 12.5 per cent in 1969 to the minimal amount of 1.2 per cent in 2002. Between 1969 and 2002 the Mexican state had had approximately 180 minutes per day on television, until it was suddenly reduced to a meagre 18 minutes per day. The fiscal time was used for, among other purposes, political campaigning or public advertisements of national programs of education, health, etc. From 2002 onwards, the private television companies in Mexico, mainly Televisa and TV Azteca, received millions of dollars from the government, who paid for political propaganda, especially during the highly expensive electoral process (20). Not surprisingly, this situation angered many experts in communication, an infuriation that only worsened with the passing of the so-called *Ley Televisa* in 2006.
Ley Televisa

The next step to dispossess the public of the possibility to interact with and benefit from the technolinguistic social assemblage came in mid-December 2005. Shortly before the holidays, the Low Chamber approved a new law for radio and television. At first, this was considered normal procedure, especially if we consider that the legal framework for radio and television had not been updated since 1960. The technological advancements and the implementation of new communication technologies in general certainly called for reform. However, there were some suspicious aspects of this reform, in particular the fact that the new law was approved in the Low Chamber without the careful consideration and analysis of the deputies; at the time the proposal was sent to the Senate, politics and opaque arrangements made corrections to such a law impossible.

Before the reform of 2006, later renamed Ley Televisa, other proposals favourable to the interests of private mass media had started to appear that were, however, neglected in congress. In particular, the efforts made by Senator Javier Corral Jurado deserve some attention. He had been working on a proposal to reform the legal framework for radio and television in coordination with diverse civil society actors. This proposal was disappointingly denied even consideration or voting. Contrary to that initiative, at the end of 2005 a proposal presented by the deputy Manuel Lucero Palma from the PRI passed in less than 10 minutes. Questions on the disparities and contradictions between both proposals were unavoidable. How was it possible that such a contradiction was allowed, and furthermore what would the consequences be?

By early 2006, an even more serious debate headed by Corral Jurado took place before some of the senators for the PRI and PAN parties, however, had apparently negotiated the reform beforehand and managed to pass it by majority. Both sides of the conflict presented their reasoning. Those who agreed with the reform declared the necessity of changing such an obsolete legal framework, arguing that even though the new law could be improved, it was better than the old one in two basic points. First, they argued that it was simply necessary to update and to keep up with the technological changes in telecommunications, and secondly, they argued that it could be used as a mechanism to reduce the sometimes obscure concessions and permissions of the RES.

In opposition to this view, some senators from the PRD, PAN, and PRI signalled three important aspects. Firstly, they noted that important issues to accomplish the collective benefit and fair competition around media uses and commercial exploitation were missing. In this regard, it is important to remark that it is the responsibility of the state to meet these conditions of equality among possible competitors. Secondly, they claimed that the reform presented an unjustified benefit to the duopoly of Televisa and TV Azteca, while costing the state millions of dollars annually.
because there was no economic compensation for the exploitation of the RES. Thirdly, the new framework presented certain structural problems that accounted for legal ambiguity in the collective and public use of communication technologies and media production. This last issue affected community radio broadcasters in particular, but also other state owned media.

The new legal framework opened the road for the major concentration of mass media broadcasting and production while reducing competition, affecting alternative and social uses of communication technologies but not commercial media. This situation produced a high pitched debate, and for those supporting the reform it almost became an unsustainable claim. The clear connection between certain politicians and the private media groups Televisa and TV Azteca was undeniable. However, Vicente Fox, who in this particular case had the power to either cancel the proposition or to simply sentence it to further revision, instead decided to put the dispute to rest. In one disappointing action that revealed Fox’s political views and interests, he approved the law without marking out one single change, correction, or revision. Colloquially, he has been criticised for passing a law that was sprinkled – literally – with spelling and grammar mistakes of the most brutish kind.

In brief terms, there are at least four aspects that reflect the implications of the passing of this neoliberal reform of the communicative realm. Firstly, the aim of this reform was to ‘catch up’ with the technological convergence that accompanied the advancement of communication technologies over the last two decades. The migration from analogue to digital signals presents not only complex technical problems, but is also a substantially expensive process. Federal governments around the world, including in Mexico, were eager to support private and public media enterprises to mirror their analogue signals to digital. In Mexico, however, both Televisa and TV Azteca received the support of the state, but failed to return the analogue channels after the process of migration had been completed. Furthermore, they also failed to pay for the continuous use of digital and analogue channels alike; an operation that practically quadrupled their broadcast capacities, since one digital channel has the capacity to accommodate four analogue ones. This over-accumulation of broadcasting capacity not only guarantees the capacity of television and radio broadcasting for these enterprises, securing the position they already enjoyed before the technological convergence, but most significantly it ensured that these channels were exempt from compensating the Mexican state for the commercial exploitation of the RES, digital or analogue. In the Mexico City area alone, this represents an exorbitant annual expense of 100 million dollars for the state (21).

Secondly, public media were also significantly affected. Community radio and state owned broadcasting stations have felt the consequences of this reform, which deliberately omits the clause
that would specify the implications of this law reform for community and public use of telecommunications. The legal framework provides only for a reduced space in which it suggests that public media may attract sufficient financial means exclusively through commercial advertisement. This practice is not commonplace within public or community media, which conventionally fund their foundations through donations, subsidies, and national or international economic support.

In short, this reform doomed radio and television stations that depend on sources other than commercial advertisement for their economic operability to a form of ‘illegality.’ This rather unclear and ambiguous situation makes them susceptible to all sorts of consequences: from disappearance, to the suspension of permissions and concessions, without which these stations are virtually inoperative. This, unsurprisingly, is one of the aspects that indirectly benefit the duopoly of Televisa and TV Azteca; not only does it reduce competition to zero, but it also reinforces the disappearance of alternative and non-profit forms and uses of media technologies.

Thirdly, in spite of the political discussion that surged around the Comisión Federal de Telecomunicaciones (COFETEL – Federal Commission of Telecommunications), the institute in charge of monitoring the permissions and concessions within telecommunications created by President Zedillo in 1995, the regulatory office of the Ministry of Communications (of which COFETEL is a part) is rather weak in legal terms. It does not have the legal capacities to penalise or even limit abuse and misuse of permits and concessions by private or public media. Hence, COFETEL is an office that handles these issues in nothing more than ‘cosmetic’ ways, and is incapable of effectively regulating the use and contents of the state owned RES. Thus one of the main claims made by the defenders of the reform – that it would lead to the reduction of corruption in the giving of permissions and concessions by the executive power – is in fact irrelevant and insubstantial. At the end of the day, it is only the Ministry of Communications, an institution that directly depends on the executive power, which can decide over permissions and concessions. Despite the weakness of this institution, the appointed chairs of COFETEL reflected the real proportion of the opaqueness within the process. The list of names, all of whom had direct ties to Fox’s own political group or to Televisa, and the dubious nature of this entire affair, pointed towards the rather grim future for Mexican media.

Fourth, the new reform has ignored or neglected the issue of electoral expenditure. This is an important aspect if we consider that 90 per cent of the electoral expenses made by political parties is invested in radio and television, especially private television. This last omission within the reform represents a substantial ‘business’ easily rising to a multimillion dollar benefit for both Televisa and TV Azteca, as was the case during the presidential electoral campaign in 2006. The federal budget
for the political parties during this electoral procedure amounts to approximately 1,200 million dollars, ultimately shared mainly between *Televisa* and *TV Azteca*. At the end of Fox’s administration it had become quite evident that Mexico was witnessing yet another ‘lost decade,’ one that combined both economic and democratic losses.