Old and new forms
of citizenship

Martín Hopenhayn

*Social Development
Division,* ECLAC
mhopenhayn@eclac.cl

This article holds that ensuring the full sway of economic, social and cultural rights makes it possible to advance towards greater equality of opportunities, both for attaining well-being and for asserting differences in the field of identity. This development of the effective use of rights must be complemented with new forms of citizenship connected with the possibility of interaction with the media and greater participation in the knowledge-based society. Only in this way does it seem feasible to give an ethical foundation to social and development policies which have been deprived of ideological bases. In this state of affairs it is necessary to build a political culture which transcends the merely formal nature of procedures and translates political action into forms of communication between different actors. The cultural construct of democratic citizenship necessarily involves such a pact or contract, which must provide space for the voices of a broad range of social actors and must have a real capability to prescribe forms of reciprocity and recognition in such diverse areas as access to justice, to social services, to informed political debate, and to the expression of opinions in the communication media.

I

Citizenship in these new times

Citizenship is a concept and practice which is constantly changing. In the course of the twentieth century, its content has been linked to liberal-democratic, social-democratic and republican conceptions. In the first case, citizenship is linked to first and second generation rights: first civil and then political. Civil rights refer to the freedoms inherent in a State of Law (freedom of opinion, expression and association) and seek to protect individual independence against possible coercion by the State or one of its institutions. Political rights concern the right of every citizen to vote and be represented in the political system by the executive and legislative powers or to participate directly in that system.

In the social-democratic conception, rights also extend to those of the third generation: economic, social and cultural rights. Basically, these include the right to work, to health, to education, to a decent income, to a suitable dwelling, and to respect for citizens' cultural identity. Finally, in the republican conception, citizenship is associated with mechanisms and feelings of belongingness of the individual to a community or nation and the participation of citizens in public affairs and in the definition of societal projects.

Now that the old century is ending and a new one is beginning, many people feel that citizenship is being rethought, rewritten and reinscribed in new spaces, without giving up its historical content. The rights that have been won (first civil and political, then economic, social and cultural) have not lost their importance nor are taken for granted. Indeed, the enjoyment of these rights is not complete: the current world order has been accompanied by greater enjoyment of civil rights but many problems for making effective use of economic and social rights. Nevertheless, the impact of postmodernism in the cultural field, of globalization in the political field, and of the information revolution in the field of technology together make up a new setting for citizenship.[1]

The impact of globalization on citizenship takes place at at least two very different levels. The first is of a political and cultural nature, and is reflected in the increasing worldwide spread of a certain sensitivity to democratic values and respect for human rights, sometimes associated with what are termed "politically correct" attitudes. This new global climate is governed by respect for the rules of a State of Law and tolerance for cultural and ethnic differences. Its values spread among the citizens within countries and are also reflected in agreements signed by the bulk of the international community. Citizens' civil, cultural and political rights are seen as being protected not only by the State but also by a kind of "global supervision" under which violations of those rights are reported, denounced and censured.

At the level of trade and financial globalization, the disappearance of frontiers and the growing vulnerability of national economies to external movements ride roughshod over the idea of the sovereignty of the Nation-State, with adverse consequences for the exercise of citizenship and, in particular, social and economic rights. A crisis in Southeast Asia, a devaluation in Russia or a rise in interest rates in the United States can affect the levels of investment and the money supply of the Latin American economies, adversely affecting the jobs and standard of living of many citizens of distant countries, without the Nation-State being able to do much to offset these effects. Who can a citizen turn to in order to seek redress because his social rights have suddenly been affected by a "financial event" which took place very far from his country, which is not at all clear to him, and which neither he nor his country can do anything to influence? In order to try to defend themselves against the effects of globalization, citizens must associate at the global level with organizations which mobilize mass support, hit the headlines, and make an impact on global public opinion. A recent example was the campaign of "global" non-governmental organizations (NGOs) against the Seattle meeting of the World Trade Organization.

In the post-modern era, the new form of citizenship is marked by decentralization and the differential self-assertion of issues, partly in response to the inherent tendencies of globalization itself, such as the weakening of Nation-States and the greater social differentiation

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[1] This distinction, like the views expressed below in this respect, is based on Hopenhayn (2000).

that is tending to take place worldwide as a result of the new model of production. With regard to decentralization, citizens' actions do not converge on a single focal point (the State, the political system, or the nation, as its territorial expression) but are scattered over a multitude of fields of action, spaces for the negotiation of conflicts, territorial areas and interlocutors. The citizen ceases to be a mere depositary of rights promoted by the State of Law or the State as a society and instead becomes an individual who, insofar as his rights permit, seeks participation in areas of empowerment which are defined according to his capacity for action and also his instrumental appraisal of which area is most favourable for the demand he is trying to make. And in proportion as the role of individual consumption (both material and symbolic) grows in importance in the life of society, the sense of belonging shifts from the Nation-State to a wide variety of fields in the production of such a sense and the interaction of individuals. The republican idea of citizenship reappears, but not so much in the field of political participation as in a great variety of forms of association or communication at the citizen's social level which do not necessarily converge on the public or State spheres.

The second level –the differentiation of individuals– means that citizenship increasingly involves the issue of the assertion of differences and the promotion of diversity. Because of this, many fields of cultural self-assertion which were previously covered exclusively in private negotiations and were considered to concern the inner feelings of the individuals in question are now matters for society as a whole, are the subject of outward-looking discussion, and form part of the political and public treatment of associated demands. Thus, for example, matters which were once deemed by people in general to be outside the sphere of work and territorial concerns and were seen as belonging rather to a subjective sphere, now form part of politics and are part of the fight for rights and commitments: differences of sex, race, sexual practices, drug consumption, religious minorities, ancient and postmodern tribal cultures, etc. All these have gone beyond their core area of belonging and have spread into a public dialogue which seeks to change public opinion, reverse the stigma affecting some groups, and increase tolerance.

The impact of the information revolution is transforming Fordist societies into information-based societies, production societies into societies based on knowledge and information and the world of work into a world of communication: in short, transforming discipline-based logics into network-based approaches. All this spreads unevenly among and within countries. However, we are living our different historical periods in a more and more synchronous manner, so that in Latin America too the exercise and concept of citizenship are affected by the "information society". In a world which is more and more decentralized and based on networks, in which demands depend less on the political system processing them and more on the acts of communication flowing through multiple networks, the exercise of citizenship is spreading to everyday practices which are half political and half cultural, relating to communication with distant interlocutors, the use of information to gain personal or group benefits, the redefinition of the consumer (of goods and of symbols) as an agent giving voice to his rights and preferences, and the use of the media to become an actor interacting with other actors.[2]

Here too, the greater dispersion of the citizens' acts and demands in the new information age leads to greater differentiation of their demands. It is no longer indispensable to seek a political party to channel demands which, according to traditional political logic, should be grouped together under great common denominators. It is possible to voice demands and wave flags in micro-groups connected with a world audience by Internet, telephone, e-mail or any other medium travelling from the local to the global level at the speed of light and free from censure. Information enables us to know where in the world there are opposite numbers who can join together with their peers in our countries and unite forces in the concert of global voices. This also makes it possible to seek those who can fill our demands and locate spaces where our demands can be heard with the desired effect. In no time it is possible to project a local rite into a political reflection on what a multiracial State or nation means.

All these processes suffer from conflicts and unevenness. Postmodernism, globalization and the information revolution are neither aseptic nor even-minded. The promise held out by long-distance interaction and unlimited information are in contrast with the social exclusion, loss of cohesion and inequality that exist in our national societies, which are phenomena that the new production patterns not only do not reduce but may even increase. Social and

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[2] Although networks can be either "disciplinary" or "emancipatory", depending on whether they operate in a hierarchical or horizontal manner.

economic rights are more difficult to translate into real commitments between the State and society, especially in view of the threatened breakdown of the Welfare State in Europe (and its partial replicas in Latin America), the social costs of the fiscal adjustment, and an unprecedented labour crisis (higher unemployment and/ or bigger wage gaps).

At the same time, globalization brings with it a greater awareness of the differences between cultural identities, either because those differences are aired in the communication media, incorporated in the new political climate spread by transnational NGOs and reflected in growing waves of immigration or because there are cultures which react violently to the spread of "world culture" and give rise to new types of regional conflicts which flood the television screens of the whole world. Thus, the political visibility of cultural assertion and the right to be different is increased, while the demands for the fuller exercise of social and economic rights come up against limited labour markets, more competitive economies and less mutually supportive societies.

In society at large, old cultural problems become matters of citizenship: matters for discussion, for the processing of differences, for claiming rights and, ultimately, for demanding the attention of the central authorities. Because of the new social movements, or because the cultural industry now amplifies voices that were previously not represented in the spheres of decision-making, change now takes place through the political or public actions of actors who are not presenting the traditional demands for higher wages or bigger social benefits but are instead expressing their concerns in fields which are symbolic rather than material. This is the case, for example, of the entry onto the political and public scene of such issues as gender, race, sexuality, consumption, etc. These are issues where the demand for equal rights is accompanied by strong claims for the recognition of differences; where the typical demands of the social actors in the political system (non-discrimination in wages, the right to land, health protection, recognition of the rights and liberties of the consumer) are accompanied by other demands, harder to translate into social distribution policies, connected with the new roles of women in society and the family, the self-assertion of culture through the institutionalized use of native languages, greater sensitivity to the feelings of the gay community, and the relations between identity and consumption.

Furthermore, the increasingly important role of the communication media means that politics must primarily develop its media-related component, so that the image of politicians is now defined to a much greater extent by the way they appear in the media and by better-informed use of popular culture on the basis of surveys. There is thus a change in the form of appraisal of political competence, which is measured less and less by the production of projects and is increasingly determined by the circulation of images and information. Citizens are leaving the streets and meeting-points and concentrating on the individual processing of information in front of their television sets or computer monitors. Identification with great national projects is being replaced by opinions on more specific and varied matters. People are now more interested in the integrity of politicians than in their projects for society and are more interested in what the newspapers say than in identifying with political parties.

All this means that reflections on citizenship must now extend both to the relations between culture and politics and to the links between local and global concerns.[3] With regard to the first of these matters, political cultures are changing in that they are adapting to the logic of the mass media, to a "post-ideological" situation and to the exhaustion of utopias. Cultural conflicts are becoming more political because they are becoming more ruthless and violent and thus make necessary the intervention of (local or global) powers, but cultural demands are also taking on a more political tone, because the political system -due to its difficulty in meeting traditional social demands and committing itself to great projects for change- finds that the marketplace for cultural demands is a promising place for staying in the contest. Thus, for example, it is now easier to propose bilingual education for the Aymara-speaking population in Bolivia than to try to revitalize agrarian reform, and promoting a television channel for women is easier than trying to redistribute wealth to benefit households headed by women.

As regards the links between local and global issues, there are authors (Mato, 1999; Lins Ribeiro, 1999) who consider that we are witnessing new forms of cultural citizenship. Globalization, they say, is transnationalizing the production of social representations, so that local and global actors are interacting and thus bringing about a change in the meaning of cultural expressions such as "identity" and "civil society" on which the political order and citizenship have traditionally been founded. According

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[3] This point has been dealt with in another article (Hopenhayn, forthcoming).

to Mato, this reconfiguration of concepts is leading in turn to a reorientation of the practices of some actors which strengthens the positions of the global actors and creates bilateral networks with local actors, promoting their participation in events and production networks. More specifically, according to Mato the formulation of new representations of race, environment and sustainable development in new global networks has taken place on the basis of the creation of transnational codes and linguistic categories such as the biosphere, biodiversity, civil society, etc. According to that author, these aim to establish a form of discourse and a transnational sense which guide the actions of the alternative global and local actors and form the basis for a sort of alliance of interests among them aimed at establishing an alternative transnational programme of action to stand up against the most exclusive and predatory aspects of economic globalization.

Mato's diagnosis points to the interesting possibility of bringing about a kind of "globalization from below" in response to the globalization from above led by the main transnational groups. This would make it possible to move towards "representations of cultural particularity" expressed in different civic organizations with their own projects. Lins Ribeiro, for his part, considers that in defining the relation between national identity (national cultures) and political practices it is essential to take into account the state of "transnationality". This state involves a new level of integration and representation of belonging and therefore completely changes the traditional settings for action. The interaction between culture and politics is reflected in the challenges of transforming the conditions of citizenship and regulating and ordering the new setting arising from transnationalization. In view of this, Lins Ribeiro's proposal basically involves the creation and strengthening of a "global civil society" which, he considers, is currently represented by "an imagined/virtual transnational community whose material dynamic ….. is a symbol of the new technologies of communication, especially the Internet" and whose main characteristics are its "remote testimony" and its "remote political activism" (Lins Ribeiro, 1999, p. 4).

II

Citizenship: between equality and diversity

The field of citizenship is enriched to the extent that the permeability of the cultural industry and global communications make it possible to claim and promote cultural rights. The banner of democratic communication flies high as a promise combining technology, politics and subjectivity, and many dream of a new utopia in which the old value of equality is replaced by the new value of diversity. Instead of social classes there would be cultural actors and identities whose potential for emancipation could not be universal but would reside in the democratic interplay of differences. The universal element would be the rules of the game which would give such differences visibility and guarantee relative equality of conditions for the exercise of citizenship, especially as regards cultural rights.

In this context, I should like to highlight a contrast which is typical of the present democracies.[4] On the one

hand, it is sought to restore or revitalize equality, understood above all as the inclusion of those who are currently excluded, without this leading to cultural sameness, greater concentration of political power, or uniformity of tastes and lifestyles. On the other, it is sought to support and promote differentiation, understood as cultural diversity, pluralism of values and greater autonomy of the subjects, yet without turning this into a justification for inequality or for the non-inclusion of the excluded. Integration without subordination would involve both social and cultural rights: better distribution of material assets goes hand in hand with more equal access to symbolic assets (information, communication and knowledge), together with a more equitable presence of the multiplicity of socio-cultural actors in public decision-making and the incorporation of cultural pluralism in rules and institutions.

It might be asked at this point how the free self-determination of subjects and the differences in culture

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[4] This idea is based on the last chapter of Ocampo (coord., 2000).

and values pursued in this defence of autonomy can be reconciled with economic and social policies that implement the "third generation" rights by reducing the differences in income, wealth, employment, human security and access to knowledge. It is a question of promoting equality at the intersection between the fair distribution of potential for asserting diversity and autonomy and the fair distribution of goods and services to make possible the satisfaction of basic needs and the exercise of social rights. At the same time, cultural segmentation also makes it difficult to achieve social agreement on the solidarity and sacrifices (taxes) demanded by social distribution. In other words, without cultural unity the viability of a consensual project for the progressive redistribution of assets in society is more and more difficult.

In order to achieve universal enjoyment of economic, social and cultural rights, non-discrimination in the cultural field must be combined with a socially acceptable form of distribution to correct inequalities. This will include policies of affirmative action with respect to ethnic minorities and other groups defined by their socio-economic level, cultural characteristics, age or gender which are also in more vulnerable situations. Policies against discrimination on the grounds of difference (which serve to promote people's civil, political and cultural rights) must be complemented with social policies targeted on the groups which are, objectively, victims of discrimination, that is to say, which are in the most unfavourable position for asserting their special characteristics, satisfying their basic needs, and developing capabilities for making more positive use of their liberties.

Such affirmative action must extend rights in particular to those who lack them most: not only social rights such as the rights to education, employment, social assistance and housing, but also the rights to participate in public life, to enjoy respect for cultural practices which are not in the majority, and to be heard in the public dialogue. In short, the objective should be a concept of complex equality in keeping with the new ideals of a democratic, multicultural society in which all citizens have the right to be different, without this being used to justify conditions which produce and reproduce socio-economic exclusion.

Traditionally, the question of equality has overshadowed that of the right to be different in the political debate, in negotiations between actors, in consensus-building, and in the State's responses to demands. The demand for a socially acceptable form of distribution through wages, contracts, benefits and services has been at the core of the relationship between politics and society under the principle of equality, but what happens when it is desired to reformulate that relationship so that the right to be different is equally important in the linkages between political and social matters? Once again, this brings us back to the question of culture, cultural demands, and the redefinition of social actors *qua* cultural actors, but with the difficulty that our political systems and our social State (or what remains of it, if it ever existed) are fluent in pro-equality language but not in the more complex language of the right to be different.

This problem is strongly felt in education. We know that the knowledge society strongly discriminates between those who have or have not had access to timely good-quality education, so that it is necessary to improve universal access to educational opportunities in order to give greater future opportunities for well-being to the entire population, so as to incorporate society as a whole into the new patterns of production and communication. We also know, however, that standardized education has traditionally tended to bring about cultural homogenization and is currently eliciting the most bitter criticisms from those who defend ethnic plurality and the right to be different.

This tension is now reflected in education policies. A clear example is the abandonment of "systemic simultaneity": i.e., the idea that once formal education is universal it should be the same for all, both for reasons of economy of scale and of equality.[5] Such simultaneity assumed that all those being educated were essentially equal, had the same possibilities of learning, and found the same subjects equally useful, so that standardized education would promote greater equality of opportunity.

Today, however, many analysts have abandoned this idea of systemic simultaneity in order to try to ensure that the subjects learnt and the forms of learning will be more appropriate to the socio-cultural situation of which they form a part (Gvirtz and Narodowski, 1998). The application of critical theories to education, at least two decades ago, showed that homogeneous education did not mean greater equity or greater democratization in the transmission of knowledge, but could on the contrary lead to a type of "systemic rationalization" in which the identities and cultural roots of different groups were sacrificed. Furthermore, it was

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[5] This idea was developed at length in Hopenhayn and Ottone (2000).

seen that a homogeneous supply of education vis-a-vis heterogeneous demand could prolong and heighten initial inequalities during a person's schooling, so that differences of social class or ethnic origin could grow worse rather than being reduced under the "systemic simultaneity" model.

We are faced here with a situation in which it is necessary to balance equality against diversity. Education must not only transmit the values of equality and respect for diversity, but must also incorporate that balance in its own curricular flexibility. Equity through education gives rise to a new approach in which the pursuit of equality exists side by side with respect for differences. For the first of these objectives it is necessary to ensure progressive universal coverage of the school cycle, from basic to secondary education, and to reduce disparities in the quality of education linked with socio-economic origin. For the second, it is necessary to adapt study programmes to specific groups (including bilingual education in areas where Spanish is not the mother tongue), to try to ensure that curricula are adapted to the territorial characteristics of the area where the school operates, and to allocate special financial resources in areas of greater social vulnerability and more precarious economic conditions. As Gvirtz and Narodowski (1998, p. 54) note: "what is involved in the need to get away from systemic simultaneity is the possibility of respecting diversity … instead of being seen as a civilizing agent which does away with ignorance and barbarity, the school becomes the means whereby different cultural expressions can exist side by side".

A question which remains unanswered, however, with regard to equality of opportunity and the crucial role played in it by education, is that of the real conditions for the progress of students in an educational context which prizes diversity rather than uniformity. Within the framework of globalized economies which compete more effectively in proportion as they advance in the third industrial revolution, the labour market of the future obliges today's children to acquire skills that will enable them to obtain jobs in the future, especially if they seek upward social mobility from one generation to the next. On the other hand, education also pursues the objective of respecting and promoting the cultural identity of its students. The options between these two objectives can be complementary, but they can also be divergent.

This also involves taking risks in the educational process itself, for a school which promotes a multicultural society is also a school teaching communication, which radically alters the teacher-pupil relationship, sees knowledge as something to be built in the classroom with the students, and respects the students in their own conflicts of identity. In the words of Alain Touraine, "we cannot talk about the school as a place for learning subjects without defending the school as a place for communication, and that is where the greatest resistance is encountered …. every time this subject is raised it is rejected both by parents and by teachers, who fear that it will lead to uncontrollable disorder in affective relationships and will do away with what they consider to be the main mission of the school, namely, to teach subjects and prepare students for examinations which will open the door to employment for them" (Touraine, 1997, pp. 336-337).

While the school as a place for communication may seem to threaten order and discipline, however, on the other hand it is an indispensable means for tackling the challenge of multiculturalism and tolerance and preparing citizens for the new democracies based on communication and knowledge, without getting lost in a mass of atomized information: "Globalization has stripped society of its role as a creator of norms. In order to avoid the risk of cultural fragmentation it is proposed precisely to adopt the principle of intercultural communication … to educate students to respect diversity, recognize the qualities and rights of others, and practice solidarity, as conditions for broadening and enriching one's own identity" (Cubides, 1998, p. 45). And as the school is a basic nucleus for socialization, its own practices in terms of learning and discipline must incorporate those values.

Another area of tension between the values of equality and diversity is in the frequent conflicts that arise between formal education on the one hand and, on the other, the exposure of students to the communications media and, increasingly, computers. Today we talk about multiple forms of literacy and different ways of "reading the world". These different ways involve the interaction of the school, television, the new interactive media, and the recomposition of the city as a radically heterogeneous space. This polymorphism undermines the position of forms of culture based preferentially on the written word, and gives rise to areas of both agreement and disagreement not only within a subject but also between different subjects.

In this sense, Guillermo Orozco invites us to get away from the two antithetical positions adopted by education with regard to the communications media: defence of the audience against the media, or uncritical

acceptance of the latter as means of educational modernization. Instead of this, he proposes a form of teaching involving constructive criticism of the material presented, which opens up a debate in the classroom on how the material supplied by the communications media should be received, assumes that the school is one institution competing with a number of others for leadership in the field of knowledge, imparts skills which will enable students to express themselves in a multimedia environment, and sees literacy as an ongoing process dealing with the different alphabets of a post-modern world: a process which is media-based, multicultural and serves to speed up change (Huergo, 1998; Orozco, 1996). Giving students an attitude of critical analysis of the messages they receive, which will enable them to process the stimuli they receive from the different media so omnipresent in everyday life, is equivalent to training them in citizenship, by making all those exposed to information and audiovisual images capable of using those elements to recreate their own subjectivity and communicate with others, without being limited to the passive receipt of images which are no more than fetishes or the product of unilateral information.

III

The cultural industry and citizenship: symbolic capital and "voice"

As already noted, we are witnessing changes in the exercise of citizenship in which this is not only defined by entitlement to rights but also by mechanisms of belonging, by the capacity for taking part in the public dialogue, and, increasingly, by practices of symbolic consumption (of information, knowledge and communication). In the words of García Canclini (1995): "It is not so much the social revolutions which have taken place …. as the dizzy pace of the growth of audiovisual communications technologies which have made it so clear how public activities and the exercise of citizenship have been changing since the last century. But these changes …. have been shifting the exercise of citizenship towards activities of consumption … many questions of the citizens are answered through the private consumption of goods and of the mass media rather than … in public spaces". Thus, the circulation of symbolic goods is increasingly becoming an extension of the exercise of citizenship. This is why it is so important to open up the communications media to new voices.

The relation between the cultural industry and citizenship does not only concern symbolic consumption. Today, the cultural industry is the most important means of access to public spaces for broad sectors which have traditionally had no means of expressing themselves in them. Television, video and information and telecommunications networks are tools whose relative cost is going down day by day, so that those previous excluded now have unprecedented possibilities for taking part in cultural exchanges, not only as consumers but also as producers of messages, because the cost of using "transmission" technologies such as fax, Internet, e-mail or community radio is going down all the time and very little training is needed to use them, so that more and more actors can now enter the long-distance dialogue as interlocutors and spokesmen. All this is possible insofar as the market does not subject the cultural industry to the system of exclusion that the national economies are currently suffering.

These promises of symbolic participation as a new field for the exercise of citizenship exist, however, in a context in which material access to the fruits of progress is not following the same expansive trend.[6] Let us look at Latin America: while social and material integration is threatened by the employment crisis and the persistence of income disparities, symbolic integration is being boosted all the time by the cultural industry, political democracy and new social movements. On the one hand, the consumption of communication media and school enrollment continue to expand. Education

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[6] This contrast between access to symbolic capital and access to material well-being has been referred to in previous articles.

now displays problems of quality rather than of coverage, which has increased so much that other challenges in education are beginning to come to the fore. In the case of the communication media, in most of the Latin American countries the great majority of the population now have more information[7] and more access to the output of culture and the political debate. Never before has the region had democratically elected governments in almost all the countries; today, there is greater awareness and effective existence of civil and political rights, political and cultural pluralism is valued more highly, and the question of citizenship and social and cultural rights has renewed currency.

On the other hand, however, there are now more poor people in Latin America than at the beginning of the 1980s; income distribution has not improved, and has even markedly deteriorated in some countries; the informal sector, based on low incomes and little capital, is growing and is the sector that absorbs most of the great contingents of workers who are left on the sidelines of the production modernization process or the poorly-trained young people entering the labour market; the traditional rural sector is being increasingly marginalized from the other sectors, and societies are becoming increasingly fragmented through the buildup of these phenomena, with disquieting effects in terms of a feeling of insecurity among the population, political apathy and increasing violence.

Let us look at some data in this respect. According to ECLAC statistics, between 1980 and 1990 per capita private consumption in Latin America went down by 1.7% (ECLAC, 2000). Over the same period, however, the number of television sets per 1,000 inhabitants in Latin America and the Caribbean increased from 98 to 162 (UNESCO, 1998), furthermore, the effects of the educational achievements in previous decades began to make themselves felt, considerably raising the average educational level of the young population. In other words, while access to knowledge, images and symbols sharply increased, consumption of "real" goods went down. In the period in question, the media industry[8] and educational coverage and achievements grew strongly in Mexico, Venezuela and Brazil, whereas poverty reduction or improvement of the quality of life evolved at a very different rate.

If we take the period from 1970 to 1997, we see that the number of television sets per 1,000 inhabitants rose from 57 to 205 in the region (UNESCO, 1998), the number of hours of television programmes (and the average number of hours of television consumed by the population) increased geometrically from one five-year period to the next, and the average educational level of the young population rose by at least four years of formal education. Yet the index of poverty of the region is today still at the same level as in the early 1980s, while the real income of the urban population has increased slightly in some countries and gone down in others (such as Venezuela). Thus, access to knowledge, information and publicity has grown at a rate which is totally different from that of access to higher incomes, greater well-being and more consumption.

This situation raises other questions about the changes taking place in the links between politics and culture. Firstly, the greater distribution of symbolic goods than of material goods may transfer the distribution struggle, at least in part, to cultural goods such as timely access to knowledge, information and education. This does not mean that classic matters such as employment, wages and social services will disappear as subjects of political negotiation, but it does mean that there will be changes in political agendas, political publicity, the nature of competition for votes, and matters which are the subject of great consensuses in society.

Secondly, this gap between symbolic and material goods may give rise to growing social conflict and may thus affect the political treatment of the gap. As the consumption of publicity expands but the purchasing power for responding to what that publicity touts remains unchanged, society begins to "heat up", and this affects the distribution struggle and ultimately governance. This problem (the expectations gap) is not new, but it may gather speed: on the one hand the young population of Latin America now has more education and knowledge and greater expectations of consumption because of its exposure to the cultural industry; on the other, unemployment among young people is double that of the rest of the population, in a region with the worst income distribution in the world. Young people have more information and greater mastery of interactive information media than their parents, which makes them more capable of exercising active citizenship today, but their demands for social rights associated with well-being and the quality of life run up against the brick wall of the market, unemployment and exclusion.

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[7] Although it is not clear how far this greater access to information is reflected in greater knowledge and action resources.

[8] See, for example, the cases of huge enterprises like Televisa in Mexico and O Globo in Brazil.

Thirdly, the use of long-distance communication is tending to be increasingly important for exerting influence politically, gaining public visibility and becoming a valid interlocutor in the dialogue between actors. There are some striking examples of this, such as the use of the Internet by the Zapatistas. This presents us with a new problem or dilemma: if some problems in the cultural field begin to be politicized, that is to say, if certain matters that were previously only dealt with -or repressed- "internally" are now aired politically, how can we avoid disparities in power due to the fact that some cultural actors take advantage of communications technology to make themselves heard but others do not? How can we promote the most suitable technical media, and knowledge of how to use them, to secure "democratic subject-oriented policies"? How can we prevent the new gap between the informatically literate and illiterate from leading to a gap between symbolic representations that circulate over the Internet and can make news, affect decisions and check abuses of power, and other representations which, because they are "electronically invisible", subsequently become politically invisible too and, hence, defenceless?

In the face of this latter threat, we must promote the use of the new communications technologies in order to give the silenced or inaudible sectors a voice. Teleconference systems, informatics-based networks and integrated connections (between the telephone, fax machine, computer and photocopier) can be used to pass the microphone to those who have not had a chance to make themselves heard in public spaces. Indeed, these new systems, integrated in turn with the mass media, have great potential for expanding the public spaces for communication. A great mass of social demands coming from scattered or subordinated actors could begin to have a place in the public circulation of messages.

The tendency towards the "de-centering" of the transmission of messages in the cultural industry could help to democratize the societies of the region. While we have already achieved political democracy in the vast majority of our countries, the further deepening of democracy, based on the participation of different social actors, could be favoured by the spread of the new forms of the cultural and communications industry. There are now highly illustrative cases in a number of countries of the region where the use of new resources of the cultural and communications industry has made it possible to connect up various groups suffering from socio-cultural segregation. These cases could form the basis for new initiatives in this field, including the construction of networks to incorporate demands from highly dispersed sectors, greater linkages of indigenous ethnic groups in and between countries of the region, and the production of programmes for the diffusion of autochthonous cultures run by the indigenous groups themselves.

In Guatemala, indigenous peasants fax messages about violations of human rights to international non-governmental organizations, without knowing how to use a typewriter. In Brazilian Amazonia, illiterate Indians exchange videocassettes in order to spread their ancient customs. In Mexico, neighbourhood organizations have multiplied their pressures in public spaces for attention to their demands with the aid of computers, their own databases and inter-neighbourhood information networks. Also in Mexico, peasant federations have established a database of their own to keep track of rural credit programmes, and in Veracruz local ecological groups have successfully opposed the proposed installation of a nuclear power plant because they obtained timely information from United States ecologists and publicized the risks in the press. In Chiapas, associations of small coffee producers make contact with similar groups in Central America and the Caribbean to share information on transport, markets, international prices, production technology and international trade negotiations.

In this context, cultural policies take on considerable importance: in other words, culture becomes politicized insofar as it becomes a battleground for reversing exclusion through the participation of a larger range of voices in political transactions. There are serious obstacles standing in the way of the self-assertion of the subordinated or excluded identities, however: on the economic side there is the privatization of communications, together with the concentration of media power in great transnational mergers, and on the political side there is the lack of commitment of the State to cultural policies which seek greater democracy in communication.

IV

By way of conclusion

A thesis which is now in vogue, and with which we concur in this article, is that the recognition as inalienable rights not only of those in the civil and political fields, but also of economic, social and cultural rights, could help to further greater equality of opportunities both for attaining well-being and for asserting diversity. Thus, the clamour for "more citizenship" not only seeks the revitalization of citizenship for a media-dominated world and a society based on knowledge but also brings up again the idea of the citizen as the possessor of inalienable rights. Only in this way does it seem feasible to give an ethical basis to social and development policies which have been stripped of their ideological foundations.

In order both to promote the political participation of sectors which have been socially and culturally excluded from the debate on the public agenda and to facilitate communication with them, innovations are needed in the forms of access to negotiation spaces. It is necessary to promote mechanisms capable of expressing the demands of dispersed groups and grassroots socio-cultural movements, and to foster the direct presence of such groups in the intermediate levels of politics (such as trade unions, municipalities, etc.). It is not just a question, within the bounds of modern democracy, of returning once again to the question of the redistribution of material resources, but rather of bringing up the question of the distribution of symbolic resources, such as participation, access to information, and presence in the exchange of messages (communication). Closer links must be promoted among the organizations that express the demands of the groups which are least integrated into the benefits of modernization. This requires that the political system above all, and after it the State social sector, should promote actions to strengthen the network of social movements which have the capacity to discern both the immediate and the longer-term demands of those groups and to help exert pressure in favour of those demands on the relevant decision-making bodies, within a framework of political viability and the further consolidation of democracy.

In order to promote linkages among organizations representing marginalized groups it may be useful to do the following: spread information and communication technology to the grassroots level; redefine cultural policies in line with the organizational culture of that level; strengthen State initiatives aimed at mobilizing the social and cultural capital of the masses in order to optimize the effect of social aid on different types of programmes; and support the linking role of the "external agents", whether these be NGOs, municipalities or social programmes, in order to link up the rationales of the socio-cultural movements with the tendencies of society as a whole, thus reducing the degrees of segregation and fragmentation.

Against this background, it is necessary to build a form of political culture which goes beyond the purely formal nature of procedures and turns political action into communication activities which socially internalize norms of reciprocity and mutual recognition between different actors. Building the cultural aspects of democratic citizenship involves rethinking the content of that pact or contract to make room for the voices of a broad range of social actors and to give it a real capacity to prescribe forms of reciprocity and mutual recognition. Those prescriptions can involve such diverse areas as access to justice, to social services and to informed political debate and the ability to express opinions in the communications media. Such a pact should serve as a dual fulcrum: first, as a mechanism for linking a new political culture with the different socio-cultural actors, with their demands and expectations, and second, as a mechanism for strengthening a new political culture of reciprocity which extends to the whole of society.

(Original: Spanish)

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