Inequity and socio-political internal frontiers in Latin America
Draft prepared for the ECPR Workshop in Helsinki May 2007
–Work in progress, please do not quoted–

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Abstract
In this paper, firstly we will consider recent debates around democracy and unequal social spaces. Secondly, considering marginal geographies as one of the most relevant barriers to equal democratic political participation, we will notice how, in those places new contested social spaces are being building, questioning representative democracy and sovereignty and erecting new political communities. Finally, we will pay attention to the way democracy concept is being used by all political discourses to gain legitimacy instead of drawing up together a democratic process that allow social space to be a common and democratic one. Political processes in Latin American countries and specifically in the Highlands of Chiapas, Mexico, will be used to illustrate our arguments.

Key words: democracy, inequality, internal frontiers, Latin America and Chiapas.

Introduction
The aim of this paper is to rethink the relation among democracy and inequality, not in relation with “levels of inequality” a democratic regime is able to withstand in terms of legitimacy, but taking into account the existence of geographies of margination and resistance, everyday getting out of the political community. The main question we would like to answer -at least partially- is about how to reinforce contemporary democracies paying attention to the internal frontiers in Latin America, created historically through a complex process.
In that sense, we will use empirical information from recent political conflicts in some Highlands communities in Chiapas, Mexico, in order to discuss the relation between democracy, inequity and social space. In fact, we would try to show how historically margin social spaces, emptiness of fulfil democratic inclusion into the political community, are becoming new political communities questioning formal sovereignty, in a context of high levels of political disaffection and conventional political participation withdrawal.
Under these conditions, in a democratic regime, there would be -at least- three possibilities to perform, first, to use the monopoly of the violence, although it has no total legitimacy in that area, secondly, to allow political fragmentation, avoiding the control of some territorialities, and thirdly, to enlarge political democracy developing strategies of social and politically inclusion. Considering theoretically the last option as more desirable, it could be searched through two different democratic paths, a deliberative or a radical one.

In order to examine coherently all those terms and questions, next, we will discussed recent approaches to democracy, development and inequity, secondly, we will present our study case and thirdly we will be back to discuss the concept of democracy and how to deal with socio-spatial inequity and political fragmentation.

**Democracy and development**

One of the main political science questions after the fall of the communism has been centred on the relation of democracy and development, when the political landscape started to show that liberal democracy could become into “the only game in the town”. The most incardinated debates have been related to the contingent or necessary imbrications among democracy and development.

In that sense, many scholars have analysed this relation through political liberalism perspectives, paying attention mainly to two directions, first of all, a) about the conditions of possibility in which democracy is promoted by economical development (modernization), and secondly, b) about the need to improve democratic regimes in order to gain legitimacy in contexts of increasing distrust (governability) to create better contexts for economical development. Hayden (2002) has recently critically summarized the debate in comparative politics literature, explaining how it was started with Lipset asseveration about relating democracy with “the ability of a country to adopt the structural and cultural features associated with modern society” (Hayden 2002: 5). Although later, Przeworski and Limongi (1997), showed that “there is no relationship between per capita income level, on the one hand, and the probability of democratic transition, on the other” (quoted by Hayden 2002: 6), even though they consider if democracy arises due to other factors (international pressure, for example), it will endure if there are better economical conditions. In that sense, it was accepted that democracy would be created regardless of what socio-economic conditions are in a country, just if just an elite group decides to develop democratic institutions at least
with these characteristics: (1) power-sharing arrangements, (2) electoral modalities, (3) legal systems and (4) voluntary associations, or civil society (Hayden 2002: 13-14). However, other scholars had already considered that not only an elite should be involved into a democratic process in order to be achieved it, but also middle classes have to be a key factor of democratization. And later, it was also considered that only when working class would accept democracy; it will be a stable regime.

Later, most analysts were also concerned about how to deal with democracy crisis, characterised in occidental democracies by political disaffection, low levels of participation and therefore absence of legitimacy. Problems associated with those characteristics have been related with different consequences in old democracies than in new or unconsolidated ones, as in Latin America region. In new Latin American democracies the political disaffection is higher than in consolidated democracies, and old political experiences under authoritarian or pseudo democratic regimes have strong influence in the perception of nowadays actual democratic regimes (Torcal 2001).

Also, in this region, the crisis of democracy has been linked with two problems: the increase of social exclusion, and the expressions of new ways of violence and social insecurity. Both problems are clearly related with legitimacy erosion but also with local vacuums of government, concept developed by Kruijt and Koonings, in their study of the relation between democracy, poverty and violence. For them, local vacuums of government are rooted in the long absence of legal and law authorities in certain areas. During those local vacuums of government, mini-wars among social actors in urban and rural context, and increasing connections among state agents, common criminals, ex-members of army forces, paramilitaries and guerrillas were becoming common practises.

A lot of scholars have tried to create concepts to describe those characteristics as delegative democracies by O’Donnell 1993, or pseudodemocracies by Linz and Lypset (Prats 2001). Delegative democracies are those with similar formal democratic procedures and institutions, than liberal ones, but fragile, because their citizens are mobilized through non democratic relation but through populist, clientelist or personal ones. Pseudodemocracies are regimes in which formal political institutions exist but in fact there are hidden an authoritarian domination. Mexico was considered under this

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1 See Boaventura Santos (2006) recent work about similar conditions in last Mozambique political arena.
concept until 2000; Vicente Fox was able to win the presidential elections, in Mexico, in an environment of free competition.

In fact, in the region, the main alarm was shot in 2002 when more than fifty percent of population were ready to accept any other political regime if it would be able to improve social and economical conditions (UNDP 2004). Therefore, authors -as O’Donnell and Sen- turned the quandary from in which conditions a democratic regime can be consolidated, to another question, why democracy should be consider as a value to be promoted universally². In order to answer this question, they bring moral values in debate, and therefore they will defend that democracy should be intrinsically linked to improve human development in order to be fulfilled. Prats summarizes the theoretical dilemma as follow: if the final value is to reach economical development, then democracy is not an intrinsically necessity, but if the final target is to reach human development then democracy cannot be renounced at any stage of economical level (Prats 2001: 43). In those perspectives, democracy and human development are two embedded concepts, and therefore it is considered that a formal approach to institutional reforms in order to improve democratic regime is a limited one, because underdevelopment and inequality are conditions which not allow a fully electoral participation but also any other informal ways of political participation in contexts of low intensity citizenship. Moreover it is proved how specially in local areas and in context of extreme poverty and exclusion, various political relations, as caciquism, nepotism and corruption, allow small oligarchies to organize conventional and not conventional political participation. Then, from those perspectives, democracy and development are then intrinsically interlinked with free political participation and therefore with pluralism.

For example, far from rational choice approaches, inspired by Schumpeter, in which citizen participation should be restricted to the election of the representatives, Sen (1999) judged that if we can consider democracy as a desirable value, it is because of a plurality of virtues it should include; “the intrinsic importance of political participation and freedom in human life; second, the instrumental importance of political incentives in keeping governments responsible and accountable; and third, the constructive role of democracy in the formation of values and in the understanding of needs, rights, and duties” (Sen 1999: 11). In that way, also, deliberative conceptions of democracy have

² In fact, Castoriadis (1997) has already set out this question issue. In fact, his conception of democracy is a regime in which the political participation of all individuals is freely opened in the public sphere.
considered that an equal and rational active participation of the population, therefore in
a republican conception the public sphere and the civil society have an strategic
function because they have to assure the social cohesion of citizens. (Habermas 1994)
Following these approaches, the most recent intent to analyse democracy in relation
with development in Latin American region, it is the UNDP (2004) report, *Democracy
in Latin America: towards a citizen’s democracy*, in which the main objective is to
evaluate democracy not only in terms of election, but more broadly in terms of
democracy of citizens. Specifically in the *Conceptual Debate*, O’Donnell brilliantly
joined democracy with State, showing the most relevant paradox related to this union.
Since the creation of nation-state and the consolidation of democracy are historically
joined, therefore it is necessary to take into account that State produces equality but also
inequality. Since State supports with coactive power a social order, in which there are
several ways of inequality, State guarantees not only rights and freedom for the citizens,
but also social and bureaucratic relationships, inherently unequal (2004:37). Following
with this point, he considered that in a context of free election, citizens are considered
generically equal, although when some citizens have to deal with bureaucratic
institutions, are situated dramatically in an inequality de facto situation. Therefore, the
bureaucratic tendency -inherent to all power relations in society- to not consider equally
or with proper consideration to all citizens is pointed out to be even more common in
contexts of extreme poverty and inequality. Keeping in this discussion, O’Donnell
summarized that equality in democracy ignores social cleavages, and since the nation is
created also a new egalitarian discourse is spread: there is a collective equality that
should be more important in our practises that any other unequal condition, the national
one.
However, and following author´s considerations, we could think also about what can
happened in some areas of a formally democratic country in which high percentages of
social exclusion, low intensity democracy (clientelism or caciquism relationships), and
local vacuum of govern are concentrated and embedded with historically patterns of
ethnic segregation. Could the sense of nation belonging or the citizenship be eroded?.
O’Donnell uses the following questions to explain how this point has been politically
defended: if we are members of the nation, how can we be so poor and excluded? Why
are we out of the benefits of our nation? Those questions are been politically used to
claim political rights and legitimate populist discourses, and also they have help to
create an imaginary of exclusion, politically articulated.
In that sense, Reygadas pays attention to how social and political identities are built in those contexts:

“Persistent inequality has generated narratives that follow the ‘them-us’ logic, which emphasizes the symbolic barriers that separate social classes, ethnic groups and genders. By contrast, the narratives of citizenship equality, inclusion, and intercultural dialogue lack this strength (…) Interpretations of inequality emphasizing looting, discrimination and oblivion are discourses that constitute social identities. They create an ‘us’ that includes those who have been abused, exploited, or relegated by ‘them’, the powerful. These interpretations can also be read as claims against governments and dominant sectors, and they frequently go together with actions to stop corruption, promote equal treatment, and redistribute resources. In that sense, they are a weapon to deal with inequalities in Latin America, inasmuch as they provide historical and ethical arguments on behalf of the excluded. To do so, they use and even reinforce the identity boundaries that separate social groups” (Reygadas 2005: 504).

In this context of friends and enemies, democracy is claiming as a new target, leading new social movement’s political actions. The democracy which is being creating by resistance civil society is far from the formal one already existing, because new democratic procedures will ensure the participation of the excluded, the marginalised. In that sense, a lot of scholar had paid attention to the new democracy discourses existing in civil society and social movements in two ways. But one hand, those movements based their critics to universal democracy showing how citizens had been systematically excluded from a full citizenship, and by other hand, new democracy is defined paying attention to social inequality, but also to plurality inherent to human conditions (religious, gender, ethnicity). Therefore, “movements appeared to demonstrate how ‘articulating good reasons’, to borrow from Benhabib (1996), could open up the politicization of issues not circumscribed by ‘received’ discourse in structurally unequal societies where ‘reasoned deliberation’ is not free and equal” (Barnet 2004:165). Then, in order to create a new political area, those contra-democratic discourses are full of new ways of democratic inclusion strategies, first, the fight against neoliberalism policies and the hegemony of economics issues over citizens’s claims, and secondly, new more democratic ways to participate in politics once specific rights to collectives as indigenous peoples, black communities and women had been recognised, since they have been historically marginalised, politically and socially. For those social movements, these strategies will be able to reduce
inequality and therefore to permit a more inclusive citizenship. However, there are also social movements that consider disconnection of the formal democracy regime is the only way to reach authentically the democratic path, and therefore they build their own spaces of democracy, living apart from the rest of the system, as we could observe in the Zapatista case. One relevant point to discuss theoretically in those cases is related to the place in which plurality and adversaries are relegated in those democratic conceptions.

Nevertheless, it can be said that in order to talk about how to improve democracies towards developing a citizen’s one, it will be necessary to pay attention not only to the improvements of formal institutions and free electoral processes, but also to how revert the persistence spatial-inequality, the existence of local areas with vacuums of government, and the polarization of social and political identities, built politically through them-us logic. According with the existence of those spatial barriers, built by practices and discourses of exclusion, O’Donnell classification of Latin American democracies identify a second category of democracies. This second category is for those countries, which can be considered democratic regimes, with mainly all democratic characteristic satisfied in the national level, but with discontinuities of law system and even non democratic conditions in sub national regimes. Mexico is considered under this category, with other countries in the region, as Argentina, Colombia, Ecuador, Peru, Brazil, Dominican Republic, and Bolivia.

**Internal frontiers and democracy**

Considering the existence of inequality regimes of democracy in Mexico spatially distributed in certain areas of the State territory, now we could pay attention to the relation between the existence of geographies of margination and how social and political frontiers are reinforced, in order to think about the relation of low intensity democracy and the uprising of new political projects through them-us logic.

One of the main interests in analysing the relation between geographies of inequity, and democracy is concerned with the absence of territorial or spatial approaches in recent analysis of democracy dealing with this point.

In that sense, although democracy has been analysed in relation to space in different ways, those analyses are not exactly connected with our topic field. By one hand, changes in the hierarchy of political scale have been one of the most relevant topic fields in political studies. Therefore, how nation-state scale is losing its predominance,
in the context of globalization and supranational integration processes, is almost consensual, although most or less nation-state relevance is still considered (Paddison 1983; Smith 1990; Knight 1994; Lévy 1994; Radcliffe y Westwood 1996; Marden 1997; Porto Gonçalves 2001; Nogué y Rufí 2001; Slater 1998). By other hand, due to the high levels of political disaffection in occidental democracies, local scale is becoming the most democratic and effective one, due to the spread of two -almost unquestioned- ideas: a) the proximity of the scale of government is more functional, and b) it is the scale where participatory democracy is more adequate to be develop in. Therefore, local government, in regions, cities and even neighbourhoods has been elected as the places for a better democracy. Therefore, the aim of a good governance is often related to local scales (sometimes also global arena) as much as governability was linked with nation-state scale. In that sense, a lot of interests has risen to check how local responses to global problems were more successful in order to deal with economical and social consequences of policies inspired by neo-liberalism (glocalism) (Perreault and Marin 2005) -last but not least- a lot of scholars have deeply studied how transnational movements are creating networks to improve democratization processes (global governance) (Munck 2002: 15).

On contrary, much more attention has been paid to the relation between space and inequality in the sense we will also conceptualized it here. In urban and rural areas, in development countries and deeply in underdevelopment ones, socio-spatial fragmentation is being considered a general phenomena, which should be taken into account in order to rethink democracy, citizenship and socio-spatial cohesion. In fact, spatial expressions of inequality it is not a new trend, since it is clearly based on historical patterns of social geographies construction (production -in Lefebvre’s term). However, what it has been noticed as a new one, is the generalized widespread of unequal social spaces partly disconnected from equal ones. In the last decade, in the region, social and economical transformations have been produced in the context of modernization and insertion to global economy processes. Some of those changes (economical liberalization, externalization of economies, privatization, and deregulation) are not being able to modify the high levels of inequality in the region, but also they could have produced an increase. In that sense, at the beginning of XXI century, social inequality and vulnerability are now even larger, although some scholars consider it will be a progressive decreasing. However, Filgueira and Peri remind us that “since inequality comparative statistics exists, inequality has been slightly unvarying in
each Latin American countries, there are no dramatic movements between countries in spite of GDP increase per capita, different industrialization phases, urbanization and radical transformation of social structure due to the growing of middle classes, the appearance of industrial proletarian…”(2004:10). 

And consequently, Machinea and Hopenhayn support that “the persistence of the inequalities are related to deep-rooted factors in the model of development, gaining strength with the new (90’s) modernization wave” (2005: 7)³. Between those factors, the authors underlined the followings: structural heterogeneity, absence of equity in knowing game rules during the structural adjustment process, which mean high impact of social charges in vulnerable sectors, and lack of success in wealth distribution policies although an increase effort in social programs (health and education promoting policies) has been done. As consequence of those imbricate factors, inequality is expressed, following those authors, through an intense social polarization, what means, the society segmentation in social groups with different possibilities of social development, being reproduced in vicious circles which block equal social development.

Also, current CEPAL reports (2005 a, b) have underlined the region is the most unequal in the world, and how this persistence phenomena is an inhibit factor of economy rising, having negative consequences in the levels of democracy and State legitimacy as wealth-being providers. In fact, CEPAL(2005 b:3) has also recently introduced Sen’s approaches to democracy and development, and therefore they have joined extreme inequalities, with the absence of possibilities to become and to achieve, what means less capabilities of develop human being, violating clearly the most simple principles of social justice.

Mainly in the region, inequality is not only a difference of monetary incomes, which is measured by the GINI index⁴, but also it a more complex phenomenon resulted of the combination of other four factors, a) high percentage of population with low levels of monetary incomes, b) high social vulnerability in some specifically social groups (by age, gender or ethnic group belonging), c) unequal access of public quality services (health and education), and d) socio-spatial segregation in regional, urban and rural scales (Machinea and Hopenhayn 2005: 19).

³ Free translation; see Cortes, who specifically is contrary to this argument in the case of Mexican economy. 
⁴ The Gini index measures the degree of inequality in income distribution, in Latin American region is 0.552, which is considered extreme inequality.
These embedded factors are measured, in Mexico, by the National Population Agency (CONAPO) with an index of marginalization that is also clearly mapped. Marginalization is brightly defined as “a structural phenomenon which has its origin in the style, model or historical pattern of development, characterised by the difficulty to expand technical progress in the whole productive structure and in all country regions, and also by the exclusion of social groups from the development process and also from its benefits. The processes that modelled margination conforms a precarious structure of social opportunities for the citizens, its families and communities and expose them to privations, risks and social vulnerabilities that are often unable to be controlled by the personal, familiar and communitarian efforts, and which reversion required the active compromise of public, private and social agents”. (CONAPO 2000:1).

Paying attention to these maps of marginalization in Mexico is easily evident how it is concentrated in some areas, at all levels of analysis. For example, if we look at federal levels, some southern states share high levels of marginalization and at the same time also its social dynamics are far from the national average. For example, Mexico is considered a country with its demographic transition ended, but if we pay attention to regional statistics, there are still regional patterns of a previous moderate one, with still high levels of fertility and child mortality (Chiapas, Guerrero, Oaxaca, Guanajuato, Michoacán, Puebla y San Luis Potosí). In lower scale, rural and indigenous areas there are still most notorious unequal behaviours in social and demographic patterns, as it can be seen in the Report of Human Development Index, elaborated just for indigenous population (see maps annexed). For example, if we look to one rural municipality in the Highlands of Chiapas, Chenalho, 23.300 people, 85% of them auto-adscript as indigenous, 66.6% tzotzil monolinguals, there are more than 50% of population without primary school education, 75% percent of the houses with earth floor. In fact, seven of the most marginalized municipalities of all Mexican federal entities, are in the highlands of Chiapas, with relevant inequalities among other municipalities rates. (Mexican HDR 2004: 161)

All those statistics and maps are not new, and they are well known by local, regional, and federal authorities, however, and even many other scholars have shown the ways inequality is being expressed increasingly in relation to socio-spatial areas, we consider is still necessary to reflect politically about this issue.

In that sense, public interest about social inequity is mainly focused on social programs in order to change extreme poverty and social conditions, but they are not politically or
territoriality analyse. And, therefore, although in Mexico, recently social programs are being developed in urban areas, while before the areas of attention used to be rural areas, the way of designing them is not changed and social poverty conditions are just seen as deficits but not socio-spatially produced. In fact, there is no attention to the located causes of the poverty, the territorial concentration of the poverty or not even why some people in certain territories reject public policies. Those political issues are not taking into account but social capital, empowerment and other new concepts related to governance are being introduced in order to improve democracy in local areas, relational and informational social capital are new words used to improve social conditions and citizenship.

However, margin-nation clearly means in the margin of the nation, almost out of the community, a place where not always resistance is organised but, where the sense of the political community membership is fading, and the only community that rests is a local one, even a familiar or a personal one. In political terms, it is not only a low intensity citizenship but also a marginalized; almost an excluded one of the benefits of a democratic State and it is not being treated as a political problem, just as an individual one. In that context as some authors has expressed “consensual citizenship is problematic because the legitimacies of common belonging (Hutchinson and Smith, 1996) are displaced by a politics of dominance and resistance that promotes separate identity (Fenster, 1996; 2002; Parker, 2001) (quoted in Morrissey and Gaffikin 2006: 2). Therefore, in order to think politically this issue, we should try to answer some questions behind it. For example: a) Are those spatial expressions of inequality becoming into persistent geographies of exclusion, barriers to be included in a democratic society?, b) how social and political identities are built in those inequality regions, and how in those spaces of inequality, different strategies of resistance are extended questioning nation-state territoriality but also democracy? And therefore, how the State should react in order to improve democracy and at the same time to reduce levels of inequality?. Let use our field work in the highlands of Chiapas to try to discuss these questions.

The cancellation of pluralist social-space
In September 2006, the Bulletin of the Centre for the Human Rights called Fray Bartolomé de las Casas, in Chiapas, explained how two indigenous-tsotsiles peasants had been arrested by the state police forces when they were trying to cultivate land and cutting down trees in an area of the Huitepec forest, in the municipality of San Cristobal de las Casas. The main charge was to be changing the use of the lands, measured to be protected as natural areas by the State government. Following the Bulletin of Human Rights Centre, we could read how after the liberation of these two peasants, bases of the Zapatist movement, the Good Government Junta of Oventic, the closed one to the conflict area, started an investigation, and after interrogating witnesses decided to create soon in those lands, an area of 102 hectares named “Communitarian Ecological Zapatista Reservation”, in order to be cared by the Zapatista community called Huitepec Ocotal. This decision was justified using the testimonies of five members of an Indian community in the area, specially two elder persons, which said that their ancestors have been the owners of this Huitepec hill, including the area in which the two peasants were arrested and according to uses and customs they had cared and preserved the land since then. Therefore it is the only place protected by its real owners, although there are other natural areas protected by official instances, i.e. PRONATURA. Huitepec Hill is a fog forest, considered one of the most beautiful natural areas in San Cristobal, and in which exist at least ten small colonies of indigenous peoples, and another two small colonies, built by mestizos. In those lands, following Maderas del Sureste, an ecologist association, only one indigenous community lands were delimited as social property, Ejido San Felipe Ecatepec, while other settlements were being

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6. Good government juntas were born in 2003; they are the institutions which control democratic process in the communities embraced in the Zapatista project. Oventic has been one of the Zapatista bastions. It has been called “Zapatistas Centric Heart behind the world”. The members of the “juntas” are elected directly by the community members and during its turn, the authorities stand and work for the community in the Caracole (snail), of each main regional area of Zapatista influence. The main task of the junta is to attend conflicts, and to balance the development (education, health, and other services) in all the municipalities attached to each Caracol and between all five Caracoles. (to see more details of the Zapatista government structures see Mora, Van der Haar, Burguete, etc)

7. In Mexico, social property of the land, ejidos and communities, were two rural forms of property through which the pact among peasants and PRI party was signed during Cardenas presidency (1936-1940). Since those days, some of the indigenous settlements, which were able to prove their ancestor property of the land (mostly with property titles from the colonial epoch) were able to see their lands sanctioned with social property –communal lands- in order to be divided in individual plots to be cultivated. Other all properties and haciendas, were also divided into ejidos, another rural way of social property. Then new political cargos, as “commissary of ejidatarios and communal properties” were introduced in the political structure of the indigenous communities, and therefore, political local leaders
fragmented and the land was sold to build houses, losing its rural condition. In fact, a few years ago, intellectuals and new age hippies have elected this natural area to build their homes due to the natural environment characteristics, and they have been fighting to get the water and electricity supplies.

However, Zapatistas followers and the Human Rights Centre considered that according with the international law\(^8\), due to the ancestors’ used of the land, the Indian community even if it is not able to demonstrate the property of the land, should be consulted as the original population in case the government want to change the use of the land and create a natural reservation. In fact, the newsletter affirms literally: “Strip indigenous people from its territory will be an ethnocide. To create a natural protected area in an ancestral territory of a community it is not recognized the people right to its territory, which has been protected and cared by proper uses and customs of the community” (Frayba Bulletin 2006). This kind of conflicts are in fact common in all countries in which indigenous movement has used international agreements, signed by the Mexican government, to reinforce their political identities. In that sense, the political identity of indigenous peoples in all American countries has been linked to the need of protect their lands of neoliberalism, and therefore lands were progressively becoming into territories, converting mythological believes of a special relation with nature into a political principle.

However, in March 2007, one day before the inauguration of this Zapatista Communitarian Ecological Area, Chiapas State Congress announced the delimitation of new natural protected areas in the region. New six Protected Natural Areas, (ANP), were going to be controlled by the Institute of Natural and Ecology History (IHNE), but with an integral attention in which population should participate\(^9\). In fact, civic participation in the protection activities was considered necessary. One of these new areas was going to be erected in the municipality of San Cristobal de las Casas, in 102 hectares, called Huitepec-Los Alcanfores Natural Area. One day later, and according to what has been said, Zapatistas bases inaugurated two camps in the same area, in order to protect their lands and water resources, announcing the possibility of accept the presence of international and nation observatories in order to prevent military or could also obtain some legitimacy through the expansion of the land of the community, or even with the obtain of public supplies and credits.


paramilitary attacks. The territorial dispute will be increasing next months and these overlap territorialities will try to gain supporters using different discourses. By one hand, Zapatistas camp will delimited a territory defended of violent attacks of paramilitary and police forces, with the legitimacy their demands has already won and with international and national civil observatory help. While other members, (Priistas supporters in indigenous settlements, local authorities, and natural ecologist associations), will use their electoral legitimacy and rational proposal to force any political solution against what they consider, a usurpation of the legal and democratic rules. For sure, this is a simplification of a more deep and complex situation, which is not new.

As it is well-known this situation is not new because since 1994 the territoriality of the Zapatista movement has been constructed using more or less the same behaviour questioning local and federal authorities in a process of develop new spaces of democracy, their own ones. They believe the bad government is not respecting democracy and Indian rights, and therefore they create new political spaces, building – following their own words- new spaces of autonomy and democracy.

Mainly in the State of Chiapas but also in other small areas in Guerrero and Oaxaca federal States, multiples political territorialities have been created since the uprising of Zapatista Army of National Liberation in 1994, breaking the administrative and political continuity of the municipalities already existing. The process has been quite complex, and even if it has been detailed narrated and mapped by different scholars, here we just summarize it briefly. After the uprising, some localities in the Highlands of Chiapas and in the Lacandon forest were divided by those who wanted to support Zapatista project and those which did not, then high levels of political violence and instability was reported in those times by the human rights organizations. In the military area or liberated territory under Zapatista control new political, legal and economical laws were development in a similar way that other Latin American guerrilla has been done during the eighties. But soon, with the breakdown of the first political dialogue with federal and state authorities, different rebel municipalities were renamed erecting with instability and difficulties new political municipalities, in most cases were just temporarily. They were creating a new myth community, a new political community with a discontinuous political territory and paradoxically with a strong sense of belonging to the nation-state. Zapatista flag and Mexican one have been always together and still today, for example, when the Zapatista Ecological Communitarian Area was
created, both flags and hymns were displayed. In that sense, although by one hand, there is a breakdown with “the bad government”, and strategies to give a new project of democracy and citizenship is considered priority, and therefore there is a political spatial and political partition, in all different historical Zapatista strategies the idea of being linked to the rest of the nation-state members has been underlined, trying to recover past leaders as Zapata, Villa and “tatic” Cardenas as the good government memberships. However, after 1995, they asked their followers not to vote in the formal electoral system, and not accept benefices from the State, as a manner to show the repulse and disconnection with the formal political community.

But this strategy is neither new, nor only used by Zapatista leaders. In fact, nonconformist strategies and non conventional forms of political protest had been used by different civilian collectives. For example, the reject to pay electricity or water supplies, the refuse to participate in governmental rural strategies as PROCEDE, the Program which try to convert into private the social property of the land, after the Salinista land reform, and many other political participation strategies are being used to show the reject of public policies, in some regions, municipalities, etc in Chiapas State, but also all around the country, as it has been seen with the failed attempt to create an airport in Atenco, and to control social magisterial movement in Oaxaca State.

Specially, in Chiapas, the impact of the uprising in 1994 created a political consensus among etho-populist organizations as (ANIPA), left wing and other religious ones in order to develop a pacific and civilian pact to support a joined candidate for the governor elections, who was finally beaten by a Priista candidate at the end of 1995. Fraud accusations, military interventions in the area, and violations of human rights were reported by different organizations, and high levels of illegitimacy were spread while the country was suffering another huge economical crisis. In this context of unconformity, old buildings of the National Indigenous Institute in San Cristobal de las Casas were occupied and a transition government was erected as a way to protest electoral results.

Also, while Zapatistas bases were creating their own rebels municipalities, other autonomous regions were also being creating under the control of civil organizations, leaded by ethno populist leaders, which were defending Indian regional autonomy. At that point, democracy demands in the State by civil organizations, the politisation of ethnic cleavage through them-us logic, and the Zapatista movement, all were more or less joined in the fight against the bad and the illegitimated government. And therefore,
San Andrés Agreements (1996) can be considered as the moment in which dialogue among all members of the community was broken. In those dialogue steps, the recognition of regional and municipal indigenous autonomy was the controversial point, around which all civilian, Zapatistas and leftwing intellectuals were joined –with different models, and internal discussion-. However, the right to autonomy even if it was recognised in the Agreements, finally was not politically recognised in the facts by the President (Ernesto Zedillo), and since 1998, the dialogue between government –in local and national scale- was broken.

Since those days, indigenous autonomy was erected as the main target in a “convenient marriage” between Zapatistas and ethno-populist movements; the idea of created political territories out of the nation-state sovereignty was politically accepted as an option due to they considered in the State there was an absence of legal democracy. However, Zapatista territoriality has never been continuous, and its length has been increasing or reducing in different moment, although it he Lacandon forest its stability has been more relevant than in the Highlands.

In fact, the violence in those resistance terrains was closed to a civil war in small scale. In the Highland the territorialities were more disputed. Oventic has been historically the camp in which all the military Zapatista power of the area was concentrated, taking care of the security, education, and life supplies for other Zapatista camps around it. In that area, in the official municipality of Chenalho, Polho was one of the most consolidated Zapatista municipalities, with eight little camps disseminated and encapsulated in a territory controlled by a priista municipal president. In that area, other Indian communities were sympathetic with Zapatista movement, although they were pacifist, part of a catholic association, called Las Abejas. It is not necessary to say that those multiples confronted territorialities were how pluralism was channelled in a context of democracy lack, but in a context of extreme violence, when human right violations, people displacements and massacres -as Acteal- happened. Clearly as we have seen above, those areas have still today the highest percentage of marginalization, but also they are marked by a historical different geography of democratic inclusion, and nowadays the spatial fragmentation, the multiplicity of legitimate political communities, and the disputes among them are still today happening, 10 years after the massacre.

But, in order to understand how this overlapping of authorities and territorialities, we should also pay attention to what Nelson (2003) called political sedimentation of political narratives and practises.
By one hand, the social-spaces of the highlands of Chiapas had been historically linked to the process of nation-state building in an asymmetric way. In a different way than other social-spaces, municipalities or territories, in which there were no such a high percentage of indigenous people. Those territories have been included in the nation-project, through a process in which democratic formal institutions, law and civil servants were always seen outside members of the community, not being able to interrupt other territorialities and nodes of power which were able to manage material and symbolic beings simultaneously, through different historical stages since colonial times. In fact, different nodes of power or authority have lived together, being able to negotiate with formal authorities and electoral system, thanks to some kind of internal autonomy in exchange of being members of the Mexican nation-state. It is easy to find traces of those multiples and overlapping territorialities in the Highlands of Chiapas which have been linked to different nodes of power. In fact, those territorialities have not been just physical spaces through which the power was executed, they were also social spaces produced and contested, but mostly lived. Those spaces created different *habitus* of subordination but also ways to develop strategies of autonomy (de la Fuente 2005). Then, first the system of *encomiendas*, joined with the Church’s territoriality, and later the *hacienda*, and the forced migration patterns to southlands, and finally the administrative territoriality of state and municipality, and the recognition of land social property.

Maybe, one of the most relevant ways to produce and reproduce social boundaries and differential political practices among government and citizens in the region was the “institutionalised revolutionary community”\(^\text{10}\), through which PRI party was able to win all elections in this area with almost 99% of the votes at least until 1988. In fact, internal candidates, elected through internal community assemblies then was proposed as PRI candidate, in that way there were no party pluralism, not even tolerated although since 70’s political dissidence in indigenous areas started mainly associated to religious pluralism when evangelical confessions arrived to indigenous communities, and later through internal opposition to PRI elected candidates, however, in the Highlands the customs and “the internal authorities” are not being questioned, because the represent mostly recently the indigenous democratic tradition to run local communities.

\(^{10}\) See García de León 2000 and Rus 1995 for a detailed explanation of the process.
The system, maybe not with its entire characteristics, is still a common practice in some municipalities of the Highland, in which pluralism is not still considered as a good value for a community and therefore all decisions should be sanctioned by consensus. Under this system, different “cargos”, of what can be called Indian town council, were elected to serve the community, politically, religiously, and also economically because they have to contribute to annual religiosity expenses, rural festivities and cooperation for the members of the community. Historically small closed communities were able to reinforce internal laces through this system, which also should be guided by the principles of political consensus. In fact, during the last decade a lot of episodes of people expulsions of those settlements were justified by local authorities with the consideration that religious plurality can cause the division of the community. Therefore the “usos y costumbres” are not only a way to take decisions in the community or to elect some religious and political cargos, but also an internal law, able to apply sanctions. And therefore, it could be said that it has been developed through decades of internal autonomy, being embedded with religion while formal parties and elections were part of the external political legitimacy. Therefore, indigenous traditional ways to legitimate power and authority in alliance with PRI party, allow those communities to survive as different political spaces, not fulfil included in the national community, but in a way linked by the this relation with political parties, through clientelism and caciquism relations.

In fact, today after the Law of Indigenous Cultural rights, in 2001, the elections by “usos and custumbres” in indigenous communities is a formula legally sanctioned by the Constitution, and only in the State of Oaxaca, more than four hundreds of communities are regulated by this legal ways to rule internal indigenous community, paying attention to the human rights deference.

This political heritage has been used by Zapatista movement as well as by Indianist movement, in order to spread an idealistic vision of those indigenous communities as they were peaceful and always harmonious, hidden rigid structures of power in those communities, sometimes legitimated by the control of symbolic beings, and other times

11 Depending on which community, Catholic Church or “tradition” church has more influence in the election process of the cargo system, in which civil and religious cargos are interchanged.
12 See Anaya (2005) for a detailed analysis of the process of “usos y costumbres” recognition.
by violence\textsuperscript{13}, as in any other political structure, by the way. However, “the indigenous way to run democracy”, with consensus and constant participation in communitarian plebiscites can be seen also as a institutional way to understand democracy, since democratic relations between members of the community are not politically equally considered. In indigenous communities woman rights and non-indigenous people rights are not considered equal than indigenous and man ones, and also, being member of a religion which is not the “one” of the community can carry the expulsion of the community.

In fact, still today there is no clear separation between religion and politics, and therefore there is difficult to find plurality inside the communities, and this is true even in the Zapatistas settlements, in which as we have seen elder authorities are the ones who has the last word, the word of the wisdom, because their capabilities are being reinforced due to the politization of ethnic difference linked to indigenous and Zapatista movement. What I mean is that the plurality is not a value in those democratic practises and it can be justified by the need of been joined in the community in the case of old indigenous government in the Highlands, like in Chamula or in Chenalho, but also in Zapatistas communities, and Good Government Juntas, in order to be protected of the bad government in a context of military and paramilitary presence. However, we will clarify this point of view in order to come back to the theoretical discussion. By one hand, empirical recent analyses of elections in the Highlands have shown how pluralism is increasingly being accepted as new game rules (Sonnletiner 2001) although still local municipalities of the Highlands are in PRI hands and Zapatistas are not involved in electoral processes. By other hand, extremely conditions in which Zapatistas lives can explain the orthodox discipline in which they live, and why internal cohesion is considered vital for the strength of the community. However, in the Highlands, but also in the forests there are ex Zapatistas supporters which have been strongly expelled or sanctioned by their communities due to the desertion.

**How to develop a common social space in order to reconstruct democracy**

In the context, we have been analysing still today, disputes for the control of resources and territories are still common, and we would say that the politization of the space and

\textsuperscript{13} Burguete (2000) analysed how in the seventies when federal government wanted to introduce water pipes, the elder authorities were blocking them, because they could not allow intervening in their religious control of the water well. One of the community *cargo* was politically sanctioned as the one in charge to take care of water supplies, with ceremonies and offerings.
the land in the Highlands of Chiapas is being used as an expression of the incapacity of channelled democratic pluralism in the communities. This is related with a high risk of political and violent conflict, in similar conditions in which the massacre of Acteal happened in December 1997.

By one hand, territorial planning and social public policies\(^\text{14}\) are not being using to create common spaces of dialogue and inclusion and by other hands, resistance territories are not changing the characteristic historical pattern of develop political communities without channeling pluralism, therefore everyday an irresolute fragmented space is being consolidated.

In that sense, and coming back to the theoretical questions we have already exposed, we should now deal with how a democracy towards citizens can be achieved in a fragmented space, in which political identities are built in friends / enemies’ logic and political practises have been historically involved with no plural contexts of political participation.

The question is not an easy one, but we could say that only paying attention to this dilemma we will be able to think democracy not as a procedure but also as a process involved in human development, and therefore as a way to guarantee plural conceptions of live and values. Therefore, understanding democracy as a regime which has as main aim to achieve human development, and free plural participation in political decisions, radical democracy (Mouffe 2002) should be practise, not only in the political area, allowing adversaries to be part of a common space, in which we were able to discuss democratically and deliberatively, but also, in order to design new social spaces, trying to dismantle social, economical and symbolic barriers historically built, learning from the experience of strategies developed in fragmented areas, as the ones recently developed in Belfast (Morrissey and Gaffikin 2006). This is the democratic challenge for us.

\(^{14}\) By one hand, while the political transition was being held in Mexico, President Fox considered those terrains of resistance in Chiapas as a soft problem, and the Zapatistas autonomies as a way of autonomy more or less permitted in the Law of Indigenous Right Recognition that was accomplished under his mandate (2001). In fact, the law recognises indigenous autonomy under the municipality scale, so it could be consider that Zapatistas autonomies were alliances of different indigenous communities to establish cooperation strategies to develop their own political and economical structures. In that sense, his strategy was not to intervene in those disputed terrains, while he was pushing social policies in the “legal” areas and municipalities. In that sense, when he launched the Plan Puebla Panama strategy as a mega-project to try to attract inversions in the southern federal states of the country, civil organizations and bases of Zapatista support started to demonstrate their reject to what was considered as a neoliberalism plan, which was not taking into the account the consensus of the population. Then, Fox clearly says, if Marcos does not want the Plan in their territories, it is ok, the Plan won’t to disturb.
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