

Comparative Analysis of Political Culture Surveys in Sinaloa, Mexico Applied in the Years 2002, 2008 and 2013 by the Sinaloa State Electoral Council

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Abstract

This paper presents a comparative analysis of relevant data from the Survey on Political Culture in Sinaloa (ENCUP) applied in 2002, 2008 and 2013 by the Sinaloa State Electoral Council (CEE) completed as part of their civic education program, with the intention to analyze political competition, socialization and participation. The ENCUP surveys support the conclusion that overall interest in politics and the recognition of the importance of elections has decreased, as well as the perception on citizens' ability to influence municipal and state decisions. Thus, the political culture of the citizens of the state of Sinaloa is characterized by disinterest. On the other hand, as it pertains to electoral democracy, Sinaloa and Mexico have reached institutional strength. The electoral bodies are growing stronger and provide political and civic guarantees that ensure a fair voting process.

Keywords: Mexico, Sinaloa, Democracy, Political Culture, Citizen Participation, Political Participation.

Introduction

Mexican democracy's consolidation process has led to a transformation of political parties and electoral institutions. The latter have contributed to the process of democracy-building through effective policies that encourage values and civic attitudes. In addition, these same electoral institutions have been the main promoters of studies that reveal patterns of citizen political participation, as well as the development of apolitical culture throughout the country.

Robert Michels (1969, p. 194) argues that due to the incompetence of the masses (regarding the administration of the *chose publique*) "we have to recognize the existence of two regulative principles: 1. The ideological tendency of democracy towards criticism and control; 2. The effective counter-tendency of democracy towards the creation of parties evermore complex and ever more differentiated — parties, that is to say, which are increasingly based upon the competence of the few."

From this definition of democracy, the possibility of alternation as an exercise of institutionalized social criticism can be sustained. The increase of democratic risk that was experienced since the late eighties in various Mexican states, "as a national phenomenon, scattered, fragmented and regionalized in modest percentages" (Zazueta Soto, 2012, p. 80), none the less normalized party alternation in the electoral processes, which was consolidated with the 2000 elections, where the Mexican presidency was no longer in the hands of the hegemonic party that had held the Federal Executive for over seventy years. The viability of alternation in the electoral space in the country in general, and in Sinaloa in particular, has been inseparable from the consolidation of a national democracy.

During the year 2006, democratic uncertainty generated new expectations in regards to presidential succession, which was under the high probability of a new alternation; now in favor of a third party block which was emerging as a favorite.

The aftermath of the disputed election in which the National Action Party (PAN), with the victory of the then candidate for President of the Republic, Felipe Calderón Hinojosa, won a new six-year period against the federal government, and laid the foundation for the establishment of new political-electoral models. These changes have had an impact in Mexican politics, beginning with the change of format of political communication, and following with the consolidation of a national authority to coordinate multiple types of elections, with significant modifications in electoral nullifications and with the introduction of the so-called independent candidates.

These developments were introduced by the permanent legislature in 2013 and 2014, in the form of constitutional reforms and new electoral laws, in order to encourage the search for greater certainty and public trust in the results of each process.

This institutional transition can also be explained with a diagnosis in which Mexico's electoral democracy shows signs of "citizen fatigue", due to the significant setbacks experienced in the degree of adherence of citizens to the democratic system, as well as in the level of citizen dissatisfaction with the exercise of political rights and civil liberties, (COPARMEX, Konrad Adenauer Foundation; Politat.com, El Colegio de Mexico, 2013, p. 8).

In this context, the aforementioned reforms are aimed at strengthening citizenship, understood as a process where previously informed individuals, basing their decisions on information and their rationality, take the electoral decision of voting, due to the intimate space, (Garzón Valdés, 2008) built by electoral bodies in complete freedom. In the case of Mexico, these are the basis of a new democratic reality in which political and electoral actions unfold. What follows is the consolidation of a participatory political culture, from the perspective proposed by Almond and Verba (1989); in order to configure a type of "full citizenship", conceived by the United Nations Development Program (PNUD) as formed by citizens that access their civil, social, economic and cultural rights, in an indivisible and integrated set (2004).

Authoritarian inertias in any regime that transitions into a democracy are a constant threat, a long with the specter of instability and un-governability. The reason behind these types of pressure is due to the fact that democracy is not a guarantee of economic growth and social development. According to Schmitter and Karl (1992) it can be argued that democracy is not:

a) *Economic efficiency*, because in a transitory regime, during a period of political alternation, phenomena like capital flight, disinvestment and structural imbalances (inflation, devaluation, etc.) can be ignited in the economic sphere.

b) *Administrative efficiency*: knowledge of the bureaucratic mechanisms by any new group of politicians in power as a result of a transition presupposes a learning phase during which the bureaucratic apparatus of the authoritarian regime persists and can lead to disfunctionality in governance mechanisms; this effect can cause irritation of the public in general and may produce incidents between the business sector about the impact of this administrative inefficiency in the development of productive forces.

c) *A process with an orderly emergence*: the possibility of a coexistence of forces for and against change leads to a political scene where governance is a challenge for the political actors; each decision must be built on consensus, and with every sharp angle there runs the danger of blowing up this fragile consensus holding the transition together, or in other words, the construction of democratic normality.

d) *Free-market economy*; many of the most successful and well-established democracies of today have resorted to protectionism and the closing of borders, and have been widely supported by public institutions that promote economic development. While the long-term compatibility between democracy and capitalism is not in doubt, despite their continuous tension, it is not clear yet if the promotion of liberal economic goals such as the right of individuals to own property and profit, the clarifying function of markets, the private settlement of disputes, the freedom to produce without government regulation, or the privatization of state enterprises, all necessarily contribute to the consolidation of democracy. The dynamics of the free market can, in a period of democracy building, cause imbalances whose consequences have a high social cost and involve tensions requiring the political system to step back in order to preserve governance and stability.

These four elements outline a scenario in which the feasibility of the consolidation of a democracy passes through a difficult process in order to create a style of citizenship that builds its alternative amid an international economic environment that shows difficulties in achieving economic growth with social developments and improvements in the levels of inequality. Democratic consolidation requires efforts by the institutions as well as by the powers of the Union, the political parties, the corporations that mediate the interests and the political participation of citizens; as long as these various expressions of social action do not assume the responsibility in the process of building a democracy, the possibility of an authoritarian retrogression will be never be far.

In the case of Sinaloa, the quality of local democracy measured from the building of a comprehensive citizenship shows a lag, mostly associated with problems such as: poverty and inequality; the persistence of authoritarian and crony capitalistic practices; the distrust in institutions and the threats to public safety, all operate as strong resistance to the democratization efforts and are expressed, for example, in the growing disinterest and high distrust of citizens towards politics.

Thus, according to data provided by the Survey on Political Culture (ENCUP) in Sinaloa applied in 2002 (Ocampo, 2003), 2008 (Jimenez Ayala, 2009) and 2013 (Beltrán; Juárez & asociados, 2013) in the state, the interest of young Sinaloan citizens in keeping themselves regularly informed on issues related to the public and political life of the State increased from 18.34% in 2002 to 34.36% in 2008, to finally rest at 22.61% in 2013. In addition to this, interest in government affairs in this latest survey stood at 27.39%. Among adults, staying regularly informed is highly correlated to the rates of the young people; however, there is a slight change regarding the interest in the state government affairs, where the seniors show greater interest, reaching a 39.23%.

The level of information about public affairs and government by age is not the only indicator that shows the nature of the problems of legitimacy by which the process of building democracy in Sinaloa runs through; there are other indexes that allow recognizing certain trends in political culture. These can include: interest in politics, interest in government decisions, perception of influence in both state and municipal government, the importance of elections, indexes of voter turnout in past elections, reasons to not vote and confidence in electoral institutions, in this case, the local electoral body of Sinaloa.

This work discusses briefly and concisely the above indicators, trying to map the development through the years, basing its sources on the outcome of the Sinaloa ENCUP developed by the Sinaloa State Electoral Council (CEE) in 2002, 2008 and 2013 respectively. In that sense, the goal was to create an analysis that could measure changes concerning the political attitudes of Sinaloan citizens and, to some extent, relate it to the political context of the moment.

To analyze the data in question systematically, the study is divided into four chapters. The first, under the heading "Interest in Politics", integrates the compared results between the areas of the baseline surveys designated as interest in politics and information about the performance of the state government. The second theme is "Governmental Decisions", which expresses the evolution of opinions stated in relation to citizen involvement in government decisions, as well as the level of influence on government decisions that respondents considered to have. In the third segment, called "Elections", the analysis is generated from the review of the data obtained in relation with the public appreciations about the importance of the elections, about the vote in previous elections and finally, about the reasons for not voting. Finally, under the heading "Trust in the Electoral Institution" the gathered opinion in the aforementioned surveys related to the activities of the CEE in recent electoral processes is addressed.

This paper is focused on identifying major trends in the formation of the political culture in Sinaloa in the early years of the XXI century. While the ENCUP only provides reference databases, this quantitative framework allows a recognition of certain characteristics in social behavior relevant for the inclusion of citizens in the political life of the state. Even as the fundamental instruments of analysis are pictures of a particular moment, they also enable the possibility of tracking key indicators in the greater social context; so, in addition to the comparative exercise between the individual results of each survey, an analytical approach of the relevant elements of the social context in which every opinion poll survey was conducted is offered. In this way there is an effort to locate and differentiate the (political and social) structural features, and the conjunctural factors that influence the attitudes and opinions provided by respondents.

1. Interest in Politics

In this section the survey data is analyzed in relation to two factors: 1) the interest in keeping regularly informed in regards to political affairs; and 2) the level of information on the performance of the government of the state of Sinaloa.

The information must be assessed taking into account the rapid change that was experienced in Sinaloa, and the country as a whole, regarding the location of politics within the areas of citizen interest following the unprecedented increase in expectations of change caused by the process of party alternation in the federal executive in the year 2000. This constitutes the first stage, from three distinct ones that can be observed in the period regarding this study.

In the second stage, after the climax of citizen interest in politics discussed earlier, a decline was perceived in the attention to these issues, probably highly correlated with the expiration of the democratic bonus extended to the alternation government, and whose balance ended up as a negative for public opinion. This decline curve ends with the uncertainty and tensions generated by the hard-fought 2006 presidential election, ending this second stage.

The fall rapidly deepens as an unintended consequence of the introduction of the new model of political communication in the electoral reform of 2008-2009, which produced a severe questioning by the media of political institutions, particularly against political parties, the Congress, the Federal Electoral Institute (IFE) and the Federal Electoral Tribunal of the Judicial Power (TEPJF). The credibility crisis already evident in regards to political parties and the Congress spread inevitably to the electoral system. In addition to this kind of citizen withdrawal regarding political and public life, the strategy against organized crime implemented by the government of President Felipe Calderon ended up being perceived as a polluting influence on the State, as argued in Ocampo, 2012b.

Media involvement exacerbated the perception of violence and insecurity among citizens. In this third stage, citizen disillusionment has remained, affecting other indicators of political participation, as shown with the 2013 electoral involvement and reaffirmed in the Sinaloa ENCUP from the same year. The data indicates that, regardless of age, education or gender, the answers are highly correlated. Only a few variations are noticeable. Note that in the case of education, concerning college-level informants, the interest in politics was maintained with only slight changes. This education level holds the most consistent links regarding involvement in governance, and which is least affected to the degree of interest towards these issues; in addition, by 2013 college-level interviewees scored the highest percentage in the study, with 31.07% stating they stay regularly informed of what happens in the political arena. The other extreme is found in people with an elementary education, which situates it as the least interested in the political sphere, with 21.25%.

In regards to gender differences, the last survey showed that men who claimed to have a regular interest in political activities were a majority with 25.05%; whereas women had a higher rate when considering only "occasional" interest in political affairs at 63.50%. This data is consistent with those offered in the "Report on the Quality of Citizenship in Mexico", which stipulates as a premise that "men tend to engage more than women in political activities [and this conclusion is related to issues such as] education level and capital resources, which are higher in men than in women", according to the Federal Electoral Institute, (El Colegio de Mexico, 2014).

In regards to the perception of competence by State Government of Sinaloa, the situation is mostly the same, the slight differences showing that regardless of gender, socioeconomic status or education level, there is a lower level of interest in the Sinaloan population for the decisions of the State Government than for political issues in general. This aspect was reinforced by the fact that young Sinaloan citizens are scarcely interested in these issues, even to a lesser degree than the adult population.

2. Governmental Decisions

In the case of opinions expressed about governmental decisions, the question of how much decisions made by the State Government affect the life of the respondent was surveyed, as well as if the citizen thought they could influence the decisions made by governments, both at the municipal as well as the state level. In the case of the impact made by decisions taken by the government of the state of Sinaloa, the perception that they have no effect in the interviewees' lives shows a downward trend among young people. This has resulted in a slight increase in the recognition of the importance of decisions taken by the executive.

The results are very similar in regards to adults. However, the exponential trends relative to those who believe that implementation of local policies affect them greatly, and for those who say it has no effect whatsoever, are contrasting; while those expressed by young people are less opposed to each other. As for the perception of the capacity to influence governmental decisions, in the municipal level, it appears that respondents with higher levels of education considered themselves with greater possibilities to influence the decisions taken by mayors and municipalities. As for college students in 2002, 43% recognized this ability to influence local governments, reaching its highest point in 2008 with 53.55%; by 2013 this opinion decreased to 49.80 percent. This perception of the ability to influence local politics can be said to follow a descending order: in the 2013 survey results, after the college level students, high school students are found with 42.80%, middle school 38.40% and finally, elementary level with 36.70%.

If analyzed based on income, a similar phenomenon is observed: the higher income level, the stronger the belief that municipal decision can be influenced by individuals. On the other hand, the comparative distribution of data in the responses of those who think that they can influence decisions on State politics and those who believe they do not have any influence in any way, correlated with the data regarding the age of the respondents, shows a direct correlation between the age and the belief of a capacity to influence decisions.

Butin general, regardless of the age of the respondent, the majority feel they have no ability to influence decisions made by the state government. Despite this marked trend, particularly in the youth range of the population, in a diachronic analysis you can clearly see that the belief in an ability to influence the decisions at the state level shows a relative increase. This seems to be an indication of greater confidence in the ability to influence governmental decisions by young people, however, it should also be noted that although the option "cannot be done" changed from 71.61% in 2002 to 27.24% in 2008, by 2013, rising to almost 50 percentage points.

This highlights the preponderance of college students who held the highest percentage in the study responding affirmatively when asked if there was a possibility to influence the decisions taken by the state government. This indicates that the other levels show a very similar distribution pattern; elementary, middle school, high school and college, by 2002, had values ranging from 25.30% (Elementary) to 28.00% (High School). For 2008 and 2013, the percentage of college students that believe they could influence decisions made by the state government increased to 51.10% and 52.95% respectively; about 10% above any other academic grade. In the case of those who think it is not possible to influence these decisions, the percentages showed a very similar behavior, because in no time the values exceeded a difference above 7 percentage points.

In general, the perception of Sinaloan citizens' on whether it is possible to influence their state government is divided. It is also true that the education level has an impact in the way of thinking of those who were surveyed; however, the data does not seem to be conclusive, because although an increase in the number of people who think that they have influence over state governmental decisions can be observed, the values of those who believe there is no such influence still remain markedly superior. Therefore, a split decision can be observed, with a slight advantage from those who think they can not influence governmental decisions.

3. Elections

Elections are a critical aspect of the political life of country and state; in this sense, they represent an important subject of study in political participation surveys. This section describes Sinaloan citizens' perceptions on the importance of elections, and observes some of the reasons behind low voter turnout. In the case of the question: how important are elections for you? both men and women responded similarly. In the ENCUP from 2013, the highest value of the degree of importance of elections in public opinion stood in the range of "somewhat important"; ENCUP in 2008 the "very important" was at the highest.

In the case of men, the "very important" option rose from 34.80% in 2002 to 48.50% in 2008 to stand at 27.20% in 2013; while for "somewhat important" obtained 35.55% against a latter 28.80% and a 48.50% in the last year. For women, this happened in a very similar fashion, in the case of "very important", it evolved from 29.70% to 43.40% but decreased by the last year to 28.03%. There are other variables to correlate with this data, in order to more clearly recognize the causes of this irregular oscillation of opinions.

The same irregular variation is reproduced by studying the results by level of education and the degree of importance in each case attributed to the electoral process. From the perspective of the hierarchical arrangement of education levels, it appears that college students give greater importance to elections: in 2013, a 44.70% answered that elections were "very important" (highest range for this variable); the same question in 2008 showed that more than half of respondents in this education range (63.20%) agreed. Of course, the relative decline in the perception of the degree of importance of elections is widespread in the social structure, not only those with a graduate education. A peculiar fact is evidenced while performing the comparisons with the data on people who reported voting in "all elections": contrary to the other questions, the lowest percentage was shown at the middle school and not the elementary level.

Regarding those who claim have voted in every election, a noticeable decline is observed between 2002 and 2013; a change of 67.02% in the young population and 72.69% among adults only to settle at 22.90% and 46.53%, respectively, after eleven years. This proves a prevailing disappointment and shows young people as the segment where the interest in voting has decreased most noticeably. It is certainly interesting that at the national level not only young people have dropped their interest in voting, but also in the case of adults, although it is recognized as less evident. In Sinaloa, this indifference is widespread, without a palpable tendency in any of the specific age segments. This same variable observed by gender shows a marked decrease in the exponential trend in 2013 with respect to 2002 in the part of male respondents. The 84.25% of men surveyed in 2002 said they had assisted to the polls to vote; in 2008 only 46.15% did so, while in 2013 the number was 36.80%. Otherwise, those that answered they did not go to the polls went from 15.75% to 49.85% to settle, finally at 61.90%.

In the case of women who responded similarly, the percentage changed from 83.60% in 2002 to 40.20% in 2008, and finally 29.23% in 2013. This confirms that the aversion to vote is increasing in general; it is not concentrated in any age range and does not distinguish between men and women.

The reasons why people chose not to vote were extremely diverse, resulting in different types of responses in different years (2002, 2008 and 2013), not comparable in and by themselves. For the year 2002, the reasons for not voting were found markedly biased towards those in the individual sphere, either by informants who lacked the proper official identification or because they were absent. This means that at least for this year, the reasons which were left out were linked to doubts about the impartiality of the institutional authority in charge of counting the number of votes (in this case, the CEE) or to arguments describing a lack of knowledge about key factors of the electoral organization, such as the date of the election or the location of the voting booths.

For the year 2008 a certain level of mistrust in the electoral organizations was beginning to be perceived, which can be considered as a *post factum* reaction to the mentioned phenomena in the federal process of 2006. In the case of men, there was a marked tendency to show no intentions or will to participate in the elections, while women felt that there were no conditions to believe in a fair election process.

If the reasons to abstain from voting are analyzed by education level, those who mainly distrust the process are college students, while the informants with a high school education who claim to not have the proper official identification to vote during the last elections were more prevalent. Interestingly, when data on monthly income is reviewed, those who most distrust the process are the two opposite poles: those who have an income of “up to 1 minimum wage (SM)” and those with “more than 5 minimum wages”.

By 2013, according to young respondents, the majority was not qualified to vote, that is to say, they did not have a valid ID or electoral credential. For the adults there are three aspects of equal magnitude: 1) Do not have a valid ID (electoral credential), 2) have a profound disinterest to participate in the elections and 3) in the case of seniors, diseases prevented them to vote.

In relation to gender, either male or female, the main reason that both men and women found is that they do not have the valid form of electoral credential or have a disinterest in voting. It should be noted that in the ENCUP 2013, one of the reasons that could be thought of as the most important, the idea of “corrupt politicians”, showed very little overall percentage.

When data is analyzed by monthly income, those who were not eligible to vote were those with lower incomes, in contrast to those who earn a higher salary of 5 minimum wages whose primary reason for not voting was being out of town on the day of the elections. In the case of education levels, those who reached the level of elementary school, middle school and high school, usually did not have a valid form of ID or electoral credential; moreover, the lack of interest in voting is an issue that affects all levels, from elementary to professional.

So far, certain general conclusions can be observed:

- 1) The years 2002, 2008 and 2013 were marked by different social and political-electoral contexts, which generated strong trends not only in Sinaloa, but also to the whole country.
- 2) The year 2002, marked by the context of political party alternation, generated that most of those who did not go to the polls were for lack of time, lack of a valid ID or electoral credential, or were out of town.
- 3) The year 2008, which was marked by the election of 2006, began to generate some level of distrust among the population, who said they did not vote because their votes would not be counted correctly.
- 4) In 2013, although this sense of distrust was not a predominant motive in the survey's answers, the media controversy associated with the implementation of the new political communication model (introduced by the electoral reform 2008-2009) catalyzed the disinterest gestated in the 2006 elections, deepening the crisis after the reverse-alternating result of the 2012 elections.
- 5) Educational level seems to be an important factor when deciding to vote. It can be argued that those with a higher academic degree more easily recognize the importance of voting.

Gender, in contrast with the education level, has not been a factor that marks a difference in the importance given to elections or when talking about reasons for not voting.

4. Confidence in the Sinaloa State Electoral Council

The Sinaloa State Electoral Council (CEE Sinaloa) is the body responsible for organizing, monitoring and ensuring that votes are properly counted, allowing the Sinaloan population to be confident that their decision will be taken into account.

However, the CEE Sinaloa has endured a period of loss of credibility and trust, like the rest of the national electoral institutions. This is not necessarily a direct consequence of the functions attributed to this body; the social and political context of the country that has hatched a climate of doubts about the effectiveness of democracy and of representative institutions should also be taken into account. The electoral political reforms that radically changed the basis of the electoral system, which were conceived originally for the development of an increasingly competed and ordered process, is part of an effort by the State to improve the expectations of the efficiency of the democratic procedures in the socio-economic life.

Another determining factor in the assessment was derived, significantly, from the new conditions of electoral competition. Thus, in 2004, the elections for governor of Sinaloa were decided with very close results, but with a slight advantage for Jesus Aguilar Padilla, who would later become governor of the state. In the year 2010, although the winner came from the opposition and won with a major advantage in favor of the then coalition "Change is now in Sinaloa", which had Mario Lopez Valdez as its candidate, the election went through a media contest unprecedented in Sinaloa and in the midst of an unparalleled legal battle before the administrative body and the judicial institutions. Similarly, the obsession of some political forces to impose dogmas and falsehoods was installed as a campaign strategy, with the after-effect of prolonged ideological criticism, often without legal grounds' his marked a downward trend in the credibility of the electoral authorities, even when they ensured that the alternation voted in the polls would be ratified without a blemish in all of the sanctioning bodies.

Accordingly, the gubernatorial election of 2010 was further evidence of the consolidation of the democratic regime in Sinaloa. An institutional taskforce founded in 1995 led to a democratic election where the majority of citizens chose the alternation in 2010 (Ocampo, 2012a). This is a sign that the main rules of procedural representative democracy are present. Robert Dahl (1982) lists the minimum procedural conditions of a democratic regime, namely:

1. Control over government decisions about policies is constitutionally placed in the hands of elected representatives.
2. Elected representatives are chosen in frequent elections, conducted fairly and in which coercion is relatively uncommon.
3. Virtually all adults have the right to vote in the election of representatives.
4. Practically all adults have the right to be voted for elective positions in government.
5. Citizens have the right to express themselves without danger of severe punishment on broadly defined political matters.
6. Citizens have the right to seek alternative sources of information - these exist and are protected by the law-.
7. Citizens have the right to form relatively independent associations or organizations, including political parties and independent interest groups.

That is to say, the democratic principle that whoever gets the most votes wins the election was fully achieved, beyond media perceptions or political positions in the electoral race. However, these disagreements leave an imprint in the perception of confidence in the CEE Sinaloa: young and old alike confess a growing distrust for the body. This is not only reaffirmed among the different age groups, but can also be observed in both genders at different educational levels, as well as in the level of monthly income, confirming that the confidence held by the people on the electoral body is declining.

The correlated data is from informants who have higher salaries than 5 minimum wages, as well as those with a professional education level. However, both income distributions by education or monthly income, in general, are very similar. Those who have experienced a faster growth of distrust have been in income levels of 1 to 3 minimum wages, and informants who claimed to have a middle school level of education. It should be noted that by 2013, the level of those who only have elemental education level equaled the college education level, however other type of data would be needed to understand why this phenomenon occurred.

With this, two basic aspects can be concluded:

- 1) The CEE Sinaloa, like other electoral institutions in the country, is undergoing a process in which the perception that the population has towards this body evolves toward negative indicators.
- 2) This trend, local and national, is directly proportional to the correlation of the citizen's expectations on democracy as a palliative to inequality and social and economic disparity. As reviewed above, unfortunately, that is not democracy.

Conclusions

As stated above, the consolidation of democracy in Mexico and Sinaloa state is a reality; power alternation by political parties in the exercise of various executive positions of popular election and the so-called divided governments are two conclusive expressions that the political regime in Sinaloa is democratic.

However, the socioeconomic crisis and miscalculation of different levels of government and the media that placed the fight against organized crime as the central obligation of the state has repositioned democracy at the center of controversy, particularly in its role as the cornerstone of the market and the social system as a whole. In the whole country, and in Sinaloa in particular, legitimate and open pluralistic political representation exists, but is still contested by various groups. On the other hand, implemented economic controls have prevented the global recession from hitting the country even more harshly; in addition, successful stabilization has been achieved on public safety matters in Sinaloa. All this in an atmosphere of democratic contests and greater public freedoms. This scenario has led to the emergence of incipient but very active political participation of special interest groups, that begin to emerge as political actors with palpable power in the public sphere; eventually they may find their way to define and dictate the public agenda. All of this is occurring with the background of increased democratic competition and under the new laws that allow, through independent candidates, the electoral participation of special interest groups beyond the sphere of political parties.

As shown in the comparative results of the analyzed surveys, in regards to political culture in the State of Sinaloa, there is a marked influence by the national and international contexts discussed in this essay, with diminishing results in terms of participation? Interests in politics, as well as the recognition of the importance of elections, are in full decline. The same thing happens with the perception of the ability to influence municipal and state decisions; the population, regardless of age, gender, educational level or income, considered they have poor influence in local decision-making. In this sense, political culture is permeated by a disinterest by the people in participating. However, a democratic life coexists with this political reality in Sinaloa, emphasizing the influence of individuals, and enhancing this political regime due to the social and political context.

The entire institutional framework at the state level, in terms of citizen participation, should potentiate the possibilities of social action beyond just the electoral-political context. In this sense the communication patterns of citizen participation in institutional development can function as a form of sustenance for the internalization of a culture of political participation in Sinaloan citizens. Plurality in the state and country's social sectors can potentiate this effort, this in addition to aspects of political and partisan interaction. In terms of electoral certainty, the institutional electoral body has made significant progress, consolidating one of the guiding principles of a democratic regime: the possibility of alternation of power, specifically in the State of Sinaloa.

In order to speed things up and change these negative perceptions, it is more than appropriate to promote public policies that enable young people, the media and the new political actors to advocate change through institutional channels, particularly in perspectives of economic growth and social inequality abatement.

In regards to electoral democracy, Sinaloa and Mexico as a country are characterized by having achieved institutional strength. The electoral institutions are becoming more robust and professional. There are enough political and civic guarantees to ensure the fairness of the voting process. Although this institutional asset is not a trifle, the institutions of the Nation State face serious challenges leading to a more just and equal society, along with free and fair elections. This is where the key to transforming the negative perceptions held by so many citizens lies, particularly in enabling citizens capable of accessing the totality of the legal and political rights.

Any regime that transitions into a democracy is under the constant threat of an authoritarian regression, along with the specter of un-governability and political instability. Without the proper attention to the social and economic problems, from the Mexican State's institutions, as well as private sector organizations, the risk of an authoritarian regression will be a permanent shadow for the Mexican and Sinaloan societies, as well as for their democratic regimes.

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