The international democratic policies bring into question to development of civic domestic activism. The case of Civic Alliance in Mexico

The adoption of political rights defense policy in the domestic context is differentiated and has diverse effects in the organizational forms that implement it. The activism around political rights defense is principally structured by the “Civic Democratic Associations” (CDA). These organizations had developed in several Latin American countries but they acquired a different specificity in accord with their political field characterizes. In Mexico for example the accent is putting in the governmental electoral frauds tactics denunciation, while in Chili, the main question is that elections take place after years of the Pinochet regime.

The Civic Alliance (Alianza Civica, CA) is one of the most important CDA in Mexico since 1994. This organization held the highest number of individual and collective participants, and received important financial support from international and national organizations. The CA principal activity is domestic elections monitoring, since it point of view the elections legality is the condition for democracy, however after time this organization diversified its activities. A number of studies are focalized to explain to us how civic associations such as the CA adopt international norms and policies, this is the case for example with Thomas Risse and Katrink Sikkink, and Sydney Tarrow. However, this literature does not take into consideration in one hand, the possibility that those norms and policies could have a directly positive as well as negative effect on the role and existence of civic domestic associations. On the other hand, this scholarly work does not consider the particular characteristics of different domestic contexts. The purpose of this paper is to examine, since the single case-studies of the CA, the effects of the international democratic policies adoption in the structure and activism of these organizations, taking in consideration the dynamics of political domestic context. It will be consider here a temporally perspective analyze to observe the differences of CA existence conditions, making a contrast between the “after”, the “inter” and the “before” of the regime change (in this case semi-authoritarian to democratic regime). In addition, the individual perspective analysis will be privileged in this paper in order to identify the relationship of social capital of the CA activists within the adoption of international democratic policies, and at the same time the relationship of this

1 The Civic Democratic Associations will understand as the organizations that will be after named ONG that are constituted with the objective of the defense of political rights.
4 The mexican system can be described as semi-authoritarian political system because it is consider to be a “hybrid of political liberalism and authoritarianism that gives it a special quality or flavor – that is well documented institutionally in its 1917 constitution, currently in effect” Roderic Al CAMP, “Politics in Mexico: the decline of authoritarianism”, New York, Oxford University Press, 1999, p. 9.
adoption process within the role (strategic positions) of CA into the political domestic context.

This paper is based on research that has been taking place for the past few years. In particular we are going to mobilize different empirical materials: more than 40 interviews were taken with activists and ex-activist from the CA, a direct observation work of 10 weeks stay in the main CA office and the presence in different organization activities, and also a complete review of CA files. This paper is structured as follows: the first section defines the context of the CA constitution during the transformation regime, and exposes the CA specificity. The second and final section, analyses the effects that the CA had on the political system transformation and how it makes face up to the political alternation in 2000.

**When the Civic Alliance became “electoral observer” par excellence and when democracy became their main objective**

The “democracy as political alternation in Mexico” is an idea that came about during the 80’s at the same time that many dictator governments were overthrow in South America (Chili, Argentina, etc.). This is also a consequence of a series of protest mobilizations against political regimes, and of the development of many post-electoral conflicts movements in different regions around the country which began in the 1980’s that are the set the scene for the protection of political rights. Political rights defense mobilizations are focused on the questioning of elections conditions and are conducted by opposition mobilizations, Revolutionary Institutional Party (Partido Revolucionario Institutional, PRI) dissidents’ actions, grassroots and religious movements, and academics. They are based in the principles of universal values of human rights, even if they are a national political strategy. This type of mobilization, at least until that moment, had not adopted a special organizational form and was not presented as a “democratic” movement developing the idea of democracy. They are recognized as an oppositional movement against the PRI-government that controlled and

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5 For example the 60’s student mobilizations, the peasant confrontations, the workers and teachers mobilizations. Jorge CADENA-ROA, dir., Las organizaciones civiles mexicanas hoy, México, Centro de Investigaciones Interdisciplinarias en Ciencias y Humanidades CEIICH, Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México UNAM, 2004, p. 163.


7 Here we think in the persons whose belong to the different political trend (right and left) that are organized in the groups more or less instituted or in the little political parties.

8 This political party is constituted after the Mexican Revolution in 1928 under the name of National Revolutionary Party (Partido Nacional Revolucionario, PNR), he will controlled the mexican politics until 2000.
monopolized politics for 60 years in co-optation with the corporatist sector\(^9\) (read the frame below). It is in this context of political rights defense mobilizations that CA is constituted.

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Mexico in the 1980’s</th>
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<td>The brief description of the political context in Mexico during the 80s will be artificial because this period is characterized by its dynamism. For this reason, we will only mention the actors that got involved in the official political fight, i.e. the actors who took direct part in the electoral competition at this period. The official political field at this period was almost monopolized by the PRI and some others little parties that were gaining representation and influence as opposition. This is the case with the of Action National Party (Partido Acción Nacional, PAN) which was formed in 1939 and represents the Mexican political right; the Revolution Democratic Party (Partido de la Revolución Democrática, PRD) instituted in 1989 which is the largest representation of the left in Mexico, this party bring together the Mexican Workers Party (Partido Mexicano de los Trabajadores, PMT) and the Socialist Mexican Unification Party (Partido Socialista Unificado Mexicano, PSUM) which is the oldest Mexican communist party establish in 1979. Finally, we identified the Revolutionary Workers Party (Partido Revolucionario de los y las trabajadoras, PRT), that is the Trotskyite party constituted in 1976 and officially recognized as a political party until 1985. For further details about the Mexican political system see Roderic AI CAMP, “Politics in Mexico: the decline of authoritarianism”, op.cit. , 279 pages.</td>
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\(9\) The Confederation of Mexican Workers (Confederación de los trabajadores de México, CTM) is one of the most important examples of this kind of practices, this confederation is recognized as a corporatist organization of PRI.  
\(11\) This assembly is constituted by the activists of the Democratic Chihuahua Movement, the National Democratic Front and some left parties (PRT and PMS) in 1988. Laura Nelly MEDELLIN MENDOZA, « La travesía de la liberalización política de Nuevo León », Espiral, vol. XII, n°35, january-april, 2006, p. 75-76.  
\(12\) It is established with the objective of evaluate the election of 1988 in this court participate some members of the democratic trend of PRI, some PAN and PRD militants, and some public personalities.

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**The election legality as a key to Mexican democracy**

At the end of the 80s emerged a movement that is mainly concentrated in “electoral fraud tactics” denunciation and in “vote defense”\(^10\). In the beginning, these mobilizations were strongly represented by the opposition parties (PRD and PAN) and they were supported by a large number of social movements and grassroots organizations. One reason for this support is that the political parties were the only legally authorized, to demonstrate their disapproval against electoral results and electoral conditions. After the elections of 1988 several organizations were formed in an effort to denounce elections fraud tactics and defend the right of vote. That is the case for example with the Democratic Assembly for the Effective Suffrage (Asamblea Democrática por el Sufragio Efectivo ADESE)\(^11\), and the Independent Citizen Court (Tribunal Independiente de los Ciudadanos)\(^12\) in 1989. As a continuation of the
ADESE in 1990 the Council for Democracy (Consejo por la Democracia) was established, its objective is to publicize the actions within the mexican political system transformation in domestic and international contexts. The social movements and grassroots organizations participation in these mobilizations is relegated to second place yet, it is nevertheless important to specify that at the same time that these denunciation movements consolidate their place in the political field, the human rights civic associations sector (including the CDA) experienced a very important development. Miriam Calvillo Velasco and Alejandro Favela Gavia studies\(^{13}\) show us that if we take into consideration the civic associations year constitution we will see that 52.3% (2 926) was established between 1991 and 2000, and 25.5% (1 426) between 1981 and 1990\(^ {14}\).

At the beginning of the 90s the configuration of these mobilizations changed, one part of human rights civic associations concentrated their actions around the idea of political citizen rights defense and looked to demarcate their independence from the political parties. So, it is here in a context of political system transformation process that the CDA was formed as a mobilization in favour of political rights defense. These associations are integrated by some groups of grassroots urban movement (Movimiento Urbano Popular, MUP), academics, corporatist organizations dissidents, and participants in the post-electoral mobilizations. They are in accordance with an international movement that demands for legal and regular elections as a condition to a democratic system that respects citizens’ rights. Non-partisan elections monitoring has since become an important way to legitimize the new governments elected in a middle of authoritarian or dictator rules (Philippines, Chile, Peru, Dominican Republic, etc.)\(^ {15}\). Even so, elections monitoring in each country adopt a different signification in accord with adopts the dynamics of their local political fields\(^ {16}\) and domestic contexts. The specificity of Mexican democratization process is concentrated in the “electoral question” and not in the idea of justice, the denunciation of humans rights violations (Chile, Argentine), or in the influence of political parties (Poland). In Mexico, if we take into consideration that elections have always taken place (since the Mexican revolution 1910-1921) and that existing public institutions that are supposed to guaranty the constitutional precepts; the questionings

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\(^{13}\) Even if we recognize the important value of this scholarly work, because there are not a lot of works concentrated on the study of this sector evolution in the Mexican case, it is important to specify its limits. It is true that is very complex to obtain the information about this kind of association because a difference of the political parties was not existed a direct control for the government until the end of the 20 century. In consequence there is not an official database that concentrates all the information about them. The most important limit of this work is that the authors don’t do a classification of different types of these organizations; they prefer to understand these organizations in a large definition that included all kind of private organization. Second, the sources that they utilize are very eclectic and there is not homogeneity about periods, quantity, and origin. Miriam CALVILLO VELASCO and Alejandro FAVELA GAVIA, « Dimensiones cuantitativas de las organizaciones civiles en México », in Jorge Cadena Roa, dir., Las organizaciones civiles mexianas hoy, Mexico, Centro de Investigaciones Interdisciplinarias en Ciencias y Humanidades, 2004, p. 73-120.

\(^ {14}\) Ibid, p. 84.


\(^ {16}\) The political field is since Pierre Bourdieu work “a competition space for the power that is realize by the intermediary of a competition to the profanes, or better, by the monopoly of a right to talk and act in the name of one part of all the profanes”, La representation politique, Actes de la recherche en sciences sociales, vol. 36, n° 1, 1981, p. 3-24.
since then are addressing in terms of “trust” in the public institutions which were constituted and controlled by the PRI-state. We identify here one of the reasons why actions for the PRI-State defeat (democratization) have been concentrated on the electoral question and institutional transformation; access to public institutions is thought of as a key which opens the door to systematic change. This thinking explains at the same time why political parties and civic associations are interesting in pointing their efforts. Like we already said, this position is shared by the international field that support domestic elections monitoring organizations with funding, materials or technical resources, coming from some internationals organisms (United Nations, OAS, Foundation for Election Systems, to name a few) and international agencies (USAID, NED, NDI, CIDA, etc.).

First of all the CDA are organized as “civic networks” that is the case of Convergence of Civil Organisms for Democracy (Convergencia de Organismos Civiles por la Democracia, COCD)\(^\text{\textsuperscript{17}}\) and the Citizen Movement for Democracy (Movimiento Ciudadano por la Democracia MCD)\(^\text{\textsuperscript{18}}\). This organizational framework can also be found in organizations like the Arturo Rosenblueth Foundation, the Assembly for the Effective Suffrage (Asamblea por el Sufragio Efectivo), the Agreement for the Democracy (Acuerdo por la Democracia)\(^\text{\textsuperscript{19}}\), and the Mexican Academy of Humans Rights (Academia Mexicana de Derechos Humanos)\(^\text{\textsuperscript{20}}\). The civic networks electoral monitoring actions were made informally because there was no legal dispositive for observing or denunciating fraud tactics by the citizens. In some occasions these networks made alliances with opposition parties, to allowing activists to participate as polling booth party representatives. This was the only way to be directly present in the election and can monitor electoral fraud tactics. However, the civic networks have to face up to different limitations that inhibit their actions or conduct them to the failure of their objectives. Finally in 1993, as part of a series of political-electoral reforms\(^\text{\textsuperscript{21}}\) came the “electoral observer”\(^\text{\textsuperscript{22}}\) as a

\(^{17}\) This network get together more than 60 organizations where participate approximately 100 persons. The principal objective of this network was the fight to the democracy. The COCD coordinate the monitoring election in some states as San Luis Potosi (together to the Navisme movement), Guanajuato, etc. Rafael Reygadas, 1998, Mexico, « Abriendo veredas », Chapitre. 4.3, http://vinculando.org/sociedadcivil/abriendo_veredas/43_lucha_democracia.html#_ftnref1

\(^{18}\) This movement is formally constituted in 1992 and is present in 15 states around the country. He is a front of Humans Rights NGOs and some local mobilizations that is constituted by academics, syndical leaderships, journalists, independents persons and some social movement organizations. Daniel CAZES and Enrique CALDERON, Las elecciones presidenciales de 1994, Mexico, La Jornada ediciones et Centro de Investigaciones Interdisciplinarias en Humanidades UNAM, 1996, p. 20-21.


\(^{20}\) This organization is one of the first Mexican ONGs constituted with the only objective of defend the citizen human rights.


\(^{22}\) “All the citizens that wish to participate like electoral observer can do it. Nevertheless, they could do it only during the Election Day and they have to be certificated by the local council of the Electoral Federal Institute (Instituto Federal Elecctoral, IFE). To obtain this accreditation the citizen should present a demand and electoral card copy”, POZAS HORCASITAS Ricardo, « La observación electoral: una modalidad de la militancia ciudadana », Revista Mexicana de Sociología, vol. 59, n° 2, april-june 1997, p.30. Some months later it is adopt
legal figure which made the participation of citizens in election monitoring possible. To the CDA this change signified the possibility to independently participate in electoral monitoring. Some months later, foreign participation in domestic electoral monitoring in 1994 presidential election was agreed upon this participation was conducted under the form of “foreign invitee”.\(^2^3\)

In this context of electoral reforms and as a result of monitoring local elections experiences, the idea of constructing a Civic Alliance that makes possible a national independent movement to observer and qualify the electoral process is established. This idea is understood as a domestic project that will get together the experiences and resources of the greatest majority civic networks, organizations and individuals engaged in political rights defense. The “Civic Alliance, 94 Observation” is officially formed the 25 April 1994 as the union of seven organizations\(^2^4\) and concentrated its efforts in domestic electoral monitoring. The CA achieves in 1994 a national network which has locals branches in all the states of the country (32), and is basically formed by three mainly professional sectors, the first is the associative activist sector that is integrated by those persons that developed their professional careers in the associative sector and who may never had been in a political post. The second is the academic sector, which included academics principally specialized in the social sciences and humanities that worked in Mexican universities, some of whom used to participate in the associative sector. The third is the journalist sector. This is a general description of CA composition that is only based in their activists’ professional careers. The social configuration of the CA activism is more complicated than this, but unfortunately we cannot go into the details of this question in this paper. However, we can say that there is a tendancy that CA activists belong in general to the middle class and have higher level educations. What’s more, in relation to gender and age we observe first that the activists are more or less even from gender perspective, 68% of men and 18% women, second we find many members between 30 and 40 years old\(^2^5\).

The Civic Alliance “expertise”

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\(^{2^3}\) This kind of participants have the right to observe all the electoral process, but a difference of the “electoral observers” they are not allowed to make public a evaluation about the process that could be considerate as an opinion that interfere in the national politics. José Antonio CRESPO, Votar en los estados. Análisis comparado de las legislaciones electorales estatales en México, Mexico, Fundación Friedrich Numann-CIDE et Miguel Angel Porrúa, 1996, p. 89-90.

\(^{2^4}\) The Mexican Academy of Humans Rights (Academia Mexicana de Derechos Humanos), the Convergence of Civics Organisms to the Democracy (Convergencia de Organismos Civiles por la Democracia), the Citizen Movement to the Democracy (Movimiento Ciudadano por la Democracia), Arturo Rosenblueth Fondation and the Democracy Council (Fundacion Arturo Rosenblueth y el Consejo por la Democracia), Assembly for the Effective Suffrage (Asamblea por el Sufragio Efectivo), Superior Institute of Democratic Culture ((Instituto Superior de la Cultura democrática).

\(^{2^5}\) These tendencies and the others that will be exposed later are based in a sample of 58 persons where had been considered the CA members representing the different analyze categories: the founders, the cadres and the terrain agents. And concerned people coming from divers’ states: Jalisco, Guerrero, Michoacán, San Luis Potosi and Mexico City.
Elections monitoring is directly related to the concept that voting liberty is the most important political right and in consequence with the election conditions legitylity. The CA’s main objective is to encourage of electoral processes in accordance with the law, because the accomplishment of this objective enables citizens to be free to elect their political representatives. To reach its objective, the CA is concentrates on the development of an electoral monitoring expertise.

The monitoring election since the CA perspective includes all the electoral phases’ process: political campaign, parties financing, electoral day, and transmission of results. In 1994 for example the CA participated with 11,800 of 81,620 electoral observers that had been positioned in the country. Those observers’ main purpose is to recollect information about the electoral day conditions, and the transmission of the polling booth results to establish the quick counting of votes (read the frame below). The CA’s actions are not only concentrated in the electoral day, it organized too other activities to accomplish a larger analyze of the election conditions. This is the case for example with the Medias campaign monitoring (read the frame below), the vote promotion campaign in rural zones “Ponte Vivo”, etc. In 1994, the CA announced before than the Federal Electoral Institute (Instituto Federal Electoral, IFE)\(^{26}\) the results tendencies, the CA results are very close to those announced some minutes later by the IFE. Moreover, the CA organizes the visit of some international delegations, that in 1994 for example numbered 450 persons from 934 registered as foreign invitees by the IFE, coming from 24 countries\(^{27}\).

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**The quick counting of votes**

This activity takes place during the electoral day and its objective is to determinate the trajectory of electoral results. Before the electoral day a polling booth random sample is designated (in 1994 for example the information was obtained from 232 polling booths), the counting of these polling booths will determine the vote tendencies. This activity is only organized during the presidential elections. The results are usually publicized a few hours after the polling booths have closed. The electoral observers do this. They are in charge of collecting and communicate at the end of the electoral day the results that are usually seen in the polling booths. The results are communicated to reception centers that were previously assigned to the electoral observers (there is a reception center for each state where the CA has a branch). Usually the reception centers are localized in the installations of the local CAs without some exceptions, the information is then relayed back to the CA main office in Mexico City. Looking to prevent possible telephone lines saturation, the schedules for the transmission of results are previously fixed. In the CA main office concentrates all the technical and human resources to treat the information coming from the states (20 states participated in 1994). Despite was established schedules transmission as a prevention measure, it is possible that some inconvenient are presented because the results at the polling booths are show it more or less at the same time. So, an important number of electoral observers will try to communicate almost at the same time, as was the case for example, in 1994 when the telephone lines were blocked for a moment. Every reception center in the states was provided with a telephone, a fax and a computer, and it was necessary to give previous training to the people.

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\(^{26}\) This is the public institution responsible of the elections organization. This institute is established in 1990 but he has like antecedent the Electoral Federal Commission (CFE) constituted in 1950.

processing the data in the states and in the main office. In the main office this data is analyzed and put into a main report.

**Media campaign monitoring**

This campaign was celebrated some months before the elections. Like in the case of quickly counting votes, media campaigns are defined a random sample stratified of days that will permit obtain general conclusions from a specific period. During the days that were determined by the random sample, a group of volunteers will monitor newspapers and television to determine on one hand the number of mentions of each candidate, and in the other hand the references made about the electoral process. These volunteers must receive previous training to complete the forms that will then constitute the base to finals monitoring reports. The training takes place in local CA offices and is taught by CA activists that have been previously trained by those who prepared the random sample. Usually, the analysis period is three months before the electoral day. The concretization of this action is represented by the final reports that look to determine if there was a preference of medias to a specific candidate or a political party.

The methodological aspects of the CA actions, specifically those of the electoral day monitoring are supervised by the international organisms. They have a role of advisor in relation to their experience in the organization of electoral monitoring activities in other countries. In the particular case of the 1994 election, the PNUD was not only advisor but also responsible for the assignation of a budget that the Mexican government assigned to the electoral observation activities of the civic associations: “the Fund to the Electoral Observation Support” (*Fondo de Apoyo para la Observación Electoral*)\(^{28}\). This experience generates a tension in the relation between the PNUD and the CDA, specifically with the CA which represents a large number of civic associations. The CA obtained in this year 50.88% of the budget that this fund allocated to the civic associations’ participation. The tension between the PNUD and the CA is generated by a difference in the methodological point of view of CA’s project, since here, two different positions are confronted. For the PNUD there is confusion between his role as responsible of the assignation resources and that of technical advisor, in any case the first one was conditioned to the second one. In the words of the responsible of the PNUD delegation, Nguyen Huu Dong:

> “The problem in 1994 is that we have in one hand a support Fund that we have to distribute, and on the other hand we offer technical assistance [to the civic associations]. Everybody... in fact the confusion of these two different things made us think that they were inter-conditioned, of course! But that was a conceptual mistake because we didn’t realize that we had a big difference in methodology [with the CA]... and for us if they [the CA] give us their methodology, their project and the other documents, we would decide later the amount of financing that each organization will

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\(^{28}\) This Fund is the result of an agreement signed between the Mexican government and the United Nations via the PNUD representative in Mexico. This found is regulated by two councils: the normative (integrated by 2 members of IFE, 2 members of TFE and 1 member of the PNUD) and the technical (5 Mexicans electoral specialist and two PNUD representatives). In both of them the PNUD representatives have the right to voice their opinions but not to vote.
receive. But as we had a difference in methodology, they [the CA] thought that this was a condition to obtain the financing.\(^{29}\)

To the CA the PNUD specialists don’t understand the reality in Mexico, and that is the reason they were not agreeing with it methodology. Sergio Aguayo Quezada voiced the CA’s position during a technical meeting between the PNUD representatives and the CA delegation:

“I understand that you [the PNUD] have to justify your mission here in Mexico, and I recognize that it is a very complex situation. But even if we continue discussing, the only thing that you don’t have the right to do, is don’t understand that for us this is not another mission, for us this is a historical moment and we are not going to give up. We [the CA] have been are preparing ourselves since a few years ago, and we are not only ready, we know better than you what is happening in Mexico, and how the [electoral] irregularities happen here!...you probably know much about what is happening in Congo, Nigeria or Bulgaria, wherever you want. But that is not the point!\(^{30}\)"

After this experience the PNUD decided that in the future it would no longer be the responsible for assigning resources, because this risked its position as legitimate agent and “deteriorated its relations with the national players”\(^{31}\). This tension is about just more than a simple confrontation between players or a fight of power. This tension analyze leave us go a long way and consider as a governmental tactic of intervention of an international intermediary agent as a means to legitimate the electoral process by the domestic civic associations. Furthermore, the role of the PNUD is not only that of advisor but also as a kind of “subcontractor”. Because even if after 1994 elections the PNUD decide to continue only as an advisory member of this fund, and thus one of their representative members (1 in the normative council and 2 in the technical council) have only the right of voice their opinions and not more of vote, that is means not participating in decision-making. The official document of the fund specifies that “the United Nations is responsible for the administration of the resources awarded to the Mexican government by means of the IFE, at the same time that it is also responsible for the mechanisms that should be followed to assign the resources to the final recipients: the groups that observe the federal electoral process”\(^{32}\). And we underline that in the CA budgets, the amounts from this fund are tagged as coming from the PNUD, even if it is the mexican government financing it and even if it is assigned by the mexican people. So, that lets us understand that the presence of the international agent is here in a symbolic way.

\(^{29}\) This interview was conducted on March 14, 2008 by the author of this paper a Nguyen Huu Dong. He is one of the PNUD representatives that carry on this found in 1994. Today he is still the representative PNUD member in the technical and normative councils found.

\(^{30}\) The second of two interviews conducted by the author of this paper a Sergio Aguayo Quezada in Mexico City on March 12, 2008. He was a founder member of the CA and his President from 1994-1999, and he is member of her Assembly since 2007.

\(^{31}\) This interview was conducted on March 14, 2008 in Mexico City, by the author of this paper to Nguyen Huu Dong.

The CA achievement in 1994 legitimated its position as a professional and engaged organization within democratized Mexico by the way of political rights defense. This performance contributes to the CA’s status as an independent organization that posed its structure and redefined their further actions, and non more like a network of organizations. But how the CA face up to the institutions transformation as a consequence of democratization process or, in another sense, how the dynamics of the political field reconfiguration affect the CA structure and activism.

The public institutions transformation and the continuum of CA

After the 1994 elections, Mexico confronts important political changes that finalize in a political alternation in 2000 that put out of the presidency the PRI, for the first time since 1929 the Mexican President will be an opposition candidate. This period is the catalyst for a political field reconfiguration that will engage a change in the dynamics of relations between actors and in political fights. But how will the CA face to this reconfiguration (democratization period) at a moment where it is still in construction? One of the most important changes is the 1996 political-electoral reform that is concentrated in the electoral system, while the construction of more equality electoral competition conditions and the continuation of the political open.

The Civic Alliance as a building of electoral school

When the 1996 electoral reform was adopted the democratization process was still in construction. As a result of monitoring experience and the different activities related to the civic citizen education, the CA builds an electoral expertise that is translated in relational and professional capital for its activists. This expertise in turn allows us to establish a basis for a sociology of practices. Even if up until that point the principal activity of the CA was elections monitoring, the specific nature of this activism encourages CA activists to acquire a minimum knowledge about the electoral process and some technical knowledge (for example the application of a survey, how to prepare a report, etc). However, this expertise changes from one activist to the next, depending on experience, and a number or other individual factors. We are not concerned here with constructing a typology of the CA activist but to identifying the principal characterizes that establish the figure of an electoral expert and how this expert mobilizes his or her know-how. The electoral expertise that the CA develops is support in a know-how developed on one hand by those that we identify as democrat experts, and on other hand by those members that as a result of their active commitment in the CA acquired a professional and social capital that allows them to become electoral experts.

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These democracy experts are principally made up by the founding members. An large portion of these experts are academics that possess a high intellectual and relational capital, that is to say a high educational level that is superior of the rest of the CA activists. Currently they follow their postgraduate studies abroad, especially in human and social sciences or in some disciplines of exact sciences. After their studies most of them become professors in the most important mexican universities or in recognized national research centers. Continuing the democracy experts analysis from a career perspective, the courses of these experts taught us also that these academics are positioned in different posts at the same time in different fields (politic and academic). This is probably explained by the intellectual and relational capital that their acquired during their foreign stays (educational or professional) and for the flexibility of their schedules as researchers. That is the case with Sergio Aguayo Quezada:

Sergio was born on September 10, 1947 in Rivera, Jalisco. He grew up in a popular social background in the city of Guadalajara (San Andrés neighborhood). His father, a journalist died when he was 9 years old. During high school, he fell victim to violent during his participation in an opposition neighborhood group (the Vikings) that became the Communist league September 23 (Liga Comunista 23 de septiembre) in 1973. He decided to leave Guadalajara in 1969, before Vikings radicalized their movement and became the communist league, and moved to Mexico City to continue his professional studies at the Colegio de Mexico. Interested in international politics he decided to continue his postgraduate studies in the United States at John Hopkins University, where he obtained a PhD and a post doctorate in International Relations. At the same time he participated in different academic exchanges in Europe. He has been professor of international relations at the Colegio de Mexico since 1977 and specialist in questions of national security, democracy and human rights. With a group of academics and politicians he participated in the drafting of one of the first civic associations specialized in the defense of human rights in Mexico, the Mexican Academy of Human Rights in the 1980’s. This organization was one of the CA’s founding organizations. The first experiences of Sergio Aguayo in the electoral monitoring were abroad. He participated for example in the Haiti electoral observation as a member of an international foundation. Sergio’s international monitoring experience was important for the CA’s project in 1994, because he had a particular knowledge about how electoral monitoring projects are organized and mounted. This experience linked him to international players and local movements at the


35 “In an objective dimension a career is composed by a series of status and using good defined of a continuation of typical positions, realizations, responsibilities and even of adventures. In the subjective dimension a career is composed of changes in the optic of the person that identified his existence like a totality and how he gives an interpretation of the signification of different characteristics and actions, and everything that happen to him or her”, Howard S. BECKER, Outsiders, Paris, Editions A.M. Métailié, 1985 (traduction française: Outsiders, The Free Press of Glencoe, 1963), p. 126.
same time, because his relational capital and knowledge of different languages placed him in the position of mediator. He was the CA president from 1994 to 1999. After a period of separation, he has continued to support the CA as a member of its executive assembly since 2007.

The case of Sergio Aguayo course is not unique this is also the case with others persons like Marie-Claire Acosta, Alberto Olvera, Daniel Cazés, José Antonio Crespo, Enrique Calderon Alzati, to name a few. These academics are motivated in part by the desire for their own political and intellectual freedom. The fact that these experts are both academics and activists is not a contradiction, but rather in accordance with their intellectual pursuits. As Sergio Aguayo explains: “I accept that I am a public-intellectual, this figure is legitimate in others countries and here in Mexico its gradually becoming accepted. If I continue producing knowledge in accordance with the rules of social sciences methodology, and if everything that I write is supported by true facts and good arguments, in any case I am violating my profession. From my perspective, the three expressions of the public profession integrate my commitment with an active Mexico, where there is a place for social justice [...] everything that I do in the public space is in accordance with this commitment.”

It was not sufficient to adopt a critical position electoral fraud tactics for these experts, it was also necessary to establish and support these criticisms with proof. It was thus necessary to create projects that been conducted by professionals and not just militant protesters. This position was strongly supported by the international organizations, like we already mentioned. Some of these democracy experts are in charge of the implementation of international human rights and democracy programs, before or after their participation in the CA or in others CDA. We certainly can say, that the commitment of these democracy experts serves as a base for the professionalization and intellectualization of the CA.

These democracy experts are responsible for constructing and giving a format to CA projects, but the implementation and supervision of the activities is realized by all the activists. The CA is confronted with the necessity of a having to train their activists. The CA then develops then a strategy to the activists training that is organized with the same logic of its structure. Thus before the beginning of a project, the local CA representatives will be trained directly for a given national project, and then, a local representative transmits this training to the other activists in the states according to the functions that each person should accomplish. However, each local CA is free to create or alter training strategies according to

36 Nicolas Guilhot advance in his studies that the life foreign experience of these experts and the contact with the political sociology school of the modernization, exercise an influence in the continuation of their subjects research when they are back to their country. This school is mainly composed by “the academics coming from a very politicize field of the Latin American Studies, they are very critic with the politics of the Latin America states departments”, Nicolas GUILHOT, « Les professionnels de la démocratie. Logiques militantes et logiques savantes dans le nouvel internationalisme américain », op. cit., p. 54.

37 First of both interview conducted by the author of this work to Sergio Aguayo Quezada on February 2, 2007.

their own regions contexts. The only important thing here is to respect the final locals formats for transmitting information to the main office, in order of prepare the final reports. The training of the CA activists also comes from scholarships offered of internationals organisms or foundations, these programs could be oriented at different subjects and adopt different formats (training in the electoral questions, specialization seminars, postgraduate studies, professional internships or visits of some of the most important NGOs that have their principal’s offices in the United States)\(^39\). This training provides those activists who do not possess a high relational and intellectual capital (unlike their colleagues, the democracy experts) the opportunity to became an expert on electoral matters, even if the acquisition of these capitals are often related to the amount of time that these activist can commit to the CA. This is the case for example of José Luis Nuño and his wife Rosa de Nuño.

They were founders and coordinators of the CA in a region of Jalisco state. José is a civil engineer and Rosa is a chemist who moved from Guadalajara to Ocotlán after getting married, because in Guadalajara they could not find stable work. She left her professional life for a while to concentrate on her children’s education (a girl and a boy). When they decided to engaging the CA’s mobilization she taught chemistry in one of the public high school of the region, and her husband works in a company. Together with others friends they decided to take on the responsibility of forming a CA mobilization in this region. When their participation in the CA demanded more and more of a time commitment struggled to find the spare time needed. Even if their children had not been so young it was necessary for one of them to economically support the family. Because Rosa’s work was very flexible and didn’t represent the most important economic contribution to the family budget, it is she who continued to participate in the CA, while her husband stayed only as a symbolic support. After 1997 Rosa became an electoral citizen district advisor for the IFE as a result of the electoral knowledge that she acquired during her participation in the CA, and the relational capital that she can acquire in the associative sector. Since then she has been an electoral expert that doesn’t come from a political party but from a “civic” movement. For the past while, Rosa decided to quit her participation in the CA and concentrate on her work as electoral district advisor in the IFE\(^40\).

The case of this couple is not, of course an isolated case; in fact this is the case for a large part of the CA’s activists. We have found in our research that approximately 28% of CA activists have position as an electoral citizen advisor in the IFE. This percent is only an approximation and in any case we are looking to establish exact proportions. We can now say that the CA serves as a mainstay electoral expert’s school, that is strongly supported by democracy experts. The CA’s training allows their access to direct access to political parties and with the government, which experiment an important incorporation of the opposition at that moment. At the same time the associative sector will support the consolidation of a national dimension of this sector. These relations are going to modify the CA at an organizational and individual level. We have identified two specific moments which accentuate this phenomenon which can be interpreted as a transformation of its structure and

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\(^39\) We identify particularly the Ford Foundation and the Organization of the Americas States (OAS).

\(^40\) Interview conducted in Guadalajara by the author of this work to José Luis Nuño and his wife Rosa de Nuño on January 6, 2006.
activist format: the ciudadanización of IFE\textsuperscript{41} in 1996 and the assumption of the opposition in new representative elected (Federal District, Michoacán, Guanajuato, etc.).

In a context of public institutions transformation, in a country where institutions were always suspect of manipulation by the PRI-state, it was important that their restructuration be based in the “trust”. In the case of the IFE’s restructuration, the question of constructing a new institutional profile that would be characterized by the non-partisan nature of it members. This as a way of guaranteeing impartiality positions in the elections organization. The expertise that the CA has developed in the past few years gives the opportunity to be considered to incorporate in the new phase of the IFE to their activists. These activists were asked to participate in the different institution levels organization (General council, local councils and district councils) as a “citizen advisors”. And in the case of the opposition ascension to the governments the CA perceived a particular effect when in 1997 the candidate of the left became the governor of Mexico city, because some of the CA members are invited to integrate gradually the equip of this new opposition government. This was also the case in others states, but it is certain that the separation of some founder activists had a big impact in the continuum of the CA.

\textit{When the CA lost its force}

From an organizational perspective the deconstruction of some local branches and the departure of some of its founding members incited the CA to engage an organizational restructuration process. From an individual perspective things are presenting in a different way. When some CA activists incorporate the IFE in its new phase they are confronted with arbitration between their civic activism in the CA and their work with electoral expertise in the IFE. In a sense, they metaphorically became jury and accused at the same time. They participate in the election organization as electoral citizen advisors, as well as monitoring the elections as a CA activism that includes the monitoring of the IFE. We learn since the individual courses analyze of these activists, that as result of this arbitration there is a tendency to give a priority to their work as electoral expert and away from that of electoral observer, as is the case, for example with José Luis and Rosa Nuño mentioned. This priority is principal explained by a reconversion process, that translates their activism experience into a professional resources. This reconversion not only offers a possibility to these activists to be multi-positional in different fields, but it also gives them recognition as “specialists” of electoral questions and professionals of public affairs. This recognition has an impact in their familiar and professional worlds, because the transformation of “professional of publics affairs” is in some cases understand as a social ascension.

Until now we have only talked about the passage of the CA activist to the IFE, but the passage of these activists could be at the same time toward governmental institutions. In that case, they are not only electoral specialists but specialists of socials issues. They could

\textsuperscript{41} The ciudadanización is the reform process of the IFE that looks to put out of governmental control this institution. To a developed analysis see Ernesto ISUNZA VERA, « Arbitrage citoyen des joutes entre partis : les conseils électoraux fédéraux », in Marguerite BEY and Danièle DEHOUVE, dir., \textit{La transition démocratique au Mexique. Regards croisés}, France, L’Harmattan, 2006.
construct a link between the civic association sector and the government. This situation could be understood as a government opening position in the middle of a political transformation process. In this transformational context the government is more interested in having a dialogue with this sector, which was not the case in the past. In fact this open position is principally adopted by the new opposition governments, even if the PRI has had to modify its relations with this associative sector too. The passage of the CA activist to the public institutions reformulated their idea of democratic change, “I understand we should fight for democracy but from public institutions”[42].

All these individual reconversions have certainly had an effect on the CA’s mobilization, as we already said, some CA branches have disintegrated and the organization is confronted with a period of demobilization. While at first the CA had branches in all the states of the Mexican Republic, this has not been the case since 1997 (in 1997 there are 24 versus 32 in 1994, and today there are only 11). With the passage of several of activists into public institutions we have in addition controversy about the transformation of the CA into a National Political Association (Asociación Política Nacional, APN) and local conflicts. Even if the functioning of the CA was delimited by their organizational institutions (National Assembly, National Coordination and the Local Coordination’s in the states), we cannot forget that in the beginning the CA was the result of alliances between several organizations that posed their own structures and individuals. After the decision in 1994 of the continuity of the CA as an independent organization, this condition of “independency” was the functioning principle follows in the states. It was possible for the locals Alliances to have their own projects in the regional context and participate in the domestic CA projects, without the first interfering with the second. The difference between one state and another were quickly accented, and in some cases the local Alliances were only represented by a few activists (Nayarit, etc) and in others it was the organizations good structured that have their own resources (Jalisco, San Luis Potosi, Guerrero, etc). There are not many states where the CA branches can consolidate their organizational structure as CA (Coahuila, Oaxaca, Yucatan, etc), i.e. the local representation exists as a CA and not only appear in a specific moments. Since the beginning the CA has been functioning under the logic of “alliances”. Nevertheless, these alliances have their own dynamic and continually have a direct effect on the structure of the national organization. Thus one of the particularities of the CA recognition as a national organization even if it is in fact made up of a number of alliances between groups which are more or less formed and individuals. These groups and individuals accept to become, at specific moments, representatives of the CA in their regions, and conversely these local representations can ask the domestic structure to support their own local projects.

Economic resources became a factor which brought about an organizational crisis because there was limited support for local representatives. In order to face up to this crisis, the CA initiated a “consultation” between their local representations and a group of “Alliance friends” that included those who sympathize with the organization without an official

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[42] Interview conducted by the author of this paper to Rogelio Gómez-Hermosillo on January 30, 2007. He is 45 years old and he made the sociology studies in the UNAM. He was a founder member of the CA and member of the executive secretary from 1994 to 2000. Since 2007 he is the President of the CA.
commitment. After evaluation of different positions, the CA engage a restructuration process that has not an effect in the organization way, but be principal reflected in its structural activist composition and in the direction that its activities take, even if the electoral monitoring continue been an important activity.

**Rethinking a new role**

During this restructuration period the most important issue is to assure the continuum of the organization. The transmission of the know-how of democracy experts to the activists contributes not only to the CA’s expertise, but also to the formation of new activists. The new activists’ generation will be responsible for the continuity of political rights defense and organizing principles. For the activists that continue in the CA it will be necessary to adapt the idea of democracy to a new context. Even if the CA expertise is based in elections legality and this question is seemingly no longer relevant because of political changes (the political alternation in 2000) and their institutionalization (the adoption of the national electoral observer and foreign invitee figures). This expertise serves as mainstay to a new of experts generation that will be concentrate on others aspects of democracy but still in the direction of the political rights defense. To them, the main question will be that of accountability, to demand fiscal transparency, accountability of governmental employees, agents, parties and to maintain strong communicational ties with all of the above. On one hand this new perspective leaves the organization consolidated her facade of specialized organization and critical of process and public institutions (including the accounting of those new functionaries that was ex CA activists). On the other hand this position is in accordance with the idea of democracy that the CA has developed since its conception.

However, implementing of accountability activities will prove to be more challenging than that which the CA monitored in the past. First, accounting is more specialized and demands more specific technical knowledge, and thus more time. Second, the activists of this new generation are not going to be valued by the combination of their professional and political capital like in the past, now they are going to be valued now for their professional capital as specialist or by their political capital as activist. Finally, economic resources more limited than before. This complicates the activities that this new plans to enforce. The CDA sector has undergone a remarkable augmentation and increases competition for finding financing. This idea of accountability is in alliance with an international context that the CA cannot forget. Mexico was not the only country where political alternation and a political opening takes place. The interest of the international organisms and the domestic government is not longer concentrated exclusively on the electoral process; it will also a lot special attention to the right to information. Continuing with this tendency, international organisms

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44 We took this term to Erving Goffman, to him the facade is « the representation part that has like principal function establish and fixe the definition of the situation that is proposed to observers. The facade is the symbolic equipment used by the player with or without intention during his or her representation », Erving GOFFMAN, *La mise en scène de la vie quotidienne. 1. La présentation de soi*, Paris, Les Editions de Minuit, 2006 (1er édition : Les Editions de Minuit, 1973, de l'anglais: The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life), p. 29.
publicize on their web sites all kind of information about their salaries, budgets, reports, convocations, etc.

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The analysis of continuum of the CDA asks us to take into consideration more than just domestic contextual factors. The adoption of international norms by domestic organizations in a context of political systems transformation seems to produce an effect on the structure and activism composition of these organizations. The case of the CA teaches us that the development of an expertise that is in accordance with international norms, can engender different ways of putting such expertise in practice in the domestic context. This also shows us how the reconfiguration and reinvention of CA is a complex process that is woven together by domestic political conditions, international policies and personal experience.

Of course, the findings of our single-case study will not be possible to translate this guidelines to the other cases of CDA that been developed in Latin America at the same period. However, we think that it will be quite useful to translate this analytic rubric to others cases of the region in order to make evident the differences and resemblances between.