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Government communication in Mexican democracy¹

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For a period of 71 years, presidential elections in Mexico were consistently won by the candidates of the official party, the *Partido Revolucionario Institucional* (PRI). However, in July 2000 the candidate of the conservative *Partido Acción Nacional* (PAN), Vicente Fox Quesada, took office and transformed the government's communication strategy in accordance with the new democratic demands. This chapter aims to provide an overview of the government's communication features during the 2000–12 democratization period in Mexico.

In this chapter, we will use the typology for the study of transitional processes proposed by O'Donnell, Schmitter and Whitehead (1988). They define *liberalization* as the opening and transformation process of an authoritarian regime, and *democratization* as the birth of democratic practices and institutions. First, we will examine political and electoral systems in order to situate the institutional foundations of government communication.

Political and electoral systems

Mexico has a presidential system with independent legislative, executive and judicial branches. It is a Federal Republic made up by 31 states and a

federal district. Each state elects its own governor and legislature; municipal authorities are chosen at the local level.

The Legislative is a General Congress, divided into two chambers: the Chamber of Deputies with 500 members, elected by popular vote for a three-year term; 300 by a simple majority in single-member districts and 200 by proportional representation. The Senate is made up by 128 members, elected by popular vote for a six-year term. Each state elects three senators; in addition, 32 are elected by proportional representation on a single nation list.

The Judicial Power is vested in the Supreme Court of Justice, the Electoral Tribunal, the Collegiate and Unitary Circuit Tribunal, as well as the District Courts. It is regulated by the Organic Act of the Judicial Power.

The president is elected directly by the citizens, as mandated by the electoral laws. He or she takes office on 1 December and governs for a six-year period. The mandatory principle of 'no re-election' is of paramount importance in Mexican politics and applies to all public officials at both federal and state levels.

Mexico has a multiparty system in which three main parties receive a large percentage of the vote: PAN [National Action Party], PRI [Institutional Revolutionary Party] and *Partido de la Revolución Democrática* [Party of the Democratic Revolution] (PRD). From 2000, several other small parties have obtained registration: *Partido Verde Ecologista de México* [Green Ecologist Party of Mexico] (PVEM), *Partido del Trabajo* [Labour Party] (PT), *Movimiento Ciudadano* [Citizen Movement] (MC) and *Partido Nueva Alianza* [New Alliance Party] (PNA).

In the following section we will deal with the political context, as well as with the new political codes and practices introduced by the democratization process. We will also describe an overview of the media landscape: the broadcasting system and the role the media play with regard to the government.

The context of political change

During the *Partido Revolucionario Institucional's* (PRI) time in power (1929–2000), there was a close relationship between media owners and the political elite, the impact of the media on politics was pervasive and, above all, supportive of the regime. Private media consented in the framing of political communication as propaganda, supporting the regime's aim of mobilizing the audience in favour of the official PRI ideology. The business association at the top level,² as well as the political complicities between the government and Televisa,³ impinged on the political information structure.

However, in the late 1960s, university students, aware of the information and values proclaimed by the left-wing movements in Europe (particularly the 1968 uprising in France), protested against the government; many of them were killed in a massive repression in October 1968 (Poniatowska, 1971).

In 1977, the waning support for PRI and its failure to open up to the opposition's demands for democratic political change, led to political reform aimed at minimizing the incidence of disruptive action for political ends, directing it into legal and institutional activities. The intention seemed to be to construct a political framework that – in the short run – could maintain the PRI hegemony and – in the long term – set the rules for the liberalization process towards democracy.

The reform, that began the liberalization process, relied on three crucial changes of the political system. The first was a Law of Amnesty aimed at political prisoners, outlaws and exiles who had not been involved in violent crimes. The second was electoral reform which allowed the registration of all political parties – regardless of their ideology – and extended their rights. The electoral reform also provided minority parties with 100 seats in Congress through the introduction of a proportional representation system. The third change was to guarantee society's right to information, provided by the article six amendment of the Constitution. The amendment meant the first step to a partial liberalization of the press. These changes enhanced freedom of speech and paved the way to a dialogue between government and society.

In the 1980s, key media owners and journalists took advantage of the political reform, playing an increasingly significant role in placing democratic demands in the public arena and participating in the debates that would bring about subsequent political reforms. Thus, the press expanded the informational content of their news reporting, adopting a new language that displayed the internal political conflicts within the country. In 1976, *Proceso* magazine provided a good example of adversarial journalism by denouncing government abuse of power; a year later, the daily *UnoMásUno* served as a vehicle for spreading left-wing opposition opinions; it also represented an important change in Mexican journalism. In 1984, a number of this newspaper's founders launched *La Jornada* with a similar left-wing ideological profile. In 1993, the newspaper *Reforma* introduced a new kind of political journalism – a forum for deliberation aimed at progressive reformers within the regime, as well as for representatives of moderate opposition groups.

Broadcast media also opened up a forum for the oppositions' points of view. The participation of academic experts in news programmes, where they expressed their ideas about the political situation and discussed the different scenarios that could lead to democratic change, was particularly relevant. Radio stations' transmission of programmes aimed at varied groups

of society who could pose their complaints and express their opinions about political affairs was also a significant development (Winocour, 2001).

One of the most important changes in the media landscape took place when two of three networks owned by the state *Instituto Mexicano de Televisión* [the Mexican Institute of Television] were auctioned off by the government: thus, in 1993 *Televisión Azteca* was born, breaking Televisa's monopoly and creating competition for audiences. The newcomer in the media market raised great hopes; it was thought that the monopoly was over at last. However, this new scenario brought along with it what in Mexico is known as 'the duopoly': two companies that control almost all the broadcasting business.

In the political arena, the 1988 presidential election represented the first serious threat to the ruling party in many years, due to a fracture within its own internal structure, brought about by Cuauhtémoc Cárdenas (a former member of the dominant coalition and son of one of the most important party mavericks and former president) and his decision to stand against the official candidate from the PRI, Carlos Salinas. Cárdenas was backed by a small coalition of left-wing parties, by the PRI's usual political followers and by many citizens with 31 per cent of the vote. Before the elections were held and when the official results were declared, public protests against the government clearly signalled the extent of authoritarian elite decay and of the level of prevailing dissatisfaction in society (Sánchez, 1999).

Once again, the political reforms meant a step forward on the path to democratization. Opposition parties called for fair competition in terms of media coverage during election campaigns. At the beginning of the democratization process, several provisions were introduced in the 1996 electoral reform to regulate the parties' access to radio and television broadcasting times during electoral campaigns including a more equitable distribution of time among the contenders. Furthermore, the broadcasting commission of the *Instituto Federal Electoral* (IFE) was authorized to monitor the transmission time assigned to political party campaigns by news programmes, as well as to report its findings to the IFE General Council. The prerogative of being granted access to free spots on radio and television was opened to all national political parties in order to give them the opportunity of widely publicizing their electoral platforms. This prerogative included regular monthly time slots and additional transmissions during electoral periods (articles 49 and 50, COFIPE).

PRI gradually yielded control over key political public posts at both federal and local levels. In 1989, PAN's candidate, Ernesto Ruffo, won *Baja California* state governor's race; it was the first time an opposition party had become head of a federal body. In 1997, PRD won the election to head the government in the Federal District, the most important federal entity and the headquarter of the state's main institutions. Furthermore, that same year PRI lost its long-held majority in the Chamber of Deputies; this meant the beginning of

a new period in which the opposition would play a definitive role in bringing about political change in the country. It was also a crucial step towards the consolidation of a plural and multiparty system.

The conservative party, PAN, won the presidential election twice: first, Vicente Fox won in 2000, with a 6.41 per cent lead over PRI's candidate, Francisco Labastida; and in 2006, Felipe Calderón won the election ahead of Andrés Manuel López Obrador, PRD's candidate, by only 0.56 per cent. In both presidential elections, the conservative party gained the largest number of seats in the Chamber of Deputies (210 out of 500 seats in 2000 and 206 seats in 2006). However, in the intermediate election for renewing the Deputy Chamber in 2009 the results were not so favourable for the party in office, weakening its ability to pass legislation required to enact the institutional reforms aimed at the consolidation of democracy.

Legal provisions

Most democratization processes are characterized by the free flow of information and by competition between public and commercial media. These characteristics are facilitated by a favourable regulatory environment that permits a variety of political viewpoints to be expressed, offering the public diverse political choices. Two media system principles make it possible for political journalism to play its role as government watchdog: first, constitutional guarantees or agreements to ensure citizens' free access to political information expressed in provisions in relation to freedom of the press, speech and assembly; second, the protection of the media from arbitrary government interference. A final requirement is the existence of all these legal frameworks that promote and sustain diverse media forms and outlets (Gunther & Mughan, 2000).

In Mexico, regulatory independence from the government is embodied in a set of provisions on freedom of speech and press, and in the right to information as established by the 1917 Constitution. The independent state organisms that protect these constitutional guarantees are the *Suprema Corte de Justicia de la Nación* [Supreme Court of Justice] and the *Comisión Nacional de Derechos Humanos* [Human Rights Commission].

There are a number of legal provisions controlling the government–media relationship. Before the liberalization period, the media were ruled by a Radio and Television Federal Law, first passed in 1960 and later amended on a number of occasions. The law states that radio and television must fulfil a public interest activity, and that the State's duty is to protect and monitor them. Legislation is explicit in pointing out the social function played by broadcast media in contributing to the strengthening of 'national integration' and improving 'human coexistence' (Wallis, 2004). A decree issued by the president in 2002

(the Federal Radio and Television Regulations on Concessions, Permissions and Content of Radio and Television Transmissions) reversed a number of obligations that the political authorities had imposed 30 years prior to the media system, particularly regarding official broadcasting times allocated to the State (Carreño, 2007).⁴

Print media are primarily regulated by the 2011 Press Act and by the 1981 Rules on Illustrated Magazines and Publications. The agency in charge of sanctioning newspapers or magazines that violate the Press Act is the *Comisión Calificadora de Publicaciones y Revistas Ilustradas* [Illustrated Magazines and Publications Qualifier Commission], under the authority of the Secretary of the Interior. This agency issues title certificates to newspapers and magazines; in the event that a publication does not comply with the act, it can be rated unlawful, sanctioned, and its distribution can even be stopped. In television and radio broadcasting, content is primarily regulated by the 1960 Federal Radio and Television Act and regulations, added to this act in 2002. The agency in charge of implementing regulations in this sector, including sanctioning, is the *Dirección General de Radio, Televisión y Cinematografía* [Radio, Television and Cinematography General Directorate], a subordinate office to the Secretary of the Interior.

There is also a third different set of rules aimed at reinforcing the quality of democracy, specifically regarding issues of transparency, checks and balances, and political equity.

As far as transparency is concerned, the Transparency and Access to Government Information Act was passed in 2003 establishing the right of citizens' access to public information.

On the issues of checks and balances and political equity, article 42 of the electoral law of 2007 forbids political parties, pre-candidates, candidates, leaders or members of a political party (as well as any individual or corporation) to hire radio or television slots aimed at influencing citizens' electoral preferences. It also forbids the broadcasting of electoral spots produced in a foreign country. Political parties, pre-candidates and candidates are allowed to broadcast advertisements aimed at getting votes through radio and television, by means of free slots assigned only by the State through the Federal Electoral Institute.

In the specific area of government communication provisions, the electoral law defines the limits of official advertising related to policy announcements or in favour of a party candidate during elections. In order to avoid the advantage of any governmental promotion with electoral purposes; the law (article 347) prescribes that during federal and local electoral campaigns – and until the end of polling day – all government advertising in the media is off limits. The only exception is for spots related to education, or health and civil protection in case of a national emergency.

The media during the liberalization and democratization periods

The way the media adapted itself to political change and pluralism – especially in television – was a reaction to the market and a profit matter, rather than a political commitment to liberty or democracy.⁵

Until the late 1990s, the media had kept a respectful and subordinated attitude towards the presidential communication strategy and blindly accepted government's definition of the public agenda.⁶ However, gradually the government began to yield to the media the monopoly on the definition of the public agenda it had held for so many years. In this sense, Mexico went from a situation where the media were subordinated to the government (during the 70 years of the PRI's time in power) to one of interest collusion during the democratic period. The partnership now showed a peculiar feature since government power began to be subservient to private media interests (Carreño, 2007). Furthermore, with its harsh criticism and severe judgement of the first achievements of democratization, the media contributed to public apathy and disenchantment regarding change.³

The media landscape changed with the years, in terms of budgets, audience and circulation, a considerable transformation that can be observed in the past two decades; ownership concentration continued to show almost the same features.

Television has – by far – the largest media audience, and the vast majority of the population receives its political information from this source (Gómez & Sosa, 2011).

According to the figures provided by the *Comisión Federal de Telecomunicaciones* [Broadcasting Federal Commission], in 2009 Televisa had 257 concessions⁷ across the country (55.7%); Televisión Azteca, 180 (39%). The remaining small media companies had 24 (5.3%) (Gómez & Sosa, 2011).

Mexican public service television plays only a marginal role in the country's television diet. The two main public stations, Once TV and Channel 22, reach less than 2 per cent of the nationwide audience. Both stations heavily emphasize cultural programming, which has a relatively small social impact (Gómez & Sosa, 2011).

In Mexico, newspaper readership figures are not high. However, the country still boasts an impressive number of print outlets: over 800, including 279 daily newspapers. According to the *Padrón Nacional de Medios Impresos* [National Registry of Print Media], subordinate to the Secretary of the Interior, there are 823 publications with a daily circulation of 6.16 million: 57.75 copies per 1,000 persons (Gómez & Sosa, 2011).

In 2008, 43 per cent of the population received information about political matters from reading newspapers; 50 per cent less than those whose main source of information was television (ENCUP, 2008). The national press adjusted to political change and some readers shifted to the emerging democratic press (Gómez & Sosa, 2011).

Radio broadcasting gradually lost its role as the main source of information for Mexicans from its peak in the 1960s. However, during the democratization process, radio underwent a significant rebirth as a news source and, above all, as a forum for political experts' analysis. It also featured more pluralism and less government bias than television.

Due to its mixture of private and public ownership, radio broadcasting has grown considerably in recent years, and nowadays 51 per cent of the population tunes in to radio stations as its main source for political information (Gómez & Sosa, 2011).

Although it almost tripled between 2005 and 2011, internet penetration has remained low in Mexico. In mid-2009, Mexico had 27.2 million internet users, just over 25 per cent of the population. By 2011, there were an estimated 34.9 million users and 20.9 million social network users (IBOPE, 2010).

The internet has emerged as a new tool for activism; civil society organizations, citizens, media, politicians and activists have taken advantage of its interactivity to make their voices heard. Social networks are becoming a powerful and effective political means to air civil society's demands and opinions. Internet campaigns are beginning to put pressure on traditional media to tackle topics that otherwise they would not cover. The movements *Internet Necesario* (internet necessary) of 2009 and *Voto Nulo* (void vote) of 2009 are examples of this kind of activism.

Government communication in democratic times

Canel and Sanders define *government communication* in Chapter 1 as 'the public institution's role, practice, aims and achievements in communication. Its primary goal is executive in the service of a political rationale.' According to this definition, it can be said that during the first twelve years of Mexican democracy, there was not a pattern in government communication. We argue that two different approaches were taken to government communication: first, during President Fox's administration, the defence of political liberties and transparency was taken to be a cornerstone of the government-media relationship; second, a control-from-above strategy towards communication duties (including government's relationship with the press) characterized President Calderón's administration.⁸

The organizational structure

In the first three and a half years of President Fox's government (2001–4), the structure of the Social Communication Office (the key government communication office) was similar to that of previous administrations, with one exception: during the hegemonic PRI party regime this office managed the entire government agencies' budget; once the PAN took power, the amounts of money assigned to the government's advertising were decentralized. At the outset of his administration, President Fox decided to hand over budget responsibility to government agencies.

The Social Communication Office worked in seven areas:

- *Media monitoring and press clippings* was in charge of following the news about the president and his government, as well as issuing a daily summary of the most important news published in media across the country. It also provided analysis and recommendations and had the task of measuring the impact of the president's message in the media.
- *National press*. Divided into three areas, this unit had the following tasks: looking after journalists who covered the president's agenda, providing them with all the necessary resources (videos, recordings, speeches, etc.) to carry out their work; coordinating relationships with local media; and meeting the travelling requirements of the media staff during the president's national and international trips.
- *International press*. This unit was in charge of issuing a daily news summary of the most significant world media. It received information from Mexican embassies and acted as a public relations office whose main task was to assist in the foreign press correspondents' assignments.
- *Radio and television*. This area worked on the relationship with the electronic media and also managed the media requests for interviews with the president.
- *Interinstitutional relations*. This unit was set up in 2004 in order to unify government communication offices' outputs in a shared vision so as to transmit a consistent government message.
- *Speech*. This unit was responsible for presidential speeches and public statements such as lectures, addresses, as well as articles and books.

- *Spokesperson.* The office was set up in 2005 specifically to prepare all the information for the daily press conferences as well as the spokesperson's activities.

The Office was allowed a yearly budget of 139,488,771 pesos (US\$9,963,484) and had 110 employees on its payroll. The government expenses in advertising amounted to 733 million pesos (US\$56,384m) in 2005 and 860.2 million pesos (US\$66.54 million in 2006 (Fundar & 'Article 19', 2011).

During President Calderón's administration, the structure of the Social Communication Office remained almost untouched; nevertheless, the political rationale of communication and the relationship with the press drastically changed. In the formal structure, few changes were made: the president decided to eliminate the position of spokesperson, and the Speech-Writing Office was not part of the Social Communication Office as in Fox's presidency, but of the president's staff. Offices, such as the Interinstitutional Relations and Analysis, were given less relevance than they had during President Fox's administration.

The Social Communication Office of the Calderón's presidency regained control over the entire governmental budget assigned to advertising. Furthermore, the Regulation Office of the Secretary of the Interior, which controls government agencies' media expenditure, came under the orders of the president's Social Communication Office so that the presidency could manage directly the monetary resources that each secretary spent on their media advertising budget, as was the case during the PRI era. The Office had 140 employees and a budget of 125,465,131 pesos (US\$9,651,163) in 2011, which in 2012 increased to 155,515,837 pesos (US\$11,962,756). The government's advertising expenses are shown in Table 13.1.

Government advertising expenses in Calderón's administration

Vicente Fox's communication strategy for new political times

President Fox decided to implement an open leadership in which freedom (including freedom of speech) became the hallmark of his administration. His communication strategy was aimed at meeting the information requests of the media and public opinion agendas; at the same time making it clear to the media the priorities set out in the government's agenda, such as housing, medical care, education and democracy.

During his first years in office, President Fox's media agency had four coordinators in charge. The first coordinator of social communication,

TABLE 13.1 Government advertising expenses in Calderón’s administration

Year	Million US dollars
2007	136,230
2008	266,238
2009	398,923
2010	350,962

Source: Fundar and “Article 19”, (2011) Estudio sobre el abuso del gasto gubernamental en publicidad [Report on the Abuse of Government Advertising Expenditure].

Martha Sahagún, concentrated on working on public relations with media representatives at all levels. She also played the difficult task of reversing practices of the authoritarian regime such as control over the media and deals with the top hierarchy of the media duopoly.

The second coordinator of social communication was Francisco Ortiz, one of the presidential campaign strategists who contributed to Vicente Fox’s victory in the 2000 elections. He focused mistakenly on government marketing, and was unable to get the expected results.⁹ He was replaced by Rodolfo Elizondo (another presidential campaign consultant), whose task was to coordinate the communication strategy for the president’s message as well as in all the executive branch agencies; this with the purpose of avoiding the risk of having a loose central coordination strategy.

Sahagún, Ortiz and Elizondo kept their former political campaign staffs, groups from different professional backgrounds, most of whom had no training in institutional communication.

In 2003, President Fox decided to appoint someone who could get across his political message and conduct a more substantial dialogue with both the media and the public. He appointed Alfonso Durazo, a lawyer and his private secretary, as Social Communication coordinator, he was also in charge of speech-writing and played the spokesman’s role in exceptional cases. Durazo implemented a new staff recruitment criteria based on communication skills and professional credentials.

In July 2004, the president appointed Rubén Aguilar, a sociologist and the former president’s private secretary chief of staff, as head of the Social Communication Office, and asked him to redesign the communication strategy with the aim of enhancing the presence of the government’s agenda in the media. The new plan focused on increasing the flow of government

information and a permanent and fluent contact with the media. In other words, Aguilar clearly established as an aim of his office to present the president's stand on diverse issues in such a way as to help him advance his agenda.

The spokesman took care of two crucial functions in crafting the presidential message: the Social Communication Office and the Speech-Writing Area. His team was made up of communication experts in various media areas as well as a high-level group of social scientists who carried out the speech-writing and press analysis tasks.

Aguilar decided to follow the White House Press Office's practice of holding a daily press conference. Thus began a tradition of responsiveness to media requests to answer their questions regarding breaking news and crises. This practice turned out to be a very effective way to release information on government programmes and policies and to make an impact on the media agenda.

If at the beginning of his term President Fox's overexposure to the media badly damaged his image (since the press opted for a negative framing of the democratic change and there was no drive-belt in the president–press relationship), by sharing media exposure with his spokesman, he managed to obtain for the president a strong voice that spoke to the media at all levels – from reporters to owners of the press and opinion leaders, as well as leaders of social organizations.

Felipe Calderón: Returning to the previous communication pattern

When President Felipe Calderón won the elections in 2006 he took a different approach to communication. In contrast with President Fox's concern to build an efficient communication strategy giving relevance to a spokesperson and counting on communication specialists, Calderón relied on himself for strategy design as well as for message delivery. Also communication priorities and recruitment criteria differed from that of his predecessor: Calderón decided to focus his agenda on the war against crime and to change some rules in the relationship with the press.

His first coordinator of social communication, Max Cortázar, failed to devise a communications strategy to promote the president's agenda throughout the major media outlets.¹⁰ He was the only authority vested by the president with power to interact at a senior level with media owners and managers; he also developed a hierarchical relationship with the reporters that covered the president's activities even arguing with them if he considered their coverage to be critical.

During Cortázar's time in office, loyalty was the central parameter for recruitment; thus, most of the staff in the Social Communication Office were young people who had worked with him during Felipe Calderón's presidential campaign but had no academic credentials or professional training to carry out the tasks demanded.

Up to 2010, the government used spokespeople only in exceptional situations. The persons assigned to these tasks were the responsible politician in each Secretary of State and not communication professionals. That same year, the president appointed Alejandro Poiré as spokesperson for Mexico's national security strategy against drug trafficking and organized crime, and Alejandra Sota as the Social Communication Coordinator. Once in office, the latter raised the academic level of her staff, although they had no professional background in the area of communication.

In November 2011, the then Secretary of the Interior died in an accident and the president replaced him with his security spokesman. Calderón also decided to revive the role of a permanent presidential spokesperson, and Alejandra Sota was his choice; from then on, press conferences were held only for the government's position on controversial issues (e.g. the first results of the investigation into the plane accident). However, communication's crucial aspects were not under Sota's control but Poiré's (the new Secretary of the Interior); for all purposes, he was considered the real head of government communication. When Poiré was appointed Secretary of the Interior, he maintained responsibility for all important government communication duties.

Conclusion

In countries with a long-standing democratic tradition, government communication agencies are taken for granted, because they already have a long-standing record and only need to modify, *mutatis mutandi*, certain functions to meet the demands required by political change. In contrast, newly established democracies need a gradual institutional design, as well as new structures and functions, to assure accurate and efficient government communication.

Accountability (a primary requirement in any democracy) requires an institutional framework in order to communicate what the government stands for: its self-definition and rationale. When this is missing, the rules become murky and give place to misunderstandings in the messages conveyed. If these issues are not properly handled, non-democratic practices, such as biased reporting or inadequate coverage, will reappear.

In a communication strategy, the learning process turns out to be expensive, especially in the context of a government–adversarial relationship with the

media and powerful interest groups, as was the case in President Fox's administration. In spite of this, the strategy of publicizing the objectives and the reasons behind the government's actions worked well in the medium and long term. At the end of the administration – with regards to its relationship with the media – the government had advanced in establishing efficient practices more in line with democratic principles.¹¹

President Calderón, however, decided to return to the old hierarchical relationship with the media and made important changes in his own communication strategy. Calderón focused his agenda on the war against crime; in doing so, he diminished the relevance of other really outstanding achievements of his administration such as, for example, the success in handling the economy, health-care programmes and the education budget. The president never relied on an official voice vis-à-vis the press; and when he came to rely on it, it was too late. There are costs of confining the Social Communication coordinator to a subordinate role and in this case the PAN lost the 2012 presidential election.

Mexico's democratic governments have so far been unable to deliver a communication strategy to manage efficiently the presidential message. This, we argue, is due to at least three main facts: one is the tense relationship with the media and the impact it had on the negative framing given by the press to the democratic change; the second, are the learning costs of building new institutions; and third, – and perhaps the most important one – is the inability to connect with the public and to develop a positive perception regarding the achievements of democracy.

Notes

- 1 We wish to thank Bella Mischne for helping us with the review of the final English version of this chapter, and Marcela Pineda for reviewing the first English version and for her comments on this chapter.
- 2 President Alemán (1946–52) dealt personally with the supervision process of the introduction of television to the country. He was already O'Farril's (one of Televisa's owners) partner in the radio business and tried to centralize, unsuccessfully, in O'Farril's hands the control of this new media. Alemán worked quite closely with Telesistema Mexicano, the new broadcasting enterprise in which he was a non-official partner (Fernández Christlieb, 1991). As a family business, power is bequeathed from generation to generation and this was the case of Alemán's son, Miguel Jr, who combined his political career with his private administration duties. He was Televisa's CEO until 1998, when he left his senior management position to contend for the Veracruz state governorship.
- 3 It is the most important Latin American media monopoly; it was inaugurated as Telesistema Mexicano (Mexican Telesystem, and renamed 'Televisa' in 1973).

- 4 The addition to this decree authorizes the license holders a tax payment for the use of the air space for commercial purposes instead of granting the State 12 per cent of the daily transmission time it had before the reform.
- 5 A good example of the media approach is the coverage displayed during President Fox's administration. Not only was he severely criticized for his performance in office and his style of government, his personal life was also subject to unprecedented and relentless scrutiny.
- 6 For many decades, Mexico lived in a political system in which any major policy decision was not taken without the president's blessing: he (and it has always been 'he') had control over his party, over the leaders of the corporate power structure, over most opposition parties and over the media. He had control over the expressions of all relevant actors of the public sphere. Everyone knew the rules of the game and acted profitably within them.
- 7 Concessions refer to the licenses given by the State for the use the air space with commercial purposes.
- 8 President Calderón opted for a similar approach to PRI's relationship with the press, given that President Fox's liberalization practices had failed.
- 9 An example of this was the programme *Chambatel* in which the unemployed called a specific number provided by the government to get a job. The programme did not meet public expectations and this impacted negatively on the government's reputation.
- 10 It was more profitable for the media to cover crime issues, such as drug dealing and insecurity, because they were more attractive to the public than the other emblematic programmes of Calderón's administration.
- 11 The daily morning conference provided a forum for the secretaries and senior officials to announce the most relevant issues in their administration fields. In this task, the spokesperson worked as the coordinator of a comprehensive agenda on government communication.

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