

The Role of NGOs in the Democratization of Mexico

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<Abstract>

NGOs(Non Governmental Organizations) have emerged as key actors in the democratization process in third world countries due to the shift in economic policies that has forced the state to withdraw from the social sector and to open the political sector. This paper reviews the theoretical debates on the role of NGOs in the democratization process as a new actor in politics. Based on distinct theoretical evaluations of the role of NGOs in the democratization process, the author examines the Mexican case to determine the boons and the banes of NGOs in the democratization process. The author argues that NGOs have played positive roles in the democratization of Mexico, such as enhancing representative democracy as well as strengthening participatory democracy. However, the author points out that the positive experiences with NGOs in Mexico could be seriously limited due to its "non-partisan" stance toward institutional politics.

Keywords: NGOs / Democratization / Mexico / Participation / Decentralization

주제어 : 비정부기구 / 민주화 / 멕시코 / 참여 / 분권화

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I . Introduction

There is no doubt that Non Governmental Organizations (NGOs) have become “the third sector” of public policy, as well as of democratization, in the world. NGOs also turned into one of the new topics of development studies for those who search for alternative ways of development(Salamon 1994). The usual reason why NGOs became predominant in various developmental projects, as well as democratization projects, could be explained by the withdrawal of the state in most developing countries coupled with the shift in economic policies(Hilhorst 2003). However, we need also consider that, even though the shift in economic policies is a major factor in the emergence of NGOs, the historical and political context of each individual country should not be overlooked when we analyze NGOs as a significant “new” political actor. As Tvedt(1998) rightfully points out, the functionalist third sector views of NGOs often ignores the particular conditions that each NGO faces within different countries. Therefore, Tvedt states that NGOs should be analyzed “as an outcome of complicated processes where factors like international ideological trends, donor policies and agendas interact with national historical and cultural conditions in complex ways”(1998, 4).

These conceptualizations of NGOs as outcomes of complicated political and historical process have provoked diverse

interpretation of their role in the democratization process. While some celebrated the emergence of NGOs saying that NGOs are counterpoints to the dominant development discourses (Escobar 1995) and strengthen civil society, which is critical for the necessary conditions for achieving democracy (Putnam 1993), others like Petras (1997) and Tandon (1996), however, have critical view of NGOs as “advancing the neoliberal project and collaborating in the depoliticization of development” (Hilhorst 2003, 9). These divergent interpretations of the role of NGOs in development as well as democratization may derive from the distinct roles that NGOs played in different cases around the world. While both interpretation of NGOs point out different aspects of NGOs’ contribution to development as well as democratization, some scholars such as Long (1992) and Grillo (1997) emphasize the importance of understanding the multiplicity of the role of NGOs. i.e. Even though there is dominant discourse regarding certain way of development strategy formed by political and economic structural situation, still people who react within the discourse have always modified, transformed and re interpreted the meaning of dominant discourse (Long 1992, 25). This process, then, requires us to reflect on the role of NGOs as multidimensional. Agreeing with Long’s and Grillo’s points, I argue that conceptualizing the role of NGOs as either “pro” or “anti” democratization/development seriously limits our understanding of NGOs in action. Based

upon these theoretical perspectives on NGOs, I explore both the boons and the banes of NGOs in the Mexican democratization process to show the complexity of the impact of NGOs in democratization processes.

Mexico offers us an interesting case to look at in terms of evaluating the role of NGOs in the democratization process. First of all, Mexico is one of the Latin American countries that experienced severe economic crisis in the 1980s and, as a consequence, changed its development policy with the withdrawal of the state from the economic and social sphere. Since the early 1980s, the Mexican government has privatized more than 900 public companies. Also, the government's share of GDP decreased from 25% to 17% and the government deficit declined from 17% to around 2%(Knight 1994). However, the withdrawal of the state does not only mean the reduction of subsidies and the shrinking of the public sector. It also means the selective withdrawal or, at least, downsizing of an often corrupt and bureaucratic state from economic, social and political spheres. The new sets of economic and social policies in Latin America are supposed to induce larger participation from the grassroots in decision making and a more effective execution of programs because the state is assumed to open the social policy planning and resource distribution process(Ronaldo 1996).

The shift toward the withdrawal of the state in Mexico

coincides with the emergence of NGOs in Mexican politics. Mexico has experienced both quantitative and qualitative growth of NGOs during 1980s and 1990s. The state actively recruited participation from NGOs as well as various social actors. This permitted those who did not previously have the chance to participate in politics to become more active in politics. Therefore, Mexico presents a case that shows the multiplicity of social and political process of NGOs' emergence while illustrating the complex political and economic structural conditions that define the role of NGOs. That is, the complexity of Mexican democratization process precedes and predicts the complex impact of NGOs in the process. In this paper, I evaluate the role of NGOs in the Mexico democratization process and I wish to contribute to a more in depth understanding of the role of NGOs in Mexican democratization as well as in the democratization process in general.

The first section of the paper consists of discussion about various definitions of NGOs. As NGOs provoked diverse reactions from the academic society, various definitions surfaced to capture distinct aspects of NGOs. Therefore, it is very difficult to find consensus surrounding definition of NGOs agreed upon by "everybody". Rather, there are multiple definitions of NGOs and the debate to define boundary of NGOs still continues. In the first section of this paper, I reviewed different definitions of NGOs and tried to determine what the

most broadly accepted definition of NGOs is. And I will also argue that the discussion about defining of NGOs rooted in what would be in general as the main cause of the rise of NGOs in recent years.

In the second part, I discuss which characteristics of NGOs could be seen in general as boons and banes through reviews of different perspectives on the role of NGOs. Then I examine the relevance of these general evaluations of the role of NGOs in the Mexican case with historical review in the third section.

In section four, I explore the question of how far the NGOs in Mexico are a boon to the democratization processes through empirical evidences as well as historical review. In this section, the Mexican democratization process was examined at two levels; representative democracy and participatory democracy. After looking at various cases of NGOs' participation in the democratization process, this paper concludes that increasing participation by NGOs in the electoral monitoring and polling reveals NGOs' positive impact on the expansion of representative democracy, while the growth both in number and in power of NGOs to make their voices heard shows the role of NGOs in expanding participatory democracy.

Finally, in the conclusion, I summarize the role of NGOs in the democratization process and state possible challenges for NGOs in Mexico for their further participation in Mexican politics.

II. Definition, Categorization and growth of NGOs

As mentioned above, there are still ongoing debates about the definition of NGOs. The inventor of the controversial term, Non Governmental Organization, is intra governmental organizations, especially the U.N. in 1968. This was done to clarify who their partner contractors of development programs are (Gordenker and Weiss 1997). In other words, the U.N. created the term “NGOs” to differentiate them from governmental organizations. As a result, at the beginning, the term “NGOs” literally included all the organizations except governmental organizations. However, this is now an obsolete definition of NGOs. The most generally accepted definition of NGOs today is “non profit organizations that are private but serving public interests” (Gordenker and Weiss 1997).

In practice, it is easier to exclude all the organizations that are not NGOs than to conceptualize NGOs. Those organizations which are not NGOs are governmental organizations, intra governmental organizations, profit organizations and interests groups or sectoral groups such as labor unions or entrepreneurs’ organization. Those sectoral groups do not aim directly at profit-making, but they find their sole support in profit making industry and commerce. However how far those interest groups conform to what is understood as “NGOs” remains controversial (Gordenker and Weiss 1997).

Once we clarify the definition of NGOs, we face with various categorizations of NGOs. Some categorizations are based upon the strategy of NGOs (operational or advocative) and others are based upon the regions that NGOs mainly cover (domestic or international). The others are based upon the role in the development project (base or intermediary) (Torres 1998).

Even though each categorization of NGOs has its own advantages, this paper uses regional category for NGOs since one of the most important banes of NGOs is said to be the influence or intervention of “international” agencies on the domestic issues. Therefore I will exclusively examine domestic NGOs, as NGOs mainly deal with domestic issues no matter where their fund comes from. International NGOs would be NGOs that deal with inter or intra national issue and that are active in international arena such as OXFARM or Green Piece.

The difficulty of having a single uniform definition or categorization of NGOs stems from the fact that the growth of NGOs is a relatively new phenomenon in world politics. These groups have been working to deliver social goods and to directly alleviate poverty problems since the 1970s, however their political importance only became evident in 1980s and 1990s. The reason for the increasing importance of NGOs can be summarized in two failures: failure of the state and failure of the market. Salamon (1992) argues that NGOs are civil society's response to the issues the state could not or did not

attend to in the welfare state era, such as environmental issues or poverty issues. However, with the withdrawal of the state, neither the state nor civil society was willing to hand over the space left to the market, since it was recognized that the market failed to resolve social problems such as inequality and stability. With the decline of strong state intervention, both the state and civil society found NGOs the most appropriate to fill in the space left by state cutbacks. NGOs were seen as more effective, flexible and transparent and have experienced rapid strengthening of their role in many areas (Torres 1998; Gordenker and Weiss 1997; Smillie 1992).

If waning state intervention from economic and social sectors is one reason for the growth of NGOs, the ongoing democratization process throughout the world after the Cold War would be the other reason for the growth (Torres 1998; Chand 1997; Chalmers and Piester 1996; Reilly 1995). Chand (1997) argues that, with democratization after the Cold War era, the civil and political society, especially in the third world where the authoritarian regimes were dominant, have grown drastically and offered the essential ground for the growth of NGOs. Hence, the spread of NGOs can be attributed not only to the state yielding economic privileges of planning and delivering social services, but also the widening political space of participation.

III. Boon or Bane? : Theoretical Discussion of NGOs

The growth of NGOs ignited the discussions about the impacts of NGOs on the consolidation of democracy and there are many resulting discussions pointing out the positive role of NGOs in democratization as well as debates concerning their negative effects. In this part, I introduce the two main perspectives which address positive and negative impacts of NGOs in the democratization process.

1. Bane: Autonomy vs. Dependency

As we will see in the historical review of NGOs in Mexico, NGOs are not a new phenomenon in Mexico, even though their importance became notable mainly in the 1980s. In fact, one of the reasons why NGOs in Mexico could not be active in the 1960s and 1970s is that there was strong concern both from the state and civil society about their autonomy from international influences as well as from the state itself. This concern regarding NGOs also exists in other countries.

According to Petras(1997), NGOs tend to be dependent on international interest groups since their funding mostly comes from international agencies. He argues that NGOs foster a new type of cultural and economic colonialism and dependency. Projects are designed, or at least approved, based upon the

guidelines and priorities of the imperial centers and their institutions. Evaluations are done by and for the imperial institutions. Depending on the evaluations, the funding can be terminated. And shifts of funding priorities or evaluations result in jeopardizing social groups, communities, farms, and co-operatives. "Everything and everybody is increasingly disciplined to comply with the donors and project evaluators' demand(Petras 1997, 17)." And NGOs are most vulnerable in front of powerful international donors.

Torres(1998) also points out that the developed countries find NGOs useful for transferring funds, thereby bypassing the government in developing countries. The fund transferred from the developed world to developing countries already reached 6.4 billion dollars in 1989. Torres indicates that those countries often use NGOs to do some activities that cannot be done directly by developed countries due to sovereignty issues and to nationalist reactions. These activities often are related to fomentation of structural adjustment and privatization. Therefore, for Torres, NGOs turn out to be missionaries of structural adjustment program promoted by the developed world rather than an "alternative" voice to represent the third sector/civil society in developing countries.

Ricardo Vergara(1994) criticizes NGOs in terms of their dependency on international institutions like the World Bank or the U.N. However, his perspective is quite different from

Petras's and Torres's. While Petras and Torres criticize NGOs in terms of their role of promoting "imperialist interests" and market principles in the developing world, Vergara argues that NGOs impede real development of the region because they limit the spread of market principles and, furthermore, hinder the development of citizenship. According to Vergara, NGOs' projects do not aim at profit making but generating "social" goods because of international influences on the project designing and execution. Because of philanthropic rhetoric of international institutions, he argues that NGOs tend to create beneficiaries instead of the citizens in developing world. Vergara's arguments, this author notes, apparently stems from the belief that only market principles are the basis for the real development of citizenship.

As stated before, Vergara's take on NGOs problematic role in promoting democratization poses quite a distinct political and ideological stance from Petras's and Torres's criticism of NGOs. However, what is noteworthy in all three perspectives is that they see the heavy influence of international institutions or foreign countries on NGOs as problematic no matter what their political or ideological stance is on structural adjustment policy and market principles.

The concerns about NGOs' autonomy are not limited to their vulnerability to international influences. Due to the increasing involvement of NGOs in government programs, the criticism

about NGOs stems from the fact that it is hard for NGOs to maintain autonomy from the state. Since NGOs often need to get permission from the state to undergo a project or, sometimes, the state itself foments the creation of NGOs to reduce public spending and to obtain international funds, NGOs constantly face the danger of being absorbed by the state and becoming less autonomous from the existing power structure. In the worst case scenario, NGOs could become an instrument of state control over civil society (Gordenker and Weiss 1997; Moguel 1995).

The strong criticism of NGOs' ability to maintain autonomy from international influences, as well as the state, touches the core of NGOs; that is, the non governmentality of NGOs, which turns NGOs into new actors in politics, free from the state as well as international influences and akin to grassroots/civil society. As this paper will show in the case study of Mexican NGOs, many NGOs became quite sensitive to this criticism and tend to overemphasize their nonpartisan and apolitical stance, which eventually creates further challenges for NGOs.

2. Boon: Grassroots Participation

Among other positive effects of NGOs, such as increasing efficiency and transparency of development projects, the one

related to democratization comes from their close relations with grassroots participation.

Gordenker and Weiss(1997) points out that NGOs developed and played a crucial role in fostering and creating a world civil society. They argue that NGOs generally depend on multiple organizational and personal relationships largely outside the purview of state control. Such relationships hardly conform to conventional conceptions of authority and hierarchy. Therefore, NGOs tend to rest on specific choices of activities and policies, which can be linked in dynamic coalitions in a highly pluralistic context.

Smillie(1997) also states that NGOs are an expression of people's need for organization, self improvement and change. NGOs that extend beyond their own community can reach places where governments and multilateral agencies can not, dealing directly with the poor. Using participatory techniques, NGOs are often more effective and less expensive than traditional, top down development efforts. Smillie sees that NGOs can be flexible and innovative and have already pioneered new ways of thinking about health, the environment, gender, technology, etc. Additionally, NGOs have become recognized as an important element of civil society, fostering citizen awareness and participation in development and as part of new approach to governmental accountability and transparency. Since NGOs are based upon "the people," Torres(1998) argues

that they are more sensitive to demands from the grassroots not only economic issues but also political ones.

While many international institutes such as the World Bank, the Inter American Development Bank, and Asian Development emphasize this positive effect of NGOs and promote further incorporation of NGOs (Asian Development Bank 1998; Inter American Development Bank 2004; World Bank 1998), the popular sector also actively employ this perspective to challenge the existing power structure in developing countries. And Mexican NGOs are not an exception.

IV. Mexican Case: NGOs as Boon in democratization process

The criticism of NGOs in terms of their dependency on international institutions and the state does not apply easily to the Mexican case. That is, it has been hard to see international interventions filtering through NGOs in Mexico. It has been equally difficult to clearly discern government control over NGOs. Unlike African countries or South Asian countries where NGOs are mostly implemented by international NGOs or agencies, Mexican NGOs have emerged by Mexican grassroots' demand and tried very hard to maintain their autonomy, both from international agencies and the state.

NGOs in Mexico have existed since the 1960s. However in

the 1960s and 1970s, NGOs had to compete with other actors in the popular sector and to face the accusation of introducing foreign influence on domestic issues. This criticism did not only come from the state but also from other popular sectors. Therefore it made NGOs more sensitive to the issue of autonomy from the state as well as from international influences(Aguayo and Parra 1997).

One important incident which precipitated the emergence of NGOs in Mexico is the 1968 Student Movements. Frustrated by the violent repression of the state against protestors, many intellectuals realized the limitation of the state and organized themselves independently from the state. However, their organization did not become socially significant until the mid 1980s(Chalmers and Piester 1996).

The earthquake in 1985 gave rise to citizens' organization while Mexican citizens acted by themselves to take over the role of state in providing relief to victims and it gave second birth to NGOs in Mexico. Also in 1988, as a result of the rise and subsequent frustration of opposition parties and of widespread skepticism about fairness of the elections, many sought to organize politically, independent of the government. During Salinas' regime, the corporatist channel broke down drastically with the new economic and social policies and it made NGOs plausible alternatives, both for the state and civil society(Chalmers and Piester 1996).

Overall, the relation between NGOs and the state in Mexico has been one of mutual distrust. The Mexican government has considered NGOs as rivals who steal their clientele by assisting the poor outside the state's clientelistic channels. To NGOs, the government has been a potential enemy that has tried to control them and maintain the status quo. The Mexican government, using several approaches to NGOs such as co-optation, patronage, selective repression, and the appropriation of opposition discourse, has maintained social control. However, in the 1980s and 1990s, the crisis of the Mexican state and the fading efficacy of its corporatist channels have increasingly opened up spaces for social and political organizations outside of the government, including NGOs (Miraftab 1996).

As described before, the emergence of NGOs in Mexico derived from the grassroots initiatives to challenge the state and it made NGOs in Mexico a boon to the democratization process in Mexico, expanding both representative democracy as well as participatory democracy. Until 1988, NGOs in Mexico mainly dedicated themselves in the improvement of participatory democracy considering representative democracy as the game ruled by PRI. However, from 1990, NGOs realized that the elections also could be used to expand grassroots participation and to voice their demands (Aguayo and Parra 1997).

Among others, the best example of the growing participation

of NGOs in representative democracy is the 1994 presidential elections. This election is said to be the most observed elections in Mexican history. Various NGOs participated in election monitoring with international NGOs. Among other domestic NGOs, under Civic Alliance(*Alianza Cívica*), more than 400 NGOs participated to promote a transparent presidential election. During 1994, thousands of citizens were trained to monitor elections and media. On August 21 of 1994, more than 10,000 ballot boxes were monitored by NGOs. While international NGOs offered financial, technical and moral support to domestic NGOs, essential monitoring was done by domestic NGOs. With election monitoring, Mexican NGOs succeeded in pressuring the government to strengthen the independence of election commissions, to improve the quality of the voter registration list or draw up a new one altogether, to give the opposition greater access to polling stations on Election Day, and to permit quick counts(Chand 1997).

While participating in the representative democratization process, NGOs in Mexico continued to demand the expansion of participatory democracy strengthening their own power. Human Rights NGOs could be one of the exemplary organizations which experienced drastic growth in the 1980s and 1990s. Before the 1980s, human rights NGOs suffered from the accusation of being the instrument of Western influences in Mexico. However in the 1980s, due to the opening up of the

domestic political arena as well as international relations, human rights NGOs became legitimate organizations without suspicion of being instruments of foreign dominance. In the 1980s, 89 NGOs have been newly created among 250 NGOs that registered as human rights NGOs to the Mexican Academy of Human Rights (Academia Mexicana de Derechos Humanos; Aguayo and Parra 1997).

However, the growth of human rights NGOs was not only quantitative. In 1989 human rights NGOs created the National Coordinator of NGOs for Support of Refugees (la Coordinadora Nacional de ONG de Ayuda a Refugiados: CONONGAR) to help refugees from Central American countries. Since then, CONONGAR has actively participated in international conferences about refugees and continues to dialogue with government about human rights issues. And finally in 1990, human rights NGOs succeeded in incorporating the issues about refugees in the reform of the General Law of Population (Aguayo and Parra 1997).

Furthermore, in 1994, human rights NGOs participated in the negotiation process between Mexican government and Zapatistas forming the Coordinator of Non Governmental Organizations of San Cristóbal for Peace (la Coordinación de Organismos No Gubernamentales de San Cristóbal por la Paz). Human rights NGOs in the other regions formed the Civil Space for Peace (el Espacio Civil por la Paz) and urged the

government to stop hostilities against Zapatista movements in Chiapas. Also they succeeded in organizing a huge protest in Mexico City to demand peaceful negotiation between the government and EZLN in Chiapas in December of 1994(Aguayo and Parra 1997).

Women's rights NGOs also experienced strong growth in the 1980s and 1990s. Until 1994, there were 97 women's rights NGOs and most of them emerged in the 1990s. In the 1960s and 1970s, women's rights NGOs have been dedicated primarily to delivering services dealing with health and poverty in the urban female population, not involved in political activities. However, one of the most noteworthy changes in women's rights NGOs in the 1980s and 1990s is that those organizations started to participate in political area not giving up their basic functions of delivering services(Tarres 1998).

In the 1990s, women's rights NGOs became a power independent, not only from the state but also the other NGOs. Members of women's rights NGOs started to talk about women's issues, no matter what their political or economic backgrounds were. That is, women's rights NGOs finally became independent from the tutelage of the other traditional public actors such as labor unions or political parties, generating their own agenda as women. The best example of this action would be the Plural Group(El Grupo Plural), an attempt to create agreement between congresswomen,

executives of the government, and feminist groups regarding sexual abuse in 1988 and 1990 (Tarres 1998).

Finally environmental rights NGOs could be an example of NGOs which expand the democratization process. It was in the midst of the 1980s that urban environmental mobilization came into sight. And it was catalyzed in part by the earthquake of 1985 in the capital. Environmental groups gained a national presence with the First National Meeting of Ecologists (el Primer Encuentro Nacional de Ecologistas) in 1985 just after the earthquake. It was also in this period that some of Mexico's well known environmental NGOs and networks formed. In 1985, the Group of 100, originally one hundred intellectuals, artists and writers who were committed to the promotion of environmental causes, came together to protest environmental policy. In the mid 1980s the Ecologist Alliance (Alianza Ecologista) was created which later became the Mexican Green Party in 1988 and in 1986, the Pact of Ecologist Groups (Pacto de Grupos Ecologistas), a horizontal, somewhat diffuse network of environmental NGOs, formed after the First National Meeting.

An interesting point about environmental NGOs is that they are actively participating in the formal political arena, forming a political party and proposing their own agenda for environmental politics in Mexico. That is, the environmental NGOs in Mexico succeeded in linking general environmentalism to a critique of the political system itself. For example, in the

second half of de la Madrid's term, a national grassroots movement formed against the Laguna Verde nuclear power plant in Veracruz. The movements included Mexico City groups, social organizations, environmental NGOs from Veracruz, housewives, and students, among others. This disparate alliance was able to delay the plant's start up as well as express strong political opposition against Madrid's regime.

V. Conclusion: Challenges for NGOs

Throughout this essay, I have examined the role of NGOs in the Mexican democratization process. From this examination, I conclude, overall, that NGOs in Mexico have functioned as a boon to the Mexican democratization process. Despite common criticisms rooted in NGO's activities in other states, Mexican NGOs have clearly maintained their autonomy from both international forces and the state, and in fact, fostered participation in both representative democracy and participatory democracy.

However there are some challenges for NGOs with regards to further development. According to Chalmers and Piester, one of the interesting characteristics of Mexican NGOs is that they are building a political sphere which is independent of the dominant party. Their successes in this efforts lies in ironic contrast and possible conflict with the fact that NGOs have historically tried to remain non partisan, not participating party

politics(except for environmental NGOs which, on a global basis, seem to typically move quickly to create their own political party). This history and identification with a specifically non partisan attitude could pose some dilemmas to NGOs. Since there is widespread mistrust on formal political system, their non partisan tendency might help them to build more support from the grassroots. However, as Tocqueville (1969) identified, a strong civil and political society as the basis of a healthy democracy is based upon strong societal institutions, including political parties. These strong societal institutions help counterbalance state power, provide a context for developing civil skills and create peaceful channels for the resolution of conflicts that might otherwise result in violence. The consciously apolitical or non-partisan attitude of NGOs may be ignoring one of most important sector of strong societal institutions even though in reality that societal institution, formal political system, is not quite an image of de Tocqueville's described "peaceful" channel to resolve conflicts. Furthermore the absolute apolitical stance of most NGOs may eliminate possible chance to improve formal political system. The demand to maintain autonomy from the existing political system and, at the same time, involve themselves in the reform of existing political system is the paradoxical dilemma that many NGOs have yet to resolve. Although environmental NGOs in Mexico opted to form its own political party to be involved in formal political system, most

NGOs in Mexico put most of their emphasis on autonomy rather than efforts aimed directly at reform of formal political system. In that sense, the environmental NGOs in Mexico show us an interesting attempt from NGOs to complete the two tasks, although their successes are arguably uniquely related to the global context and support of environmental issues.

Finally, the growing support from the government to NGOs might soon pose problems for their autonomy. NGOs in Mexico could attribute part of their success in becoming viable alternative to the state in the political area to their antagonistic relations with the state. Due to mutual distrust between the state and NGOs, NGOs have had to suffer repressions from the state but also they have easily preserved their political autonomy. However, in 1990s, NGOs became the praised as the key actor of “third way” of development not only nationally but also internationally. Since 1990s, international institutions such as World Bank, Asian Development Bank and Inter American Development Bank have promoted incorporation of NGOs in development projects as a tool to guarantee transparency and accountability of the projects forcing member countries as well as funding recipients to allow participation from NGOs in governmental projects(Asian Development Bank 1998; Inter American Development Bank 2004; World Bank 1998).

Mexican government has followed this advice from powerful international institutions, too. NGOs, which were seen as rivals

of the state, are now seen as indispensable components of governmental politics, especially in social sector. However, as Moguel pointed out(1995), clientalism and co optation are still alive in Mexican politics. Therefore, Mexican NGOs must continue to exercise caution about their relationship with the government amid growing participation in governmental programs, while globally, the roles and opportunities for NGOs must continually evolve to match the challenges and constraints in the ever dynamic political and economic stages of the developing world.

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